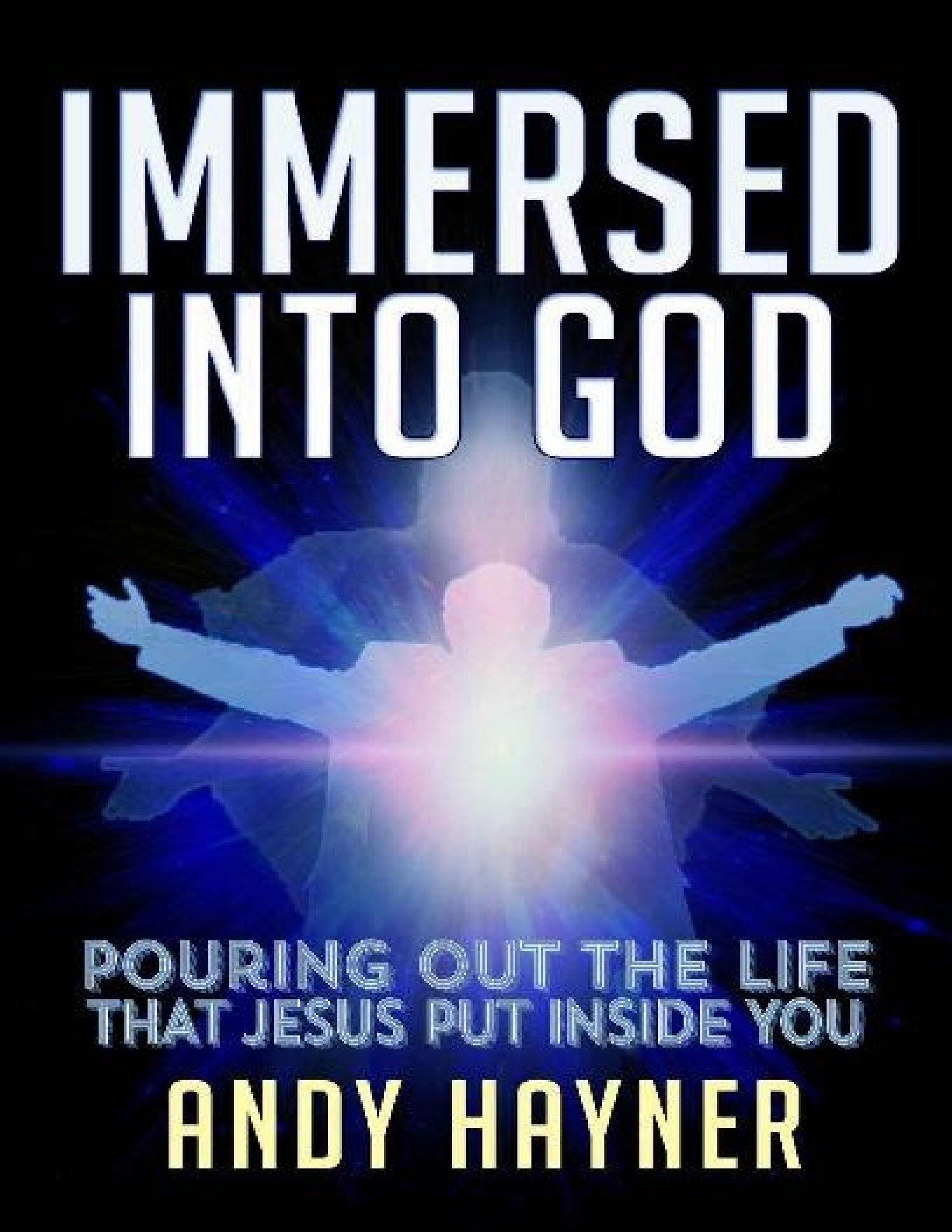
IMMERSED INTO GOD



POURING OUT THE LIFE THAT JESUS PUT INSIDE YOU

ANDY HAYNER

Immersed Into God

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Andy Hayner

FullSpeedImpact.com

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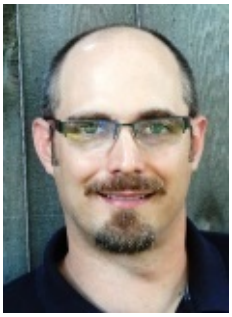
Dedication

First, to my wife Tina,
a godly woman, faithful wife, an awesome mother, and my best friend.
There is still nothing that
“thrills me more than when I see my Savior’s face in one so wonderful as yours.”
I love you!

Second, to the Lord’s bride
and my precious brothers and sisters in Christ
of the Sunrise Fellowship.
Without our journey together,
I would not enjoy the rich revelation of how Jesus Christ
works through His body that I share today,
for we discovered much of it together.
Thank you my friends!

The best for last…
to Jesus,
for giving yourself for me and to me
so faithfully and completely.
No one loves like You!
You are amazing!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andy Hayner mobilizes believers to walk in fullness of Jesus Christ world-wide. He is the founder of Full Speed Impact Ministries, and is recognized for having a gift to impart a profound revelation of the believer's union with Jesus Christ in a simple, understandable way that unleashes greater depths of the love and power of God. He has a passion for hands-on disciple making that has been developed through over twenty years of Christian service as a missionary, a pastor, and a church planter. He is the founder of Full Speed Impact Ministries and volunteers as a Regional Director for John G. Lake Ministries, the oldest and most successful healing ministry in existence today. He holds a Masters of Divinity from Columbia International University Graduate School of Missions . He resides in Wisconsin with his wife and three children.

A missionary at heart, Andy travels widely to minister to churches, small groups, conferences, and individuals wherever God opens the door. Although he travels widely, he endeavors to establish ongoing relationships with churches to be a regular outside resource for the sake of the Kingdom.

You can connect with Andy on Facebook . You can also receive fresh words of insight and encouragement along with exclusive free videos of teaching and testimonies from Andy by subscribing to his monthly e-newsletter.

To enquire about having Andy minister in your area, please contact Andy directly at FullSpeedAndy@gmail.com.

PREFACE

Whenever I read a book, I like to know a little about the person behind the letters on the pages in front of me. Who is this person and why have they written this book?

After over twenty years in Christian ministry, three years ago I founded Full Speed Impact as a ministry dedicated to mobilizing the church around the world to walk in the fullness of Jesus Christ. I'm fond of saying, "I used to have a ministry,' but I gave that up so that Jesus could have His ministry through me." As I train believers to discover their life in Jesus Christ, I tell my brothers and sisters in Christ, "My only ministry is to equip you for yours." In high school, I played football. I was a lineman. I guess I'm still a lineman at heart, slugging it out in the trenches so that other people can score the touchdowns.

I've been a very slow learner when it comes to the things of the Spirit of God. Since earning a Masters of Divinity from Columbia International University, I've served the Lord as a pastor, missionary, and church planter. Along the way, I've made the slow journey from believing in the God of the Bible to experiencing the God of the Bible in my own life and ministry. My own slow journey has given me a great deal of sympathy for those who struggling for spiritual break through and the ability to relate to believers at all points along the way. You can hear me share some of my journey into the power of God, here.

The message of this book has been birthed through real world experience and proven out in a variety of cultures on several continents. I have had the joy of seeing this message bear spiritual fruit in the lives of countless people from diverse backgrounds around the world. I've seen many precious lives transformed as they have discovered that Jesus Christ does indeed live inside of them to live His life through them today. I've seen stagnant ministries begin to impact regions with the gospel. Believers struggling with fear, guilt, and inferiority have been unleashed to walk in God's power and love to impact their regions for the Kingdom of God. In the process, we've seen thousands who have been healed by the power of God alone of almost every disease and condition

known to mankind, including blindness, deafness, C.O.P.D., cerebral palsy and cancer. You can see some of the video testimonies of the miracles we've seen at my website FullSpeedImpact.com. We've also seen many come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and matured in Christ. So, you have in your hand a book that has been forged in the trenches in hopes that the lessons I've learned on my own "slow journey" may help you accelerate your own life to full speed as quickly as possible so you can "run the race marked out for you with endurance, looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.." (Heb. 12:1,2) and be empowered to run at full speed and impact the world around you.

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Introduction
Our Heart's Cry

"It's on like Donkey Kong!" David Hogan

It starts at birth. We are plunged into a family that is entrenched in a lifestyle and embedded in a culture… which will soon become our own. It's inevitable. We absorb the language, relational patterns, and values around us with very little effort. We learn by osmosis. We are *immersed*.

With every passing experience, our version of "normal" is being defined. To a child living in Cambodia, sitting ***on*** the table (not at the table) and eating rice with their hands in normal. If a child sits on the table at my house, they get picked up, scolded, and set down in chair. Depending on the culture into which we have been immersed, "normal" can be very different.

Jesus Christ came to rescue us from our version of "normal." Before Jesus arrived, we thought that it was normal to be worried, ashamed, jealous, frustrated, irritable, and fearful. Struggling with sin, guilt, and uncertainty about ones standing before a holy God seemed normal to us. Before Jesus, we may have even thought that being sick and in pain were just part of God's plan for our lives. When Jesus showed up, we realized we have been deceived our whole lives. Everything we thought was true was actually just reinforcing the terrible mistake that "typical" is "normal."

Jesus Christ brought a new version of normal to planet earth; God's version of normal. Although Jesus Christ lived on the earth, He found His life in heaven, where things were truly normal. Our Father in heaven is the only completely normal person Jesus ever met. The Father overflowed with wisdom, truth and love. Jesus' inner man was immersed in His Father. He was completely drenched with God in a dry and weary world. Like a spiritual submarine, inside of Jesus was another world, an atmosphere from above whose origins were from beyond this realm. Jesus brought the atmosphere of heaven to earth within Himself.

Jesus demonstrated God's version of normal *for our lives*. He came to pour out the life of God into us, to flood our heart with heaven's light, in order to make us sons of God[1] in the midst of world of spiritual orphans.

There are too many today who have mistaken "typical" Christianity for "normal" Christianity. Many are claiming the name Christian, yet they want only enough of God to help them get what they want out of their life, never realizing that did not send Jesus Christ as an add-on to improve our lives on earth. Jesus came to restore us to a heavenly life in order to set us free from a mere earthbound existence. He came to baptize us with fire from heaven, to immerse us into God and saturate us so completely with Himself that we can experience heaven's version of a normal life on earth, life as a child of God. The normal Christian life can only be defined as the life that Jesus Christ lives inside of us. Everything else is abnormal.

Many have been awakened from the slumber induced by the world's siren song. They have heard a clear blast from God's trumpet. Heaven's reveille has sounded and Christians around the world are waking up to the reality that when Jesus Christ called "Follow Me!" He rescued us from darkness and enlisted us as soldiers in His army. Our warfare, however, isn't waged with guns. It's waged with redemptive love, truth, and the power of the Holy Spirit. If you are "in Christ", whether you've realized this or not, you are at war. The apostle John identified himself as our brother in the "*the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus*" (Rev. 1:9). Coming into Christ sets us at odds with the powers of darkness. We are in an ongoing clash between the Kingdom of God and Satan that will bring tribulation and require perseverance. Although Jesus Christ has already won this war by His death on the cross and resurrection, billions of souls remain captive, waiting for you and me, as the appointed ambassadors of Jesus Christ, to come and set them free so that they may partake of His victory.

Finally, the full message of the gospel that turned the world upside down has been recovered from the ashes of "churchianity." The message of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" is once again being proclaimed and those who hear are discovering that the gospel is indeed "Good news of great joy for all people."

For this message unleashes a supernatural power that overflows with demonstration of power. The same Lord Jesus, who "walked about doing good healing all who were oppressed by the devil," now lives inside of every believer to transform our lives and do the same mighty works "and even greater" through us today. Although Jesus Christ sits enthroned in heaven, this same resurrected King of Glory still has a body and resides on the earth. He lives inside of every born again child of God. God is awakening believers everywhere to take hold of their union with Jesus Christ and begin to fulfill His purpose, advancing His Kingdom by walking in the dominion that has been restored to us through the victory of Jesus Christ.

No longer are we pinned down with lies, shame, fear and insecurity that come from trying to improve ourselves and become worthy. We've been crucified with Christ, so that we can enjoy Jesus Christ living His life through us. We're no longer satisfied with the mere assurance we are going to heaven when we die. We have come to realize that we have already died and are already seated with Jesus Christ in the heavens. God has put the Kingdom of heaven inside of us and left us here on earth, for one reason: that we may destroy the works of the devil and manifest the Kingdom of God now in love, truth, and power.

It's no longer enough for us to find a good church and enjoy good preaching that helps us live a comfortable life in safety with our family while there are entire nations who have yet to hear the message of our Savior; while countless orphans live abandoned in the streets; while our neighbors still think that hypocrites and greedy televangelists are "typical Christians"; while families live in such poverty that parents are deciding, RIGHT NOW, whether to allow their children to starve or to sell their oldest daughter as a sex slave; while children, mothers, and fathers are being consumed by cancer in every city around the world; while a slumbering church sits with its hands folded believing the deception that somehow this is the "will of God." This isn't right! We've had enough! If Jesus is Lord (and He is) and He lives in us (and He does), we are compelled to lay everything down to learn how to allow Him to live *through us*, to live *as us*, so that He may once again show the world that "God is light and in Him there is *no darkness*." (1Jn. 1:5)

We've tried, but we just can't spend our lives merely attending church. Don't get

me wrong. We *love* God's people, all of them. We won't stop gathering for worship and the sharing Word together.. We just can no longer *merely* a*ttend* church. We ***are*** the church and the church of Jesus Christ is heaven's ambassadors, not religious spectators. The love of Christ in us compels us to run into the streets with the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with our few "loaves and fish" and cry to Jesus, "take all of me and all I have! Break it, bless it and give it out!" It's no longer satisfying to find a nice church to attend, with nice people with a good youth program and uplifting sermons. We're raising our voices to cry, "Where are the believers that will stand with me for the sake of His Name in truth, love, power, and compassion?" To us *THIS is church*, those who are answering the Lord's call to lay everything down to become like Him. Having discovered the victory of Jesus Christ for our own lives, how can we be content to receive His victory only for ourselves and never rise up to answer His call to enforce His victory on the earth to the blessing of our fellow man?

Jesus Christ said that "He *will* build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against us!" (Mt. 16:18) We are becoming the people Jesus envisioned, a people who are forcefully advancing the Kingdom of God against all the works of the devil. We refuse to play defense, just trying to hold on to what we have. No! We are taking back what the enemy has stolen and hell is on the run. Devils may run, but they can't hide. We are tearing down their strongholds of lofty imaginations and fine sounding arguments with the demonstration of God's power in the message of the gospel. We are storming their gates to rescue the captives and will not stop until every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord!

This is the cry of our heart! Yet we must recognize that an awakened heart is only a crucial beginning. If we are going to walk in the fullness of Jesus Christ, we need much more. We need practical guidance to help us rediscover the depths of the riches that God has placed inside of us. We need input from people who can give us practical equipping and encouragement so that we may walk as sons of God who exercise the dominion of Jesus Christ on this earth to "do the work of the ministry" effectively. When I speak of "the work of the ministry," I'm not speaking merely about typical "campus duties" like ushering, nursery duty, and chaperoning youth group lock-ins. However vital these acts of service may be, I am speaking of every believer being equipped to fulfill the vision of Jesus Christ

when He said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."* (John 14:12)

A soldier has a very different approach to life at peace-time from when he is at war. We, in Western church, have been well schooled in peace-time "tactics" of ministry. Church leaders have been thoroughly prepared for leading peace-time gatherings of faithful spectators. The church has been well trained to come to meetings, listen to sermons, sing songs and participate faithfully in programs. Although we aspire to making disciples of Jesus Christ who walk in His fullness, the main ministry skill employed by the attenders of these peace-time gatherings is to "invite people to church" so that the professional ministers can have a shot at influencing their lives. Have we unwittingly locked ourselves into a series of perpetual meetings and programs that is failing to mobilize the saint's army so that they are able to meet the enemy in battle and set the prisoners free? Have we unintentionally embraced a culture in the church in which "man's typical" has replaced "God's normal" for our lives?

As we push forward to *"attain…to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13), many important elements have been recovered by the church. We have rediscovered such things as the priority of intimacy with Jesus, holy living, evangelism, healing the sick, Kingdom authority, baptism of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of spiritual gifts, justice for the poor, and the importance of relationships and small groups. However, in our propensity to compartmentalize, large segments of the church have specialized in only a few aspects of the Christian life to the neglect of all others. To our own detriment, we have allowed this mindset of "specialization" to justify our division from one another and the neglect of entire areas of the Christian life. For example, some believers have given themselves over to intimacy with Jesus but neglect evangelism and discipleship. Others have recovered the importance of evangelism but neglect spiritual gifts or justice to the poor. Others have recovered the importance of relationships in the body of Christ and are committed to small groups… that don't do evangelism or heal the sick.

What must be done to mobilize the saint's army as a grass-roots movement of people who walk in *the fullness of Jesus Christ* and are capable of reaching the

unchurched *outside of the walls* of any religious building? As unprofound as that may seem, this rather large book is written with the conviction that we need simply to discover how to pour out the life that Jesus Christ is living inside of us. God's method for changing lives has always been a man, *THE man Christ Jesus.* We must become people who know Jesus as more than a bridge out of hell into heaven and an example of morality and leadership skills. We must know Him deeply by learning to cooperate with Him so that He can express Himself through us in His fullness to the people around us. As we anchor our hearts in heaven and plant our feet firmly on the earth, we will be able to become living demonstrations of the power and love of God.

If we are ever going to see the cry of God's Spirit in our hearts mature into a powerful Kingdom lifestyle, the body of Christ must refuse to limit God through specializing and return to God's vision that each believer become a mature disciple who is "fully trained, just like their master." As we learn to connect the revelation of our union with Jesus Christ with practical equipping, we will be able to release the words and power of the Holy Spirit effectively to the people around us. We must set our hearts toward the fullness of Jesus Christ and refuse to neglect any aspect of His saving power in our lives. May God make us a people who are *immersed in God and pouring out the life that Jesus lives in us!*

After over twenty years of disciple-making ministry, I have written ***Immersed Into God*** as a tool to guide you into the supernatural lifestyle that Jesus Christ is living inside you to impact the world around you. I begin by laying a foundational understanding of the connection between our lifestyle and our identity in Christ. Then we move on to equip you to demonstrate the power and love of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways, like healing the sick, speaking with supernatural insight, and more. If I were to stop there, and many do, you would be able to live a powerful life doing "random acts of Kingdom". However, Jesus has called us to make disciples, so everything is tied together with the aim of mobilizing you to become a supernatural disciple-maker.

This is not just a book for you to read. It's a book that you will do. It's a book that you can become. Each chapter is filled with real-life examples and practical coaching. Also, at the conclusion of each chapter you will find group exercises and personal assignments to give you some practical guidance that will help you

implement the truths and practice the skills covered in each chapter. If you are already a disciple-maker or small group leader, I'd encourage you to also consider using the ***Immersed Into God Interactive Training*** **Series** (available March 2015) that corresponds with the content of this book, so that you can cover this material in an interactive fashion with your LifeTeam, small group, or new disciple.

Are you ready to learn to live the life that Jesus put inside of you? I believe you are!

Chapter 1
GOD'S LOVE- Our Life and Our Mission

"If your gospel isn't touching the world, it hasn't touched you!"
Curry Blake

It was around 2 a.m. on a Friday night in October of 1989. I sat up in my bed, raised both hands up with a shout "Whoo-hooo!" I had just received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I had been born again, and I knew something had changed. Little did I know then, EVERYTHING had changed.

Without anyone telling me, I borrowed a friend's Bible and began to read it profusely. I began speaking to God through my day like He was my best friend. I immediately quit smoking pot and womanizing. I also began to speak to my friends about the difference Jesus was making in my life. Within a few days, I also called my parents to tell them that I was coming home that weekend because I wanted to talk with them.

When I returned home that weekend and got settled, I sat down in the living room with my parents. I was a little nervous, but they were downright tense. I said, "Something huge just happened in my life that has changed my perspective on a lot of things. I feel like I need to apologize for the sort of person I've been. All through high-school, my football coaches always told us that we needed to have our priorities straight. 'God first, family second, grades third, and football fourth.' I would always agree, because I knew they were right. But last week something happened. God really showed me what a jerk I had been and how much I need His forgiveness. I asked Jesus Christ to forgive me and gave my life to Him completely. For the very first time in my life, I believe I can honestly say that God is first in my life. Something really changed. It's like my eyes are opened. Now I realize that through my whole life, it was never 'God first, family second, grades third, etc' It was always "me first, me second, me third.' I know

you guys love me and I'm not saying I never did anything good. I just need to tell you that I'm sorry for being so selfish, argumentative, and self-centered. I really want to change and need to ask you to forgive me."

I stopped and waited for a response. My Dad spoke first, "Whew! That's a relief. I thought you had gotten somebody pregnant!" And so began my new life in Christ.

When a person receives Jesus Christ and is born again, God doesn't just change our eternal destinies. He changes the entire direction of our lives. Our hearts are now being carried along by the current that flows in the river of God's Spirit. When you are touched with the power of the gospel, you begin touching others with God's grace.

Rivers always have a current, a flow, a direction, a destiny. So it's essential that we learn to understand and cooperate with the operation of God's Spirit within us so that we can experience the life He wants to give us.

THE MISSING MISSION

What's your mission in life? Don't keep reading. Take a second to answer the question. Be honest. Grab a something to write with and write it down before reading further.

If you have to stop and think about your own mission, it's not a good sign. Unless you have absolute clarity and dedication to a mission of your own, you are potential fodder for someone else's mission, someone who IS clear about their focus in life.

So what is your mission in life? Sometimes it's hard for Christians to give an honest answer to questions like this, because instead of giving an honest answer we give the answer we know we're *supposed* to give. But your current state life-mission can be determined by observing how you are actually living. If I hired a private eye to follow you around and watch you for a week and report back to me how you spend your time- especially your free time- the content of your conversations, what you read and watch on TV, how you spent your money, your leisure activities, and what stirs your emotions and draws out your best efforts, I could determine your real current state mission. What would it be?

Mission is tied closely to our purpose. Our purpose answers the question, "Why are we here? What's the reason for our existence?" Mission is a little different because it answers the question, "What's the best way to live out my purpose now? What do I need to DO to fulfill my purpose?" The Gospel restores human beings to God's original purpose to be His representative rulers on the earth who bear His image and likeness living in His perfect love as sons of God. Since we've been restored to God's purpose, we can join God on His mission to "bring many sons to glory." **OUR MISSION is *HOW we carry out our PURPOSE of living as sons of God and manifesting His glory on the earth.***

If you are Christian, your mission has already been defined by Jesus Christ. We don't have to assess our background, spiritual gifts, our likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses to determine our mission. All those things will come into play about the roles we may play in carrying out our mission, but they have *nothing to do with defining our mission*. Just like a soldier gets their mission handed down to them from headquarters, Jesus Christ gives us our mission.

THE MISSION OF A CHILD OF GOD

We will understand God's mission for us as His sons and daughters best as we understand the mission of Jesus Christ. We can observe many occasions in which

Jesus states His mission with His own Words.

From the Scriptures, we can see how Jesus described His mission in His own words:

1) **To serve everyone in God's redemptive love at great personal sacrifice.**

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark10:45

2) **To set the captives free by the grace of God and the power of God's Spirit.**

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19

3) To recover mankind for God

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

4) To demonstrate the Mercy of God by calling sinners to repentance.

"Go and learn what this means, "I desire Mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" Matt. 9:13

5) To proclaim the Kingdom of God with the demonstration of power.

And Jesus said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons." Mark 1:38-39

6) To reverse the works of darkness by giving us the supernatural life of God in abundance.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10

7) To attack and overcome the devil, to strip him of his power and to reclaim the devil's stolen property for God.

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of

God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but ***when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor*** *in which he trusted and* ***divides his spoil.*** Luke 11:20-22

8) To execute God's judgment against evil on earth by casting out the ruler of this world by sowing Himself as a seed so that the life that is inside of Him would be released to raise up a harvest of many sons of God.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit…"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." John 12:24, 28-31

9) To glorify the Father by manifesting God's Name and accomplishing all the work God had given Him to do.

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. John 17:4-6

Although Jesus states His mission in many different ways, His mission is not changing, nor is it complicated. Jesus simply knew His mission so well that He could talk about it out of the overflow of His heart and not merely recite a canned phrase from memory. Jesus lived to glorify His Father and serve people by setting the captives free and destroying the works of the devil. He knew what He was about. Jesus was laser clear about His mission from the Father. He was not wondering or wavering. He made every decision and focused all of His energy to fulfill the mission that He had been given from His Father.

The mission of Jesus is what fueled His entire lifestyle. In this light, the Gospels become a picture of a lifestyle that is living out this mission. What do we see?

Here are a few key components we see in Jesus' lifestyle:

- He lived in unbroken fellowship with His Father, in total surrender and perfect faith.

- He lived in redemptive love towards all people that attracted sinners, upset the religious, and transformed His disciples.

- He ministered inside and outside of the established religious institutions, in homes, on the streets, at the seaside, as well as in the synagogues and the temple.

- He traveled around doing good, healing all who were oppressed by the devil wherever He went.

- He made disciples by creating a Kingdom-mission community.

- He preached and demonstrated the Kingdom of God publically and personally.

- He healed all, died for all, and rose for all.

Why is this important to us? Jesus Christ is our leader. We follow Him as His disciples, which means we discipline our lives to become like Jesus Christ. This means that we not only adopt His mission, but that we adopt His way of fulfilling that mission as our own. To do this, you don't need to become a Jewish rabbi or even a full-time vocational minister. But you do need to become a human being whose inner life is immersed in the unseen life of God and allowing divine mercy, love, truth and wisdom pour out in a life of redemptive power- healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead and proclaiming the reign of the Kingdom of God!

Look back through the list of Jesus' lifestyle and you'll find that anyone can adopt this lifestyle. You can live in fellowship with God and advance the Kingdom of God whether you are a teacher, doctor, lawyer, truck driver, garbage man, athlete, website designer, or country music star. This lifestyle is available to the young and old, rich and poor, male and female, educated and uneducated. This lifestyle will transform and flow through the introverts and extroverts, the hard chargers and the laid back among us. And, as we'll discuss in more detail later, this was Jesus' plan… to live in you, to live through you *as you*. You are uniquely designed as a person and positioned in the human race to display the glory of God. God wants to live through regular people just like you to flood the entire earth with His glory!

The heart of our mission flows out of the heart of God. It's not merely so many activities. Our mission is not about us. It's about the passion of God to reveal Himself and to bring mankind back into union with Himself for all eternity and fulfill the very purpose of their existence.

REACH, PREACH, DEMONSTRATE, DISCIPLE

Here is a simple way to summarize the actions that comprise our mission: to REACH, PREACH, DEMONSTRATE, and DISCIPLE.

We REACH. Because Jesus Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, we go to every nation. We are going to the neighbors and the nations to reach people with a message that brings salvation. We live on mission with God. Even when we live in one place, in all our actives, we GO to make disciples. We aren't waiting to be led. We have the command to go to everyone, to the down-and-outers and the up-and-comers. We aren't expecting them to come to us. We are going to the captives to set them free. If we need a special leading to get us to a specific person or place, God will give it to us while we are going. He's already told us to go. He's already said that He is with us. We don't need to wait on God for instructions. We have the authority to act on His instructions. He's with us wherever we go and waiting on us to take His presence to the neighbors and the nations. We REACH.

We PREACH. We have a message to proclaim to the World, "Jesus Christ is Lord!" We speak forth the revelation of the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ,

namely that God created us to contain Him so we could represent Him on the earth. Although few of us will preach a sermon on a street corner or a pulpit, we all communicate the message of the gospel. We must let people know that, although we were taken captive by the enemy, God sent His Son as man to live and die in our place to deliver us. Then Jesus Christ rose in victory and gives the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who humble themselves and bow their knee to King Jesus. Through Jesus Christ, God adopts us as sons and gives us the spirit of His Son, so that Christ now lives in us to manifest the glory of God through us! Hallelujah! It doesn't matter what you've done apart from Him, you can be forgiven. It doesn't matter what has held you in bondage. Jesus Christ is stronger! He will come to live in you so that He can live through you and empower you to live as He lived! Praise the Lord! We PREACH.

We DEMONSTRATE. We have more than words. We have power! We take up the Name of Jesus Christ and cast out demons and lay hands on the sick and see them recover. We do the same works as Jesus Christ and even greater because He has gone to the Father in victory. We speak in new tongues because we have received the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. We walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and demonstrate the victory of Jesus Christ over evil by destroying the works of the devil. We DEMONSTRATE the Kingdom.

We DISCIPLE. We make people from all nations disciples of Jesus Christ. We baptize them in water. We baptize them in the Holy Spirit. We baptize them into their union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We teach them to obey. We're not sidetracked into endless Bible teaching for its own sake. We are laser focused, aiming at the transformation of our lives. We teach believers to obey EVERYTHING that Jesus commanded, which includes the commands to "preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, and raise the dead." We train every believer to become a spiritually mature maker of disciple-makers. We DISCIPLE.

If you are like me, my life needs constant alignment to this mission. The world is designed to get us off mission, distracting us with a constant barrage of opportunities to do something, anything but reach and disciple people for Jesus Christ. Living on mission is a challenge. But if you think living life on mission is a challenge, you should *try living life apart from God's mission.* Ouch!

LIVING A REDEMPTIVE LIFE

The work that Jesus did upon the cross to redeem us by His death and resurrection is unique to Jesus' role as our Savior. Dying for the sins of the world is the one part of Jesus' mission in which we do NOT imitate Him. Although we are called to take up our cross to follow Him, we don't atone for sins by our sufferings. Sin's penalty has been paid and it's power defeated by the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

But notice that Jesus was able to say to His Father that He had "accomplished the work that you gave me to do" *prior* to going to the cross. Before He died a redeeming death, Jesus lived a redeeming life, setting captives free from sickness, sin, and deception wherever He went. His life on earth was surrendered to be a vessel for the life and love of His Father. He preached the Kingdom and demonstrated its power wherever He went. In this, we must follow Him! We must adopt the same lifestyle of surrender to the divine life, love, and power of God to set the captives free.



Although I have been a minister of the gospel for over twenty years, I have also worked in the marketplace. In fact, after a season of wrestling with God, I became convinced that Jesus wanted me to resign from being a pastor in order to work in the marketplace. I didn't stop being a minister of the gospel when I worked in the marketplace. The marketplace became my primary place of ministry.

When I worked for seven years in a business consulting firm, I didn't "check my Christianity at the door" just because I was working. I did my work as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. I represented Him in my work. I was by no means a silent witness.

One day, I remember hearing someone behind my desk moan. As I turned around, I noticed the office manager standing at our CEO's door holding a file in one hand and rubbing her back with the other. When she had finished her conversation with our CEO, I walked up behind her and said, "What's going on

with your back?" She said, "I just need to make it through the day so I can go home and take my pain killers." I asked her a little more about her back problems and then told her, "Let me pray for you real quick. I believe God can heal you now. He doesn't want you hurting." She said, "Wow! Thank you!" She sat down at her desk and I reached for her hand over the top of the reception counter and told the pain to leave and her back to be healed. The funny thing was, as I was holding her hand across the counter, our C.E.O. returned from a visit to the restroom and came into the lobby. He took a look at me holding our office manager's hand and cocked his head to one side with a look of confusion. I began to open my mouth to explain what I was doing, and my C.E.O. smiled and said, "I don't want to know." So I returned to my desk chuckling at what my C.E.O. must have been thinking.

Twenty minutes later I got a tap on my shoulder. I turned around to see my office manager standing in front of me with tears in the corner of her eyes and a radiant smile. "My back is healed!" she said. Then she proceeded to twist from side to side and bend over and touch her toes to demonstrate how good she felt. I told her how much Jesus loved her and how happy I was that she was healed.

At another time, I became part of a new program and got a new supervisor. He was a good man in many ways; but as we got to know one another, it didn't take him long to realize that I loved Jesus or for me to realize that he hated Christians. God gave me many opportunities to demonstrate the reality of God and to speak into his life, which often left him stunned and silent (which was very unusual for him).

At one point I asked him, "Why do you have such a low opinion of Christians?" He proceeded to tell me this story, "In my previous company, there was one guy who was the V.P. of Human Resources. He led Bible studies before work. He wore a W.W.J.D. (what would Jesus do) pin as a tie clip. One year, our market had contracted and the president issued a goal for cost reductions with incentives to the vice presidents if they were able to meet that goal. Because of my role in the company, even though I wasn't a vice president, I was part of those meetings. As the year progressed, it was becoming clear that we were going to fall short of the cost reduction goals set by the president. I watched this "Christian" vice president decide to terminate hundreds of employees and withhold Christmas bonuses from many others so that he and a small group of the richest people in the company could get a bonus. What would Jesus do? Yah right!"

The world is watching us to see if they can see Jesus in us. As our good brother Todd White says, “If they can’t see Jesus in you, they don’t want what you have!” When the world sees God’s redeeming love, they know it. They also know selfishness and hypocrisy when they see it. If we aren’t clothed with Jesus Christ, we won’t be able to make up for the lack of His character in our lives with Christian pins and T-shirts.

Even though we could never qualify to save people from sin by dying in their place, in a very real sense we can follow Jesus Christ even in giving our lives to ransom many; not in the sense of atoning for their sin, but in the sense of bringing the message of salvation to many people! As Jesus said, “whoever loses His life for Me *and the gospel* will find it!” (Mark 8:35) Suffering is often required to bring people the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the apostle Paul wrote “*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body.*” (Col. 1:24) Although Christ’s work on the cross is complete to redeem us from our sins, there remains a measure of Christ’s suffering that must be fulfilled by those who carry the message of the gospel so that the body of Christ is built up. This too is redemptive suffering that believers should embrace with joy. (Matt. 5:10-12) Refusing to give up in the face of trials, persecution, and affliction to remain a steadfast witness of Jesus Christ is a supernatural demonstration of the Kingdom of God that is part of the normal Christian life.

GOD’S MISSION REQUIRES SUPERNATURAL POWER

I discovered this by experience when I went to the mission field without the power of God in operation. When I graduated from seminary, I took my family to Turkey as a missionary out of a burden to take the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world. While we were in Turkey, there was a huge earthquake that took the lives of many people. Our family ended up moving out to one of the cities that had been destroyed by this earthquake to help with relief and recovery efforts and to be a witness of Jesus Christ. I remember several instances in which I saw people who were suffering in their bodies or their souls and feeling the Spirit of God leap up within me as if to say, “Let me touch them!” I remember one older person who just laid in a dark room growling at anyone who came near. Others were in severe pain in their bodies because of injuries sustained in the earthquake.

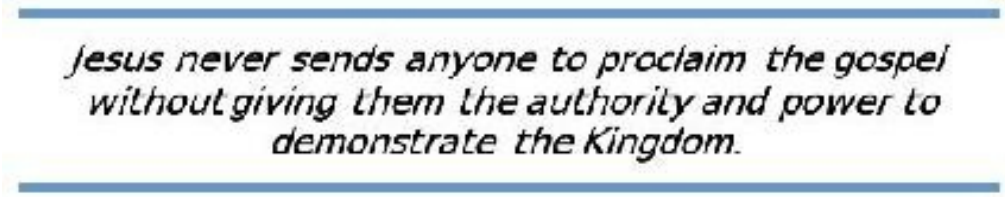
Unfortunately, at that point in my life I was not walking in the power of God. I had the words of the gospel. I even called myself a “theological charismatic”, which meant that I believed that all the gifts of the Spirit of God seen in the Bible are in operation today. But at that point in my life I was only a “theological charismatic” because my only experience of the Holy Spirit was limited to illuminating my understanding of the word and conviction of sin. I had no actual experience of the supernatural sign gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in my life and ministry. So even though the Holy Spirit was practically leaping out of me to touch these poor people with His power, my fear kept a lid on the activity of the Holy Spirit. After two years, I left Turkey with a sick wife and a cry in my heart, “Lord, teach me to walk in the power of your Holy Spirit!”

Whenever Jesus sent anyone out to proclaim the gospel, He ***always*** gave them power and authority to demonstrate the power of the Kingdom by healing the sick, casting out demons and raising the dead. In fact, Jesus actually forbid His disciples from attempting to advance the Kingdom until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit. Did you realize that?

> *He (Jesus) ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* Acts 1:4-5

Apparently, even eye witnesses of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus were ***not*** fit to carry out the mission Jesus has for us without the power of the Holy Spirit. According to Jesus, words alone, even when they are right, are not adequate to be a witness of Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus Christ brought the Kingdom of God with power to set us free!

What happens if we rely upon the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to heal the sick, cast out demons, as we make disciples of all nations? What happens if we return to that approach?



Recently I had the opportunity to return to the mission field in Cambodia, another unreached nation. This time I was there to help a buddy of mine, Dustin, who had been a missionary in Cambodia for twelve years. In twelve years as a missionary, Dustin had made a few solid disciples of Jesus Christ with a typical evangelical message of salvation through Jesus. Dustin invited me to Cambodia in hopes that the power of God would make a difference in helping him to reach this nation.

Would the power of God make much of a difference? After all, these are people with a rich spiritual tradition of their own who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ. Would adding the power of God in healing the sick and casting out demons make much of a difference?

In three weeks, Dustin and I went to seven unreached villages and also ministered in the capital city. We never stayed in any village more than 3 days. Yet in every village we saw people come to faith in Jesus Christ. We saw hundreds of people healed which always lead to an opportunity to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The deaf heard, the lame walked, and the blind saw. Many souls were saved, churches were started, regions were buzzing with talk of the great things God was doing, and believers were equipped to walk in the power of Jesus. In almost every instance, we had unbelievers *coming to us* for prayer because the word was spreading about the healings that were taking place. You can see a summary video of this trip here.

We took a very simple approach of going into a village where we had a contact. We asked them to take us to people in the village they knew who were sick or in pain. Many people were healed instantly, so we took the opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ to them. Many people were saved and many believers began to minister in the power of God for the first time, including Dustin and several Cambodian believers who accompanied us.

Dustin saw more fruit for the kingdom in 3 weeks than he had seen in 12 years.

How? We just did the great commission with the power of the Holy Ghost! I never laid hands on him or any of the other believers to "impart" something. I simply helped them to realize how to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, which they already had. You can hear Dustin share his reflections after ministering in our first village together here.

Cities and nations are waiting for ordinary believers to begin to unleash the supernatural power of God. People aren't interested in changing religions. But they will drop religion like a bad habit to walk with the true and living God. To do this, we must return to the Biblical model of walking in God's love and power as we proclaim the authority and victory of King Jesus. We make disciples with demonstration and proclamation.

EMBRACING GOD'S MISSION ACTIVATES HIS POWER

Here is the fundamental flaw frustrating many Christians when it comes to fulfilling God's purpose for their lives: We can't use the power of Christ to empower our self-directed activities without negative results. Many don't understand that our activities are either empowered by the Spirit of God to fulfill the mission of God or they are being shaped by the "prince of the power of the air." Our activities and lifestyle are either an expression of the culture of heaven or the conformed to culture of this world system established by Satan. There is no middle ground. Unfortunately, many believers remain double-minded and perish in the wilderness trying to walk forward in Christ's promises while their hearts have "turned back to Egypt." If we are ever going to live in the full power of Jesus Christ, we must live out the mission of Jesus Christ.

Rebecca is a young lady who is a living witness to this fact. She grew up in a Christian home and attended a strong Spirit-filled, Bible believing church. After she graduated college, she moved to another country to run a language learning program. After her first year abroad, she came to our house to tell us how God had watered the seeds that we had planted in just a few short conversations we had in the year before she left home.

Here's what Rebecca shared with us, "Even though I grew up in church, my Christian life was still basically focused upon me. I was always trying to improve some aspect of my character and trusting God to bring all the pieces of my dreams together so that I could live a happy life. The problem was that I was always focused on my flaws, so I never felt very worthy of God doing great

things through me. I was mainly focused on character improvement and achieving my own goals and dreams. God was basically a means to that end. This all unraveled when I graduated college and moved to another country far away from all my friends, family, and everything familiar. In this place, I was lonely and depressed. I even went through a season in which I was actively "walking away from God", if such a thing were even possible. This only made things worse. My spiritual life was getting desperate. Then I began to cry out to God for Him to put just one real Christian in my life. God was so faithful, and He connected me with an on-fire missionary couple who began to teach me about the reality that Jesus didn't just come to save me, but also to live inside of me and do His works through me. They taught me to begin to minister to the sick and expect healing… and God did it! I was amazed. It was like all of my need to "improve myself" and focus upon my own flaws took a back seat. I realized that God does love me and He just wants to live in me and touch the world through me. Now I am just living to let Jesus love others through me. The funny thing is that now I have so much more joy, peace, and love and so much more confidence because my focus is on Jesus Christ and what He can do instead of my own character flaws. My life is looking a lot more like Jesus as I'm spending more time focusing on Him than me. God is surprising me every day with how much He is willing to do amazing things through me. I have much more joy and peace as I allow the presence of Jesus within me and the needs of people around me to occupy my heart instead of myself."

SOLDIERS WITH NO FIGHT AND KITES WITH NO TAILS

Unfortunately, many today are trying to avoid any responsibility or obligation as Christians. They fill their lives with activities of their own choosing to their own detriment. Because these activities are off-mission, their personal lives and the church as a whole is weakened spiritually by their life instead of built up. Many Christians and churches are languishing because they are refusing to live out their true mission!

A Christian living without mission is like a kite with no tail. Have you ever tried to fly a kite without a tail on windy day? It's got no direction. It goes up, flips over and does a nose dive right into the ground. What's needed is not more wind or a bigger wingspan. Adding a tail to the kite adds weight to the kite, but instead of weighing the kite down, the weight of the tail enables the kite to soar to incredible heights.

Many believers have taken a nose dive because they have never completely surrendered themselves to God's mission. Although their faith in Jesus Christ is sincere, they continue to live mainly for themselves, their own comfort, advancement, and security. God's mission, if it finds a place at all, is worked in around the edges of a life crammed with other pursuits. All the while, the power of God is rarely experienced because their life is off God's course. The invitations of the Spirit to live as Sons for the Kingdom are either ignored or smothered by carnal religion. Instead of tying on the tail by surrendering to the weight of God's mission, they try to alter their flight pattern by expanding their "wingspan" with still more Bible knowledge or by catching a yet another "fresh wind of the Holy Spirit." They enlarge their wingspan in endless Bible study and leap up to catch the Spirit's breeze, and WHAM… another nose dive. Why? No weight. No direction. No mission. For all the wind and wingspan, they are still a kite with no tail. Their lifestyle doesn't have the direction that Jesus Christ intends.

We abandon God's mission for our lives to our own peril. A soldier may know that they have the purpose of defending our country, yet if they use their supplies, time, and energy to throw parties, build beautiful state-of-the art military complexes, and educate themselves in the finer points of military strategy and yet refuse to take up arms to fight their enemies, their nation will soon be overrun by their enemies. Likewise, when God's Army refuses to live out their mission, SOULs perish and lives are destroyed. But not only the souls of others. The spiritual vitality of our own soul is drained by a lifestyle that isn't in step with the Spirit of God.

FOLLOWING A MAN ON A MISSION

The Word of God is clear that living the Christian life is a lifestyle of mission with God, a life of redemptive love in fellowship with the Father. As Jesus says, "Whoever tries to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me *and the gospel* will save it." (Mark 8:23) Surrendering our life to Jesus Christ includes surrendering our life for the advance of the gospel. To come to a genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ requires that we embrace His mission as our own.

The call of Jesus has always been "Follow Me!" But if you want to follow Him, you better get your running shoes on because Jesus Christ is on a mission to set the captives free and immerse them into the life and love of God. If you want to be close to Jesus, you need to join Him on His mission. Today, Jesus' call, "Follow Me!" has become "Go into all the world and make disciples… for I am with you even to the end of the age!" While every believer may not go to another country, we must nonetheless "Go and make disciples" wherever we may be in the world and partner with our brothers and sisters in Christ to reach the entire world.

GOD'S POWER MISDIRECTED

Although every believer has been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, most believers are not living in the power of these spiritual blessings. Why? This requires aligning our lifestyle with God's mission. Focusing our lives upon the mission of God is like turning the key to align the tumblers to unlock all the promises of God. This is a consistent pattern in the Scriptures.

For example:

1) **The power of God is not poured out to give us thrilling worship services. The power of God is promised to empower us to fulfill the mission of God.**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8

2) **God doesn't promise peace and provision so that we can fulfill our own worldly dreams. He gives His promises of freedom from worry and ample provision of our needs to those who make a firm stand to abound in every good work as the put the mission of the Kingdom first.**

"*But **seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you."* Matt. 6:33

"*God is able to make all grace abound to you, **so that** having all sufficiency in all things at all times, **you may abound in every good work."*** 2 Cor. 9:8

"*Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved… do not be anxious about anything, but* ***in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God****. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Phil. 4:1, 6-7

3) Partaking of the divine life of God is reserved for those who surrender their own life.

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever ***loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.****"* Mark 8:35

"I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it." 1 Cor. 9:23

"He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." 2 Pet. 1:4

4) God does not promise to work everything out for our good unless we love God and have answered His call to live for His purpose, *not* our own.

"*We know that* ***for those who love God*** *all things work together for good, for those* ***who are called according to his purpose***." Rom. 8:28

BUTTERFLIES DON'T CRAWL

It's important that you understand that focusing the activities of our lives and the motives of our hearts on the target of God's mission does not *earn* God's promised blessings any more than a caterpillar is earning it's wings by going into its cocoon. A caterpillar does *not* crawl into its cocoon with the thought, "I need to do this *to become worthy* of wings." It's merely a matter of surrendering to the operation of life within them that is birthing new wings. The caterpillar is surrendering one lifestyle (crawling) in order to take up another lifestyle (flying). The caterpillar flies because flying is the lifestyle that fits its new wings the

best!

In the same way, we surrender the flesh life to take up the life of the Spirit of God, which is a life of redemptive love, divine authority and power and confidence in God. This lifestyle of mission lived out in the power and love of God is the lifestyle that fits our “new wings” the best. “Christ in you, the hope of glory” is on a redemptive mission. The lifestyle that fits Christ in you is truly glorious!

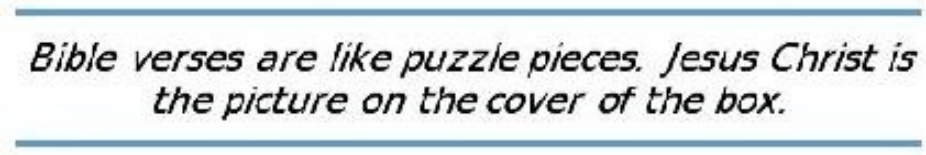
CHRISTIANITY GONE WILD

Many Spirit-filled Christians are frustrated even though they speak in tongues and understand their authority in Christ, because they have not yet embraced the lifestyle of an ambassador of Christ. They have opened up the faucet to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They have unkinked the hose from all the false teaching that has had them bound. But the spray nozzle at the end of the hose remains closed. They are not focused upon others. They have the end of the hose pointed at themselves, seeking mainly their own blessing. You’re never going to have the flow of the rivers of life unless you open up your life to God’s mission. You must focus your life on those who are languishing without Christ in this “dry and dusty land where there is no water.” As you do, you will be amazed at how powerfully God will flow through you. Although living on God’s mission is often hard work that requires sacrifice, we work “with the power that God mightily works within us.”

The best way to understand God’s will for our lives is to look at Jesus Christ. He is the perfect demonstration of the will of God for humanity by word and deed. Jesus said, “*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”* (John 6:38) Likewise, He speaks prophetically in the Scriptures, "*Behold, I have come to do your will."* (Heb. 10:9) Jesus demonstrates to us the lifestyle of a child of God. Knowing the life that Jesus Christ *lived* will help us discern the life that Christ is living through us today, because the Christian life is “*no longer I, but Christ Jesus who lives in me*.” (Gal. 2:20)

It’s important that we keep Jesus Christ in focus because many people who are sincerely committed to doing God’s will are thoroughly confused. In some

instances the confusion just makes us less effective, like the Corinthian church who was making too much of the gift of tongues, or movements within the body of Christ today who are trying to fulfill God's mission by living a good, positive life that inspires people to come to know God simply through their pleasant demeanor. Other times the confusion can be quite detrimental, such as the one church in America that has taken the approach of picketing funerals holding signs proclaiming "God killed your son!", "You are going to Hell!", "Thank God for A.I.D.S" while quoting Bible verses all the while (almost always from the Old Testament).



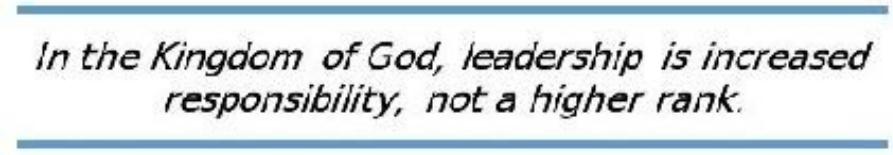
Ironically, confused Christians usually have Bible verses that seem support their approach, which just adds to the confusion. Here is the key: Bible verses are like puzzle pieces. Jesus Christ is the picture on the cover. Bible verses are portions of God's self-revelation to mankind. Jesus Christ is God living among us to reveal Himself in totality. So instead of assembling of various Bible verses to construct an idea of how our life should look, God lived out His will perfectly through Jesus so that we would make no mistake. Jesus Christ ***is*** the Word of God made flesh, the will of God made manifest. If you've put together a string of Bible verses that are leading you to live in a way that doesn't look like Jesus, doing things that Jesus never did or taught you to do (like be a "silent witness" with no words, or to be an "worshiper and intercessor" who never actually shares the gospel with people, or to protest funerals with signs proclaiming that "God killed your son") then you've put the puzzle pieces together wrong. The verses aren't wrong. They are God's Word. You're just jamming them together to make a picture that's altogether different that Jesus Christ. You've got a case of spiritual dyslexia that is garbling the message up as its run through your current visual filter. You need to "fix your eyes." How? By "*fixing your eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith*." (Heb. 12:1-2)

THE KINGDOM WAY

Many Christians have adopted the Kingdom of God as their life mission, but have failed to realize that the Kingdom of God is not merely the GOAL. It's also the WAY TO THE GOAL. In God's Kingdom, there is no room for manipulation, control, half-truths, and compromise. Unfortunately, many

Christian leaders get blinded by the light of their glorious goals and succumb to unchristlike attitudes and actions that are destroying lives behind the scenes. We can't compromise love, truth, holiness, and personal sacrifice and hope to advance God's Kingdom.

I remember one instance that occurred when I was a pastor. On this particular week, I was also leading the worship team. During practice, I was introducing a new song to the team prior to the worship service. One of the ladies on the team insisted that I was doing this new song wrong. She showed me how to do it her way, but I really didn't want to change. We discussed it for a few minutes, and then I did it. I pulled rank on her. I said, "I suppose we could do it either way, but whose turn is it to lead?" I thought since it was my week to lead, I had the right to have my way. That settled the dispute, or so I thought.



I settled the dispute about the song, but I had unintentionally picked a fight with God in the process. After the worship service, I was troubled in my spirit. As I sought the Lord, He brought this interaction to mind. At first I still didn't understand. I thought perhaps He was going to give me some insight into my sister's heart so that I could help her not be so pushy and defensive. Instead, God put the spotlight on my own heart. He said, "When you asked the question, 'Whose turn is it to lead?,' not only did you ask the question 'Who is the greatest,' but you had already answered it!" I had allowed my goal to have a great worship song done in a particular way to blind me to the ungodly practice of falling back on ranks and titles to get my own way.

This proved to be a significant turning point in my life. As I received God's light in this one instance, I began to see how often I- and the church as a whole- were leveraging titles, roles, and positions to get our own way. "*For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*" (2 Cor. 4:5) In the Kingdom, leadership is increased responsibility to serve, not a higher rank. While the body of Christ is encouraged to give extra cooperation to those who have taken extra responsibility, those who are entrusted with leadership must remember their titles are to designate responsibility, not rank. Jesus Christ has all rank and our service is to exalt His authority, not our

own, in the church.

I remember another instance where I was pastoring a gifted Christian lady, we'll call her Cheryl, who loved the Lord and had a heart for the poor. Cheryl went overseas to serve alongside a respected brother, we'll call Nathan, who had established a strong network of schools to train Christian leaders in his home country. Brother Nathan was well known, respected, and loved by our congregation from his frequent visits and pulpit ministry. Cheryl was thrilled to be able to serve in his ministry.

When Cheryl arrived, Brother Nathan worked out an itinerary. For her first week in country, Brother Nathan invited Cheryl to teach at one of his pastor training schools, which would allow Brother Nathan to travel to a different part of the country and attend to other pressing matters.

Then it happened. At one of the early classes, Cheryl opened up the class for discussion, asking these young leaders, "What questions do you have, even if they are not related to the lesson at hand? If I can, I'd like to help." One man asked a question about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially tongues, healing, and deliverance. As it happened, this was an area that Cheryl had a great deal of Scriptural and practical wisdom from her years of faithful service to the Lord. She answered this one question, which launched several more. To make a long story short, there was such a pressing interest amongst the Christian leaders at this school regarding the present day ministry of the Holy Spirit, and they were finding so much help by Cheryl's ministry, the rest of week was spent going through the Scriptures and helping these leaders-in-training apply these truths to their present ministry situations.

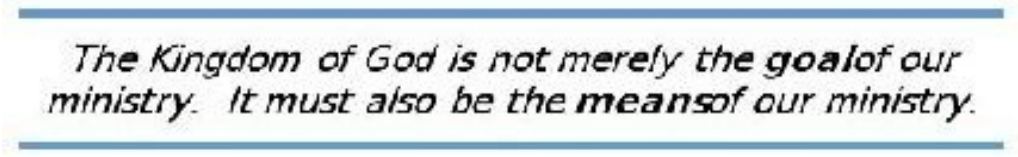
Everyone was thrilled… until brother Nathan returned towards the end of the week. Cheryl honestly didn't know that brother Nathan had taken a strong position *against* the present day functioning of sign gifts of the Holy Spirit and that he would be greatly upset to find that his entire class of Christian leaders were now baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues regularly, prophesying, healing the sick and casting out demons!

What started as an honest mistake with good intentions got ugly in a hurry… real ugly. From Brother Nathan's perspective, his credibility as a trusted teacher had

been deliberately undermined in the eyes of his students. In his mind, his life's work to bring desperately needed solid Biblical training was under attack. So Brother Nathan fought back. He immediately "took the gloves off" and began to publically berate Cheryl in front of the class she had just poured into for almost a week, maligning her as a rebellious false-prophet who was ignorant of the things of God. In private Brother Nathan accused Cheryl of intentionally trying to undermine his work, to steal his students to build "her own ministry." His accusations were continuous and relentless through the remainder of Cheryl's mission. It eventually culminated with her in tears while he shouted at her while one of his leaders in training watched on in horror.

What was going on? What could make a "man of God" behave like this? The answer is simple. He believed his theology was right and that his work was of God. Therefore, he felt completely justified in attacking, maligning, and verbally abusing Cheryl. He was blinded by his holy goals to his unholy behavior. The Kingdom of God was His goal, but not His method.

Cheryl returned home very broken, in need of much counsel and prayer, which was how I learned of this situation. As I was working for Cheryl's healing and reconciliation between her and Brother Nathan, I was spending a lot of time in prayer over the matter. It was during this season that God showed me a lesson that I believe is crucial for every Christian who is seeking to advance the Kingdom of God: The Kingdom of God is not merely the goal of our work. It's the WAY in which God's work is accomplished. Godly men are often blinded by Holy goals to ungodly methods.



Take King David as another example. He had a holy goal to establish Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by bringing the ark of God to this city. Holy goal. However, in his rush to accomplish this holy goal, he employed an ungodly method and set the ark of God on a platform pulled by oxen instead of upon the shoulders of sanctified priests. When the platform was rocked and a man was killed, and David got angry at God. David was probably thinking, "God, why would you do

such a thing? After all, look at my holy goals! This was for You God, and YOU killed a guy! What's up with that?" David was angry because his holy goals were smashed by God Himself. He was blinded to the darkness of his own sin by the light of the goals he was trying to accomplish. Brothers and sisters, we must embrace the reality that the Kingdom of God is only truly advanced when the Kingdom of God is not merely the goal of the work, but the source and means and method of our work!

The only way to truly advance the Kingdom of God is to be completely surrendered to the Lord Jesus and allow His Kingdom to be our life's aim *and the means by which we live*. We are to become living "portals" through which God's Kingdom is manifest on the earth. As we learn to relate to God, to each person, and every circumstance by faith, hope, and power, victory and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God is not only advanced by the activities of our lives. It's made manifest all along the way.

JESUS GIVES US HIS MISSION

Jesus was very clear about His own mission. He was just as clear about His mission for us. His mission is the same for each one of His followers. Regardless of talents, spiritual gifts, gender, marital and economic status, education, personal interests or background, **Jesus' mission for each of His followers is the same**. Jesus' mission *does* incorporate all of the things that make us unique, but our mission is the same. Why? There is *only one mission*. It's His mission! Our mission is the mission of Jesus Christ! The mission of the Kingdom is not an "add-on" because God wants to give you something challenging to do with your life. Living for the mission of the Kingdom is what happens when God unleashes the core of His being to flow out from your life now. He comes to live inside of us to continue His redemptive work of setting captives free from darkness to live in the Kingdom of God.

Since He has come to live inside of us, in the deepest part of our being, His life is flowing through us in the same way it flowed through His own humanity; with grace, power, and redeeming love. We've been incorporated into Jesus Christ as His body. We have received Him as our Spirit. He gives us Himself so that we can live through Him. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." (1

Jn. 4:9) Jesus Christ was the living manifestation of God's love. What then do you suppose we will manifest when we are living by the life He put inside of us?

As Jesus said, "*Whoever believes in Me… out of His heart will flow rivers of living water!"* (Jn. 7:38) God created us to be one with Him, to pour Himself out inside our hearts in an eternal embrace of love and trust. When we open up our hearts to allow God's presence to flow from us, it flows out like rivers of redeeming love and power! Every river has a flow, a direction, a destiny, a goal! God's heart flows to bring us into the ocean of His love…and flow it must!

After Jesus accomplished the work of our redemption, He prepares us to carry out His mission. Look at what Jesus said to His disciples in these passages that are commonly called "the Great Commission."

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and 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 that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matt.28:18-20

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark16:15-18

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:45-49

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8

Let’s pause for a moment to pull out some of the key elements that make up our mission from these passages.

The **foundation of our mission** is fastened upon the victory and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has completely defeated evil, death, and Satan. He has done so on behalf of the entire human race. This is good news! Jesus Christ has ALL authority in heaven and on earth. He has defeated EVERYTHING that defeats us! One of the keys to boldness, perseverance, and faithfulness in carrying out the mission of the Kingdom is a revelation of the King of Glory, the Lord Jesus exalted far above all rule and authority and every name which is named both in this age and the ages to come! Once you see Jesus Christ for who He really is, it sets you free from fear and fills your heart with faith. Jesus is Lord of all.

Also, **the scope of our mission** is identified as the whole world. Every person in every nation on the planet for all time, no matter the culture or background, should be given the good news of the authority of Jesus Christ and become His disciple. Jesus is the rightful ruler, and His rule brings life, peace, healing and salvation. He sets us free from the grip of sin, deception, and evil.

But we don’t carry out the mission alone, nor with words alone. The **method for our mission** is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit joined with the proclamation of the gospel. Jesus Christ comes to dwell within us and gives us the “promise of the Father, power from on High” to empower us to be His witnesses. We become the authorized agents through whom Jesus Christ makes Himself known to all nations as we speak and act in the authority of His Name. This includes casting out demons and healing the sick as we proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom.

FOLLOWING THE PATTERN OF APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Many people are taught that the reason they shouldn't expect God to do the miraculous through them is that they are not apostles. The reasoning goes like this: "God authenticated the ministry of the apostles with signs and wonders. You aren't an apostle, so God won't do signs and wonders through you." This mindset is one of the main reasons that Bible believing Christians can oppose miracles and healing in the church today. For anyone to claim that God did a healing in their ministry, in the minds of those who believe miracles are exclusively for apostles, is paramount to giving yourself the status of an apostle in the church. But we must ask, "Were signs and wonders in the New Testament restricted to the apostles and did they *only* serve the purpose of validating the ministry of the apostles?" Some of you may be asking this question.

Consider the following:

1) Jesus sent many "non-apostles" out to heal the sick and cast out demons. In Luke chapter 9, Jesus sent out the twelve to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the Kingdom. In Luke chapter 10, Jesus sent out seventy-two to do the exact same thing. So Jesus demonstrated that spiritual power and authority to heal the sick and preach the kingdom are NOT reserved for the apostles.

2) Jesus commanded the apostles to teach us to obey everything He commanded them. If Jesus Christ taught the apostles to "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (Mt. 10:8), then the apostles are under orders to teach us to obey those same commands.

3) Jesus taught that miraculous works were for all believers.
"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12) Jesus never tied miraculous works with the office of an apostle. Jesus said that walking in the miraculous was a "whosoever" thing, like "whosoever believes will not perish but have eternal life." Jesus expects these very same "whosoevers" who believe on Him for eternal life will "do the works that I do…and greater."

4) Jesus is training ALL of His disciples to become like Him in EVERY way.
Jesus said, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, but **everyone** when he is*

fully trained ***will be like his teacher***." (Luke 6:40) If you are a disciple of Jesus, you are in training. Jesus has a goal, a vision for your life as He trains you. He expects you to become just like Him. When Jesus was in the flesh to disciple the apostles, He trained them to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. We are His disciples today. Now, in the Spirit He's training you to be able to do the same things… and more. He's not playing favorites.

5) Jesus taught the apostles that miracles would follow "those who believe" the message they preach. "*And these signs will accompany* ***those who believe****: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."* (Mark 16:17-18)

The signs of healing the sick, casting out demons, and supernatural protection from evil were not just following the apostles, but those who believe what the apostles preached. So, if you want these signs to follow you, set yourself to discover and believe the message that the apostles preached when they were sent out.

6) Normal non-apostolic believers were used to do miraculous works in the New Testament.

Here are a few obvious examples of regular believers being used for the miraculous:

Phillip, the Spirit-filled-food-distribution-manager

When the practical needs of the widows in the church became so labor intensive that the apostles needed some men they could put in charge of this task, Phillip was one of the people selected by the church. This allowed the apostles to focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer. So Phillip was obviously not an apostle, which meant that he shouldn't expect miracles in his ministry, right?

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized

> *he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Acts 8:12-13*

Apparently God never got the memo that He's not supposed to do miracles through blue-collar laymen.

The Scattered Tribes

The church started in Jerusalem with converts from Judaism who received Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The day Stephen was martyred, these believers began fleeing from Jerusalem. When James wrote to these "scattered tribes" of Jewish Christians, he addressed a variety of issues that the church was facing, including the way in which believers should respond to sickness.

> *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* Jms.5:14-16

James is giving instructions to the church for those needing physical healing for sickness. Does he say, "Call an apostle or you are out of luck?" No! He says, "Call for the elders of the church." The elders were not apostles, yet the believers are assured they would be able to minister healing when they pray the prayer of faith. But even in this case, the ministry of healing the sick was clearly not reserved for the elders of the church. Elders merely had a special responsibility to serve the church in this function, but every believer is encouraged to confess their sins and to pray for one another so "that you may be healed." Every believer was a potential minister of miraculous healing for the sick among the earliest scattered Jewish churches.

The Galatian Believers-

"Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" (Gal. 3:5)

The apostle Paul is pulling out all the stops to rescue the churches in the region

of Galatia from being taken captive to those who are trying to force believers to observe the Mosaic Law. So he points the church to their experience of the Holy Spirit. “How is the Spirit supplied? How does He work miracles?” Paul assumes that the believers in these churches are experiencing the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit and would be able to answer this question. He calls on their experience of God to bring up the answer, “You know Paul, you are right! When we experience the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit, it’s not because we do a work of the Law. It’s because we act in faith of the message of the gospel!” Paul knew that the message he preached had been believed and that the signs of a believer (casting out demons, dominion over the enemy’s power, supernatural protection, and healing the sick) were following them.

The Corinthian Believers-

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 1 Cor.12:7-11

The apostle Paul was not trying to teach the church in Corinth about how to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. He was teaching them about what they had already been experiencing, namely words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophesy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. This was not strange for the apostle Paul or for his churches. Paul expected that all his churches were experiencing the supernatural power of God at work in their midst without him or any other apostle present. To this apostle, normal Christianity was supernatural. The believers were experiencing the signs that follow the message of the Kingdom.

7) Believers are taught to follow the examples and practices of the apostles.

“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” Phil. 4:9

The apostle Paul is teaching non-apostles to practice whatever they learned from him, heard him teach, and saw him do. Did Paul speak of miracles? Did Paul do miracles? So when the apostle Paul tells believers to do what he did and practice what he practiced, this would include the miraculous. We are to adopt a lifestyle of the miraculous with the expectation that God will also be with us as we do so. So, just in case you are not persuaded that miracles were not reserved for the apostles, in this command, every believer is told to do whatever they saw the apostles do. This includes miracles!

THE APOSTLE PAUL FOLLOWS KING JESUS

The apostle Paul gives us an example of what it looks like when someone carries out the great commission by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul said, "*My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*." (1 Cor. 2:4) Paul did not rely on persuasive arguments or dynamic speaking ability, but the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit to persuade people regarding the truthfulness of the message of Jesus Christ. Paul demonstrated the Spirit in every way; by his boldness, peace, integrity, and joy (the fruit of the Spirit) as well as his sacrificial, self-giving love. Paul also demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit through signs and wonders, healing the sick and casting out demons. He demonstrated that the Kingdom of God had indeed arrived with Jesus Christ who rose from the dead.

Paul was carrying out the same mission that Jesus has given to all believers. However, in the passages that follow, Paul describes his mission in his own words.

Paul's mission in his own words was to:

1) **To turn people from Satan's power to God to receive forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ.**
I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. Act 26:18

2) **To form Christ inside all believers.**
My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! Gal. 4:19

3) To present everyone mature in Christ, who lives and works powerfully within all believers.

God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Col. 1:27-29

4) To represent Christ as His ambassador to reconcile all people to God that they might receive life and live unto God.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised… All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Cor.5:14-15, 18-20

5) To build up the body of Christ world-wide to do the works of Jesus and walk in His full stature.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Eph. 4:11-13

The overlapping elements of the mission of Jesus Christ in Paul's description of his own ministry are unmistakable: The victory of Jesus Christ and His authority over all, making disciples by teaching people to obey Jesus, the ongoing presence of Jesus Christ with His followers, believers looking like the full stature of Jesus Christ.

Our mission is the same mission as Jesus Christ and the apostles. It is a redemptive mission, to bring people out of domain of darkness and into the Kingdom of God.

Here's a question for you to consider. Have you adopted this mission for yourself? Will you? It's the only mission that will fit your purpose and allow you to harness the fullness of the power of Jesus Christ. For it was for this mission that the Holy Spirit was poured out in power.

> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* Act 1:8

Living out this mission is a challenge best undertaken on a team of believers that is dedicated to helping one another fulfilling this mission. This book will help establish these kinds of teams. If you get off track or take a hit from the enemy, the team is there to encourage and support you to keep moving forward. Are you ready to be trained to be a victorious spiritual warrior?

Will you join the many believers who are stepping up to God's vision for their lives, ready to live a life of love? Our mission is love. It's not the tame, domesticated love that many picture when they hear the word love. The love that I'm talking about isn't tame. It's wild. It's the love of God, the kind of love that stops funerals, confronts hypocrites, casts out demons, turns over tables in the temple, and refuses to give up on the worst of sinners. We've been tamed into being nice, polite, domesticated man-pleasers when God wants us to walk in His own ferocious love that will stop at nothing to bring us back into the glorious freedom of His fellowship.

Many believers are beginning to embrace who they are in Christ. As they adopt a lifestyle of mission they find themselves like a domesticated lion released from the zoo to live in the wild. Once you overcome the learning curve, you begin to reap huge dividends in the Kingdom of God. As we begin to tap into the power required to exercise dominion, we begin to discover the value of running with a pride. We're rediscovering what it's like to live in the wild. We're talking to strangers, sharing prophetic words at work, stepping out from behind our shopping carts to lay hands on the sick without any concern about what people or society think about us. We know that we are walking in love, and "against

such things there is no law." We're off the chain, out of the box, and running wild once again.

Certainly a solitary domesticated life in the zoo is much safer and easier, but since when did a safe and easy life ever fulfill God's purposes or truly help others! Gone are the days of going to church to just to "get fed." We must learn how to run with a pride and work as a team to feed ourselves and reproduce. We must relearn the skills that allow us to walk in power, defeat our enemies and exercise dominion over our territory. We must embrace the lifestyle that fits our true nature. Are you ready to run? Ready to roar? Ready to exercise dominion?

You were born ready the moment you were born again. You were born to express God's untamed love. Jesus Christ died so that we could love without religious trappings imposed by tradition. It's for *this freedom* that Christ set us free!

But how can we relearn the skills that we once knew by instinct, but have long since been forgotten in the days of our captivity? Is it possible for us to recover the supernatural power of God that once turned the world upside down? Read on my friend.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) Discussion: What connections do you see between the passages in which Jesus gives us the great commission and the passages in which the apostle Paul describes His own mission?

How are the elements of the Great Commission given by Jesus present in Paul's mission?

2) A. Partner Up for role play. Take turns answering these questions, "What is the mission of a Christian?" and "Why do you believe that the miracles that were occurring during the New Testament should be happening in our lives today?"

B. Group Debrief: Re-gather as a group. What did you learn through your role play exercise as you practiced answering those questions? (2 A above)

3) **Discussion: A.** Where do you see a disconnect between your current lifestyle and the mission that Jesus has for you?

B. As you look at the activities that comprise our mission (REACH, PREACH, DEMONSTRATE, DISCIPLE) which of these elements are the strongest and weakest part of your current lifestyle?

C. How can we help one another grow stronger? What would help you the most? How can you help others?

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) For your own personal awareness and assessment… This week keep a "mission journal." Each day, make a list of the things that you did that day that connect with the mission that Jesus gave us.

2) At the end of the week, review your journal. What did you learn about yourself? What do you feel good about? Where do you see opportunities for growth?

3) Watch this video in which I share a message called, “Are you Walking Like a Child of God, or just getting religious?” here.

CHAPTER 2

THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE OF CHRIST- THE KEY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

"I didn't pray a prayer to get into heaven. I got right with God and heaven came into me."
Dan Mohler

I have a friend who works for the John Deere company as an engineer. He has a heart for orphans around the world and is using his influence within his company to help provide tractors and tractor implements to help feed orphans around the world. This is redemptive love in action in the marketplace.

But imagine the following scenario: a brand new John Deere tractor is delivered to a remote village in a third world county. The delivery person drops off the tractor and announces the good news of the gift of the tractor. They are told of the wonders that the tractor has done and of the benefits that would be experienced by those who converted from their hand tools and began to plow with the tractor. Considering his job complete, the delivery man returns home with many photos of his excellent work among the poor natives.

Meanwhile, the villagers have discovered a problem. Although they were eager to experience the power of this great machine, they soon realized that no one knew how to run a tractor. Some of them quickly abandoned the idea that the tractor had any power and went back to their traditional ways. Others remained convinced that this tractor was truly good news, so they decided that something must be done to keep hope alive in the village. So they strapped ropes to the tractor. With great pushes and tugs, they began to plow the field with the tractor.

As silly as this story may seem, many Christians are doing this today when they attempt to live the Christian life in their own power. You can be in the right field, seeking to accomplish the right task; but if you're seeking to do this in your own

power, it's like trying to push a tractor through the fields.

God's mission for our life doesn't happen merely by a believer deciding to become an activist with a "Jesus-agenda." It is more than just setting out to preach the gospel, win souls, make disciples and heal the sick. It's certainly not less, but it must be more. There is a divine dynamic that must source, shape and accompany these activities or it will accomplish nothing. As Jesus said, "*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* (Jn. 15:5)

The mission of God requires that we become co-workers with God Himself. There must be transformation of our lives that comes about because of an ongoing spirit-to-spirit relationship with the living God, not merely a change in our activities. Jesus is not sending us out to do work for Him apart from Him. Otherwise Jesus would have no need to tell his fully trained disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on High. When people embrace the mission of God without surrendering themselves completely to the Holy Spirit, we can do great damage to ourselves and others. God's mission for us requires that we learn to live our lives on earth by the life of another; the indwelling life of Jesus Christ. He first takes up residence within us so that as He sends us out to others, we are carrying His presence into the world! Hence the promise of Jesus *"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*(Matt. 28:20)

Only as we become participants in the life of God, not merely imitators of His behavior, is the Kingdom of God truly advanced. Our mission is not merely a new lifestyle. In its essence, it's the expression of a new life form. The life form of which I speak is the very highest form of life that exists. This life form is the only self-sustaining form of life there is, depending on nothing outside of itself. It is the source of all other lower forms of life. I say that it's new, but in fact this life form is not new at all. It's only new to us when we are infused with this higher form of life and become born again, born from above.

The life of which I speak is the divine nature, the very life form of God Himself, with eternal habits and unlearned instincts that are natural expressions flowing from the very "DNA" of the Spirit of God. This form of life is beyond ancient, older than even time itself. Although this life form interacts with this world, it's

not bound to the limits of matter, time, space, and light. It transcends all. God is *spirit*. Yet, this life has been revealed to us in time, space, and history in Jesus Christ.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 Jn. 1:1-3

God wants us to join into the fellowship of His life. When we are born again, we become partakers of this divine nature, infused with His Spirit. We receive eternal life. Our human nature has become the willing host to an altogether different life form. We partake of the divine nature of God in our humanity, the same life that was revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

In the ocean, there are fish and there are mammals such as dolphins and whales. Unlike fish, dolphins draw their breath from above and live by the breath they contain even as they swim in the ocean. Like them, once the breath of God's Spirit breathes into us, we contain Him and draw our life from His presence within us. Even though we are in the world, we are a species of humanity that contains life from above.

DIVINE DNA

Every life form has its own lifestyle. It's a matter of DNA. It's biology. Flowers grow and bloom as they are nourished by the sunlight, water, and nutrients in the soil. Eagles fly, build their nests up high, and eat fish, rabbits, and squirrels. Alligators swim, bathe in the sun, lay eggs, and eat whatever they want. You won't have any luck teaching a flower or an eagle to swim. You'll never get a flower to lay eggs, or an alligator to build its nest on the peak or a mountain. It's biology.

You can speak to a flower, but it won't listen. It won't understand what you are saying. Nor will it answer back. You can try to train an eagle to swim, but a duck will always do it better. Why? It's biology.

You can raise an alligator from birth, pet it and speak nicely to for its entire life. It will always look for a sunny, warm spot in the house and some water for bathing. And eventually, there will come a day when it will decide to see how you taste. It's a matter of biology. It's merely doing what comes naturally… for an alligator.



It's the same way with God. God is simply ruled by His own nature. He's got no rule book giving Him standards to live by. He's not trying to improve or develop His character. He's simply being Himself, doing what comes naturally to His own nature. God lives in perfect joy as the Father shares Himself with the Son in the Spirit. The Son shines forth the glory of all the Father's radiance as He shares Himself completely with the Father in the Holy Spirit. It's a perpetual flow of perfect fellowship overflowing in glory, joy, and creativity. This divine fellowship is not merely something God is doing. It's the expression of what God is. In short, "God is love." It's the most natural, unlearned instinct of the highest of all beings.

Most Christians go through long seasons of frustration because they never grasp the significance of this revelation. They do their best to imitate the virtues they see in Jesus Christ or to live up to what they think God expects them to do, never realizing that God doesn't want them merely to imitate Jesus Christ. He wants us to partake of Christ.

Some people have trained their pet dog to walk on two feet like a human being, to "speak", to "sing", and even to perform basic tasks. But no matter how good a trainer they may be, at the end of the day you will still have a dog imitating characteristics of a higher life form, a human being. Unfortunately, people fail to realize that when they set out to "apply Biblical truths to their lives" in order to live the Christian life, they are going to be about as successful as a dog living the "victorious human life" until the come to grips with the fact that the Christian life is the supernatural life that Jesus Christ lives in them. They may try to be loving, kind, patient, and holy. The problem is, they are the wrong life form!

God ***is*** love, patience, holiness, goodness, and power. It's simply His nature.

When we attempt to "do what would Jesus do" without faith in Jesus Christ who lives inside of us to live through us, then we get religious. Deep down inside we never feel like we measure up. So we strive in the flesh. When we are in this mindset, our "ministry" puts a yoke of religious pressure on others an fails to impart grace and life. Life becomes work and people become projects. Until we see that Jesus Christ lives inside of us, our striving to live for God and improve ourselves accomplish nothing. Our relationship with God lapses into religion. We hurt ourselves and others around us.

HOSTS OF DIVINE LIFE

We must see that human beings were created to contain and participate in God's life. We were created to be hosts of another life-form, the divine life of God. The Christian life is not primarily a change in our theology. It's changing our biology! It's a matter of receiving divine life… the highest of all life forms.

God created us empty so that He could fill us. He is the one who "*fills all in all.*" (Eph. 1:23) The perfect completion of our own nature is being filled with God Himself. God created us to be filled with perfect love, joy and peace so that God could make His image visible in creation through us. God never intended for human beings to live separately from Himself. God created humans to share Himself with them from within so that we could participate in the fellowship that He's been enjoying for all eternity.

Your own body is a wonderful parable of this reality! You can only live by taking air into yourself. But if you only take air in without exhaling, you'll pass out. You must release what you've taken in. When we breathe, we take in the air in which we live and that air becomes life inside of us. As we breathe in the air, oxygen goes into every cell of our body. In the same way, we were created not only to live in the presence of God, but to contain the presence of God. Christians are not only "in Christ" but we also have Christ in us. By faith, we can allow Him to fill us and then release that fullness to the people around us.[2]

I've been blessed with three beautiful children and one amazing wife. Anyone who has been pregnant or around someone who is pregnant is seeing another amazing picture of receiving life, nurturing it, and then releasing it in order to

live and let another live. Each time my wife Tina shared the news that she was pregnant, we waited with anticipation to see the evidence of the life that had been implanted within her. Yet we tended that life by faith. Soon we were seeing and hearing heartbeats by ultrasound. Then her tummy began to bulge. With each of our children, when it came time to give birth, Tina was ready. There is a definite shifting point where releasing life (i.e. giving birth) becomes a matter of life and death. So it is with us spiritually. We must receive and nurture the life of Christ within us. We must also release that life as it grows. It's the only way to live and to become a supply of spiritual life to others.

Like the womb of a woman is created to contain a baby, our souls have been created to contain God. Our minds were created to contain the mind of Christ and be filled with God's truth, not confusion and lies. Our hearts were never intended to have to search for love. They were created to contain and be filled to overflowing with God's love. Our wills must learn to operate in union with the Holy Spirit to carry out the will of God. You were created to contain God, to receive Him and be filled with Him so that His presence is released into this world through your every thought, emotion, and action! "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*!" (Col. 1:27).

Much like our physical heart, our soul only pumps out what we've first received. The heart pumps out whatever has filled it. As Jesus says, "*But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart.*" (Mt. 15:18) Our hearts are intended to be containers of the love and truth of God which He pours into us through the Holy Spirit.

When we become born again, through the gospel we come to realize that all the pain and lies that have ever been sewn into our lives through the failure of our parents or other people are complete lies. We can let go of the pain and lies we've picked up from our experiences so that we can embrace the truth of God that we see in Christ. All the love, healing, direction and worth our souls need to be completely whole and happy has been put inside of us when Christ came to dwell in us. The gospel restores us to the place of God's original purpose and created value for our lives. Power is released into our souls as we believe and receive all that He for us. Instead of religiously trying to live up to what we think are God's standards, we can learn to be our true selves living in the perfect love, joy, and peace of God that He supplies within our very being.

Children are easily damaged because of the failure of parents to instill a sense of worth, destiny, acceptance, and purpose in their children. What if, instead of coming into this world empty and getting our identity from our earthly parents, we were to simply have our heavenly Father's own unshakable, glorious image as our image? When God created human beings, His vision was a being in the physical creation that displayed His very own image, a being to make His invisible life visible. This was God's original purpose and design.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Gen 1:27

We were created as God's counterpart on the earth. Imagine being so completely permeated with the consciousness of the perfection and presence of God within yourself, being fully aware that you are manifesting God's perfect likeness in every aspect of your life. Imagine standing before God in all His glory and feeling no need to change or improve. This is what it's like to be in the image of God. It's hard to conceive that we were never created to have an independent "self-image" of our own. It's harder still to imagine the freedom we'd experience from all the pressure and pain trying to establish and improve our self-image. As humanity shares in God's divine life, we were created to exercise dominion over all the earth. We were created for this glorious purpose!

Why am I sharing this? Because ***this*** is what Adam abandoned when he surrendered to Satan's deception in the garden! This what Satan stole from God and us! This is what ***God lost***! God lost His image bearers! This is what we lost! We lost the image of God! To fulfill ***this original purpose*** is what moved God to send Jesus Christ to be our ransom! Recovering this was "the joy set before" the Son that compelled Him to endure the shame of the cross. God's love drives Him to fulfill this purpose. His life is totally given over to this mission! No one is forcing God to do this. It's in His DNA, the very substance of His nature. He is just being His most awesome glorious wonderful self so that we can become who we were always intended to be.

When Jesus Christ came to live among us, this is the mystery that was revealed. We saw God living in and through a man. We saw a man living in God. The Kingdom of God was no longer "over there." This glorious man, Jesus Christ, had become the portal through which God Himself had entered our realm, saving

us and destroying the works of the devil. Jesus was no mere messenger. He *was* the message, the Word made flesh. Every word and action revealed that the inwards parts of this man were dwelling inside of God Himself, drawing out from eternal realms what eyes have never seen and ears have not heard.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

Many people miss the significance of the life of Jesus Christ for them because they are confused about the dynamic between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. They believe Jesus Christ lived a supernatural life, but they wrongly assume that He lived a supernatural life because He was God. While it's true that Jesus Christ is divine, in order to redeem us, Jesus Christ set aside the operation of ALL of His divine power and privilege to live completely and exclusively as a human being (Phil. 2:6). So even though Jesus remained God the Son, the uncreated co-equal of the Father and Spirit, He willingly set aside His divine form to live like a man.

Think of it like this. Imagine that a newly elected president of the United States was elected and announced, "I am greatly troubled by the plight of the poor in this land. Therefore, as my first act as your president, to better understand this issue, I am going temporarily suspend the exercise of any of my powers and privileges as president in order to live among you as a homeless man for three months." During those three months, the same person would be both a homeless man and the president of the United States. That man with tattered clothes resting on a park bench with a backpack who smells funny and needs a shower is the president of the United States!

Even though the same person can BE the president and a homeless person at the same time, it's impossible for anyone to LIVE like a homeless person and the president of the United States at the same time. In order for the president of the USA to live like a homeless person, they must chose to "empty themselves" of exercising any of the power that goes with that office. They must give up Air Force One, secret service protection, tax payer paid expense accounts, living in the White House, and a staff of people to do whatever you tell them to do. The president must decide to live with only the clothes on his back and the wits in his head with no special powers or privileges.

Jesus Christ did something far greater. *"Though He (Jesus Christ) was in the*

*form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." (*Phil. 2:6-7) In Jesus Christ, God joined the human race. He added our human nature to His divinity in order to *live as a man* among men. To do this, He set aside the exercise of all the power and glory that were rightfully His as God to live among us *as a man*.

MAN AS GOD INTENDED

However, Jesus was a man as God intended, a man living in union with God. The human spirit of Jesus Christ was alive, filled with the very presence of His Father. Jesus lived as a true man, a complete man, a container of the living God. The Father was now relating to His Son only through the Son's humanity by indwelling Him through the Holy Spirit. The inwards parts of this man were connected with God Himself in ongoing, unseen fellowship. This oneness with the Father, this unbroken awareness and harmony with the Father that exploded in miraculous power was NOT a result of Jesus drawing upon His own divine power. It was the result of Jesus Christ living in the fellowship and power of His Father's divinity as a man.

> *But if it is **by the finger of God** that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.* Luke 11:20
>
> *For as the Father has life in himself, so **He has granted the Son also to have life in himself**.* John 5:26
>
> *If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that **the Father is in me and I am in the Father**.* John 10:37-38
>
> *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father**. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but **the Father who dwells in me does his works**. Believe me that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**, or else believe on account of the works themselves.* John 14:9-11

Jesus was simply manifesting through His humanity the revelation and power He was receiving through the ongoing, invisible fellowship He was experiencing with His Father. He was empowered and driven by God's lifestyle of love… the self-sacrificing, all that I am is for you, I came to serve not to be served kind of love; the "I'll never give up, never fail, and never forsake you" kind of love. It's what comes naturally to God. It's in the DNA. God's plan was to "hook us up" to that same divine nature so that He could do the same things in us that He did through Jesus.

YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE

If you feel like you are unable to "live the supernatural Christian life", take heart! The life that Jesus Christ lived was not His own. He too was hosting a different life form, the life of His Father, and He died to put ***that life*** inside of you and me.

> *Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but* ***if it dies, it bears much fruit****.* John 12:23-24

> ***In that day you will know*** *that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* John 14:20

> *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.* John 14:12

God created us to live in His fellowship and to make that fellowship visible on the earth. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes this possible for us. The church is suffering because we've almost universally made the purpose of Jesus Christ's death to rescue people from hell. We desperately need to reconnect the death of Jesus Christ with God's passion to recovering the human race to fulfill His original purpose of living in spiritual union with Him and living as His representatives on earth. Receiving eternal life is does not just mean "heaven when you die." When people are presented with Jesus mainly as a bridge to get out of hell and into heaven after you died, we remain disconnected from God's

main purpose. Receiving eternal life means you receive another life form NOW, a life form that is stronger than death, the very resurrection life of Jesus Christ that changes everything!

After becoming a follower of Jesus Christ, I lived in Alabama for several years. Alabama is known as the buckle of the "Bible Belt."[3] , because almost everyone is saved (or so they tell you). Unfortunately, precious few actually love Jesus and follow Him. Most people went to the front of the church during a revival service when they were young. They prayed a prayer to ask Jesus to take them to heaven. Some of them were even baptized. But as soon as they were finished jumping through these religious hoops, they went off to live the rest of their lives in unrepentant sin. It was all just a sham in hopes of escaping the consequences of their sin without any intention of leaving their sin to follow Jesus.

Is that why Jesus came, to get us out of hell even though we continue to live in our sin? Let's examine just a few verses to see the emphasis of Scripture when it talks about why Jesus Christ came. Is it mainly to get people out of hell, or to recover us to fulfill God's original purpose of living in union with Him?

What do the Scriptures say was Jesus' reason for coming?

1) **To serve us by giving Himself as a ransom for us**

   Mk. 10:45 *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

2) **To recover what God and humanity lost through the fall**

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

3) **To manifest the Father in the flesh**

   John 1:14-18 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth…For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

4) To give eternal life to all who believe by laying down His life

John 3:16-17 *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (i.e. the uncreated, divine life of God's own spirit within them). For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*

Jn. 6:33-35 *"For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world… I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."*

Jn. 10:10-11 …*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

5) To give Himself for us so that He could give Himself to us and live together with us inside of us.

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

1 Thes.5:9-10 *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.*

6) To reconcile us to God by dying and be raised for all that we might live unto God.

2 Cor.5:14-19 *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised…All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

7) To manifest the love of God by satisfying the offense against God by His

death so that we might live through Him.

> 1 Jn. 4:9-10 *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

8) To make us sons of God.

> Gal. 4:4-7 *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

God not only declares us to be righteous, but also makes us righteous by placing His own Spirit within us.

When Jesus came, He not only came with the life of God in Himself, He came to give us this life. He did not come to save us *in* our sins, but to save us from *our* sins and make us sons. His own self-giving love moved Him to step off the throne of heaven, to empty himself of glory and power that was rightly His as God. He came to partake of our human life so that we could become partakers of His divine nature. He was made sin to take it away so He could make us the very righteousness of God for eternity. He not only declares us to be righteous, but also makes us righteous by placing His own Spirit within us as He comes to dwell inside of us as our life, our image, and our love.

Through Christ we've been brought into the fellowship of God. The Father embraces us as His long lost sons and daughters. This means that God has given you the relationship that Jesus Christ has with Him, to enjoy as your relationship with God. "*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him* ***we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand****, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*" (Rom. 5:1-2) You've been redeemed, bought back, to be adopted to stand in the very place of a son of God and filled with the Spirit of the Son. The Father couldn't be more pleased!

The Son and Spirit are thrilled as well. The Son finally has His bride, perfect counterpart, a completer. The Holy Spirit is no longer a “disembodied spirit”, no longer homeless, but has a place to dwell on the earth and a body through which to express Himself. God’s appointed earth-rulers have been rescued from their deceitful kidnapper. God’s Kingdom and man’s dominion have been reunited to establish God’s original order on the earth once again.

The presence of God’s Spirit within us now compels us to reconcile men to God, to bring everyone into the destiny for which they were created. We live on the mission of God because the God who dwells within us is on a mission to set prisoners free, so that His captive sons and daughters may come home. The same one who loved me and gave Himself for me, now lives and loves through me giving Himself up for others. So in the same way that it is impossible to fulfill the mission of God without living in union with God, it is equally true that we cannot live in union with God without a lifestyle of love on mission to reconcile all people to God.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE RECOVERED

Long before there was a need for any mission whatsoever, before indeed there was anything else at all, the love that pulsated between the Father, Son and Spirit chose to include us in their fellowship of love as *an equal*, as a son. “In love He predestined us for adoption *as sons* through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:4) Our mission is the spontaneous overflow, a natural expression of the love of God pulsating in the new nature we receive when we are born again in this fallen world. It’s the lifestyle Spirit-filled people.

Redeeming, sacrificial, life-giving love is what happens spontaneously when the Spirit of God is allowed to express His eternal lifestyle through His people in a fallen world of loved yet lost sinners. Only as God’s children allow God to instill His divine mindsets and express His own nature in us, can we fulfill God’s mission in this world. We must have faith not merely in a God out there in heaven, but the indwelling Lord living within us and allow Him to be Himself in us and through us. As He becomes the source of our living, our life becomes the expression of His mission. A life on mission with God is the result of living union with God. Living union with God is the root. A life on mission is the fruit.

Dear Christian, when you were "born again", the very same life that was in Jesus Christ, the life that raised Christ from the dead, the life that pours out from the Lamb of God on the throne came into your spirit. God didn't make you come alive spiritually with the power of electricity or new chemicals or even just new ideas. "*God made you alive together **with Christ***" (Eph. 2:5). Christ doesn't just give you life. "Christ ***is*** your life" (Col. 3:2).

WHAT DOES GOD GET OUT OF THIS?

Have you ever stepped back and wondered, what does God get out of this? After all, He is going through an awful lot of trouble for us. Why is God so passionate about bringing us into our destiny as sons of God? It's a good question with an encouraging answer.

I remember coming home from the hospital with our first child and realizing how sharing a child had affected my relationship with my wife. One evening, I looked into Tina's eyes, trying to find words to tell her what I was feeling. I said something like this, "Before we ever had a child, I loved you completely. I couldn't have loved you any more than I already did. But now that we have a child together, I realize our relationship has changed. I feel like my love for you has enlarged. It's not that I love you more. Our love has taken on a whole new dimension. I used to love you only as my wife. Now I love you as my wife and the mother of my child." Each of our children exists because of our love for one another, and each one of them enlarged the love we have for one another.

In much the same way, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are expressing and enlarging their love in us. Each of us exists because of the love of God, the love that flows between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through His own suffering, the Son is able to demonstrate His own love for the Father and present the Father multitudes of adopted children who are just like Him (He knows what kinds of gifts the Father likes). The Father gets the joy of giving us as a bride to His Son. We are the love gift of the Father to the Son, a partner that corresponds to His own glorious nature and will bear His image even as the Son bears the Father's image. And the Father and the Son have the pleasure of presenting the Holy Spirit with a temple, a place to dwell in glory upon the earth. This is amazing!

Every child wants to grow up in the security of a stable home where the father and mother love one another. No matter what our home was like on earth, we

have been brought into the most stable home of all, the Father's house. We are kept and nurtured in the strongest of all loves, the love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of you as the Father's gift to Him, "*All that **the Father gives** me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out… And this is the will of him who sent me, that I lose nothing of **all that He has given me**, but raise it up on the last day*." John 6:37,39

And what is the Son planning to do with this wonderful gift He has received from the Father? "*Then comes the end, when he(Jesus Christ) **delivers the kingdom to God the Father** after destroying every rule and every authority and power."* (1 Cor.15:24) At the very end of the ages, at the conclusion of His reign in glory on the earth, Jesus Christ will present the Kingdom as a gift to His Father. I don't pretend to understand everything this means, but I know it's going to be good for us! As it says "*You have been saved…so **that in the coming ages** he might show the **immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us** in Christ Jesus.*" (Eph 2:7) We've only begun to experience the riches of God's grace!

Before creation, God was the ALL. Creation was intended to be filled with the glory of God, but it "broke lose" empty, dark and dead, like a body with no spirit. Through Christ, God destroyed death, darkness, and evil. The old is gone! The new creation has come in Christ. God was the ALL. Now, in the new creation God is the all IN ALL. There is no more separation with you "down here" and God "out there." God has moved inside of your very being to become one with you. You are His glorious prize on the earth for all eternity. You contain Him on earth. Jesus Christ contains you in heaven. He fills you and expresses Himself through you on the earth. You dwell inside of Jesus Christ and express yourself through Him in the heavens. We are in Christ. He is in us. He is no longer merely the ALL. We are now "the fullness of him who fills all in all." (Eph. 1:23)

I've spent some time with a few people who are paralyzed from the neck down. They have perfectly normal brain function but no body to express all that's in their heart to do. They have so much in them, but they are temporarily bound in a body that isn't fully functional. How they long for their bodies to be restored to full function so that they can do everything that is in their hearts. They long for a means for expressing the "fullness" that is in them.

We are God's fullness. (Eph. 1:23) We, born-again believers, are the only means that God has of expressing His glorious love on the earth. He has so much on His heart that He wants to do on the earth. There are so many hurting people that He longs to heal, so many widows and orphans He longs to care for, so many captives He longs to free. But we are God's fullness, His only means of revealing Himself personally on the earth today. We are quite a treasure to God, and we should honor the value He places upon us by allowing ourselves to become His full expression.

Jesus Christ has given Himself to you as your life, your love, your identity, even your very nature. You can stop searching in the world to find life for your soul. You can stop looking to other people to get the love you need and start pouring out the love of God without needing anything from them in return. You can stop worrying about how others perceive you. Stop evaluating yourself to determine what God can or can't do through you. Get your eyes off of you and fix your eyes on Him. Christ is your identity! The more you live in this reality, the more solid, whole, and powerful your spiritual impact becomes. People see Jesus in you… and that's a good thing. Start drawing out from the Spirit of God into you all that you see in Christ.

PUT ON CHRIST

You need to picture yourself differently. When you walk around, that's no longer you walking around. That's Jesus walking around in your body, speaking through your words, and touching people through your life. You are His body. He is your spirit. I like to say, "This isn't me. This is Jesus wearing His Andy suit!"

This works both ways. When you go before the Father, how do you picture this in your mind? Many people see themselves as appearing before the throne of God with Jesus Christ seated beside the Father. I'd like to suggest that you put on your "Jesus suit." Go before the Father "in Christ."

You may be wondering, "How do I do that?" An illustration from the Bible has really helped me understand how to go to the Father inside of Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 27, Jacob did something deceitful. Jacob was the son that God had chosen to receive the covenant blessings from his father Isaac. But in his old age,

with his eyesight failing, Isaac announced that he intended to give his blessing to Esau, the firstborn favorite, after Esau went hunting and brought him some of his favorite wild-game stew. So Jacob came up with a plan to deceive his father, Isaac. What would he do? Jacob decided to get blessed by going to the father *inside of Esau*.

Jacob and his mother Rachel slaughtered some goats to make Isaac some stew, but also to cover Jacob with "Esau." Esau was very hairy, so Jacob put the goat hair on his hands and his neck, so that when his father touched him, he touched "Esau." Jacob put on one of Esau's smelly garments. He also took the father Esau's stew.

> *Then Isaac said to Jacob, "**Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son** Esau or not." So Jacob **went near** to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. **So he blessed him**. He said, "Are you **really my son** Esau?" He answered, "I am." Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of **my son's game** and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "**Come near and kiss me, my son**." So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed! May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. **Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you.** Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"* Gen 27:21-29

Jacob deceived his father and got his father's blessing. That's not good. That's illegal. But that's also not the point. We don't imitate that. But Jacob *did* get the blessing of the first-born *because he went to his father **in the firstborn as the first born***. When his father asked, "Are you the first born?" Jacob answered "Yes! It's me" When the father said, "Come close that I may kiss you!" Jacob stepped forward into the father's embrace. Jacob covered himself in the firstborn and walked into his father's embrace. The hands of the first born, the neck of the first born, the fragrance of the first born, the works of the first born… Jacob

chose to take this as his identity before the father. What Jacob did illegally by deception we get to do legally! That's the point.

When you go before the Father, you don't need to deceive Him! The Father *invites you* to come before Him clothed in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has justified you! It's God's idea that you would come before Him clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Step into His place of privilege and acceptance as the Son of God. Go ahead! The Father's adopted you *as a son!* Do you have needs? No problem. You're an heir of God, a co-heir of Jesus Christ. Everything that belongs to the first born belongs to you too, because you are *in Him*.

Do you feel guilty, ashamed, fearful, or rejected? You need to come to God in Christ. Step out of guilt. Step out of yourself and step into Him and go to the Father in Him. Let the Father pull you close in His embrace. Allow your heart to receive the very same love from the Father that Jesus Christ Himself has been enjoying for all eternity. Feel what it's like to be embraced by the Father *like His own Son*. That's what you are now. Don't pull away because you don't think you deserve it. You don't! You don't have to! It was "deserved for you" by Jesus Christ. This is God's grace. Get used to it. This is your new home… in Christ.

"For our sake God made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21) Jesus Christ willingly "wore" your sin before the Father so that you can "wear Him" before the Father. Because as we truly wear Christ in heaven, He wears us on earth. This is God's idea!

COME TO THE FATHER IN THE SON

Look carefully at these Scriptures that talk about relating to God "in Christ." As you do, allow yourself to take these things to heart:

1) **We enter the Father's presence by entering into Christ.**

Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9

2) **We come to the Father by taking Jesus Christ as our way, truth, and life.**

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known

my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." John14:6-7

3) We willingly choose to live inside of Jesus Christ and He lives in us and bears the fruit of His life through us.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5

4) We have the same standing before God as Jesus Christ by grace.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5:1-2

5) We are already on the throne of God inside of Jesus Christ.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:4-7

6) We have been called into the Godhead to experience the fellowship of the Son.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Cor. 1:9

7) We have access to God in the Spirit as we come to the Father through Jesus Christ.

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Eph. 2:18

8) We are to present ourselves to God in resurrection life in union with Jesus Christ.

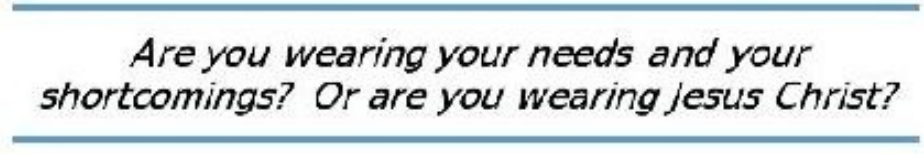
So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ

Jesus…Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. Rom. 6:11-13

9) We have confident access to God in Jesus Christ.

*This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord**, in whom** we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.* Eph. 3:11-12

10) We received Jesus Christ so we can walk in Jesus Christ.



As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Col. 2:6-7

Brothers and sisters, present yourself alive to God in union with Jesus Christ and surrender your life on the earth to God as perpetual worship to Him. Don't believe your feelings when they contradict the truth. Don't believe your own perceptions, understanding, or analysis either. The very core of the enemy's deception is to exalt our own experiences and perceptions above the truth of God. Only what you've received from Jesus Christ is truth. Everything else is deception. Bring your entire inner person into line with the life of Jesus Christ dwelling in your Spirit using the Word of God as your guide. The same Holy Spirit who wrote the Scriptures is leading you into all truth. The Word made flesh now dwells in your flesh becoming the living Word inside of you. Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you!

As we enter into the fellowship of God in the Spirit by putting on Christ Jesus in the inner man, the Spirit of God is released in our lives. Rivers of living water are unleashed to wash through us, removing lies, darkness, and unforgiveness. Inner brokenness is healed. Demons flee like junkies running out of the back door of a crack-house when the rightful owner returns to occupy the house and begin repairs. We become the dwelling place of God indeed.

These Holy Spirit rivers don't start or stop inside of us. They've been flowing in and between the Father and the Son for all eternity. The rivers are ever flowing. They have no beginning, but they find their origin in God.

> *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal,* ***flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb*** *through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."* Rev. 22:1-2

> *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit…"* John7:37-38

The Rivers are the Holy Spirit who gives life, God's life. This is the very same Spirit that was inside of Jesus Christ, the river that flows out from the throne of God. The rivers burst forth inside of you and flow out from our innermost being, our belly, the *core of our being*. These rivers flow out- in praise and thanksgiving to God, in words of encouragement, in gifts of the Holy Spirit, in generosity, in all the fruit of love, in miraculous healing and deliverance, in bold proclamation of the truth and more.

The Christian life is supernatural. It isn't "worked up." It's received and released. It flows in and flows out. We aren't the source of it. We are channels of endless rivers of God's Spirit. Open up your innermost being to the Highest of all beings- God Himself. Let Him fill you, flood you, overwhelm you. Then release what God puts inside of you. Let His life flow out from you to the neighbors and the nations!

> *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you*

have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. Jn 17:3, 17-26

Before this book ends, you will learn much more about how to cultivate your life in God and to unleash the power of this life to others! In the next chapter, we'll dig deeper into the way in which God establishes in a lifestyle of fellowship with Him as the foundation for advancing His Kingdom.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) DECLARATIONS: As a group, take turns using the 10 statements and Scriptures regarding our union with Jesus Christ and turn them into prayer and confessions of faith. One person will lead, the others will repeat what the leader says. Take each of these truths. Use the Scriptures as a launching pad and let your heart soar!

For example, # 1 says

1) We enter the Father's presence by entering into Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9

Leader- Father I enter your presence (group repeats) By entering into Jesus Christ (group repeats) He is my door (group repeats) I step into Him and enter into Your presence (group repeats) I am saved because I am in Christ (group repeats) I am wearing His righteousness (group repeats) He wore my sins (group repeats) I am inside of Jesus Christ and He is inside of Me (group repeats) I find nourishment for my soul in the Father's presence (group repeats).

2) GROUP ACTIVITY:

1. As a group, list as many "spiritual blessings" as you can think of. Write them down as people brainstorm the blessings they remember.

2. **DECLARATIONS:** Now, with your list in front of you, as a group, take time to declare that these blessings are yours in Christ and to thank God.

3) DISCUSSION:

1. How does your lifestyle "fit" and how does it conflict with your new divine nature?
2. What adjustments can you make in your lifestyle to make room for more "divine LIFE"?

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) A. Every day for the next month (and the rest of your life), set aside some time speak to God from inside of Jesus Christ. Enjoy the relationship that Father has with Jesus Christ as YOUR relationship. Dedicate this time without speaking to God about any of your needs, failures, or things you want His help with. Simply be with God and enjoy the Father's relationship with the Son as your relationship. Spend enough time to allow your soul to "absorb" this perspective. Use the Scriptures related to life in Christ as a spring board for these times.

b. Stop letting guilt, worry, and shame hold you back from the living in the Father's embrace. Stop chasing your satisfaction and security in the stuff you have and eyes of other people.

c. Never stop doing 1A and 1B.

2) Watch this video message that will reinforce what it means to fellowship with God In Christ.

CHAPTER 3

LET'S GET WITH IT

"The finished work of Christ becomes manifest when a man becomes love and takes on the nature of God, not when he prays a prayer to go to heaven."
Dan Mohler

I'm not sure if it's because I'm a man or an American. Maybe it's got something to do with the fact that I'm a firstborn, but I have a strong preference for straight-forward communication. When my wife and I got married, little did I realize that I had just embarked on an exciting exploration into the world of indirect communication and intuitive assumptions.

My wife had a wonderful habit of putting objects in certain places in hopes that I would decode her secret desires. For example, after we had been married several months, it came time to complete our very first tax return. One day, out of nowhere, this pile of tax documents wound up on the middle of my desk. It was really in my way, so I put it back out on the counter. After a couple of weeks of transferring the pile back and forth, Tina asked me a question, "Andy, in your family, who did the taxes?" I said, "My mom." Tina smiled and said, "In my family, my dad did the taxes." Then it began to dawn on me that this pile of tax forms that kept winding up on my desk was being placed there on purpose by my wife in hopes that I would do the taxes.

It took me a while to realize that when Tina said something like, "The grass in the front yard is getting a little high," what she was actually saying was, "Would you mow the grass today, or do you want me to hire a boy from the neighborhood?" No one told me that when your wife piles your dirty jeans and socks in the middle of the bedroom doorway, you're not supposed to just step over them and wonder why she put them there instead of in the laundry basket. To this day, in honor of my efforts at learning this secret art of intuitive communication, Tina affectionately calls me "Mr. Intuitive."

The Father has a way of communicating that involves a bit of a learning curve, too. The Father's primary way of revealing the deepest parts of Himself are hidden from most; but to those who come to understand His ways, a boundless universe of revelation and fellowship is opened. God's primary way of making Himself known is this: He ***indwells***. From the inside, God supplies Himself as the source of life, love, wisdom, and power. He gives Himself to be the ALL of another. The Father has always been an indweller. Self-revelation by indwelling is the way of the Father.

When I travel overseas, I like to keep in touch with my family as best as I can. One of our favorite ways to communicate is by videoconferencing using a program such as Skype. When we have a video conference, even though I am thousands of miles away, I'm able to "indwell" the computer which enables the computer to display my image. I can make myself known by indwelling the computer, in a way.

The Father, however, doesn't merely transmit His image and voice through some wires in a computer. He communicates His entire self by personally dwelling inside of the Son through the Holy Spirit.

This eternal self-revelation of the Father has always existed within God. It's a complete self-revelation. In fact, the Father has so completely revealed Himself, this self-revelation is a completely whole person. This person is God the Son, the very image of the Father, the glory of the Father unveiled and on full display. This person is also known as "the Word." This Word is not mere talking. This is THE Word, the eternal self-disclosure of the Father.

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

> *He (Jesus Christ) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature*. Heb. 1:3

The Son is the way of the Father, the truth of the Father, the very Life of the Father. The Father's way of revealing Himself is the Son. The Father indwells the Son. The Son reveals the Father. They indwell one another through the Spirit

they share, who Himself is a complete person, serving as the perfect personal conduit of the indwelling fellowship of the Father and Son. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit- one eternal being of three interconnected, inseparable persons, connected in an unbreakable fellowship of completely “others centered” love.



The Father does everything for the Son and through the Son. The Son manifests the Father and lives unto the Father. They do this by the Spirit they share. Never a thought of competition, a selfish assertion, or interpersonal conflict has ever arisen among them. They are a perfect, eternal, interdependent union of distinct yet inseparable persons, completely and eternally given over to one another, sharing one life, one mind, one heart, one joy, and one existence beyond all bounds of space and time. Truly, “God is love”, eternal indwelling love.

One of my favorite examples that illustrates just a fraction of this kind of love is the love I saw in my wife when our babies were newborns. These little lives were so needy. They were completely dependent. Every few hours, they needed to nurse; and since Tina’s breasts were the only ones that were able to produce milk, she got the honor of allowing our babies to draw their nourishment from her. Tina was no longer her own person. She embraced our children and allowed herself to become their source of life. As she gave herself to our children, her life became their strength. This is similar to the way in which the Father and Son give themselves to one another through the Holy Spirit.

> *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is in the Father's bosom, He has made him known.* John 1:18

> *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John 1:14

THE CULTURE OF HEAVEN COMES TO EARTH

The church of the New Testament found its origins in the bosom of a man who had lived for eternity in the bosom of His Father. The culture of the Father, Son and Spirit came to planet earth in the man Christ Jesus, and it’s glorious! It’s full

of grace, empowering favor… thanks be to God! It's filled with truth, complete honesty! It's a place that "being with" gives life to your soul.

Halleluiah! Finally, we've found the love that we've always craved! Our hearts are finally home in God! We've entered into a glorious fellowship of true and total self-giving that is pure, an endless embrace that makes us come alive on the inside! It's a culture pulsating with glory, joy, creativity, mutual self-deference and honor, complete self-disclosure received with perfect delight, and so much more! The eternal delights that have been secretly known in this divine fellowship are now being unleashed into the hearts of those who have been called into this fellowship.

And oh yes, this is a culture of fellowship! It's a culture of being *with* one another. Face to face. Heart to heart. Life is exchanged there. Love is poured out and received. Boundaries between my joy and yours have been erased. Life is shared, surrendered, and treasured in never-ending self-giving love.

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with God**, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning **with God**.* John 1:1-2

Being together with God, face to face, heart to heart is all the Son has ever known. It was the culture of heaven, to be face to face, together. The Son living inside the Father, and the Father living inside the Son… you can't get anymore "with" one another than to that. Being "with God" was the Son's way of life. This was also the Son's way of ministry. To the Son, ministry was simply bringing more people into the circle of those who are with the Father.

> *And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be **with him** and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.* Mark 3:14-15

"WITH JESUS" UNIVERSITY

Jesus invited twelve to be *with Him*. For somewhere between three and four years, the apostles lived with Jesus. Living with Jesus was their training, for they knew that they were going to be sent out to do what He was doing. Besides two

short “test runs”, when Jesus sent them out to villages in Israel, they had no ministry responsibilities. Jesus carried the ministry responsibilities on His own shoulders. They were simply to live with Him.

Living with Jesus while He ran like a Holy Ghost freight train through Israel was challenging, but sometimes the greatest challenge was living with one another. The longer they walked with Jesus together, the more they seemed to fight about “who’s the greatest.” Jesus has a way of calling people to follow Him that are pretty rough around the edges. (If you are lucky, you may meet one or two of them as you follow Jesus.) While Jesus is surrendering Himself to give life to others, they are fighting about who has more say, and who’s going to have the highest rank in the Kingdom!

Jesus was the leader, the teacher who lived among them “as one who serves.” They watched Him live. They heard Him pray. They listened to every conversation. They saw Him walk into town after town and leave a wake of healing, forgiveness, and compassion where there had been only guilt, sickness, and despair. They watched every single miracle; miracles that were so plentiful that one of them would later say, *“were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”* John 21:25

Jesus was a living encounter with God! Bringing people to be with Him was His way of training. God’s “method” of ministry is a Person filled with Himself!

> *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.* John 14:7-9

This was their training, to live together with Jesus. There was a lot to learn, but no books to read. They learned to “read Jesus.” There were no classes to attend, but every day was a new test, tests not of knowledge, but tests of courage, of faith, of integrity, and commitment. There were no diplomas to hang on the wall for others to see, only scars from the cross you had to pick up and carry every

day, until the day came when they nailed you to it. Only then would you graduate to hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” (Matt. 25:21,23)

GETTING DISCIPLED FROM THE INSIDE

These years were not only forming their own spiritual foundation. This experience was also shaping the culture of the church. For these apostles, church-life was simply what they had been doing with Jesus, living together with Jesus on the mission of the Kingdom! The only thing that had changed was that now He had moved inside of each one of them. The church that the apostles knew would forever be a bunch of “rough-around-the-edges” disciples learning to love one another as they follow Jesus Christ together and advanced the Kingdom of God together… this was church!

They tended to get kicked out of synagogues, but open fields, homes, hillsides, seashores are fine with Jesus and the gang. To them, church was never a series of religious meetings, prepackaged with bulletins and presided over by clergy. They had no buildings of their own to construct or to maintain. Nor was this a series of once a week gatherings with lights-camera-action worship, put on smiles, suit-and-tie handshakes from strangers, presided over by a professional cleric who had been left alone to study his books all week. No! This was life in the open with Jesus and the guys, all of whom saw all of your best and worst moments… and stood with you through them all because they saw Jesus standing with you.

Not only was this church, this was disciple-making! When the resurrected Jesus told these men, who had lived with Him for the past few years, to “Go! Make disciples” everyone knew what Jesus meant. No one had to ask, “Good teacher, how do we make disciples?” They knew. God’s method is a Man filled-with Himself, Jesus Christ. God’s method is being “with Him.”

To be a disciple is to become that very thing, people who are filled with God, just like Jesus. Following Jesus means that our lives are becoming conduits for others to encounter God. People can experience God in the words we speak, the things we do, the way we handle problems, and the way we treat people. We embrace the calling of God for people to see Him and hear Him through us as we

see people through God's eyes and treat them according to the value He's placed on them at the cross.

> *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died… From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh…All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:14-18*

> *That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and* ***indeed our fellowship IS with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*** 1 Jn. 1:3

BEYOND INSTRUCTIONS FROM ON HIGH

I love the fact that the God of the Bible did not just send us a book. He's not the distant God of Islam who sends people a book of commands for us to obey. We need far more from God than a list of rules to live by. The true God, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ came to dwell among us. His name is Emmanuel, God with us! The Bible brings us into that revelation. God's heart is to establish relationship *with us.*

The culture of the church is much different today than when it was established by Jesus and the apostles. Instead doing life in the trenches on Kingdom mission together, we take classes, attend worship services, and participate in programs. All the while we remain largely disconnected from one another and ministry remains disconnected from our everyday life.

The goal of a disciple of Jesus Christ is to become a person filled with God.

As we learn walk in fullness of Jesus Christ, we must also recover the practice of making disciples. Most seminaries never really trained leaders for ministry in the trenches.[4] We learned how to study the Bible, to preach sermons, to run committee meetings, and to structure organizations for growth. We learned lots of Biblical and ministry concepts, many of which were quite good. But we

lacked real life examples and personal input from men and women of God who took us under their wings to show us how they release the fullness of Jesus Christ in everyday circumstances. Most seminaries are not training future leaders how to pour out God's grace in situations that don't come pre-planned with an order of service and a microphone. Books and lectures can only supplement, never replace, on-the-job training with hands-on mentoring from godly men and women.

Since we were trained for ministry in academic and organizational environments, if we aren't careful, we can end up approaching the church as an organization, ministry as a profession, and people as resources to carry out our vision. If we do, we will end up managing people in the flesh instead of connecting with them in a way that only Jesus makes possible. This puts us in constant danger of making the same mistake as the apostles who were failing to love and serve one another because they wanted to manage one another by getting a higher rank. They wanted to be the greatest, to have a title that gave them the right to have other people do what they say. As we make disciples, Jesus hands us a towel (the same towel He had just used to wash our feet) and tells us to love and serve one another as we learn to follow Him.

Perhaps we are seeing leaders fall because we're following the world's pattern of being Christian C.E.O.s instead of Jesus' pattern of being a man of God on mission who is living life with a team of future leaders. Paul's encouragement to a young church leader was, "*So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, **along with those** who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*" (2Tim. 2:22) Ministers and leaders for the body of Christ must recover the importance of making disciples by "being with" as we live a lifestyle of advancing the Kingdom of God. Not only would young leaders in the body of Christ be greatly helped, but ministers themselves would find a greater grace for their own lives as well.

I find it much easier to preach a great sermon than to live it out. It's much easier to tell people what God wants them to do than to provide them a real-life example and help them grow up into Christ. But having relationships with other believers for the sake of making disciples keeps me honest and real.

A lot of men become better people when they have their first child. Before they

become a father, they are just big boys enjoying a little more money and freedom to goof around. Then their first baby arrives, and they realize a sense of responsibility because of the love they have for this little life that depends upon them to be their leader, protector, and example. As men embrace this responsibility, they become a much better version of themselves. They begin to spend their time, their money more wisely. They adjust their character because they realize the influence their life has on someone else. Their priorities change.

The same thing happens with us spiritually as we embrace a lifestyle of disciple-making. Although relationships require time, effort, and self-sacrifice, we always receive grace when we do it for Jesus' sake. We receive the grace of Jesus that's needed to be a Kingdom agent in every relationship.

> *"Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."* (Luke 9:48)

Many times preachers who stumble into sins that scandalize the church have allowed themselves to hide behind their speaking gifts, Bible knowledge, important titles, and office doors for far too long. If they began to become an example of connecting with people in non-religious settings as a disciple-maker, the culture of the church would have made it very difficult for their spiritual decline that led to such an event to go undetected and unresolved.

The culture of heaven always creates a lifestyle of Kingdom mission with supportive relationships giving hands-on, real life experience.

C.E.O. or DISCIPLEMAKER?

The apostle Paul, who never walked with Jesus in the flesh, nonetheless learned and embraced God's heart. Paul was discipled by the indwelling Lord Jesus in the context of the body of Christ. Look at what the following Scriptures show us about how Paul approached ministry. Did he become a "Christian C.E.O."? Or did he become a man of God who lived with people so he can help them live with God? How do we see God's mindset towards ministry in his life? We see:

1) **God's heart of affection compels us to share the gospel and our lives with others.**

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 1 Thes.2:8

2) **Seeing Christ living in people is a necessary addition to the proclamation of the truth to accelerate our growth in Christ.**

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 1 Cor. 4:15-17

3) **God's heart living in us can be the catalyst for God to do the same thing in other people.**

But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 2 Cor.8:16

I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? 2 Cor.12:18

4) **Although hands-on, personal mentoring requires a greater investment, it is God's way to raise up quality leaders for the body of Christ. It's especially important for those engaging in public ministry.**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus… To Timothy, my beloved child. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 2 Tim. 1:1-6

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Tim.2:2

5) **Relationships in the body of Christ allow us to receive and to**

share what is necessary to strengthen one another with what we've received from God.

…holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together ***through its joints and ligaments****, grows with a growth that is from God. Col. 2:19*

In relationships we can ask questions and get answers. Others can see where they can help us move forward, even when we didn't realize we needed help. Men and women of God become the pictures that help us understand the Word to encourage us to aspire to live in all the fullness of Jesus Christ. Other people can help us get past barriers in our lives.

DYING FOR DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Just recently I spent a couple of days with a dear brother. He had spent the past couple of years listening to some of the best teaching I've come across in the body of Christ on walking in the fullness of Jesus and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit. He was convinced in his mind about His union with Christ and that he should be laying hands on the sick, but he wasn't. He said, "I'm dying on the inside because I know I should be doing this, but I'm not!" He was very frustrated at himself and discouraged.

We had the opportunity to spend a couple of days together. I took him out on the streets with me and showed him how I ministered to strangers in public. I showed him how I interacted with strangers and started conversations, how I moved the conversations towards ministry, and how to handle different sorts of situations. He was with me. He asked me questions about what I was doing. Then I began to involve him as he with me. I would start the conversation, turn the conversation towards ministry, then say, "Well I'm so glad I asked you about your cane! God uses my friend here to heal the sick. You should let him pray for you, okay?" Then he would step in and take over the ministry from there. Afterwards, we would talk about how things went.

Before long, our brother in Christ had overcome his fear of rejection and failure. He stepped across the line and was approaching people on his own and ministering to them and seeing miracles without me even involved. Sometimes when we are learning to ride a bike we need someone to put a hand on the back

of our seat who will run with us a while when we are learning to ride a bike. After a short while, they can stop and let us ride on!

Even a child can do it! You can watch me activate children at a Christian kids camp and watch God do ten miracles in less than one minute through children who have never seen God do a miracle before here.

THE RETURN TO HANDS-ON COACHING

I have spent, and continue to spend, a great deal of time in ministry working hands on with people who want practical help in walking in the fullness of Jesus Christ. I've gone off the beaten path of most ministries that are anchored to a pulpit in order to equip believers to minister on the streets, in the coffee shops, around kitchen tables, and on the living room couches of the world. (Along the way, I've even found myself in a pulpit or two.) As a result of a great deal of ministry in the trenches, I've learned a few things to help people become effective ministers in the power of God's Kingdom. I've also observed how a lot of well-intentioned ministry falls short of equipping believers to actually walk in the power of the Spirit of God. I've gone through significant periods of frustration trying to get help in some areas of ministry because some ministers were trying to equip me in their gifts, instead of using their gifts to equip me to function in the fullness of Jesus Christ.

Much of what is intended to build up the body unintentionally shuts people down. I've observed that many believers are under the weight of years of pulpit ministry that has convinced them that they should be experiencing and doing many things that are in fact available to them. However, since these things aren't happening in their lives, they are very discouraged and frustrated. They believe they should be living for God, making a difference in the world, and seeing His power at work in their lives, but they need more than just being told what to do. *They must be shown how*. They desperately need someone who will take them under their wings and help them overcome their hang-ups and not just beat them down with more expectations. Jesus once rebuked the religious leaders of His day saying, "*you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers*." (Luke 11:46) Have we made the same mistake by neglecting to *be with* the people we are leading?

Since nothing seems to be working, even for sincere and godly people, eventually they often struggle to reconcile their own level of living with what they've been hoping to experience. Many just sink down into empty affirmations while their heart gets buried in disillusionment. "Oh, I believe in healing brother," is something I hear often. "Really. That's great. Tell me then, how many people have you seen healed lately?" (Insert cricket chirps, eyes darting, shuffling feet with a big gulp and a blush.) By the way, I don't ask these questions to embarrass anyone. I just hope I get to hear some cool testimonies… but alas, often I don't hear anything except back tracking.

Others resolve not to succumb to lower expectations than the Word of God will allow. They realize that the Word of God points to the power of God. Since they don't see any power in their lives, they begin to cry out to God for the Holy Spirit's power, sometimes even day and night. They don't realize that they only need to learn how to tap in to what they already have! I've been amazed to see God's people step right into the revival they've been waiting for when they get a full gospel with some practical equipping that includes hands-on experience to get them activated.

For the most part, most ministers are not much better off because they feel like their ministry isn't effective. They've preached their hearts out, and still people sit in the pews unmoved, unchanged, and numb. What are leaders in the body of Christ to do? Unfortunately most church leaders are so tied up with "churchianity" it's difficult for them to take a relational approach towards disciple-making. They pour their time into administrating programs and building the organization because this is what they've been hired to do, not realizing that they are leading the church by example to continue to neglect our primary mission of making disciples. For that, we must come out of our offices, out of our buildings, and out of our programs and spend time with people. This is more than just men's group or a women's group, or a small group Bible study. This means taking people out of their comfort zone and giving them loving support and hands-on training as you advance the Kingdom together.

It may not be the prudent thing to immediately abandon everything we are currently doing in the church, but it is certainly time to reexamine ourselves. We must set some things aside in order to make room in our lives to make

discipleship a primary activity and driving force in the lifestyle of the church once again, especially as leaders. We must do whatever it takes to make true disciple-making the primary thrust of our lives.

I recently returned from a three week ministry in an African country that is over 90% Muslim. During the first week, I preached to a group of 25 or so church leaders. They were so excited as they learned from the Word about their union with Christ and His power at work in them and through them. I also coached them as they ministered to one another and saw miracles. It was exciting. But we didn't stop there.

I spent the remainder of my time visiting them in their villages. We started off in the morning in their church. I shared briefly and had the people who were sick to come forward to be healed. But I was not the primary person ministering healing. I had their own church leaders lay hands and heal them. I coached the church leaders and in most places we saw everyone or nearly everyone instantly healed. So I made it a point to be sure the people understood that it is God's will do this through anyone who believes, which includes their own church leaders and them! We didn't stop there.

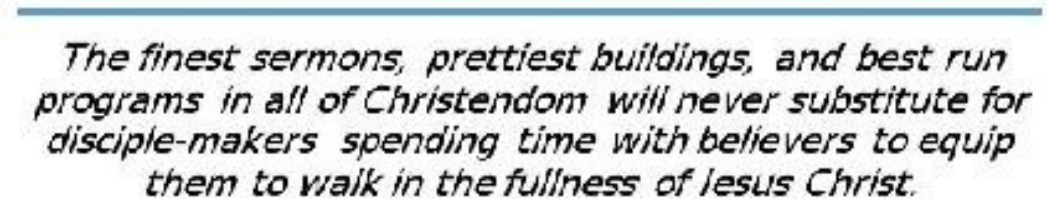
We went out into their villages and began to minister to those who were not yet believers in Christ. Even though the pastors wanted to be able to reach their community, they had significant fear because of the programming of the anti-Christ culture fostered by the prevalence of Islam. So I said, "Come with me!" I took them with me as I started conversations with the people in their village. They saw how I spoke to people with love and respect. They saw how I shared testimonies about what God was doing in their village and used this as a bridge to ask them if they had anything causing them (or anyone they knew) pain or health problems. They saw how surprisingly receptive people were and how I ministered to people. They saw how I handled rejection and dealt with different situations. They also experienced how I got them involved in the ministry and created confidence for them to do this same thing with their own people. They saw how "I decreased so that they could increase." Through this hands-on approach, I was able to take them beyond merely agreeing with my sermons to actually living in the power of what I was preaching. They caught a vision for making disciples outside of the church, outside of programs, because I did this

with them.

One of these dear brothers pulled my son Simeon aside, who came with me on this trip, and told him, “Before you came, I was not able talk to people, especially Muslims about Jesus. I was afraid. But now, since you came I am able. I am not afraid. I don’t fear anything now. So I thank God for that!” You can see a video summary of this amazing trip here.

LET’S PICK UP WHAT WE LEFT OFF

When leaders pour ourselves into equipping people to live in the power of Jesus by hands-on disciple-making alongside of the preaching of the Word of God, a synergy is unleashed that launches the church into her true destiny. Church leaders become true spiritual leaders, fathers and mothers in the faith. God is able to nurture His children to walk like true sons and daughters of God, giving each one the personal attention they need, incarnating Himself once again as we allow the “word of Christ to dwell richly within us.” If this is ever going to happen, both leaders and the church at large must be willing to break with the current pattern of occupying our resources, time, and talent in endless programs that allow us to hide away from the world in a self-made religious system that hinders the advance of the Kingdom of God under the guise of Christianity. The finest sermons, prettiest buildings, and best run programs in all of Christendom will never substitute for disciple-makers spending time to equip others who will make disciples who walk in the power of Jesus Christ.



I have greatly benefitted from the many people who have spent personal time with me, smoothing out some of my rougher edges, teaching me to love, to grow closer to the Lord and to share His life with others more effectively. Although this book is not the same thing as hands on coaching, my hope is that you’ll find the some real help, encouragement, and equipping in the remaining chapters of this book that will allow you to unleash the glory of God that continually pours into you! Hopefully you’ll be able to partner together with some other believers and put these things into practice together and strengthen one another.

Many of these life-patterns and skills would've simply been "picked up" by believers in the early church because the church had remained relationally connected while walking in Kingdom power and mission. Everyone learned how to speak about their encounters with Jesus Christ, because they were speaking to one another, not sitting in pews alongside of one another listening to the pastor. Everyone learned how to speak and minster hands-on in the power of the Holy Spirit because they were always doing this together. The disciples of Jesus were always hearing from Him and speaking the truth in love to encourage one another day by day. This was church: disciple-making disciples helping one another become better disciples. This was how believers learned to walk in power, truth, and love. This was how the Kingdom was advanced. It still is. Nothing has changed.

My hope is that this book will be a strong resource for supernatural disciple making in the body of Christ. For the remainder of this book, we're going to equip you with practical skills that will help you pour out everything that Jesus is pouring into you. You already have everything you need to make an amazing impact for the Kingdom of God. You only need a little coaching, a few moments of courage, and a little discipline to cultivate a lifestyle that is shaped by the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Are you ready? I believe you are.

In fact, with this foundation you can use the remainder of the book in whatever order fits your interests. Each of the remaining chapters will focus on equipping you in various aspects of releasing the power and love of Jesus Christ. However, if you've not yet already established a strong personal devotional life with God, I strongly suggest that you jump to the chapter twelve, and then return to chapter four. Before you are finished with this book, you will receive a solid foundation in every aspect of what is commonly called the "Five-fold Ministry" (Apostolic, Prophetic, Evangelistic, Pastoral, and Teacher). You will be equipped to walk in the fullness of Jesus Christ and to make disciple-makers!

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) **DISCUSSION:** A. Who has impacted your life for the Kingdom of God by being "with you"? How have they made a difference in your life?

B. How has being "with Jesus" made a difference in your life?

2) Partner up. Take some time to be "with Jesus" together. Have some time of fellowship sharing about the following questions:

1. How has your walk with Jesus being going lately?
2. How is your ministry going? Who are you reaching for Jesus? What's been happening?
3. How can I pray for you? Take some time to worship Jesus and pray for each other.

ASSIGNMENT:

1) Who has made a difference in your life for the Kingdom? Encourage them by letting them know that they've made a difference in your life.

2) Who needs you to invest some time in their life for the sake of the Kingdom? Make a plan, and make it happen.

3) Who do you know that is very strong in an area that you want to grow in? Make a plan to get together with them, and make it happen.

4
SHARING YOUR "JESUS STORIES"

"The World is changed one life at a time, face to face."
Curry Blake

*The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "**Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you**." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:38-39*

Encounters with God create a stir. Wherever Jesus went, people were encountered by God. Some people withdrew back to the familiar territory of their normal life, but most people were in awe. People marveled and gave glory to God. For years to come they shared their stories!

In the early days, the message of Jesus Christ was not spread by clergy preaching sermons in religious buildings. It was spread by regular people who were encountering God, sharing the stories of their encounters with whomever would listen. They were telling stories of real experiences with God and the difference that had made in their lives. They were giving praise and thanks to God, encouraging and instructing one another so that others could experience God in the same way.

Everyone tells stories about what's happened in their life. We talk about the traffic accident we saw on the way in to work. We share the story of "how I met your mother." We tell our friends about something funny that happened over the weekend. We are constantly sharing stories. It's the most basic of all communication.

MORE READY THAN YOU REALIZE
Perhaps you don't feel like you are ready for God to use you. Unfortunately, many of the leaders of the church have unwittingly or even knowingly reinforced that sense of inadequacy in many believers. Jesus' approach was very different.

He understood that once people had an encounter with the Kingdom of God, they were ready to share their stories. They may not be ready for other things, but they are certainly ready for that!

Jesus is ready to send out everyone he sets free.

In Luke 8, Jesus encounters an infamous man who is filled with demons. This was the guy that every mother would use to threaten their children to keep them from wandering too far from home. “Now Junior, you better come home before sundown or that Naked-Devil-man will get you!” But in a few short hours, Jesus sets him free and then sends him out to ten cities to proclaim the gospel. Did you get that? In the morning, this man was demon-possessed. Now, a few hours later Jesus just sent that same man out to evangelize an entire region of ten cities! How many believers have spent YEARS in church under leadership that insists they still aren’t ready?

How could Jesus do that? We’ll get to that, but first it’s important for you to see that He did. Not only did Jesus Christ do it then, He does it today. He is ready to send out everyone He sets free.

How? He sends us out with our story, our experience of the difference that Jesus makes in our lives. He didn’t put this newly delivered convert in Bible College, or even require that he walk with him through Galilee for the next few years. Jesus was ready to use this man to touch people in ten cities right away.

This not just a “beginner” tool either. The two strongest apostles of the New Testament, Peter and Paul, both repeatedly shared about Jesus by using their testimony. Although they were both strongly rooted in the Word of God, they didn’t just go around teaching Bible verses or quoting Jesus. They spoke about their own discovery and personal experience of the power and grace of God through Jesus. They allowed their lives to become a picture frame to showcase the Lord Jesus.

BUILD BRIDGES BY TELLING YOUR STORIES

“Testimony” is a fancy word for a story, specifically a story about the difference

that Jesus made in your life. If you know Jesus, you have a “Jesus story” to share. Sharing testimonies is a simple way that any believer can release the power of God’s Kingdom. You have many different kinds of Jesus stories to share. Sharing your story can help family, friends and people you meet understand who Jesus Christ is, how someone comes to know Him, and the difference He makes in our lives today.

Testimonies are effective ways to connect with people, to identify yourself with the mindsets of the people with whom you are speaking. Instead of correcting them directly, you can share your story starting from the point that you had the same mindsets, struggles, and approaches to life as the person to whom you are speaking. As you share how you discovered the reality of Jesus Christ and the difference He makes in your life, you can bring them along the path that you’ve walked to discover life in the Kingdom. As they see life through your story, they have the opportunity to see past their own barriers without feeling “preached at” or “talked-down-to.”

For example, the other day I was speaking with a young man who was quite bright and ambitious. He made a comment about “doing whatever it takes to chase the money.” I wanted to speak into his life for the Kingdom. Had I chosen, I could have responded with a Scripture verse to correct him by saying, “The Bible says that love of money is the root of all kind evil and you can’t serve God and money.” That’s a legitimate approach, and it can be an effective way to minister to some people.

There are some big problems with this kind of approach though. Many people don’t care what the Bible says or believe it. They are antagonistic towards the Bible because of prejudice. Some people don’t respond well to anyone correcting them. They are rebellious, foolish. Setting them free from their captivity requires wisdom and love. You may be surprised to learn that quoting the Bible isn’t always the wisest approach. Just because you are right doesn’t mean that you don’t need to give some thought to how to most effectively rescue the people with whom you are ministering.

We are called to do more than just “be right.” We are called to be wise and win souls! (Prov. 11:30) A prophet can be a noisy gong and clanging symbol because

the words of truth on his lips are not spoken in the power of God's love. Many believers are following Peter's zeal and cutting off ears, thinking they are acting for Jesus, when they are just picking fights with Bible verses thinking they are acting on behalf of God, when in fact they are operating in a different spirit altogether.

> *A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.* Pro 18:6
> *…we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up.* 1 Cor.8:1

> *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.* Pro 25:11-12
> *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.* 2 Tim. 2:24-25

Testimonies are an effective tool to correct, instruct, and challenge people who are in error, but to do so in a way that invites them to move forward and to grow instead of creating barriers and picking fights. Whereas direct confrontation can put a strain on even the best of relationships, testimonies are powerful relationship builders! You are opening up your life to someone else. Sharing your stories allows other people to get to know you more as you allow them to see the difference Jesus has made in your life.

> *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.* Pro 18:21

In this interaction, I chose to open the door to share part of my story with this ambitious young man. I said something like, "I can see you have a passion to succeed. You remind me a lot of myself. I actually got frustrated with life because I always had to succeed. As soon as I accomplished one goal, I had to start chasing another one. I never seemed to be satisfied. Along the way I experienced something that really changed my perspective and has made a huge difference in my life. It may challenge you a little, but I think you might really

connect with this too. Would you like to hear about it?" He was eager to hear more. I shared my story of how Jesus changed my life, which lead to an opportunity to pray for him. His back got healed and then he and his co-worker prayed to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. I doubt this would have happened had I taken the approach of quoting a Bible verse to him to tell him that the Bible says he was wrong. But as I shared my own story, he was able to receive correction without feeling judged.

YOU ARE AN EXPERT WITNESS

When you share your stories, you are speaking as an expert witness. The power of a testimony is that you are sharing the difference that Jesus makes in your life. This is the purpose of a testimony, to allow other people to see Jesus through your eyes. You have firsthand experience of the truth. You are an expert witness. They may or may not believe you, but no one can argue with your experience. Testimonies are a powerful tool because they are so personal. They allow you to identify with the people to whom you are speaking and build a bridge to them instead of a barrier. Testimonies aren't "preachy." Instead of coming at people with Bible verses, which can often trigger walls going up, life changing truth is communicated in the context of one's own story.

RELEASING SUPERNATURAL POWER WITH TESTIMONIES

Testimonies are used in a variety of situations all through the New Testament. God's Kingdom power is released when we speak forth the truth of who God is and what He has done.

Look at some of the ways God's Kingdom power is released when we share our testimonies.

Here are ten ways the Power of God is released through our testimonies:

1) **God's power and presence is revealed to those who hear.**

And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Act 14:27

And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the

Gentiles. Act 15:12

For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; Rom. 15:18-19

2) **The grace and power of God is manifest to all.**

And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Act 4:33

And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Acts 15:7-9

3) **God is glorified by those who hear.**

After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified God. Acts 21:19-20

4) **Misunderstandings are corrected and the unity of the church is preserved.**

So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." But Peter began and explained it to them in order: "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down… Act 11:2-5

5) **Faith and love are encouraged.**

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of

generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints. 2 Cor.8:1-4

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble. Ps. 107:2

6) **The move of God expands from one region to another** (from Thessalonica to Macedonia and Achaia).

And you (the church in Thessalonica) *became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.* 1 Thes. 1:6-7

7) **People abandon their idols, give up their misinformed prejudices, and come to personal faith in Jesus Christ.**

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 1 Thes.1:8-9

He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. John19:35

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of town and were coming to him. John 4:28-30

8) **Others can receive our experience of God.**

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. John3:11

For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. Act 4:20

9) **The accuser of the brothers is overcome.**

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the

power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rev. 12:10-11

10) The Spirit of prophesy is released.

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Rev. 19:10

BULLET TESTIMONIES

One of the easiest ways to share a testimony is what I call "Bullet Testimonies." These are sound bites or "elevator speeches." These are like captions under a picture, not the picture itself. You don't go into that much detail. They are usually just a few short sentences that convey the impact of a story without telling a story.

Here are some examples:

- *"I went to church my whole life but I was the biggest hypocrite that ever lived until I met Jesus"*

- *"I was addicted to every drug known to mankind, an atheist that hated God and hated Christians. Then God broke into my life and I've never been the same."*

- *"I used to think that every religion was the same, and I frankly still do. I can't stand religion. Religious people are the ones who killed Jesus. But Jesus is different. He's not a religion at all. He's able to give you a real relationship with God like no one else."*

- *"I was a Muslim who was contemplating being a suicide bomber so I could go to paradise. Then I learned that Jesus died for me, and it's made all the difference in my life."*

- *"I had a great career and a terrible marriage. I was heading for a divorce when I cried out to God, not even expecting an answer. Then He came crashing into my life, saved my marriage, brought balance, and put everything in perspective. He'll do the same thing for you too. I know it."*

- *"I didn't want anything to do with Jesus, because I didn't want Him to be real. I wanted to do my own thing… until my own thing destroyed two marriages and landed me in jail. Then I hoped Jesus might be real. But ever since I called out to Him and asked Him to save me, I* ***know*** *He's real."*

You need to practice your own "Bullet Stories" testimonies. Keep them short, to the point, powerful. Don't explain too much. Keep it simple and powerful. Here are a few of my own "Bullet Stories":

- *"I used to think that finding the right woman would make me happy. But then I got my heart broken. But I've discovered God's love will never let you down."*

- *"For the six months before Jesus came into my life, I was high every day before my feet hit the floor. I was trying to put stuff in my body to make me feel peaceful. But once I got the Prince of Peace living in my heart, I didn't need that stuff anymore."*

- *"I was a drinker, druggy, and a womanizer. Then I met Jesus and He made sense of my life, brought balance, and set me free from emptiness that I didn't realize I was carrying until after I experienced His fullness."*

- *"Jesus has made such a difference in my marriage and family. I can't tell you how many times He's changed my heart and kept me from attitudes that would have really hurt my wife.*

- *"I can't imagine my life without Jesus Christ. He set me free from being wrapped up in myself so that I can love people no matter how bad they are because I know He's loved me at my worst."*

- *“I used to think people who believed in healing were gullible. Now I not only believe God heals the sick today, I know it!”*

With these examples as food for thought, create your own sound bites. Take a few minutes to jot down a few areas in which you’ve experienced the difference that Jesus Christ makes in your life. Then write a sentence or few sentences that encapsulate the difference He makes in your life.

With “bullet stories” under your belt, let’s begin to develop your “Jesus stories.” You’ll find that you have many kinds of Jesus stories to share, but we will start with the basic story of how you came to know Jesus Christ personally as Savior. As you develop your stories, keep in mind that your purpose is not to tell **your** story. You are sharing about the difference that Jesus Christ makes from your experience. This isn’t an A.A. meeting or therapy session where you are expected to go into the sordid details of your past. You are sharing Jesus Christ with them and using your own experience as a showcase to allow your friends to come to know Him for themselves. You’re building interest and understanding, so that they can come to trust and know Jesus for themselves.

Since testimonies start with your life apart from the life in Christ, it allows you to effectively connect with whomever you may be speaking. If they are an atheist, you can start by speaking of your own struggles with God’s reality. If they are a Hell’s Angel biker, you can start by leveling the ground. “You and I really are no different in the eyes of God. I never rode a Harley or killed anyone, but I’ve had my fair shares of ups and downs and made plenty of mistakes along the way.” Your testimony becomes a bridge to allow you to stand alongside whomever you are speaking and walk with them through the path of your own discovery of Jesus Christ and the difference He makes in our lives.

Besides, your “bullet stories”, I encourage every Christian to have at least three basic stories ready to share:

1) You should be able to share your **salvation story**- How did you come to know Jesus personally and what difference has that made in your life?

2) You should be able to share your **power story**- How did you come to discover that the power of Jesus Christ was for you today?

3) You should be able to share your **strategic story**- What story is particularly key for your life or the people around you that God has called you to reach?

We'll spend the remainder of this chapter helping you develop your stories so that it's easy for you to share. Then we will talk about how to move through a conversation to open doors to share your testimony and how to follow up once you've shared to make the most of every opportunity.

SALVATION STORIES

So how can you develop your own stories as an effective ministry tool? The first and most basic Jesus story you need to learn to share is your salvation story. As you begin to develop your story, you should picture someone you know who isn't yet a believer in Jesus Christ. You are going to be sharing this story with them. You're not writing a book or preparing a sermon. You're preparing yourself to share a brief story as part of a conversation with a friend.

There are three major sections that you'll have in your story:

1. **BEFORE/WITHOUT:** What is your life like before or without the LIFE in Jesus Christ?

2. **REALIZATION/CONVERSION:** How did you become a follower of Jesus Christ?

3. **DIFFERENCE/CHANGE:** What difference does Jesus Christ make in your life?

Many people who came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as adults, have clear testimonies that easily fall into this framework. We'll share some pointers for others who don't fit this profile very shortly, but as an example of a testimony for those who came to know Jesus Christ as adults, I'll share my story.

BEFORE/WITHOUT: *"Although I was raised going to church, it was mainly a family tradition, which I quickly dropped when I went away to college. However,*

despite of all my womanizing, partying, and popularity, I was growing increasingly frustrated at the emptiness of life. I was succeeding at everything I set out to do, but I still wasn't happy.

REALIZED/CONVERSION: *Then the Lord brought to mind a question, "What good is it for a man to gain the world if he loses his own soul?" After some wrestling, I realized I needed to surrender myself completely to Jesus Christ. When I did, I can't explain the peace that came into my soul. I knew I God had forgiven me of all my sin and that He had made me new on the inside.*

DIFFERENCE/CHANGE: *Immediately my life took on eternal significance. I had joy and peace that I never knew existed because I had a relationship with God that was real. Jesus Christ said, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they might have life."* (John 10:10) *That's why my life was empty before, because I didn't have the life of Jesus Christ inside of me. Now I do and I don't feel empty. I am filled with God and can share His love and goodness to others in anything I do."*

TWEAKS FOR EARLY CONVERSION STORIES

Some stories don't fit this pattern very easily without a little extra work. My wife, Tina, for example was raised in a godly home and came to faith in Jesus as a young lady. She's walked with Jesus her entire life, served the Lord on missions in high school and college, and now is a rock star of a homeschooling mom, raising three children who love Jesus. So it's difficult for her to speak about her life without Jesus and the difference Jesus makes, since she's been a Jesus follower all her conscious life. Sometimes people who were saved at a young age feel like, "I don't really have a testimony" or "mine is not real exciting" because they don't feel like they have much to say about life before Jesus.

How can people like this share their story of coming to know Jesus Christ effectively? In these cases I would encourage you to forget about a chronological outline, and use the three point Jesus story framework to help you share about the difference that Jesus makes in your life. You can share your own Jesus story very effectively using the same elements if you'll make a couple of simple adjustments. We'll use the same basic outline in a slightly different order. Instead of telling a chronological story, we'll organize some snapshots of your

story along these three sections: 1) coming to know Jesus, 2) life without the Life of Christ, and 3) the difference Jesus makes. For example, even though you may have known Jesus Christ since your youth, you have still experienced what life without Jesus is like, either personally or through others. You've experienced Jesus setting you free from guilt and shame, empowering you to forgive others, and transforming your life by His presence. You've seen your friends destroy their lives in the name of "having fun." You've had ugly experiences that have shown you the ugliness of sin and its effects. You've fallen into various kinds of temptation and realized that sin really could destroy your life if it wasn't the grace of Jesus Christ, His forgiveness, and the power of His presence in your life. You don't have to hide the fact that God has spared you some of the heartbreak that many people go through. Just "declare how much God has done for you." Using this outline to organize snapshots into categories to tell you story will help you do just that.

For example, imagine that my wife, Tina, gets into a conversation with a stranger who is very different than her, a lady who is a stripper. Even though Tina grew up in a Christian home and became a believer at a young age, Tina can share her testimony effectively with someone from a much rougher lifestyle. Watch how this can work.

EARLY CONVERSION EXAMPLE- TINA'S STORY

REALIZED/CONVERSION: *I was very blessed to grow up in a home where my parents loved me, loved one another, and taught me about God. Even still, as child, I had questions about God. I remember coming home from church one day and asked my Dad what I needed to do to go to heaven. I was thinking that it must be very hard or that I had to be perfect, or an adult. But my Dad explained to me that God sent Jesus to die for me because we all sinned. Jesus died to pay the price so that we could be forgiven and then He rose from the dead so that the power of death could be broken over our lives so we could live with God forever. He explained that all I needed to do was to trust Him to save me and surrender my life to follow Him. I asked Jesus to be my Savior right then! I felt all this pressure leave me. I started to cry. I knew God was real, I was forgiven and that God had come into my life. That's made all the difference for me, and you can have this too. He died for you too.*

WITHOUT: (Instead of life before Jesus, focus on how Jesus has made a difference in your life) *Even with all these advantages, I've had my fair share of temptations and downfalls. I've also had to deal with the same sorts of challenges that everyone else faces: bad relationships, fear, guilt, dealing with stress, being hurt and needing to forgive. If I didn't have Jesus in my life, I don't know where I'd be today.*

DIFFERENCE**:** *Through it all, I've found that knowing God's love for me, His forgiveness and presence in my life, has allowed me to move forward free from shame and guilt whenever I did something wrong. He's given me the power to steer clear of a lot of things and to live differently. He's healed my heart when I've been hurt. It's because of Jesus that I have peace and direction in my life in every situation. I know what He's done for me, He can do for you. Do you know how you can experience God's love for you? Do you know how Jesus can do this in your life?*

I hope you can see that even someone without a dramatic before/after turn-around story can still share their story very powerfully in a way that can connect with someone who is very different from themselves. Many people who have been blessed to come to faith in Jesus Christ at a young age, go on to walk with Jesus consistently. Yet they have bought into the lie that they don't have a good testimony. There's no need to run out and get a tattoo, smoke crack, and pierce your eyelids in order to have a good testimony of God's grace in your life. You have a LOT to say about the grace of God, not only for the forgiveness of your sins, but the difference He makes in your life. You don't need a *dramatic* story. You just need *your* story. You are an expert witness of how Jesus Christ has made *a real difference in your life.* With a little thought and practice, you can share your story very effectively in a way that connects with other people who have lived a very different life.

TWEAKS FOR PRODIGALS OR BACKSLIDERS

For those of you who have experienced (a) period(s) of backsliding since coming to know Jesus Christ, remember, you have a powerful story to share "how much God has done for you." You've got a "been there, done that, and got the T-shirt… TWICE" story.

I know people who came to know Jesus Christ as an adult, but then experienced a couple of periods of significant "backsliding" before getting their life back on track with the Lord. One of my friends was saved in high school, baptized in the Holy Spirit in college, and walked with Jesus until his marriage broke up. After his marriage broke up, he was mad at God and hit the bars on Friday and Saturday night, depressed, heart-broken, and ashamed. But the whole time while he was in the bars, he was still aware of God's presence, even the grief of the Holy Spirit in His life. Eventually he came back to repentance and is now walking with the Lord. He had a real desire to share Jesus with others, but struggled to share his testimony because he lived in a small town and was afraid that people would bring up his past.

If this is you, Jesus says to you, "Go tell what great things God has done for you!" Jesus is not ashamed to be called your brother, and God is not ashamed to be called your Father. You know that sin has got nothing for you, and that there is nothing the enemy can do in your life that is too big for the grace of God! Don't allow the enemy to keep you silent by holding shame over you. The regret you feel for the darker period of your past is because Jesus has made your heart brand new! You have embraced the leadership of His Spirit afresh, so accept His forgiveness. You have a powerful story of the Lord's grace and faithfulness that needs to be heard. You may have occasions to speak to prodigals and bring them home to the Father.

> *My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.* James 5:19-20

Hear the Lord's word to you, which He first spoke to Peter before he denied Christ three times, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" Luke 22:32. You've turned back. There are people who need what you carry. The Lord is ready to use you!

You also have a powerful story that you can share effectively with prodigals or non-believers. The challenge you face is this, "How can I share my testimony about how Jesus changes our lives when I had a period of walking away from

the Lord without confusing people about who Jesus is and what it means to walk with Him?"

You can use the same basic testimony outline to share how God has proven His faithfulness and power in your life in spite of your downfalls. To do this, we'll use the same three sections of a testimony, but in the final section in which you share the difference that Jesus makes in your life, instead of telling a chronological story that may overwhelm or confuse a non-believer or be too much detail for a stranger, you'll share snapshots of the difference Jesus makes in your life… including restoring you whenever you fall as a Christian.

As an example, let's take the testimony of my friend who came to know Christ as an adult and fell away from the Lord for a short period after his wife left him.

BEFORE/WITHOUT: *When I was growing up, we never really went to church. I thought religious people were boring and uptight. I liked drinking and chasing women. I also had a lot of anger. I got in lots of fights. I also had a string of broken relationships.*

REALIZATION/CONVERSION: *Then I met a buddy who was really different. He didn't get drunk or chase women, and he talked about Jesus like he was his best friend. I thought this was weird at first, but the more we hung around each other, I realized that he had something I didn't. He had peace in life and a real connection with God. We got to talking about this one night, and he shared with me how Jesus came to give us the Holy Spirit, so we could have the presence of God inside of us to fill us with peace and love on the inside. To do this Jesus had to first die for us and then rise again so we could be forgiven. I was blown away to think that God would really do that for me, when I never cared at all for Him. That night I asked Jesus to come into my life and He did.*

DIFFERENCE: *The change Jesus made in my life was so dramatic. He gave me a peace I've never known. I didn't have to drink anymore. I never got in a fight since that day. I got married and settled down. God became my best friend, just like He was my buddy's best friend. Jesus also stayed with me through some real tough times, including my wife leaving me and times I brought some things back into my life that God didn't want. God has been faithful even when I haven't been faithful to Him. He's forgiven me for all my junk, healed my heart, and put my broken life back together twice now. I know that what He's done for me, He can*

do for anyone. Do you know how Jesus can do this for you?

As you get more comfortable sharing your story, you'll find yourself emphasizing the aspects of your story that are the most relevant to the people to whom you are speaking. For example, when I'm speaking to a church-goer, I emphasize the fact that I went to church but didn't know God. When I'm speaking to a party-goer, I emphasize those aspects of my life. Remember, the goal isn't telling someone your life history. You simply want to speak from your own experience about the difference that Jesus Christ can make in their lives.

Don't stop with merely telling your salvation story. Once you've got this basic salvation story well in hand, you can use this same basic frame work to share ALL KINDS of "Jesus stories" in other areas of life. Share the difference that Jesus Christ has made in your family life, your job, healing the sick, baptism in the Holy Spirit, relationships, legalism, addiction recovery, parenting, dealing with stress, finances, self-image, emotional wholeness, and more. Jesus Christ is Lord of all and relates to every area of life. So you are ALWAYS talking about a topic that you can take as an opportunity to "declare how much God has done for you."

POWER STORY

The testimony framework that we used to share our salvation story works well to share other kinds of Jesus stories, like how you discovered His power was available to work through you today. In the body of Christ, we need many people sharing these testimonies to shut the mouth of the accuser of the brothers, who would want to make us believe that God's power has left the earth. People need to hear your story and you should be prepared to share.

Here's an example of my power story using the same testimony outline.

BEFORE/WITHOUT: *Even though I was a committed Christian, for a long time I stayed away from anything having to do with the miraculous. Even though I believed the miracles in the Bible, I was really suspicious of anyone claiming to experience or work miracles today. The only people I ever saw speaking about miracles were televangelists who were asking me for my money. So I didn't trust them.*

REALIZATION/CONVERSION: *I came to a point where I realized that the Christian life wasn't me trying hard to live like Jesus, but Jesus Christ Himself coming to live in me and through me. As this became more real to me, God began to show me that He hadn't stopped healing people just because He lived in me. Then I began to see so many verses in which Jesus talked about "anyone who believes in Him will do the works that I do." I began to lay hands on the sick and believe God for healing, and I started seeing God heal people through me.*

DIFFERENCE/CHANGE: *In the past couple of years I've seen a couple of thousand miracles. I've seen C.O.P.D. healed, cancer healed, titanium joints become real bone, deaf ears hear, blind eyes see, the lame walk. I've seen miracles in WalMart with people who didn't even believe God was real. My children and wife all minister to the sick and see people healed regularly. I used to read about miracles in the Bible. Now I see the miracles written about in the Bible in my life every day. Do you know how Jesus can do this in your life too?*

Another option that fits well with the "Power Story" is a simple testimony of a specific healing. These usually fit well in a simple chronological story, or a before/after framework.

BEFORE: *There was a time when I didn't believe Jesus was healing today the way I believe now.* But listen to this. *I was shopping the other day and this guy walked by me limping behind his shopping cart. He had crutches in his cart and a taped ankle. He said he fell off his delivery truck and rolled his ankle and he was in bad pain. He said I could pray for him. So I did.*

AFTER: *I told him to test it out, and his jaw dropped open. He was amazed at the difference. He wasn't completely healed, but much better. We had a great conversation about Jesus. He was really amazed and told me thank you with a big grin before we shook hands and went our separate ways. Besides many Bible verses, it's things like this that have shown me God's power is still at work through us today. Do you know how God will work through you like this?*

Do you know believers in Jesus Christ who aren't walking in God's power? They need to hear your story. Do you ever meet people and discover they are

already believers? Ask them if they've experienced any miracles lately. Then share you Jesus power story! God is awakening the church to walk in His love and power. Sharing your testimony is one of the ways God's Kingdom is advancing. You aren't sharing to puff up your ego. You can share your testimony in the confidence that whatever God has done in your life, He is able and willing to do for others.

STRATEGIC STORY

To develop your strategic story, think about what you bring to the table for the people that you are around every day. For example, if you are working in the business world, you may want to develop a story about the difference that life in Christ makes as you handle pressure at work. If you are a mom, you may want to develop a story about the difference Jesus makes in your life as a mom. If you've had a significant battle with depression and anxiety, you can share about the difference that Jesus Christ made in helping you overcome depression and anxiety. God will give you direction about your third story, but make sure you take time to master all three so that you can share them comfortably within three to five minutes at a moment's notice.

Remember, you're not limited to three stories, but I find that once you develop and practice your first three stories, you are ready to effectively communicate all kinds of stories. With your testimonies, you'll be surprised how many opportunities you'll find to speak to others about Jesus Christ. You don't have to wait around for someone to come up to you asking, "What must I do to be saved?" to be able to release the power of God in your testimony.

Now you are able to release the power of the Kingdom of into almost any conversation. No matter the subject, you are on a perfect subject to speak about Jesus. Jesus is Lord of All! He makes ALL THINGS new!

If your co-worker complains, "I hate my job. I can't stand waking up in the mornings" you are on the subject of Jesus.

"I know your job is rough right now. You know, I've found something that has made a huge improvement in my outlook in general and the way I approach work. It has gotten me through some pretty rough patches. I'd love to share it!"

If your friend tells you, “I feel lost as a parent. I don’t know how to help my son,” you’re on a subject that you’ve probably got a story to share about some of “the great things that God has done for you.”

As you share how God has changed your life with others, God will impact the lives of others through you. You’ll develop the confidence and sensitivity in the Spirit to the needs of each person so that you can adapt your story to emphasize the things that will connect with them particularly. According to the situation, you can go into more or less detail. Become comfortable speaking about the difference Jesus Christ makes in your life, how He saved you, how His power works through you, and how His presence impacts every part of your daily life.

TESTIMONY EXERCISE:

- Use the Testimony Outline (BEFORE, REALIZATION, CHANGE) to write your story. Don’t make it complicated. Just put down a few notes in each section of the outline to help you get your thoughts together.
- Practice sharing your story with a partner out loud.

Here are a few pointers to keep in mind as you share your story. These are general guidelines, and like most rules, there may be exceptions. But in general, these guidelines hold true:

- Try to keep your story conversational and brief.

- You should be able to share each of your testimonies in 3 to 5 minutes. Nobody likes someone who hogs the conversation speaking about themselves.

- Don’t worry so much about saying it “right.” Say it “real.” Be yourself. This isn’t speech class or a sermon. Share from your heart and put the spotlight on Jesus.

- Practice enough so that you are comfortable sharing your story with someone who needs to know Jesus.

- As you share, try to avoid religious terminology that an unchurched person may not understand clearly. To do this, use the definition of the word instead of the word (e.g. instead of “repented” say “I turned from going my own way to follow Jesus”).

- It’s not usually appropriate to share sordid details. People don’t usually want to know. For example, instead of saying, “I was so broken and lonely that I was sleeping with a different person every night. I got several STDs, but I didn’t even care”, try something like, “I was broken and lonely. I was with lots of different people, desperately looking for someone to fill the void, which only led to more pain and problems.”

- Keep the emphasis on the difference that Jesus had made in your life.

- You can adjust the details you include in your story according to what would connect most with the person(s) to whom you are speaking. For example, if you know the person you’re talking to is an addict, you would want to emphasize parts of your story that could connect with them at that level. Or if the person you are speaking to is an un-born again church goer, then you’d want to emphasize parts of your story that would help them understand having a personal relationship with Jesus.

- Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable. We are bearing witness of the difference Jesus makes in our lives, His goodness, not our own.

- Feel free to share other people’s stories. I’ll often be in a conversation and say, “I have a friend that I think you’d appreciate. Listen to what happened to them…” Then share their Jesus story.

OPENING AND CLOSING THE DOOR FOR YOUR STORIES

In addition to preparing your story, you need to learn how to open and close your story effectively. In other words, “what can you do to open the door to be able to share your story?”, and “what do you do when you are done sharing your story?” These are very simple skills that make a HUGE difference!

First, let's learn how to open the door to share your story. People who are eager to share their story sometimes take over a conversation, turn the corner and launch into their story. While this is one approach that God can still use, one drawback is that your awareness of dominating and pushing the topic of the conversation can put a nervous edge on what you're saying that detracts from the power of your story. My suggestion for door opening is simple— whenever possible, *get permission in advance* to share.

For example, if you're out to lunch with a co-worker, you may be able to transition the conversation like this, "You know, we've been working together for a while. If you don't mind me saying, it seems like you're doing great in your career, but unsettled in your personal life, like you are searching. I really respect you and see so much potential in you. I think you are an incredible person." Then OPEN THE DOOR. "*Years back I had a real breakthrough in my life. I'd love to share that with you if I could.*" Then wait silently until they say, "Sure. Go ahead. What is it?" Now, without realizing it, they just asked you to tell them your Jesus story.

Here are some simple examples of using different approaches to opening the door, some are purposely vague and others are more open:

- "Let me share something that has made a huge difference in my life."

- "I know something that has made a real difference in my life that I know would help you too. If you'd ever be interested, I'd love to tell you more."

- "I'll bet you'll never guess why I'm always happy. Would you like to know why? Really? Okay, don't forget… you asked."

- "I've found something that has made a huge difference in my life that I think you'd be interested in. Can I tell you about it?"

- "I recently made a decision to follow Jesus Christ. It's really changed my life. I would love to tell you about it!"

- "I've known you for a long time, and you know I'm a Christian, but that means a lot of different things to different people. It would mean a lot to me

if I could share with you what this means to me. Can I?"

- "Do you believe it's possible to know God personally? If you could know God personally, would you be interested? I'd like to share my story with you, okay?"

- Have you ever experienced God? You can! Let me share how I began experiencing God constantly.

Finally, when you are done with your story (and you should try to keep it less than 5 minutes) you'll want to close by asking a question to invite your friend to respond to you.

Here are some of my favorite closing questions:

- Has anything like this ever happened to you?

- Do you understand how Jesus Christ can do the same thing for you?

- Do you know how you can experience God like this?

Closing your testimony with a closing question invites people to relate to your story and give you some feedback. It also advances the conversation towards potentially leading them to personal faith in Jesus, or clearly identifying the most significant barrier to their faith. Listen well and you'll learn a lot about where your friend is with regards to the gospel.

Let me also encourage you to nail all aspects of the skill of sharing your Jesus stories down by practicing out loud with a partner. Practice opening the door for your story. Practice sharing your salvation story. Also, practice closing your story. Share with your spouse, your children, and your friends, even if they are already believers. Tell them that you are learning how to speak comfortably about your experience with Jesus with others and ask them if you can practice and get their feedback. Share your story as often as you can until you can share it comfortably, confidently, and concisely.

Then begin to share you Jesus stories whenever you get a chance. This is powerful! God's power and glory breaks out whenever we speak of the

wonderful things God has done! Why? We believe that God is able to do it again and to do it for anyone! He's the living God! Praise His Name!

GROUP EXERCISES and ASSIGNMENTS:

Groups are encouraged to take a two or three weeks to work through the group exercises and personal assignments. Take some time each week to review by practicing. Keep it fresh.

WEEK 1

BULLET STORIES and SALVATION STORY GROUP EXERCISES:

1. Develop and practice sharing your "bullet stories." Pick a partner and practice sharing these verbally and get their feedback.

2. Develop and practice sharing your "Jesus SALVATION story" with as many people as you can. If you need, pick a partner to practice by phone or in person.

3. Get feedback during your "practice sessions." What was good? How could it be improved to make it GREAT?

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Who needs to hear your "Jesus SALVATION story"? Make a plan. Tell your LifeTeam with whom you plan to share. Plan to report back next week how it went.

WEEK 2

JESUS POWER STORY

1. Develop and practice sharing your "Jesus Power story" with as many people as you can. If you need, pick a partner to practice by phone or in person.

2. **Get feedback during your "practice sessions." What was good? How could it be improved to make it GREAT?**

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Who needs to hear your "Jesus POWER story?" Share your Jesus Power story with several Christians you believe need to discover God's power and invite them to come to your LIFE Team or start a new one

with you.

WEEK 3
STRATEGIC STORY

1. Develop and practice sharing your Strategic Story with as many people as you can.

2. Get feedback during your “practice sessions.” What was good? How could it be improved to make it GREAT?

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Who needs to hear your “Strategic story”? Make a plan. Tell your LifeTeam with whom you plan to share. Plan to report back next week how it went.

CHAPTER 5

SPEAKING SUPERNATURAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND DIVINE INSIGHT

"We all go through experiences. But we don't need to allow life to speak louder than God. Jesus Christ is the truth and the truth is the only thing that sets us free."
Dan Mohler

It was my privilege to pastor a young man named Lawrence (not his actual name) while he completed his college degree. Lawrence had a horribly unstable upbringing. His parents were divorced and his mom had a knack for latching on to abusive men. Lawrence once told me of a time when one of his mom's live-in boyfriends slammed a two-by-four board down on a table and got in Lawrence's face and said, "Do you know why I put this here? Because at the end of the week, I'm going to whip your butt with it. I'm going to leave it right here all week as a reminder of what you have to look forward to, and if you touch it or move it, you'll get something worse." Lawrence said, "He actually followed through on his threat, too. It was one of the worst beatings I ever remember… and for no reason except he didn't like me."

Needless to say, this kind of environment takes its toll on a person's soul. A bruised backside heals, but the emotional damage remains long after the bruises have faded.

One of the legacies of Lawrence's abusive upbringing was that he had a constant tendency to interpret difficult and unpleasant events in his life as God's displeasure with him. Lawrence was accustomed to angry, unreasonable men, abusing him for reasons that he didn't understand. After becoming a Christian, Lawrence had an emotional tendency to relate to God as an angry authority

figure. For example, if Lawrence's car died, he would immediately wonder what he had done to offend God. If Lawrence got a bad grade on a test, he would say, "I knew I shouldn't have watched that movie the other night. Now God is disciplining me." Lawrence had a low sense of self-worth and a constant suspicion that God was easily offended, fault-finding, and vindictive.

Lawrence was a Christian, but he wasn't living in the power of the gospel. He was making the same mistakes that most people make when it comes to understanding what life is all about. The first mistake is this: we define God through our circumstances instead of through Jesus Christ. The second mistake is like it: we interpret ourselves through the events in our lives. If we are looking at our circumstances to define whether God is good or whether He loves us, we are not going to have much stability in our walk with God. When we are in difficult circumstances, instead of having courage to empower us to stand firm and persevere, we are going to have the additional weight of feeling like God is displeased with us on top of all our circumstances.

Lawrence began to gain strength and stability in his walk with God as he learned to stop interpreting God through current and past events in his life. Instead, Lawrence began to define his relationship with God exclusively through Jesus Christ. "***God shows his love for us in this****: while we were still sinners,* ***Christ died for us****."* (Rom 5:8) If all my tires pop on the same day, I am still deeply loved by God. If I'm kicked out of school or fired from my job, I am worth the blood of Jesus Christ to God. If I get passed up for a promotion at work, I'm still blessed with every spiritual blessing that heaven could give me. We need to let the truth of God that has been revealed in Jesus Christ become larger than any circumstance and louder than any other voice in our lives. As we do, we will be filled with God's truth and power and shine God's light in a very dark world.

Ever since humanity walked out of the Garden of Eden without the life of God in our spirits, we've attempted to find identity and worth independent from God. We usually end up interpreting our worth through things that have happened to us and how others feel about us. Because we're not filled with the truth of God, lies fill in the void. We're "born suckers" to the world's lies. Some of the lies are very painful and destructive. Others are more "empowering" partial truths. This world systematically under values people because it is based on a lie. It values people based on their beauty, talent, possessions, power, or moral virtue… all of which are very temporary and easily lost. It's little wonder that people are so

easily angered, fearful, insecure, greedy, discouraged, and depressed.

Thankfully, God does not have the same perspective as we do. He sees all things and He is the God of *all hope*. He is the blessed God and Savior. God sees all things from the vantage point of eternity according to their true significance and value. He revealed His truth to us in Jesus Christ.

The gospel changes how we speak because it changes how we see ourselves and others. We have stopped living from our own perspective for our own purposes so that we can live from God's Spirit. As the word says, "*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might* ***live through him****"* (1 Jn. 4:9) God has displayed the depths of His love in the tremendous cost of the cross. Where we might think that our sin would make God forsake us, at the cross He shows us that His value for us never wavered. He is still willing to share Himself completely with us as our all in all. Because we live through Him, we *speak through Him*.

WHO, ME? PROPHESY?

"*The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation."* (1Cor 14:3)

All believers can speak words of encouragement from God's perspective into people's lives. No longer do we speak to people based on worldly perceptions and human reasoning. Nor do we treat people according to how they treat us or how they make us feel personally. It's no longer about us. We can see and speak to every person according to God's perspective, His redeeming value and created purpose for them. Through us, God can speak into the lives of both believers and unbelievers. When we spontaneously speak God's perspective into people's lives in the power of the Holy Spirit to move them closer to God and His purposes for their lives, this is what the Bible calls prophesy. Prophesy is a spontaneous spoken flow of revelation from God that impacts the hearts of those who hear.

Prophesy is for any believer in Christ. The "new creation in Christ" has a higher level of communication. We have become transmitters for the Spirit of God to speak through us. The new creation is characterized by prophesy. When people receive the Holy Spirit, they receive the power to speak forth the perspective of God spontaneously with power. As Peter said at Pentecost, *"'And in the last days*

it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." (*Act 2:17-18)* And later Peter said, "Whoever speaks should speak as one who speaks the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11) According to God's revelation through Peter, God is not limiting prophesy to a select few. Prophesy is for "whoever speaks."

Are there things we can do to activate the ministry of the prophetic in our lives? Yes! Here are some practical things you can do to "stir up the gift" within you.

1) **Desire**- The apostle Paul encourages every believer to "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, *especially that you may prophesy*."(1 Cor. 4:1) So if you don't yet regularly prophesy, you can! It starts with pursuing love and *desiring to prophesy*. God tells us to desire to prophesy because He wants us to honor the value of this ministry. We should desire prophesy, not for ourselves, but for others. We don't pursue prophesy so that we can be admired, but to build others up. Our desire opens the way for the Holy Spirit who lives in you to release the ability to speak God's perspective spontaneously in His power.

2) **Speak in Faith**- As you step out to build others up by speaking God's perspective into their lives, you will have to exercise faith. Don't expect to be "certain." It will be a step of faith, yet this is more than just a blind leap or shot in the dark. God's word tells us to prophesy "in proportion to our faith" (Rom 12:6). Your ability to speak into the lives of others will never rise higher than your personal trust in God, your grasp of His ways, and your understanding of His purpose for people. So because this is true, it's important that you…

3) **Fill your heart with God's Word**- The mouth speaks out of what fills the heart. If you want to spontaneously speak forth God's perspective, saturate your heart with God's word. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. Keeping your heart filled with the Word of God is necessary if the Holy Spirit is to fight the lies of the enemy by revealing His truth through

you.

4) **Pray in tongues frequently**- As you pray in tongues you build yourself up in the spirit. You are also allowing the Holy Spirit to "download" heavenly mysteries into you as you "speak mysteries within yourself." This is sort of like downloading a music track from the internet. God is downloading mysteries into your spirit as you speak in tongues. But this download comes into your system in "computer language." But once it has come in, it's ready to be played in a language you will understand. Praying in tongues allows the Holy Spirit to deposit revelation in your spirit so that He can speak through you. Furthermore, praying in tongues gets your mind used to stepping out of the way to allow God to speak through you spontaneously.

5) **Become like a child**- Children learn how to speak by speaking. They're not afraid to make a mistake. The path of becoming fluent in speaking is trying often, like children who never tire of speaking although they make mistakes. No one starts off as a fluent speaker. You expect to start small and grow as you continue to speak. So speak out in the measure of your faith, as Paul says, "*Having gifts that differ … let us use them: if prophecy,* ***in proportion to our faith****;* Rom. 12:6 We prophesy *by faith*, which means that if you are waiting to be absolutely sure before you speak, you probably won't prophesy very much. You'll learn by doing and exercising your faith.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Jesus is the ultimate model of prophetic ministry. He flowed in prophetic ministry often to reach people for the Kingdom of God. For example, with Nathaniel.

Jn 1:46-51 Nathanael *said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"*

Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

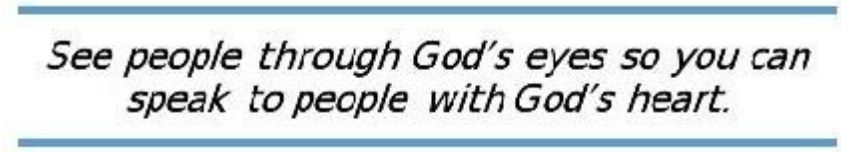
When Nathaniel came to Jesus, he wasn't born again. Nathaniel was a skeptic who had some serious reservations about Jesus. Yet the first thing that Jesus spoke to Him was to commend him for an area of his character that was a true God-given strength. Although God knows everything about Nathaniel, including his greatest sins and flaws, God speaks to Nathaniel about what He values about Nathaniel. Furthermore, Jesus spoke to Nathaniel about events going on in His life ("under the fig tree") and went on to speak to Nathaniel about God's destiny for His life.

Jesus is the same today, yesterday, and forever. When He speaks to people through us, He will do the same thing. He will show us their character, especially areas that He wants to redeem and use for His purpose. For example, although sin distorted Nathaniel's passion for the truth into skepticism, Jesus affirmed what He wanted to redeem. In the same way, Jesus will give you eyes to see and words to redeem the image of God in people.

JUMPING OUT IN THE PLANE

I remember being on a plane trip and having a strong impression about a man who was sitting on the other side of the plane one row behind me. At first, I had no understanding, but I noticed that my inner attention was fixed on him. With my body I was facing forward, but within me my minds-eye remained fixed on him.

I've learned to pay attention to where my attention is drawn to. Holy Spirit lives inside of me, so sometimes he takes the wheel to get me pointed the right direction. As it says in Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: *I will guide thee with mine eye*." God's guidance comes through His word and His eye, which I understand to mean that God shows us what He sees with His own eye. He gives us His perspective. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we can see people and situations as He sees them. This increases as our minds are renewed to the Word of God. So pay attention to what your attention is drawn to.



Since my attention was drawn towards this man, I asked God, "What about him?" Immediately I got two impressions, a word "wide open spaces" and had a picture of him saying, "Give me the ball coach" as a basketball team huddled on the sidelines to make a plan to win the game at the buzzer. With that picture I had the impression that he was a real leader under pressure. That's all I had. I kept asking God for more, but that's all I He gave me.

So I stepped out on faith with that. I turned and started talking with his wife about how good their little boy was, made a little small talk to build some report and break the ice. Then said, "This might seem a little strange, but I had an impression about something that I think I'm supposed to share with you. It may be wrong, but if it's right, I think it will really encourage you. Can I share it?" They said "Sure!" They smiled and settled back in their seats in case I was weird.

I said, "I had an impression about you (speaking to the husband), two impressions actually. The first was the phrase, "Wide open spaces" and I believe this has to do with you as a person. You thrive in wide open spaces. The worst job for you would be anything in a cube stuck behind a desk. I even get the impression that it may have to do with starting a business, needing room to create your own destiny, not really being cut out to have a boss sort of thing. The other thing was the impression that you are a great leader under pressure. You are the sort of person that people can look to in a crisis, because as much as you don't like pressure any more than the rest of us, you keep calm and know what to do. But you don't just know what you need to do. You see the plan and the roles for each person. You take responsibility not only for yourself but for others as well. Does any of that make any sense to you?"

Now the whole time, both the man I was speaking to and his wife were being completely "poker faced." I had no idea if I was anywhere close, or if they were going to look at one another and laugh and tell me to get back to my seat and

leave them alone. But that's not what happened.

His wife spoke first, and she burst out and said, "That's freaky amazing! Are you some sort of physic or something?" I said, "No! I just believe in Jesus Christ, and He lives in me and wants to let you know that He knows you and loves you and wants to bless you in whatever you are going through. So some of that was right?" You see, even though I could tell it wasn't a total bomb, I still didn't know! You prophesy BY FAITH!!!

Now the husband spoke up. He said, "You don't realize how encouraging it is to hear all this. I just retired from the Army a few months ago. I was promoted through the ranks very quickly, almost in record time for the Army. The reason given at every one of my promotions was because I was an excellent leader under pressure and that if we ever got in a crisis they wanted me to be the highest ranking person around because of my leadership ability in those situations. So I'd say the impression about leadership ability under pressure was spot on. The other thing about "wide open spaces" and it "being possibly related to business"… well since retiring, my family and I moved out to Colorado and I purchased a wilderness adventure business that we are turning around. It's been kind of tough and I was beginning to wonder if I had made a mistake. So your word about wide open spaces was spot on too. And here's the cherry on top. I'm also a Christian. And I was just discussing with a buddy of mine this week wondering if God still does stuff like this today, I mean speak to people. So I asked God to show me if this was true." Amazing!

At this point, let's highlight a few principles to keep in mind as you begin to step out to speak spontaneous words of encouragement and divine insight into people's lives.

Key Tactics:

- See each person through God's eyes so that you can speak with His heart regarding WHO PEOPLE ARE and GOD'S PURPOSES FOR THEIR LIVES.

- When you see people, see them through God's perspective revealed in Jesus Christ.

- As people hear the heart of their Heavenly Father in your words, they will come to Him.

-Ask God specific questions. Here are some common questions you can use to start with:

1. **What are they like?**
2. **What are they good at?**
3. **In what ways are they selling themselves short of the destiny that you have for them?**
4. **What do they need to know about you (God)? How have they misunderstood about you? How do you want to reveal yourself to them?**

BLESS MY MOUTH

In James 3:8-10 we read, *"But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."* So we should not "curse people" because they are "made in the likeness of God." Why do people curse one another? We are failing to see the value of God in them! Instead we should bless them with our words, even when most people would be provoked to cursing. Why? We're not looking at their behavior. We're looking at them through the lens of God's original created value and destiny for them… even if they themselves don't seem to recognize it.

In Jesus Christ, God has revealed to us the incredible value and purpose for each person. To God, we are worth sacrificing His own Son in order that we may be restored to His original created purpose. God created people to be filled with God's divine nature to manifest His image and demonstrate His likeness. God destined people to become true sons and daughters of God, filled with His divine love.

What does it look like to bless people because of the revelation of God's created purpose and destiny? Without a particular impression about someone's past or any particular "words of knowledge", you can still say things to people like, "I

want you to know that you have an awesome purpose and value. Do you know what that is?" Sometimes when I'm shopping, I'll ask people, "What do you think the most valuable thing in this store is?" They'll guess. Then I'll say, "It's you. You are worth the blood of Jesus Christ to God. He paid an awesome price for you so that you can live with Him. Did you know that?" Speaking the blessing of God into lives spontaneously to reveal God's heart and mind to people is the very heart of prophesy, even if you don't get a "specific impression" about the person to whom you're speaking. You can trust that the specific gospel truths that came out at that particular time were exactly what they needed to hear. These words are just as powerful and equally supernatural to the man who can tell you where you lived and the color of your house when you were five.

Imagine that a child was abducted at a young age and then later recovered and returned to the parents as a young adult. Because of the abuse and lies of their abductor, the personality of this abused child would be greatly affected. But at every stage, the love of the parents for their child remains unchanged. They loved them originally. The loved them while they awaited their return, and they loved them after they are restored to the family in dire need of restoration. Why? The parent's love was always based on the original status of their child, "this is our baby."

God demonstrated His love for sinners at the cross. Learn to speak to people about the value God places upon them. For example, in Luke 15 Jesus is criticized by religious leaders for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. True they were sinners, but whereas the religious leaders criticized them, Jesus blessed them. Jesus spoke according to their created value and the religious leaders spoke according to their behavior. Jesus spoke a story to them of a lady who searched her house for a silver coin, a shepherd who left his flock to search for a lost sheep, and a father who ran to receive a long lost son. Do you see how God speaks to lost sinners? He speaks to them as lost sons. He speaks to them about the searching heart of the Father and His eagerness to restore them and welcome them home as sons, not as slaves. He speaks to them about misplacing their value apart from the Father. He speaks to them of the Father's love that is eager to restore them to their true destiny and their original value, even as if they had never been lost.

It’s much easier for lost sons to return home when they realize that their heavenly Father is eager for their return. When they hear His voice in our words, they will come running. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance.

POURING OUT REVELATION AT THE WATER FOUNTAIN

Another one of Jesus’s well known encounters was with a Samaritan woman whom He met at a well. Prophetic ministry (spontaneous speaking of divine revelation and insight) was integral to the way that Jesus revealed the Kingdom of God to unbelievers, including this lady. This woman returned to her village proclaiming, “*Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*” (John 4:29) So, of all the things that took place in that encounter, Jesus’ ability to speak to this lady about particular things in her life convinced her that He was the Messiah.

Let’s go through Jesus’ encounter with this lady and notice how He works. And as we do, let’s remember we are watching the way that “Christ in you” operates. So let’s observe some principles of the way God’s supernatural life can flow out of our lives:

1) **God is ALWAYS ready to move through you to encounter others, so step out and make the most of every opportunity for the Kingdom.**

Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water… John 4:5-6

Jesus was in a foreign village, tired, hungry and thirsty. He wasn’t in a religious or familiar setting. He needed rest, water, and food. Yet Jesus wasn’t “off the clock” for the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God was at hand. There was no audience or on lookers. Jesus was living unto His Father, an audience of one. Where ever you are, however you may feel, God is ready to flow through you. Don’t wait to “feel” it. Just step out in faith that God is with you.

2) **Draw people into conversation. Often the first step in a supernatural encounter is the supernatural act of being kind enough to start a conversation with a stranger.**

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) John 4:7-9

Jesus didn't need to start this encounter with a prophetic word. Jesus had to break through some substantial cultural barriers:
- He was a stranger. People don't know whether to trust strangers or not.

- He was a Jew. Samaritans and Jews don't get along.

- He was a man. It was considered inappropriate for a man to talk with an unaccompanied woman in public.

Yet Jesus crossed all these barriers for the sake of love. How? By walking up to a perfect stranger and giving her a "Word from *GAWD*"? No! He asked her for a drink.

Look for a way to talk with people. Going out of your way to start a conversation with someone who is likely to fear you, reject you, and suspect your motives is a supernatural expression of the Kingdom of God. As you step out in love and kindness, you are breaking through all of the cultural programming of the "prince of the power of the air." But as the Scripture says, "There is no law against love" (Gal. 5:22-23), so we can break all the cultural barriers that stand against us showing the love of God that we need to in order to advance the Kingdom. Even if people react in a suspicious or closed manner, God is pleased with you even when you are misunderstood and mistreated by others.

But notice, Jesus DIDN'T start this encounter with anything that was obviously supernatural. Some people get ahold of the supernatural and forget that God's Spirit is not just the Spirit of prophesy, but the one who bears the fruit of love, kindness, and gentleness. Jesus didn't start His interaction with this Samaritan lady with, "Hey, lady! You have had five husbands and are living with a man who is not your husband!" He started by asking for a drink of water. He didn't approach this lady using his spiritual perceptions as "power over her" to black mail her into the faith by pulling some skeletons out of her closet. He

empowered her by asking for her help, by asking for a drink. He started simple. He expressed a need and empowered her with His trust. Knowing that having a strange Jewish man speak to her at all would potentially raise her guard, Jesus just kept it simple. Why? That's the way God's love does it. God's love breaks through artificial cultural barriers. God's love isn't afraid of asking for a favor from an unknown foreign woman to break a barrier to show a little kindness.

Here are some examples of ways you can approach strangers asking them for help:

- For the time- "Do you know what time it is?"

- For directions- "Do you know how to get to (name a place) from here?" "Do you know where the nearest (mall, gas station, ATM) is?"

- For information - "Can you tell me about this (some object or event)?"

- For their participation- "Do you have a second? Maybe you could help me… We're looking for people who have any sort of physical pain or problems that we can help. Do you have any physical pain or problems? Anything at all?"

3) Speak about the grace of God and realities of the Kingdom. Create curiosity and interest.

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." John 4:10

In two sentences, Jesus is talking about God. He brought God into the conversation on purpose. The mouth always speaks out of what fills the heart. Many Christians in the west have bought into the idea that God is somehow an inappropriate or potentially offensive topic of conversation. That barrier didn't come from heaven! So you will need to decide to make spiritual issues the subject of conversation on purpose. Don't be shy about bringing God, Jesus, miracles, or the supernatural into conversations. We talk about the people we know, and you know God. Shine the light. Just as moths will fly into the light

and roaches will scatter, people's reaction to you will show you how they are responding to God's drawing grace.

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. Col.4:6

I walked into a store with my daughter and wife, "Can I help you?" "No but we might be able to help you." I responded to the shop floor worker. "Really?" She said looking confused. I said, "Yes, we help people just like you all the time. God uses us to heal people, and you're on your feet a lot. Do you have anything that gives you pain?" "Well, actually I was just getting ready to punch out because I've had back pain so badly, but I can't afford to take off, much less to pay for a chiropractor." I had my wife minister to her. She was healed instantly and began to cry and gave my wife a big hug. She was so relieved.

Every word we say can be seasoned with "supernatural salt," speaking forth the grace and revelation of God. The Holy Spirit is ready to flow into people's lives through us. We have so much to offer people. Jesus knew this and spoke about "the gift of God." As we speak about the supernatural presence of God and what He is able to do in and for people, people will react. As they react, we receive clearer insight on how to partner with God in His work in their lives.

Shining the light, speaking God's grace, and manifesting the Kingdom doesn't mean that you'll always be received. There are occasions in which I approach people in the same way, with the grace and love of God, and they react negatively. I didn't do a thing different than things that I've done that have opened up. But this gives me insight in "how to respond to each one."

If you ever experience rejection from someone, it's not because you approached someone when you weren't "being led by the Spirit." Some people give you the impression that the goal is to never get rejected and the way to accomplish this is to learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit flawlessly. This simply isn't true. Our goal isn't to avoid rejection. Our goal is walk in God's love as faithful ambassadors of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is *always* leading us to do this. Jesus taught us to value the reward that comes from rejection and to move on to the next person. Jesus never said, "If you'd just learn to walk in the Spirit, you wouldn't get rejected." In fact, the opposite is true. "Indeed, *all* who desire to

live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will* be persecuted…" (2 Tim. 3:12).

4) Use misunderstandings as opportunities to speak the truth, and natural things as objects to reveal spiritual realities.

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:11-14

At this point in the story, Jesus had managed to start a conversation with a stranger and make a statement about His ability to give her a gift of God that would blow her mind. This provoked her to object.

How do you respond when someone, whom you know is not a believer, objects or disagrees with you? Do you go into a verbal "fight or flight" meltdown and shut up or start arguing? Do you start calling them sinners and warning them about hell? Many do. They fear conflict and need to be right for their own sense of emotional security. They're like insecure police officers that pull their gun and flash their badge simply to compensate for their fear.

But those who love well listen well. When you are secure in your identity in Christ and in what you believe, you can listen to people and appreciate the fact that they are at least sharing their perspective with you. While you listen to them, God will be speaking to you so that you know how to respond.

Jesus listened well. He didn't get tense when this foreign lady, a heathen, dared to challenge the very Son of God. He didn't go on the attack against her to shoot down her opinions, even though she was just a "peasant woman" and he was a "respected rabbi." Nor did Jesus attack her pride in her heritage or use her shady morality against her. He could tell that she had quite a few misunderstandings and was still hung up on physical water. Nor did He drop the subject to make nice since she "obviously isn't open." No! That's not how love treats people. Love hopes all things and bears all things. When someone is speaking with you,

even when they disagree, you are happy to get the honor of understanding someone… someone you love, who needs your help to set them free.

Those who love well, listen well.

Because Jesus listened well, He realized this Samaritan lady was confused and still thought they were speaking about drinking water. So Jesus took realization of her misunderstanding to reveal the truth by taking the object of natural water and drinking to speak about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the human heart. This is an important aspect of prophesy, spontaneously speaking forth the revelation of God according to the need of the moment.

I remember having a conversation with a young Turkish man who was a Muslim. As the conversation turned towards our beliefs, he began to tell me what he thought I believed. He told me that I believed in three gods and that God had sex with Mary to make her pregnant with Jesus. This was obviously a misunderstanding.

Instead of starting to argue, I took this as an opportunity to say, “Anyone who believes in three gods cannot be a true Christian, because the Bible says “There is only one God, and one mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus.” Also, Christians believe that Jesus was born through a miracle of God, born by a virgin. No one who believes that Mary lost her virginity to God can be a true Christian. Did you know that?” His objections and misunderstanding opened the door for a fruitful discussion.

On another occasion I was shopping and came to an older man who was using an electric shopping buggy. I struck up a conversation with him and eventually asked him whether he had pain when he walked and offered to pray after he explained his condition. When I offered to pray, he proceeded to explain to me his faith in native-American spirituality, how many people he killed as a soldier, and his great respect for Jesus Christ. I just listened patiently and asked a couple of questions to help me understand more about his life and show him that I was truly interested in him as a person.

As this man continued to share, he said, “I’ve had a few real encounters with

God that I still can't explain." So I asked him, "Would you mind sharing one of these encounters with me?" He really began to open up and share with me that he had been a specially trained soldier who was dishonorably discharged from the military. He had been the leader of a team that was given the mission to find and assassinate the leader of a country during a time of war.

He said that he found the leader, but he was in a school yard surrounded by children. But he knew that if he pulled the trigger, he was going to traumatize all those children who would see the leader of the country blow up in front of them and end up with his blood splattered all over them. His superior officers (with whom he was in radio contact) were screaming at him to pull the trigger anyway. Then he said, "As I was looking at him through the scope on my rifle, all of a sudden, my scope went dark. I pulled my eye back from the scope and an image of the face of Jesus hung about four feet in front of me. I could see it as plain as I see your face. It hung there for a few seconds. It didn't speak or anything. But at that point, I just walked off the hill and told them I wouldn't do it. So I was court-martialed. I don't even believe in Jesus, but I knew it was Him. This has always troubled me."

I started at this point and began to speak into his life, "You are not a murderer at heart. You've slaughtered many people but you are not a murderer at heart. Jesus doesn't see you as a murderer. He sees you as someone who needs Him to save you from yourself and give you the power to do what's right. That's why He showed you His face then. That's why he died for you."

The man allowed me to pray for him God touched him with His power and love. His pain left him and movement in his arm was restored after being lifeless for many years. He was absolutely stunned and amazed that Jesus would do this for him. All of this started with an old man sharing with me his reasons for preferring native-American spirituality over Christianity.

5) **Set hearts free by directing people to God.**

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The

woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will ***you worship the Father.*** *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when* ***the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*** *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* John 4:15-24

At some point in this conversation Jesus received supernatural revelation specifically about this woman's broken past; five former husbands and currently living with someone to whom she wasn't married. Uh, oh! Now she's in for it, right? Jesus knows all about her. Wouldn't a "true prophet" tell her to "repent or you're going to hell!" Religious people seem to think along those lines, like Simon the Pharisee who, in a different setting, said, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." (Luke 7:39)

A prophet is someone who sees and speaks with divine insight through the heart of the Spirit of God. It's not enough to merely speak with divine insight if you don't also speak from God's heart to bless people and set them free to realize their true destiny as a child of God. *"And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge… but have not love, I am nothing."* (1 Cor.13:2) Through the eyes of God, this Samaritan lady was desired by God, sought eternally as a true worshipper, but she saw herself as rejected. Through the eyes of God, she was a vessel capable of receiving and being filled with divine love, but she had given up on love after a long search that left her broken and empty. She felt like her past made her feel as if God and people were against her. God wanted her to know and receive His forgiveness, to realize that God was for her and to be set free from this life of rejection.

So Jesus asked her to call her husband.

GOOD DESIRES GONE ASTRAY

Sin is what people do when we try to fulfill the God given desires of our heart apart from faith in God. The desire for love and belonging isn't bad. It's good.

God “wired us” with these desires so that we would be capable of experiencing joy in fellowship with Him. But without God, our desire for love can lead us into adultery, immorality, or even a relatively happy “godless” marriage. Apart from God, our hearts look for substitutes. God wants to give us Himself, but in order to receive Him, we must let go of our substitutes. Jesus saw this through the eyes of His Spirit, Jesus saw that this lady had to let go of her shame, her rejection, her inferiority, and her immorality to step into her place as a Spirit-filled worshipper, loved and sought after by the true and living God.

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4



Prophetic ministry turns our hearts to the Lord by exposing the misdirected desires, but does so in a way that people understand that you are using the truth *for them, not against them*. “*Love rejoices with the truth…*” and “*the truth will set you free!*” Prophetic ministry is just loving people with the truth they need to be set free!

I was at home one evening and a man was knocking at my door. Marty had walked down to my house from a neighborhood pub because the bar tender had suggested that he come visit me. I took Marty out to a McDonald’s restaurant for some fries and a soda, where he poured out his heart for about an hour. He told me he had had addiction problems most of his adult life, and had lost every woman that ever loved him, and that he just found out that his fiancé was leaving him. He was afraid because he was feeling suicidal, depressed, and hopeless.

How would you respond to Marty? Some Christians would perhaps quote Bible verses, like “*The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.*” (Prov. 5:22) or “*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption*” (Gal. 6:7-8) While these principles are true Biblically, they weren’t the place I started with Marty. They weren’t what Marty needed to hear.

I told him about my own drinking habit. “Marty, you might be surprised, but I have a drinking habit too. I drink constantly. Every day. I can’t stop and the truth is, I don’t want to. I’ve found that I’m happier when I drink. I think more clearly and work harder when I drink. I’m a better person when I drink. When I drink I’m not depressed or angry. In fact, the reason that I have a strong, stable marriage is because I *won’t stop drinking*. I don’t think you need to stop drinking at all. I believe ***you need to change what you are drinking***. If you drink what I drink, you can be happy, peaceful, and pull your life together. You can have a free lifetime supply that will never run dry. It’s the Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus Christ. Do you know how you can have the same thing?”

When your heart and eyes are open, you’ll see people as God sees them and find creative ways to reveal God’s heart for them. You’ll see past their sins to the place where the cry of their empty heart connects with overflowing love pouring out from God’s hearts. Like Jesus, we’ll need to find ways to interact with people and make the most of every opportunity to reveal God’s heart and destiny for each person. As the apostle Paul reminds us, “*Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*” (Col. 4:5-6). Jesus is a master at doing this, and He now lives in us!

From Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well, we learn several more important tactics.

KEY TACTICS:

- Interact. Start conversations. Ask strangers questions. Ask for help. Involve them in your life.

- You can speak into people’s lives by springing from the natural to the spiritual.

- God speaks to set people free and invite them into their true value and destiny… not to make them feel ashamed or embarrassed. We are always liberators, not judges.

SHARP SHOES OPEN DOORS

Just recently I took a friend out on the streets to activate him in Kingdom ministry. We went to a shopping center and started walking down the sidewalk in front of the stores. As a young man was coming towards us, I wanted to start a conversation. I noticed that he had on some bright red shoes, so as he approached us I said, “Hey man, those shoes are sharp. Where did you get them?” He answered, then I followed up with “Were they expensive?” He answered. I followed up with, “How’s your day going today?” He answered. I followed up with, “So what brings you down here today?”

What was I doing? I was breaking the ice by asking a few non-threatening questions. We started with shoes. We could have done something else like, “Hey, do you need healing for anything in your body?” Sometimes I do this. There will be times when you feel like you should just go for it! So DON’T take any of this coaching as static one, two, three formula or hard and fast rules. But in general, when you want to start a conversation with a stranger look for something you can talk about with them about that would make sense to them. Jesus started with water to reach a woman. We started with shoes to reach a man. Look for someone you can talk to, then find a way to speak to them that breaks the ice. Questions are a great way to get people to start talking with you.

We turned the conversation toward Kingdom ministry by asking another question, “This may sound strange, but do you have anything that gives you pain or problems in your body? Anything at all?” So instead of leading with a word of encouragement, we decided to start through the door of healing. Right away, he said “My back hurts. Why do you ask?” Then we explained that God uses us to help people get free from their pain by doing miracles to show His love. My friend laid hands and told the pain to go and the man was healed. Then we talked about the gospel and he re-committed his life to Jesus!

God is eager to open His heart to others through you. God has redeeming love in His heart for each person you meet and every stranger you pass. You are His appointed ambassador, His spokesman. He wants to speak His words of life that will restore people to His heart through you. He wants to speak to His lost sons and daughters through you. Will you allow Him speak through you?

POINTERS FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY

When I speak into people’s lives, I often see myself as God’s messenger boy sent

to speak His message to lost sons. Sometimes I speak to them about the wonderful qualities that they have in their lives and how special they are to God. They need to know that God knows them, that He's for them, and that He has a destiny for them that far outshines what they've envisioned for themselves (and I don't mean the American dream… I mean God's dreams for them- sonship, wholeness, provision, value, redemption, and becoming an ambassador of Christ impacting lives for eternity).

Jesus Christ is called the "author of our salvation." In another place it says, that the "blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of bulls and goats." You've read the book that Jesus has authored, called "SALVATION." This is the Word that He has authored over each one of us. You can hear what the blood of Jesus Christ is speaking. When you're out at a restaurant, what does the blood of Jesus Christ say about your waitress? What words has Jesus Christ written over the life of your neighbors and co-workers when He authored SALVATION for them? What does the blood of Jesus say about their value, God's destiny for them? What does it say about what God wants to do in them, for them and through them? What is God's salvation able to restore in their lives? What words are these precious souls believing that need to be exposed as lies because you've read the book that Jesus Christ authored called SALVATION? *These* are some of the things that God wants to speak into people's lives through you. We must open our hearts and open our mouths to allow God's heart to pour out through our words into the lives of those who haven't yet truly grasped the depths of God's value or the significance of His purpose for their lives.

Hopefully, you're really eager to share these words of life with the people you encounter. So how does this work?
Here are some pointers that will help you get started:

1) **The Spirit with which you speak is as important as the words you say**. "*Pursue love and earnestly desire that you may prophesy*." (1 Cor. 14:1)

   Speak from God's redeeming love. You'll speak more as you *desire* to speak in God's love. Remember, "*The one who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation*." (1 Cor. 14:3)

Align your heart with this purpose in all your words.

2) Speak the gospel revelation into people's lives on a personal level even when you don't have anything unique to say.

You can say things like, "I really believe God wants you to know that He paid an awesome price for you because you are incredibly valuable to Him." Or "I believe God wants you to know that He's a refuge for you in the midst of everything you are going through." As we open our mouth in faith to let God love and speak truth to people through us, we'll be amazed at the divine TIMING of these encounters.

3) Give yourself "permission to be wrong."

Being afraid to make a mistake can keep you from speaking everything that God is truly showing you. Prophetic revelation will stretch your faith as you learn to speak what you have no human way of knowing. You will grow in speaking from the Holy Spirit as you take those steps of faith to address specific issues that you may not be as "certain about." For example, you may have the impression that God wants to set them free from guilt related to a divorce, but you are not even sure they've been married, much less divorced. So in cases like this you can say, "Have you ever been divorced?" or in other instances you can say, "I may be wrong, but I sense…" Then get some feedback. After you become more confident, you'll be able to speak from the Spirit with greater certainty.

4) After you speak, give people an opportunity for feedback.

"Does that make sense to you? Was there anything that was particularly encouraging or anything that seemed to miss the mark?" Getting feedback from others will help you develop more confidence and accuracy in hearing the Lord and speaking from Him.

5) You can open the door for a Word in any conversation.

Try these:

- Can I share something with you that'll probably make you smile?

- I sense that you're the kind of person that… and I could see God using you to…

- As I look at you, I just get the feeling that God wants you to know…

6) Enquire. Ask God specific questions. Speak from what He shows you.

Ask God things like:

- What do they need to hear?

- Is there a Bible verse that would be special for them right now?

- What are they good at? What are their gifts, strengths, weaknesses?

- What do they NOT see about their value to God and destiny in God?

- What movie, book or Bible character are they like? In what way?

- What would salvation through Jesus restore to them?

- What does the blood of Jesus say about them to you, Father?

- What do you want to say to your lost son/daughter right now, Father?

7) Just start. More will come as you speak.

God's thoughts towards each of us "outnumber the sands of the seas." So He has a word for everyone. God says, "Open your mouth, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10)

8) You don't need special leadings or promptings to speak a prophetic word of encouragement.

However, pay attention to whom and to what your attention is drawn. God tells us, "I will lead you with my eye" Ps. 32:8. One of the ways He does this is by drawing our attention to specific people, things about them, words they say, or situations. You often don't understand fully why your attention is drawn, but just recognize it. For example, you may see someone and

experience a surge of compassion or an urgency to talk to a particular person out of a crowd. When this happens, move towards them to speak and act in faith.

9) Even though you are seeking to speak from the Lord into someone's life, **remember that God empowers them to "test all things, and cling to what is good."** (1Thes 5:21) Only God's word in Scripture has absolute authority in our lives.

SPIRIT TALK

As you begin to move out in the prophetic, it's also very important to be aware of some of the ways that God is able to speak to you. As you develop in your ability to hear God, you will become a more effective minister in this area.

Here are some of the ways that God most commonly speaks:

1) **Reminding you of the Truth**

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and ***bring to your remembrance*** *all that I have said to you.* John 14:26

Sometimes, you can be in a conversation or situation, and the Holy Spirit will speak to you by bringing truth to your mind. He often will bring a verse of Scripture or a lesson He taught you in the past, kind of like a pop-up advertisement suddenly "pops up" on a web site. The Holy Spirit wants to speak to you and through you.

2) **A word or phrase interrupting your own thoughts**

And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." Act 8:29

The Holy Spirit can "hack into the computer" of our own minds so that He can start a chat session with us. He expresses His thoughts to us so that we see it or hear it in our own thoughts. Often He does this as we learn to quiet ourselves before Him and listen.

3) **Seeing pictures in your minds-eye**

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young

*men shall **see** visions…"* Act 2:17

*So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he **sees** the Father doing…For the Father loves the Son and **shows him** all that he himself is doing."* John 5:19- 5:20

Consecrate your imagination to God. Our imagination is like a movie screen that allows us to "see" things that are generated completely from within. Be aware that God often speaks in pictures that He brings to our minds. Or God can speak by playing little movies in our mind.

4) **Seeing something externally- open vision**

*And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and **saw the heavens opened** and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."* Act 10:10-13

These kinds of open visions tend to be less common than visions that appear in our own imagination. However, when they are happen, they are very significant and should be taken very seriously. Open visions are not a sign of being more spiritual than other believers. In fact, had Peter been obedient to Jesus' command to go into all the world, God would not have needed to give him an open vision. An open vision may actually be a sign that God is being very gracious to get you moving after you've stalled on the path towards fulfilling God's destiny for your life.

5) **Tongues with Interpretation**

If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. 1 Cor. 14:27-28

When we speak in tongues, we speak the mysteries of God in our spirit. It's like downloading a song off the internet. It comes into our computer in computer language. But once the download is complete, the song is ready to be played. This is interpretation of tongues.

Praying in our heavenly prayer language builds us up in the spirit and makes us sensitive to activity of the Spirit of God. As you pray in tongues with more regularity and intensity, you will become more aware of how the flow of God's Spirit feels within you. You'll become aware of the location within you that is the source of our heavenly prayer language. This is often "where" we hear God's voice. We learn to discern the operation of our spirits verses the operation of our own brain.

6) **A spontaneous burst of spiritual understanding**

If a revelation comes to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one 1 Cor. 14:30-31

Because the Spirit of God lives inside of us, He can share His perspective and understanding with us. While teachers rely upon the thorough study of the Word of God, the prophetic ministry relies upon the spontaneous bursting forth of truth and understanding.

7) **Hearing God's audible voice**

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Act 9:3-4

Many have experienced God's audible voice even today.

8) **A dream**

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall ***dream dreams****;* Acts 2:17

Dreams, just like our thoughts, can come from a variety of sources, such as our own imaginations, the influence of the enemy, or God. So it is important to consider the source of the dream and be aware that God can speak to you through dreams even today. God often speaks to people in dreams throughout the Bible. Dreams are often symbolic and require some interpretation. Negative dreams are not usually unalterable revelations of the future, but warnings to encourage faith and action.

9) **Angelic communication**

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Act 8:26

Sometimes we get a little caught up in what we're doing, and the Lord sends an angel to give us a little tap on the spiritual shoulder so that we don't miss a divine appointment. Angelic communication to a believer is not a bad thing, but it isn't the normal way in which God communicates with us either. In the same way that we don't rely upon prophets to tell us what God says because we have the Spirit of God within us, we don't rely upon angels either.

For example, if my wife tells me that dinner will be ready in ten minutes, then I shouldn't need her to come tell me again. As husband and wife, our normal way of staying coordinated is personal communication. But if ten minutes goes by and I haven't come down stairs from my office yet, she may call out from the bottom of the stairs, "Andy, dinner is on the table." But if I've got my head phones on listening to some worship music while I'm working on my computer, I may not even hear that. So she may send up one of the children, "Will you go upstairs and tell your Dad that dinner is on the table?" My wife sending a child to knock on the door is her attempt to pull me out of being so engrossed in my work that I don't miss dinner. It's a gracious supplement for direct personal communication, not a substitute for it. She's sending a child to knock on the door to accommodate the fact that I've gotten engrossed in my work. God did this for Phillip, who was leading a revival in Samaria, and He does this for us today when we need it.

FRIENDLY ANGELS ARE USUALLY EVIL

A word of caution: If you ever begin to have regular angelic communication from any angel or spirit attempting to draw you into a relationship with itself, cut it off. Command it to stop and go away. Ignore it from then on. You don't need it or want it. It's a devil masquerading as an "angel of light." Holy angels always serve, support, and advance your personal relationship with God Himself. They never try to insert themselves into the picture.

My wife and I led one young lady, Beth, to faith in Jesus Christ. We met together with Beth regularly for several weeks before she confided in us that she had "spirit friends" that she wanted to ask us about. Beth told us about three spirit

friends that she has literally seen since she was in high school. They came to Beth when her friends died in a car wreck. Because she didn't know Jesus at that time, when Beth's "dead friends" came to her to comfort her in her grief, when they told her they could keep being "spirit friends", Beth was happy. They told her that they could hear and see God, and would tell her what God wanted her to know. But since she received Jesus, these "spirit friends" were getting very unruly. She was beginning to question whether these friends were actually helping her, or hurting her.

Deceitful spirits had used the tragedy of her friends death to come into her life imitating their form and function in her life. Worse than that, these spirits had been functioning as mediators between her and God. So we explained that "there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim 2:5) We taught her about her authority over demons and she commanded those deceitful spirits to leave her life. She watched them leave and was glad to have them gone once she understood what had been happening.

But genuine angelic communication builds up the Kingdom. I remember drinking coffee with my friend Dustin who was visiting. We were discussing the revelation of our union with Christ, but all of a sudden I saw Dustin's face go flush and his eyes began to well up with tears and he was looking distant, as if our conversation had just been interrupted. I suspected that Dustin had just been touched by God in some way so I stopped and waited for him to share. Dustin said, "I'm sorry. I was enjoying our fellowship and paying attention, but something just happened. It was like a rush of wind came over me. There was a "word" in this wind and I believe it was for you. The word was "Come." I asked him lots of questions, "Was that for me? My family? For a little while? A long time?" Dustin said, "I don't know. It just said "Come."

Eventually, through prayer and seeking the Lord, I ended up going to visit Dustin in Cambodia for an amazing short term mission that resulted in many people getting healed, saved, and equipped for more effective service in the Kingdom of God. Because the word for me was given through Dustin, I discerned that I was being invited to come to Cambodia to assist Dustin and work with him, not to pack up the family and move there. It was also a confirmation to Dustin that inviting me to come was not his own idea, but heaven's idea. (This is not to say that heaven's ideas always require an angelic

message, but this did give Dustin and me some additional assurance.) This ministry was directed from heaven and began with Dustin hearing the Word "Come" from an angelic messenger.

You may wonder, "How do you know it was an angel? Couldn't it be the Holy Spirit that spoke to Dustin?" The Holy Spirit speaks to us from the inside. Angels speak to us from the outside.

This word came from a rush of wind filled with the presence of God, like a puff of God's presence that brought a brief, one word message.

> *Of the angels he says, "**He makes his angels winds,** and his ministers a flame of fire."* (Heb 1:7)

The word did not bubble up from the inside, but interrupted Dustin from the outside. This was an angel. In the end, it's not essential to determine whether it is from an angel or the Holy Spirit, only that it is from God whatever the method of communication.

You can expect to experience this as well whenever you need it. Angels are part of the divine arsenal to communicate with people, even to born again believers who have the Holy Spirit. But holy angels always function as servants of God, not substitutes for God.

10) A "holy highlight" of a person, object, or action

The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north." Then the LORD said to me, "Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. Jer 1:13-14

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Psalm 32:8

Pay attention to where your attention is drawn. You never have to wait for a special leading or prompting to go and minster to anyone, but when you receive special revelation from the Holy Spirit, pay attention. There have been many times that I have been out in public and one particular person captures my

attention. Sometimes it's as simple as that- my attention is captured. Other times, someone is highlighted by a flash of light around them that I see in the Spirit. Sometimes when I am preaching, I'll look at someone and know that God is doing something in a particular persons heart right now. Sometimes you'll walk by people and notice that they are affected by your presence. Other times you will just "see" the Holy Spirit on someone by their countenance or through an observable reaction such as tears, trembling, groaning, laughter, or some other indication of God's activity. These are invitations for you to join God where He is at work.

11) Words of Knowledge in the form of:
- Physical sensations
- Emotional Sensations
- An "inner knowing" or Holy Ghost "intuition"

> *For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.* 1 Cor. 12:8

I remember being out shopping one afternoon and one of my children needed to go to the restroom. In this particular store, the lobby for the restrooms was in the same location as a customer service counter. As I waited, one of the store employees came to the counter. As soon as she got close to me I had a strange twinge in my lower back. So I looked at her and said, "This may sound crazy, but do you have problems in your lower back?" She stepped back with big eyes, and said, "That's weird. Yah. I have pain all the time. Why?" I told her, "You may not believe this, but I believe God just showed me your pain because He wants to heal you. Come around here real quick and let's check your alignment and let me pray for you." She said hesitatingly said, "Ooohh kayyyy" and began moving around the counter towards the chair I pointed out. She had no idea what was going on, but was willing to trust me in hopes that her back pain would be healed. I had her sit in a chair and she had one leg that was about a half-inch short, so I commanded her legs to be aligned. It grew out even and all her back pain left. She was amazed and I had the opportunity to share Jesus with her… all because of a word of knowledge in the form of a physical sensation.

The same thing can happen with emotions. For example, you may be in a conversation with someone and have a strong sense of grief, or fear, or guilt

come over you for no apparent reason. Many times people misunderstand this as an attack from the enemy, especially if the emotion is unpleasant. Sometimes it is. However, it may be a word of knowledge about something going on in someone else close to you. When it's a word of knowledge, God allows you to "feel the emotion" in such a way that you realize that it's not your emotions you are feeling. You may wonder, "how do you find out whether this a word from God or not"? You'll have to ask. For example, you may need to say something like, "This may sound strange, but have you been dealing with some grief lately?" Just ask. If you're wrong, just explain, "Well, I thought God might have been showing me something, but I'm still learning and sometimes I'm wrong. I thought I should ask just in case." If you are correct, you'll have the privilege of being a co-worker with God to set someone free.

TESTING EVERY SPIRIT

The Bible demonstrates clearly that God is able to speak to us supernaturally directly through the Spirit of God dwelling inside of our spirits in a way that is in keeping with the Scriptures themselves. However, God's Word also cautions us, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to *deceitful spirits* and *teachings of demons*." (1 Tim. 4:1) So because there are deceitful spirits, we must be diligent to "test every spirit because not every spirit is from God." (1 John 4:1)

My first fifteen years as a Christian were spent mainly among believers who held the conviction that God doesn't communicate directly to us anymore. They believed that His only means of communication to people was through means of reading the Holy Scriptures. However, eventually I asked the question, "Where does it teach *in the Bible* that God won't communicate with us directly anymore now that we have the Bible?" When I studied this out, I discovered that the Bible taught that one of the main distinctions between believers in the New Covenant vs. the Old Covenant was the fact that God dwelled in us personally *to communicate with us and through us directly.*

For example, on the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be marked by every believer experiencing various forms of prophetic revelation.

> *But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,*

> *and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy… And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* Acts 2:16-18, 38-39

While Peter indicated the believers would experience prophesy in many various forms now that the Holy Spirit had been given, he also proclaimed that this remains an enduring gift for *"**all** who are far off, **everyone** whom the Lord our God calls to Himself."* This passage and others convinced me that the Bible itself bore witness that believers in Christ would experience direct communication from God.

Not only that, but my experience showed me that even the believers that were the most staunch contenders for the ceasing of all direct communication outside of the Bible were experiencing direct communication from God themselves! In these circles, the Holy Spirit is still experienced in a limited fashion, but believers have learned not to say, "The Holy Spirit spoke to me" for fear of being hauled in by the "doctrine gestapo." Instead, they learn to say things like, "The Lord just laid this on my heart for you…" or "I just feel like the Lord wants me to say this to you…" On one instance, I remember the wife of one of the elders at the reformed Baptist church I was attending came into the Sunday school class and said, "Before we start today's lesson, I just need to tell ya'll (we were in the south) that God woke me up early this morning. And I don't know who needs to hear this but He showed me that I'm supposed to share these three things…" She then proceeded to share those things. Then a lady in the back of the room began weeping profusely.

The next week at this reformed Baptist Sunday school we heard the rest of the story. The lady who began weeping in the back of the room had been struggling with depression and considering suicide. As a last ditch effort, she had decided to go to church and give God one last chance. She said, "God, I'm giving you one last chance. I need to know these three things… If I don't get any clarity, you must not really be there or if you are, you must not care about me." God, in

His mercy, wakes up this Baptist Sunday school teacher and tells her specifically the exact three things that this suicidal lady told God she must hear! The Holy Spirit is moving supernaturally within His church, sometimes in spite of limitations imposed by our bad theology.

I've spent the last 15 years of my Christian life in what I affectionately call "Charismania", believers who believe in the present day supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Although I have witnessed a fair amount of spiritual reality, I've also seen a great deal of confusion and abuse attributed to the speaking of the "Holy Spirit."

As we learn to hear and speak to others from the Holy Spirit, it's important that we have a few basic guidelines to keep us from being carried away by deceitful spirits. There are many passages that help us with discerning the Lord's voice from all others, but in my opinion, the most all-inclusive passage to help us in this regard is found in 1 John 4:1-9. We'll go through this passage to draw out some of the principles by which we can embrace supernatural communication from the Holy Spirit without being deceived by other spirits.

Here are a few basic guidelines to distinguish the Holy Spirit from other deceiving spirits:

1) **Is it from God? Does it pass this basic test?**

> *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see* ***whether they are from God****, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* 1 Jn. 4:1-9

There are people who move in the supernatural and preach about Jesus Christ who are manifesting the ***wrong spirit***. We can detect and avoid deceitful spirits but we must be willing to test every spirit. False prophets resent people testing the spirits to examine their source.

I remember a friend pulling my wife aside to ask us what we thought of "toking the Ghost." We had never heard of it. Apparently, she was in a meeting in which the speaker talked about "getting high" on Jesus Christ. So he lit up an imaginary "Holy Ghost" joint and was having people inhale. After inhaling, these people began acting and feeling high, literally. She saw some of her trusted friends do this and they began acting the same way… laughing hysterically,

rolling on the floor, and acting foolishly. She wasn't sure that Jesus was really sponsoring this "spiritual pot-party." She wanted to know whether we thought this was of God.

I asked her what she thought. She said, "I didn't do it because I wasn't sure. But then the leader of the meeting started to say that I had a religious spirit." This is a very common tactic today. It's called ***mocking***. We have to be willing to test every spirit, and any minister who comes against you for testing every spirit is on very dangerous ground. God wants you to make sure that people are moving in the Holy Spirit and not cave into a "lust for the supernatural" in which you are (in the words of a popular song "just waiting for something beautiful to touch you." Not everything that appears beautiful is good. Not everything that can touch you in the spirit is good. Not every good feeling is holy. There is such a thing as "passing pleasures of sin", and one of the works of *the flesh* is witchcraft. So we must test every spirit to be sure they are from God.

> *"In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.* Jude 18-19

Can a touch from the Holy Spirit make someone laugh, or fall down, or even roll around? Absolutely. But we must also ask, "Is the spirit being manifest godly or ungodly? Does this spirit seek to preserve the unity of the body of Christ or does it cause divisions? Does this spirit care for God and the things of God, or is it worldly, fleshly?"

Sometimes, even generally godly and faithful ministers can manifest the wrong spirit in something they say or do. They may speak or act according to the flesh, or speak according to human wisdom, which the Word says is "*earthly, unspiritual, **and demonic***." (James 3:15) People who have genuine healings, miracles, leadership gifts, or a good reputation in the church still have some flaws. By testing every Spirit, we activate a spiritual immune system that keeps us spiritually healthy, filled with the Holy Spirit, and free from deceptive lies.

> *Do not despise prophecies, but **test everything**; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* 1 Thes.5:20-22

We are ***not*** testing things looking for every little flaw. We are looking *for the good*, looking for God, with full awareness that testing everything is essential when the ministry of prophesy is in operation. Even as we test prophesies that are spoken to us, we must also be willing to allow those to whom we may speak a word to test what we say to them. As we test, we are not primarily focused on looking for things that could be wrong. We are looking for "the good" so that we can receive it and hold on to it. As for the rest, we abstain from it. We don't receive it.

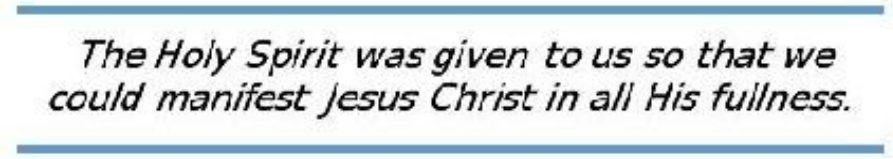
2) Does it align with Jesus Christ Himself and the truth about Him?

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 1 Jn. 4:2-3

Did Jesus do that? Did Jesus tell us to do that? Those are two great questions that cut through a lot of confusion in the church today. The Spirit of God speaks the truth about Jesus Christ.

We don't just want any 'ole spirit. We only want the very same Spirit that was manifest perfectly and completely in the man, Christ Jesus. While some in the church don't want the manifestation of any spirit, others in the church have gone off the deep end, seeking all manner of manifestations with no discernment between the Holy Spirit and other spirits. We need to get away from both of these extremes. What we should be doing is seeking only to manifest Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Did Jesus "toke the Ghost"? Of course not. Did Jesus tell His disciples "get high on the Holy Ghost"? Nope! Then whatever Bible verses they may use to support such behavior, we can say with certainty that this is not of God and a deceiving spirit. As for me and my house, "We'll be leaving now. Thanks."



Sometimes people have God in the box of their religious tradition and experience and we need our man made boxes shattered by a real encounter with the true and living God. Some ministries try to pull Christians into error through deceptive mocking saying things like, "God isn't in your little box." While none of us have grasped all there is of God, we can say with certainty that "in Christ is the fullness of God." *God put Himself in a "box"*, the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ contains ALL of God. Jesus Christ is God's box. So if you don't recognize that Spirit as the same Spirit that was manifest in Jesus Christ, or if you didn't already receive that Spirit when you received Jesus Christ, then you don't want it. Just walk away. "No thanks. I'm good."

This is especially important at larger gatherings of the church or in movements led by people with strong personalities. The worship may have been great and very Christ centered. The message and testimonies may have been great and very Christ centered. They may be able to point to many areas where they are bearing good spiritual fruit, such as feeding orphans, starting new churches, or other such things. But when that minister "changed channels" and you began to feel that "what's-this-all-about" check in your spirit, you shouldn't just dismiss your misgivings because of these things. You shouldn't just go along with the crowd into this spiritual manifestation because God is "doing a new thing." Don't be carried away into deception by crowd dynamics or force of personality.

Whenever anyone prophesies, ask "Did Jesus Christ do this? Did Jesus Christ tell me to do this? Is this making me more like Jesus Christ?" When you have a message to share with someone else, check your own message, "Is what I'm saying what Jesus is saying to them? Is this pointing them to obey Jesus Christ, to become more like Him? "

3) **Does it agree with Christ in you as your victory in all things?**

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 1 Jn. 4:4

The Spirit of God sees you as victorious because of Jesus Christ. Any spirit that promotes a mindset that identifies you as anything less than victorious and in union with Jesus Christ is not from the Spirit of God. These deceiving spirits may try to get you to "do the right thing" by inducing a fear of rejection, or spiritual inferiority, or some other defeat-based mindset. These deceiving spirits are what has many in the church running around thinking, "If only I could get so and so to lay hands on me for impartation, then I could walk in power" or "If only I had four generations of pastors as my spiritual heritage, then I could be victorious" or "If I could just lay on John Lake's grave to receive his mantle…" or "You can't cast out a demon because you're not a pastor." The Spirit of God magnifies the greatness of Jesus Christ who lives inside of you as your sufficiency in all things.

Saints, you have already overcome the enemy because of Jesus Christ who lives in you. The Spirit of God is constantly trying to get you to recognize that reality so that the power of Christ's victory can be manifest in your life.

4) **Does it agree with obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

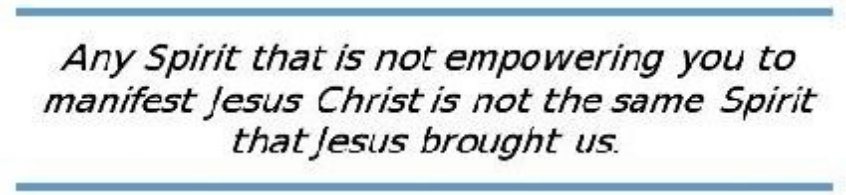
> *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* 1 Jn. 4:5-6

Even the devil can quote the Bible. But the Spirit of God leads people to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to love God, to love their neighbor as themselves, and to fulfill the great commission. We don't need a special prompting from the Holy Spirit to obey the written Word of God.

Some Christians spend their entire human existence in a flesh-induced comfort zone, rarely doing anything that requires significant sacrifice, perseverance, or risk. They push aside things like healing the sick, proclaiming the gospel of Christ, or loving the poor until they receive some special prompting from the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit of God Himself does not give them this luxury. God tells us to be "doers of the Word" (James 1:22), which refers to the *written* Word of God. Having a close personal relationship with the Holy Spirit of God does ***not*** mean that we ignore the requirements of the written Word of God until we receive some special prompting or leading.

> ***Be not*** *like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you*. Ps. 32:9

Horses and mules won't do anything for their riders unless they are pulled, prodded, and poked in the side. They need a special prompting for everything. Unfortunately, some believers are following their example as they sit around getting fat in the pasture until God comes and throws a rope around their neck to pull them to do what He already told them to do in His written Word. Once we realize that we have the freedom and authorization from God to do His Word we have the confidence to run free in the power of His love to advance the Kingdom. The nature of God within us is always leading us to love God, love others, and to advance the Kingdom of God by fulfilling the great commission.



Unfortunately, some people even try to justify rebellion against God under the guise of spirituality by appealing to the Holy Spirit. Once I was helping a couple who had recently professed faith in Jesus Christ. They had been living together off and on for some time. As part of laying a foundation in Christ, we talked about how God's plan for marriage, sex, and faithfulness reflected His covenant with us. Then I asked them what they thought God's will was for them regarding their relationship. With the Bible in their hand, they both said, "We need to get married." That night they had a fight, and one of them told me that they had "prayed about it, and God showed me that it's okay to live together for now until we're sure we should get married." That's a "spiritual" way of saying, "I'm not sure if I'm ready to be married, but I'm scared of being alone, so I'll put God's will off to the side and do things my way." In other words, now they had a feeling that God was saying it would be okay to disobey His Word and live in immorality.

Really? There is nothing to "pray about" in this situation except for the courage to do what is already written. When the Spirit of God shows you something personally, He will never contradict what the Bible says. Regarding our sexuality, He has already made it clear: *"this is the will of God, your*

sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God…For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." (1 Thes. 4:3-8)

If you ever *really hear* a spirit that you believe is "God" say something that encourages you to live in sin, it's ***not*** the Spirit of God. You need to respond like Jesus and say, "It is written…" and do what the Bible says to do to spite what this spirit has impressed upon you.

"***Whoever knows God listens to us." 1 Jn. 4:6***

"**Did the apostles do that? Did the apostles teach us to do that?"** These are two more questions we can put alongside "Did Jesus do that? Did Jesus teach us to do that?"

For example, did the apostles teach us to speak in tongues? Yes. Did the apostles speak in tongues? Yes. Then we should speak in tongues. Did the apostles teach us that tongues would cease after the Bible was written? No. Then we shouldn't teach that either. Did the apostles go around teaching the church to obey the dietary food laws of the Old Testament? No. Did the apostles teach nutrition classes as *the key* to walking in divine health? No. Then we shouldn't either.

Let's take another example. Did the apostles teach that believers could be subject to generational curses or did they teach that believers were blessed in Christ with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and that "Christ had become a curse for them"? Did the apostles set people free from the emotional pain of past traumatic experiences by taking them back into their past memories? Or did they bring them out of the power of the past by teaching them to forgive any past offenses and enter into the power of the new creation? Do you see how much clarity that brings? The Spirit of God inclines our heart to recognize the authority of the revelation of Christ through the apostles.

*You should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and **the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles**, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.* 2Pet. 3:2-3

5) Does it build people up in the redeeming love of God that flows from the life of God?

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love… In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 1 Jn.. 4:6,9

Any spirit that is not manifesting God's self-sacrificing, redeeming love is not God's Spirit. Any spirit that gives you permission to take offense or to throw down your cross because of wrongs done to you isn't the Spirit of God. God's love isn't "ushy gushy" emotion. God's love is the same love that drove Him to stand up to the Pharisees and to flip over tables in the temple and chase these money grubbing thieves out with a cord of whips. It's the same love that said to Peter, "Get behind me Satan because you are setting your mind on man's interest, not God's." God's love has an aggressive edge to it when it's necessary. It is far more than "being nice" in the flesh. Yet, in everything Jesus did, He was redeeming, self-sacrificing love personified, moving to bless, build up, and set people free. The only reason Jesus "got in their face" was because He loved people too much to let them remain captive to Satan.

Some ministers make the mistake of teaching God's love as if it was merely a Law or standard for us to strive to attain by our own effort. It is not! Whenever anyone upholds the standards of God apart from proclaiming the power of God's Spirit as the one who fulfills those same standards in us, people are set up for defeat, frustration, and legalism. Proclaiming the provision of Christ kicks faith into action so that our obedience is "obedience of faith."

God is love. So we must "pursue love." Our pursuit of love is simply seeking to live by the divine life that God has already put inside of us. So our pursuit of love is by faith! *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."* (Rom. 5:5)

I remember listening to a sermon one day and the minister was speaking on "How to be a godly Father." He did a great job of teaching the biblical standards

for being a good father, but by the end of the message, I didn't feel built up in my spirit at all. I felt under tons of pressure to act differently.

Why? He proclaimed the standards of God alone without also proclaiming the provision of the Spirit of God to us as the one through whom these standards of godly fatherhood are fulfilled in us. His message was right as far as it went, but because it was so incomplete, the *spirit of the message* was in error. The spirit of the message was, "Try harder so you don't mess up your kids." A Muslim or Jew could've preached the same message. "Here's the list of things God wants us to do. Now snap to it." The Spirit of God always reveals Jesus Christ as the one who empowers us to fulfill the Word.

6) Does the Spirit of God agree with the message? What does the "anointing" say about it?

> *I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.* 1 Jn. 2:26-27

In the Old Testament, when someone was set apart for the Kingdom of God, ointment was poured out upon them. They were anointed as priests, prophets, or kings. To be "anointed" was essentially the same as being appointed. They were anointed for this special role by the application of the ointment. Before the ointment is applied, it's just ointment. Once the ointment is applied, it has become an "anointing." The anointing is the application of the ointment that sets them apart for God.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, the perfect priest, prophet, and King, is called "THE anointed one." He is the "ointment" of God fully applied to human flesh setting Himself apart as Lord and Savior. He is the Christ.

We don't have our own anointing. We get Jesus' anointing.

Believers in Christ

have received *His anointing*. We are set apart as sons of God in the Son. We don't get our own anointing. We abide in Him and get "***His*** anointing." The same ointment of God's own divine nature that was poured out upon Jesus Christ has now been poured out upon us through Him to mark us for the Kingdom of God.

This anointing is the divine life of Christ poured out within our spirits. We are marked and set apart for God by a living union with God in our spirit. However, God is not static. He has taken up residence within us to *reign* in our hearts. He is leading us from the inside by making us partakers of His divine nature. "*His anointing **teaches** you about everything, and is true, and is not lie."* (1 Jn.. 2:27) He will not allow us to subject ourselves to lies, sin, or any evil. He teaches us that *"you abide in Him"* which is another way of saying that *"The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits that we are sons of God." (Rom. 8:16)*

When the ointment of God's nature agrees or disagrees with anything, and you discern that through your union with Him inside of you, the anointing teaches you. God's Spirit is far better at discerning than are we. The "Yes" of God within our spirit is sometimes experienced as a "No!" The anointing of God, the union of God within our spirits, is true, so He can't agree with a lie. He is holy, so neither will He agree with ungodliness. He agrees with love and won't agree with selfishness. Much like the attraction or repulsion of a magnet, the Spirit of God is attracted to that which is of Christ and repelled by those things that are of the domain of darkness.

We experience the "Yes" of God and the "No" of God within ourselves, sometimes even beyond what we understand in our minds. You will sometimes hear people say, "I'm not sure what bothers me about our brother's message this morning, but something seemed "off" to me." The more that we mature in our walks with God and renew our minds to the Word of God, the more we understand the activity of the Spirit of God. This is why the apostle says, "I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it" (1 Jn. 2:21). The Word of God allows us to align our minds with what our spirit already knows. We may embrace a teaching in our mind that seems Biblical or right, but there is no "life", no agreement with the Spirit of God within you. Or you may come into contact with a teaching that contradicts what you have

previously been taught that has a strong sense of “Yes” within your spirit even though your mind is saying, “I have always been taught differently.” The Spirit of God always agrees with the Word of God. He may contradict our doctrinal paradigms, or our mindsets and practices surrounding those doctrines, but the Spirit of God will always agree with the Word of God *rightly divided*. We must learn to give heed to the Holy Spirit of God. As we do so, we will become “a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15)

The apostle John was writing to churches that were in a great crisis. They were being bombarded by false teachers. Yet as John wrote them, he was confident. He assured them that they didn’t need him to write them to teach them the truth. John understood that the Spirit of God within each believer had already taught them that these false-teachers were wrong. How did the Holy Spirit teach them? By His touch on the inside.

The truth of God and the Spirit of God are one. “*The Spirit **is** the truth*” (1 John 5:6) So, when a false message is preached, the Spirit of God within the believer disagrees with that message. Like magnets with conflicting polarities, the Spirit of God is opposed to lies. He withdraws His “Yes!” Because we experience the activity of God within ourselves, as the anointing withdraws from the message, He pulls our insides with Him. There’s no “touch of God”, “no life” in that message. We feel repelled even if our minds don’t see anything wrong with it. The Spirit of God can’t agree with lies. He won’t touch it. The anointing is teaching us to withdraw from every message, mindset, and practice that doesn’t fit our new nature as a son of God.

We do well to pay attention to the witness of the Holy Spirit within us as we speak or listen to a message. Believers run into problems when they begin to override the ministry of the Spirit of God within them by their own human reason or emotion. “*His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie.”*

The union of God’s Spirit within our spirit always knows the truth and leads us into all truth.

I remember a season in my life when the Holy Spirit was addressing a specific habit. I kept looking for a verse in the Scriptures that would tell me “Thou shall not…,” but I never found one. I used this to justify carrying on with my habit despite the unmistakable sense that whenever I would move towards indulging in this behavior, I would immediately perceive the Holy Spirit withdraw. He was leading me to put a misdeed of the flesh to death, but I wasn’t following. Instead, I argued within myself, “There is no Bible verse that forbids it,” and “My other Christian friends do this all the time and don’t seem to be bothered by it.” Eventually I came into line with the Holy Spirit. Now that I’m on the other side of this issue, I can see clearly that the Holy Spirit was setting me free from chains I couldn’t even see. Brothers and sisters, we must learn to yield to the Holy Spirit even when our minds don’t yet grasp the truth.

Our minds are not designed to be our primary source of discernment. Our spirit is. Our minds tend to operate by systems of logic and truth statements based on a mixture of experience, Scripture, and peer influence. People who discern with mainly with their mind are rigid and easily deceived. They hold fast to a pre-arranged doctrinal system and use this as a grid to evaluate everything. This works okay until they run into something they don’t have a grid for or places in which their own system is in error. What then? This is why it is far better to learn to rely upon the “anointing we received from Him.” The Spirit of God is far better at discerning truth from error than us. He renews and uses our minds, but under His direction. When our minds can’t figure out what’s wrong, the Spirit of God within our spirit is able to let us know, “That’s not true” as we sense His reaction to the message within our spirits. The Spirit of God is able to keep us in the truth so that we establish our relationship with Christ in us and walk in His fullness.

Truth in its ultimate sense can only be revealed *by* the Spirit *to* the mind. Truth is God allowing us to participate in His own perspective. The “organ” for receiving truth into our mind is our spirit in union with the Holy Spirit. You can’t shove a sandwich into your stomach through your belly button. You must put your food into your mouth, chew and swallow, so that the food can go into the stomach properly. The spirit is the “mouth” of the mind. Unless it comes into our minds from the Spirit, it will not build us up. If it doesn’t fit in the “mouth” of our Spirit, it shouldn’t go into the “stomach of our minds” to be digested.

When our mind comes into contact with the truth apart from our spirit, we receive the truth merely as something we "know" or "agree with" or "understand." We become "puffed up" with knowledge, and our minds become hardened. But when we receive the truth by the Spirits, we embrace the truth with faith, love, and hope. Instead of merely accumulating more spiritual facts, we embrace the truth with a living faith that unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Truth received in our spirits produces love that kindles holy passions and inspires obedience and sacrifice. Holding the truth of God's word firm by the spirit empowers us to hope in spite of all manner of difficulty "as seeing the one who is unseen." When we receive the truth by the Spirit, we become living epistles with the Word of Christ richly dwelling within us, not merely living encyclopedias with years of accumulated Bible knowledge.

Several years ago I attended a worship gathering sponsored by a group in the region in which I lived. The worship music included some of my favorite songs and the singers and musicians were superb. But I was just feeling dead as I sang. Nothing was going on in the spirit. It was just words and notes, purely human. I thought perhaps it was just me, so rather than strive, I decided to walk to the back of the venue and just pray. Without any prompting, two of my friends independently came over to me and said, "What's going on? Something's wrong. God's not part of this." I couldn't understand it, but I knew from the teaching of the Holy Spirit, something was wrong. So I left. God never showed me what was wrong, but He showed me that He didn't want me involved.

The Word of God, when received by faith, is supernatural communication directly from God Himself.

On the other hand, before I understood and believed that Jesus would heal the sick through us today in the same way He healed the sick when He walked the earth, someone handed me a DVD of Dan Mohler preaching the opening message for a "Power and Love Conference." I had never heard of Dan, but I was thrilled to hear him pour out the revelation of our union with Christ with such simplicity and reality. I said, "This guy gets it!" Finally, I had found someone who was preaching the same gospel that I preached. But then Dan shifted his message from living by

identifying ourselves with Christ towards healing the sick. “We heal today because Jesus heals! He isn’t a hope so, maybe so Savior. He’s the Yes and Amen of God!” My head was saying, “But what about Paul’s thorn and Timothy’s stomach.” My spirit was crying, “YES! This is it.” I knew I had a problem. The problem was that my head didn’t agree with the Spirit of God or the Word of God. So I began to seek the Lord for revelation, and He very quickly gave me what I needed to begin the process of renewing my mind in this area.

God is able to speak through us supernaturally and directly. But let’s not forget that God’s Holy Word is direct supernatural communication from God to each one of us. As we pursue God’s prophetic revelation, let’s not under value the Holy Bible. As our minds are renewed and our hearts aligned by the Spirit of God to the Holy Word of God, we will be able to discern more accurately God’s prophetic revelation. God will be able to pour out His truth and love into people through us as we allow Him to speak through us. He is also able to give us discernment so that we are not led astray by deceiving spirits who seek to imitate His work and confuse the body of Christ. We have the same Spirit as Jesus Christ and the apostles, so let us manifest the same lifestyle, power, and purpose. By testing all things by the words and life of the Lord Jesus and the apostles, and allowing the Spirit of God to lead us into all truth, we will stay on the path of truth, life, and love; destroying the lies of Satan and setting captives free!

So far we’ve learned how to release the power of God through our testimonies and by speaking prophetically. In the next chapter we are going to learn one of the most powerful ways to demonstrate His Kingdom; healing the sick! When we combine healing the sick with our words, we have a powerful “one-two” combination that is a powerful force for advancing the Kingdom of God! Are you ready to learn how to heal the sick like Jesus? Read on my friend.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) Get in a groups of 3 or 4. You will take turns receiving words from the others. Go from the shortest person in the group to the tallest receiving words of encouragement from the others.

Each of those who are NOT the one receiving the words of encouragement, will take turns speaking. Go through the following exercises. Keep the Words brief and encouraging. Keep your eyes open and keep it conversational. When one person stops, the next one should start quickly. Don't wait. Speak God's truth! (No "waiting on a word from God." Open your mouth and God will fill it.)

Go through the following exercises in rounds in the group. Ask the Lord a specific question about the people in your group, then share a word of encouragement from what He shows you. Do one question each round:

- What super hero or movie character do they remind you of? Why?
- What Bible character are they like? Why?
- What Bible verse do you have for them? Why?
- One of the ways I see Jesus in you is…? I could see God using you to…

2) Give one another feedback.

- When did you feel most stretched by the Holy Spirit as you were speaking?
- When did you feel particularly encouraged or like God was speaking to you through someone in the group?

3) Send half of the group out of the room. Everyone remaining in the room should gather a variety of random objects (keys, bible, cell phone, shoe, belt, wallet, pillow, and other such items) and place them on a table in the center of the room. Have everyone come back inside the room and select one object off of the table. Each of those who were IN THE ROOM, should now speak a word of encouragement into the lives of the people who are holding objects BASED ON which object they chose. After everyone has been spoken over, switch. The other half should go out and repeat the exercise with new objects.

4) Flying by your instruments: One half of the group stands and closes

their eyes and KEEPs them shut. The remainder of the people shuffle around and stand immediately in front of someone who has their eyes shut. Touch their hand with one finger to let them know you are there. Then the person with their eyes closed speaks words of encouragement for their person. They can use some of the questions from the previous exercises. They should open their eyes only when they are completely done and then get some feedback. Then switch so that everyone else has a chance to do the exercise.

5) Give one another feedback.
- When did you feel most stretched by the Holy Spirit as you were speaking?
- When did you feel particularly encouraged or like God was speaking to you through someone in the group?

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Begin to develop a lifestyle of speaking LIFE. Purpose to speak into the lives of 3 strangers this week. Be sure to invite their feedback. "Did any of that make sense to you or seem to fit what's going on in your life right now?" You'll be sharing about these encounters next week.

2) Learn to incorporate prophesy with prayer.
    1. Select a friend and pray for them. Ask God to give you specific insight into His heart for them and pray these blessings into their lives.
    2. Call your friend and share what God put in your heart for them. Encourage them. Then ask them if anything you shared connected with anything in particular they've been going through.

3) Watch this brief video of some believers sharing their experiences after they went out to speak supernatural words of encouragement on the streets here.

CHAPTER 6

HEAL THE SICK LIKE JESUS

"The biggest hindrance to healing is our belief that that there are hindrances to healing." Curry Blake

Once I was at a Christian conference and a friend of mine pulled me aside because a family had arrived from a long distance away with a young girl who was unable to walk. She had been born with cerebral palsy. They wanted me to come and minister to her, so that she could be healed.

We had ministered to her for about ten minutes when the worship music started. The parents said that this was the last evening they were able to be at the conference, so we decided to move out into the lobby and continue laying hands on this precious seven-year-old girl. After about 30 minutes of ministry, this little girl began to walk and then run around the lobby! For the first time in her life she was free. Watch Video Here

Her parents told us that when they brought her home, she went out in the backyard and ran with her brothers until midnight. When she finally came in from playing, she walked up the stairs on her own power. For the first time in her life, she was able to do things that other kids do. Her healing continued to progress, and now she is completely healed! Praise Jesus!

Believe it or not, there are some people with "religious mindsets" that would be happy that the girl got healed but be upset with me. Why would they be upset with me, you might ask? Because I had skipped a session of this Christian conference to minister to this little girl. If you got in a discussion with one of these "religiously minded" people, they could probably convince you that I was in the wrong: "It's so rude, after someone has prepared a message from God, to be hanging out in the hallway disturbing other people. He could've prayed for her at another time."

Religion and Jesus don't mix well. Religion uses accusation to keep everyone

with the program, abiding by the traditions and sticking to the routine. Jesus uses power and truth to set people free and make them well. Religion is always looking for a reason to accuse people of a fault. Jesus is always looking for a way to show people how much God loves them even if it means violating standard protocol.

Jesus Christ did not come to bring the world a new religion. He brought us an alternative to religion. Religion thrives on “holy men”, doing “holy things”, in “holy buildings”, standing between God and unholy people. Religions thrives on separation between people and God. Jesus came to make us all God’s own holy priesthood, whose every word and deed is a “holy thing.” We who believe in Jesus have become the very dwelling place of God on earth, God’s own living, breathing Holy Temple. Jesus makes us carriers of the presence of God. No more separation! We don’t need religious men, doing religious things in religious places to bring us close to God. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and through Him we come to the Father! We are free from religious systems because Jesus Christ has brought us into union with God.

Jesus did not come to bring us a new religion. Religion lives by dead rituals, traditions, dogma, and rules. It’s all external, performance based and conformity driven. Jesus Christ brought new life, divine life on the inside. Jesus came to put God’s life inside of us to flow out from us, spontaneously, continuously, and creatively. Adam and Eve were not in the garden lighting candles, burning incense, studying theology, and developing religious organization charts. They weren’t created for religion. They walked with God together. God walked with them. They were created for fellowship. Jesus walked with us too. Why? Jesus did not bring us religion. He brought relationship. He loved us. He walked with us. Religion doesn’t know how to love. Religion destroys love. Religion killed Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, the true and living God who *is love*. Jesus brought us the love of God. Jesus came to bring people into a new relationship, to know God as their own Father, to bring people into their true destiny to walk with God as His very own sons.

Jesus did not come to bring us a new religion. He came to bring us an alternative to religion.

Jesus did not bring us into a new religion. Jesus came with a "government upon His shoulders", the reign of the Kingdom of Heaven. He came to bring us into a new Kingdom, the Kingdom of God that sets men free. Jesus Christ brings people divine life from the Father that governs us and sets us free to live as sons of God. As Rom 5:17 says, "Those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness ***reign in life*** through the one man Jesus Christ." Religion doesn't give people righteousness. Religion doesn't give people grace. It give's rules and guilt. Allowing religion to govern someone's life never empowers people to reign in divine life. It makes everyone a slave to serve a dead system. It was the religious people, who didn't like God's government setting people free from their system, that killed Jesus. It still kills today. Jesus came to give us life, a life that reigns in us and empowers us to reign.

Religion comes with rules, traditions, hierarchy, creeds and expectations. It comes with words to conform, to recruit, to argue, to manage, to accuse, to manipulate, and if that doesn't work… words to kill. Jesus came with words too, but His words were "Spirit and Life." His words give grace. His words unleashed an encounter with a living person, the Spirit of Life. Even though Jesus used words to minister to others, His words were never mere words. He came with demonstration and power. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead… with *words*! Religion conducts funerals. Jesus raises the dead. Those who live in Christ are learning to minister with words and demonstration today, with words of life that demonstrate the power of God by healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead.

SENT WITH POWER AND AUTHORITY

Jesus Christ never sent anyone out to proclaim the gospel with mere words. He always sent them out with the authority to demonstrate the Kingdom's power to set captives free. Even after Jesus had gone to the cross and arose victoriously over the grave, Jesus would not allow His well-trained disciples to go and preach the gospel. He "ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father," the Holy Spirit who would give them "power to be His

witnesses" (Acts. 1:5,8). To be a witness of Jesus Christ, we *must* demonstrate His power. We need the Holy Spirit. We must be completely yielded, saturated, and clothed with another person. Without demonstrating the power of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, no matter how or what we are preaching, we are *not* the witness of Jesus Christ that He had in mind. He envisioned people carrying His own presence and power as they proclaimed His glory. Jesus envisioned people setting captives free from the grip of sickness and sin as they proclaimed His victory over evil.

Some Christians come from backgrounds where they were taught that God no longer intends to work in His miraculous power through believers today, because now we have the Bible. They suppose that miracles were needed only to validate the Bible, and once the Bible's authority is established miracles are no longer needed. Because they hold to this view, anyone who claims that God is working through them to heal the sick is treated with a great deal of suspicion and sometimes outright hostility, since in their view, this would give them authority to speak for God like the original New Testament writers. There's one BIG problem with this though… this view is never taught in the Bible… ***anywhere***! In fact, the Bible specifically teaches otherwise.

Everyone knows the Bible verse John 3:16 which says, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*." But a few chapters later in the same book Jesus says, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever** believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father*." (John 14:12) Did you see that? The same people that receive eternal life (i.e. "whoever believes") are the same people who get to do the miraculous works of Jesus Christ and even greater. So we could condense these verses to read, "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life **and** do the works that Jesus does, and even greater works because Jesus has gone to the Father*!"

After Jesus rose from the dead, He commissioned His disciples to go out.

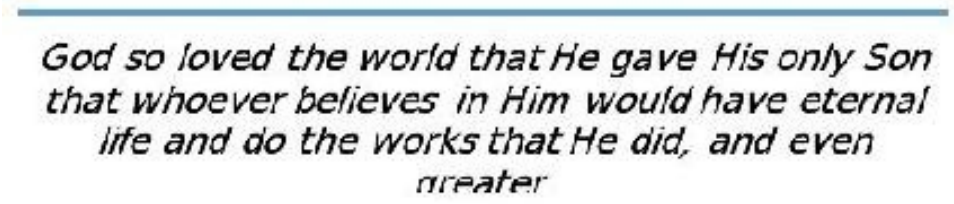
Mark 16:15-18 And he said to them, "*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. **Whoever believes** and is baptized will be saved… and these signs will accompany **those who believe**: in my name they will cast out*

demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

When you hear someone speaking on the phone, often you can get a good idea of what the person on the other end of the line is saying simply by listening to one side of the conversation. Judging by the signs that Jesus said would accompany those who believe the apostle's message, what can we tell about the content of the message that the apostles proclaimed?

Jesus obviously expected that the gospel that He was sending the apostles out to proclaim would produce people who cast out demons, spoke in tongues, exercised divine dominion, experienced supernatural protection, and healed the sick. According to Jesus, these are for everyone who believed the apostles message and was baptized in water.

MIRACLES POINT TO JESUS, NOT OURSELVES



We know from the rest of the New Testament that genuine believers could also be deceived and make serious mistakes. So then, supernatural signs are ***not*** an indication of flawless doctrine, a holy life, or spiritual authority in the church. God's power operates by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ as an indication that you are real a believer in the original message of the apostles- and not a special sort of believer, just a "whoever believes" sort of believer.

In fact, there are indications that it's possible to exercise faith for miracles without genuine faith for salvation. As an example, take Judas Iscariot. Do you think he healed the sick and cast out demons with the rest of the disciples? Had he been the only one that never had any miracles take place, it probably would have been a "no brainer" at the last supper for the disciples to figure out the identity of the son of perdition who was betraying Jesus. But this simply wasn't the case. There will be many like Judas on the last day who say 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many

mighty works in your name?' And Jesus will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' (Matt. 7:21-23)

So never allow your own heart to turn a blind eye towards sin in your life simply because God is still using you to work miracles. Endeavor always to walk in holiness "without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14) Nor should you allow yourself to be manipulated or deceived by someone simply because God uses them for genuine miracles "as though by our own power or piety." (Acts 3:12) God will use some pretty messed up believers simply because Jesus is Lord and God loves people. Just look at the churches of Galatia and Corinth, both of which had fallen into serious error, yet miracles were continuing to take place in their midst (1 Cor. 12:10, Gal. 3:5). So let's walk in holiness, test everything by the Word of God, and never allow the enemy to intimidate us through his accusations that God won't use us because of sin in our lives. If He will use Judas, the legalistic Galatians, and the fleshly Corinthians to demonstrate His power, He will use you!

WHY CHRISTIANS DON'T ALWAYS HEAL

If Jesus Christ lives inside of us, why wouldn't we expect Him to do miracles through us? Has He lost His power? Has He lost His compassion? Has He changed? Does the world no longer need witnesses of Jesus Christ who are clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit? Would genuine miracles somehow undermine the message of a completed Bible, or could they serve the same function as they did with the first apostles… as signs pointing to the true Word? When Christians exhibit the character and power of God, doesn't this affirm the authority of the Word of God?

Many Bible believing Christians have a great deal of confusion surrounding the ministry of healing. Many people started out believing, but then someone they prayed for didn't get healed and they got confused. They allowed their confusion to hinder their faith. Jesus Christ is not at all confused about healing the sick. Many ministers are practicing things regarding healing that Jesus nor the apostles ever did or ever taught. Our problem is that we believe so many things about sickness that Jesus Christ and the apostles didn't. We need our mind renewed.

For the past few years, I have traveled to many different churches and several

different continents to mobilize believers to walk in the power of Jesus Christ. I find that the church has been very well taught on “why people don’t get healed”, “why God doesn’t always heal”, “10 things that block miracles” and things like this. We are saturated with this kind of “theology.” Is it any wonder the church is walking in so little of Jesus’ power? Did Jesus believe these kinds of things? When Jesus walked up to someone who needed a miracle, did he wonder if God wanted them healed? Did Jesus say, “I’m sorry, I’ve been writing this book about 10 things that block miracles and you have 3 of them. So I can’t help you today. Sorry?” Christ had none of these things in His belief system. They weren’t in His mind, then or now! We need to live “by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20 KJV) and renew our minds to the mind of Christ. If Jesus didn’t believe sickness was God’s will, should we? Shouldn’t we walk according to the mind of Christ?

While it’s beyond the scope of this book to address every issue that people have in this area[5], I feel compelled to address some of the most common beliefs and practices surrounding sickness and healing in the church today that are *not in line with the life and teaching of Jesus or the apostles*.

Based on my experience, here is a list of several of the most common lies Christians believe and practice today regarding healing the sick:

1) We accept sickness as part of God’s plan or “mysterious ways” of dealing with His children, but ***Jesus Christ ALWAYS treated sickness as the work of the enemy.***

> *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and* ***healing all who were oppressed by the devil****, for God was with him. Act 10:38*

Jesus Christ never accepted sickness as part of God’s plan for anyone. He saw it as a work of the enemy to be removed from people’s lives. He never treated sickness as the Father’s discipline or a blessing from God. He treated sickness as a work of darkness to be overcome by the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said to him, "…Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9) The clearest revelation we have of the Father is in Jesus Christ. How many

people did Jesus ever make sick? If Jesus never made anyone sick, and He revealed the Father to us, why do we accuse the Father of making people sick?

Sometimes I meet people who believe that God sometimes wants people to be sick so that He can accomplish a greater good. Yet they are busy going to the doctor and taking medicine. But if you really believe that God wants to accomplish a greater good by your sickness, shouldn't you just stay home and let God accomplish His plan?

Jesus revealed God perfectly. He showed us that God's will is to heal all who have need of healing in that He never sent anyone away sick who came to Him for healing. This is good news for us today, because Jesus Christ has not changed, nor has the will of God.

2) We pray and ask God to heal… if it be Thy will, but ***Jesus Christ demonstrated that God's will is ALWAYS healing.***

"*Then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And He who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone,* ***for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him***." John8:28-29

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? … ***The Father who dwells in me does His works***. John14:10

Jesus always did what pleased the Father. The Father was doing His works through Jesus. Jesus healed all who were brought to Him. So the Father's will is revealed in Jesus Christ. As we look at the life of Jesus Christ, we see clearly that it is God's will to heal all who are brought to Him for healing. He heals by the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Kingdom of God through the suffering of the Son at the whipping post.

We never have to take the approach, "let's see whether it's God's will to heal in this case." Instead, we should look at Jesus, who is the living revelation of God's will, to determine the will of God. We settle the will of God in the Word, then go after it! Jesus demonstrated that it is universally God's will to heal all who need healing. He never refused or failed to heal anyone for any reason.

3) We blame the sick people or their family members for being sick or not having enough faith to get healed, **but Jesus NEVER blamed a sick person or their family. He took responsibility to heal them.**

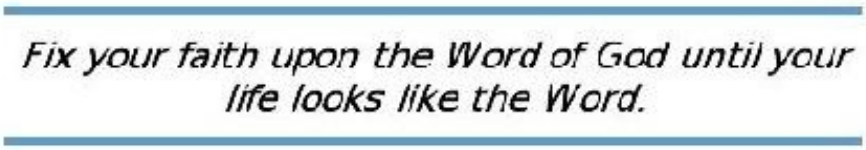
Jesus commended faith whenever those who needed healing had faith. However, many times people were healed by someone else's faith. Jesus gives His authority to heal the sick, so we can heal the sick whether they have faith or not. As Jesus said, "Believers will lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." Mark 16:18. So a sick person doesn't need to be a believer. They just need to be sick and allow someone else to *believe for them* and lay hands so that they can recover.

One of the clearest examples of this is Acts 3, in which Peter and John healed a lame beggar on the way into the temple. The Scriptures say that, "*Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (*Acts 3:4-7) Was the lame man healed because he had faith for healing? Absolutely not! He wasn't in faith. If anything he was in greed. He wasn't expecting a healing. He was expecting money! Yet John and Peter were able to minister healing to this man. How? By their own faith in the Name of Jesus Christ, which is another way to say it was by their faith in the authority, power, and presence of Jesus Christ at work through them. We are to follow this same pattern.

4) We lower our expectations to what we've experienced, but **Jesus Christ shows us what to expect from God. We should put our faith in Him until our experience lines up with the Word of God… (Remember, Jesus IS the Word made flesh.)**

Sometimes Christians struggle to believe that it's always God's will to heal. They stumble in their faith because someone they ministered to doesn't get healed, or perhaps they themselves are not completely well. As a result, they begin to lower their expectations far below what we see in Jesus Christ. They begin to accept their experience as "truth" about God and His will instead of what we see in Jesus Christ, who healed all, went to the whipping post for all,

rose victoriously for all, and sent us out to do the same works and greater.



If a Christian sins, is that God's will? Of course not. You'd be wrong to tell them, "It's not always God's will to give you victory over sin" simply because they fell into temptation. If a born-again-believer is struggling to overcome an addiction, it's not because they need God to give them something that they don't yet have. Is it? They just need to learn to walk in all that they have received in Christ. They need to be transformed in their mind until their lifestyle is transformed to become what God put inside them. So we know that we shouldn't look at our lives to determine whether it is God's will for us to walk in victory. We look at the Word until our lives look like the Word. We should take this approach for healing as well as holiness. Jesus Christ has provided us victory over evil, the devil and all His works, which includes sickness as well as sin.

5) We beg God to heal people, but **Jesus taught us to exercise Kingdom authority in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to heal the sick.**

*So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of his own accord**, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does **in like manner**.* John 5:19

*Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but **the Father who dwells in me does His works**.* John 14:10

But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" Act 3:6

Jesus openly taught that He could not heal by His own authority or power. It was His Father healing through Him. Yet Jesus *never prayed* for anyone to be healed. He never asked God to do it! Instead Jesus acted and spoke in His Father's authority. He spoke and acted in union with His Father, and His Father acted in union with the Son. Jesus commanded His disciples to do the same thing, to speak and act in His authority and power. So instead of asking God to heal, we should follow the example of Jesus and the apostles to act and speak in His

authority, commanding the sickness to depart, laying hands and believing for healing.

Instead of laying hands and saying, “God, please touch them and heal them,” we should exercise Kingdom authority and say something like, “Sickness, go now! Be healed and whole in the Name of Jesus.” We should be exercising Kingdom authority in faith. As T.L. Osborn said many times, “Never ask God to do something He’s already done. And never ask God to do something He’s told you to do.” God healed the sick over 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ suffered stripes on His back. God has commanded us to heal the sick. So let’s walk in the blessing of what Jesus has already accomplished and obey what He’s told us to do by following the example He gave us.

6) We reserve healing for the super-spiritual, specially gifted, or special moves of God, but **Jesus taught healing was for all believers whenever and wherever there is a need.**

*Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever believes** in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*
John14:12

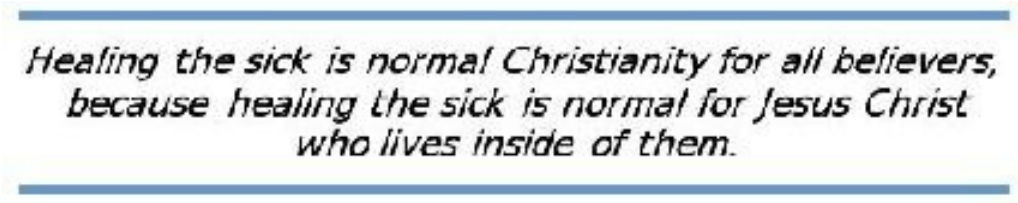
Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' Luke 10:9

*…Teach them to observe **all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matt.28:20*

*And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, **as though by our own power or piety** we have made him walk?...if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well**.* Act 3:12, 4:9-10

HEALING IS SUPER NORMAL

Healing is normal Christianity for all believers. We heal the sick not because we are super spiritual. We heal the sick because the Kingdom of God is near and we are under orders from heaven. The sick are healed because Jesus is King and we minister in His Name, not as a sign of our own spirituality. Healing indicates NOTHING about our spiritual status. Healing is a sign of the victory, compassion, and presence of Jesus Christ.



You may still have some questions regarding whether healing is for today, or whether healing is for you, or how God can use you to heal the sick. Here is my encouragement. In addition to continuing to search the Scriptures for the heart of God and revelation of Christ in this matter, I would like to appeal to you to set your doubts aside and focus on *acting on what you do understand* and *do believe* instead of whatever has you confused! Jesus said, "***Go*** and learn what this means. God desires mercy…" Jesus wasn't sending the Pharisees off to do more Bible study. He was sending them off to go and learn mercy, to go and find some people who need the mercy of God and help them until the mercy of God enters their hearts. Often the path becomes clearer as we walk further down the road, "leaning not on our own understanding, acknowledging Him in all our ways…" So get out there and help some hurting people!

When I first came into this revelation regarding God's will to heal the sick through believers today, I had quite a few "theological loose ends." At that time, I still didn't know what to make of "Timothy's stomach."[6] Nor was I able to answer every objection that my fellow believers brought up to me. In the beginning, I didn't even see many instant healings either, but I decided *not* to base my faith on my experience or my doubts. I decided to live out my faith in Christ based on what I did see and understood clearly- that Jesus Christ is the Lord who lives in me to do His works through me, which includes healing the sick. It's always been part of His work.

Had I decided to wait until I had every Bible verse wrapped up in irrefutable

clarity, I'd still be studying… and helping no one. Had I decided to stop the first time that someone I ministered to was not healed, there would be countless people dead, sick, and debilitated who are now still alive and well.

Will you be like Peter and step out of the boat with your eyes fixed on Jesus even though it defies your experience and He remains in the distance, almost ghostlike? Or will you be like Peter and sink, because you fixed your eyes on the waves, your past experiences, your personal fears, opposition from those you love, and your doubts? You must decide.

You wouldn't be reading this book this far if you were someone who wasn't ready to walk this out. So the remainder of this chapter will be focused on equipping you to "walk on water" in healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead to demonstrate the Kingdom, reach people for Jesus Christ and equip them to walk in His fullness as His disciples. Once the Biblical understanding of God's dominion is in place in our lives, we need to be equipped with practical "hands-on" skills that will help us more effectively demonstrate the power of God to fulfill the mission of making disciples of Jesus.

As you read the passages that follow, pay special attention to the role that demonstrations of the power of God play in fulfilling the mission Jesus gave to His disciples:

1) **The mission was to preach and to cast out demons with authority from Jesus.**

Mark3:14-15 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

2) **The mission was to heal the sick and preach the Kingdom.**

Luke 10:8-9 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'

3) **The mission required the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses**

of Jesus.

Act 1:4-8 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now… You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

4) **God wants our faith to rest in the power of God, so ministry MUST demonstrate the Spirit and power of God as the partner of the proclamation of Jesus Christ.**

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Cor. 2:1-5

PRACTICAL HEALING MINISTRY

In the remainder of this chapter, I'd like to give you some practical guidance about ways you can demonstrate the power of God as part of your Kingdom lifestyle. As I do so, please understand, ministry is *never* a formula or a method. However, God seems to know that we need models, demonstration and examples to move forward to release God's kingdom in our lives. This is why God not only gave us His Word, but also those who are called to equip the body of Christ by being examples and sharing what they have learned.

Consider the following pointers as a starting place to help get you going. You will eventually develop you own approaches as you walk with God and have your own experiences. So don't worry about "doing the formula" or "following the method." Follow Jesus Christ and stay flexible. Here is an overview of a general flow I've experienced in ministering the power of God with strangers in public:

1. Approach

2. Ask
3. Minister
4. Test
5. Rejoice or Repeat
6. Connect and Close

1. **Approach**: Go to people. Build rapport quickly with a pleasant demeanor. Take as much time to building rapport as you feel is appropriate or necessary.

2. **Ask:** Say something like, “I noticed you were walking with a cane and thought, you’re too young and good looking to be using a cane. What happened? Do you have pain?” Or, if there is no visible condition like a cane, crutch, or an oxygen tank, you can say, “This may sound crazy, but I was wondering if you have anything that causes pain in your body? I have a special gift to be able to set people free from pain and I just felt like I should ask you.”

3. **Minister:** Tell them. “I can help you with that. Are you ready for that pain to go?” While holding out your hand like you’re asking for money, say “Let me see your hand for a second” They’ll put their hand in yours automatically, even if they are wondering what you are about to do. Then grasp their hand firmly (but not hard enough to hurt them), and minister healing, “Father, thank you for all you’ve done. In Jesus’ Name, pain/sickness, Go now. Be healed. I set you free in Jesus’ Name”

4. **Test:** Then immediately say, “Now test that out. Move it around and tell me what’s changed.”

Here are some tests for testing:
- Make up your mind from the beginning that you will have people test their condition. It’s often the *action of faith* that activates the working of miracles. Tell people, “Do something you couldn’t do. Tell me what’s changed.” In sports, when someone throws, hits, or kicks a ball, everyone understands that power is released in the *follow through*. Miracles are the same way. Usually, when people are not seeing results in public it’s because they are still working through their personal insecurities and are relieved to finally get a

chance to pray for someone. When you act on your faith by having them test their condition, it releases more of God's power than when you "pull your punches" and minister with no follow through.

- Quantify Pain Level: If they have pain, ask them to tell you the level of their pain on a scale of 1 to ten. I usually say, "So what level is your pain right now on a scale of 1 to 10. 10 is like having a baby and 1 is like someone standing on your toe." After you minister, have them move it and tell you what the pain level is now. It's more encouraging to hear "It was an 8 and now it's a 2," than it is to hear, "Nope. It's still there." Helping people quantify their pain level from the outset can help you both recognize the progressive miracles of God.

- ***Never*** give medical advice. Some medical conditions are not immediately testable, such as diabetes or A.I.D.S. Others only experience the symptoms of their conditions when they stop taking medication. Understand that in most modern countries it is illegal to ever give anyone medical advice or tell them to go against directives given by their doctors. Simply encourage them to expect their healing to manifest. Even if they ask you explicitly, "Do you think I should stop taking my medicine?" I just say, "That's not my business. You need to make those decisions for yourself. There's no pill big enough that can stop God from healing you." Leave their medical decisions between them, God, and their doctors.

5. **Rejoice or Repeat:** Rejoice in their healing or Repeat the process, by saying, "Sometimes I pray more than once. Let's hit this again quickly." Then take their hands and command healing once more.

Here are a few recommendations for repeating the healing ministry in public:

- KEEP YOUR PRAYERS BRIEF so you can TEST FREQUENTLY. If you pray for two minutes your first time around, guess how many opportunities to pray twice you'll have with a stranger? Probably not very many. So keep your hands-on ministry brief and test often. You can get 20 whacks at something in less than 5 minutes when you keep your ministry simple. "Boom! How's that? Boom! How about now? Boom! Need some more?" Remember, we're not heard because of our many words. We're releasing the

finished work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has placed the loaded gun in our hands. Now, just release power that's in your hand. Just draw the gun, pull the trigger, and check the target. If you need to, fire again! You don't need to proclaim the assembly instructions for the gun or go online to purchase bullets.

- STAY WITH THE SAME APPROACH. When you start to change your approach, generally you are starting to operate in the power of the mind instead of the authority of the Spirit. Going on a search for the right words or correct diagnosis tends to get you out of the Spirit and into your mind which ultimately hinders the release of power. Just fix your eyes upon Jesus Christ, His absolute victory through the finished work of the cross, and give it another blast. If anything, I encourage you to be more general and less specific with your words and more focused on releasing the power of the Holy Spirit. "I said Go NOW. Be completely healed in the Name of Jesus. Now, move it again. What's changed? Still the same. Then once more, in Jesus' Name, BE HEALED. Move it now."

6) Connect and Close: When it's time to wrap up your spontaneous healing ministry, you will have experienced one of three results:

1) They have not noticed any change

2) They have experienced some improvement but are not yet completely healed

3) They are completely healed.

Let's go through some tips about how to handle each of these different scenarios. We'll hit the most challenging scenario first, and the others are simple.

"What do you do when you minister to someone and nothing happens?" This is the scary "Goliath" scenario that the enemy tries to use to keep the church of God intimidated into doing nothing. But I've found that it's not very scary at all, especially once you forget about you and stop looking to ministry results to affirm your standing with God. Base your standing with God on your union with Jesus Christ and allow ministry to become an overflow of His love and victory to

others.

When it comes to wrapping up ministry that had no *apparent* results, here are a few things to consider:

- They were already NOT healed before you met them. Now they are not yet healed, but LOVED IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

- Just because they didn't experience change immediately, doesn't mean that they aren't healed. You just released God's healing power into them. Once a doctor gives a patient a shot, he doesn't worry about the patients current symptoms any longer because he realizes the medicine will work. We have the most potent medicine in the universe!

- Your actions of obedience are worship to Jesus and love to your fellow man. Stepping out in faith is sowing to the Spirit, which will bring a harvest. Be of good courage. Keep laying hands, worshipping Jesus, agreeing with heaven, and you will see a harvest!

- Everyone wants the power to manifest miracles instantly consistently flowing from their lives. But sticking your neck out over and over and allowing the Lord to do His work in you is the path to get there! Keep walking forward! Challenge yourself to do the things that build up your life in the spirit like communion with God in the Word, confessing the Scriptures, praying in tongues, singing worship songs, or whatever else builds you up spiritually.

- The heavens and the earth are watching you. God, demons and angels watch your life more than your results. So do people of whom you may not even be aware. Several times I've had people come to me, not because they saw someone get out of a wheelchair, but because they saw me laying hands on someone in a wheelchair. (You do draw *more* when they see people get out of wheelchairs, but still…)

- The alternative (i.e. doing nothing for hurting people that Jesus loves when you could do something) doesn't fit the Spirit of God in you. It's not acceptable to you, much less to God. So put it out of your mind as an

option. Don't play multiple choice. Put yourself on spiritual "auto-pilot" and condition yourself to automatically move towards the needs you see around you without evaluating the situation any further: I see. BOOM, I act. It's a reflex of love.

- Nothing NEVER happens… unless you actually decided to do nothing. If you try… SOMETHING good happened. You stepped out in faith and love and released the Kingdom. Awesome! Now, don't pull your faith back based on what your eyes see. Don't unplug your faith and default to disbelief. You've opened heaven's door to flow with power. Keep it open. Give God time. If you need to, you can pray again. If you don't quit and get discouraged, you'll see Jesus' results.

With those pointers in mind, when it seems like my new friend is getting ready to move on, here's how I often wrap up a spontaneous ministry session with a stranger, "Thank you so much for allowing me to pray for you. I know God loves you and wants you well and with Him forever. He paid an awesome price for you when Jesus died on the cross. (IF they aren't yet completely healed…) I'm believing God for complete recovery in your body. Or (IF they are healed) I'm so glad you were able to receive what He purchased for you. I'm happy I had a chance to meet you. You are so worth it. Look, here's my card with my contact information. If you ever need anything, please give me a call." Shake their hand and walk away praising and thanking Jesus for the victory He's won for them and the privilege it is to know Him and exercise His dominion on the earth.

Even if they've not yet experienced change in their body, and often if they have received healing, there may be grace to go further with the interaction and speak into their lives. If not, WRAP IT UP. But in the case where there is grace to carry the interaction further I'll often say something like this, "You know I think that God wants you to understand something. You can never look at the condition of your body or the circumstances in your life and to see the whole truth about His love for you. God demonstrates His love for you in what happened to the body of His Son. He joined the human race to live and die for you because you are so precious to Him. He rose again and is alive now to give you victory over everything that defeats you. Do you know Him? Is Jesus Christ your Lord?" Then see what happens.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM "SLOW MIRACLES"

One afternoon I took my family to a small traveling fair in a local parking lot. As we walked around I noticed a man pulling an oxygen tank. As it turned out, it was an acquaintance of mine from years back named Isaac. Isaac was a large, tall, light skinned African American man, but when I saw him today his skin was almost yellow. I asked him what was going on and he told me, "I've got C.O.P.D. They've put me on hospice and say I've only got a couple of months, so I wanted to bring my son out to the fair today." I said, "Well that's not right! I want to pray for your healing right now." I reached my hand and put it on his chest. I said, "Right now, in the Name of Jesus, I command COPD to leave him. Lungs, be restored and healed, now! Now, Isaac, take a deep breath and tell me what's happening." He took a big breath… "Cough, hack, wheeze." So I said, "Don't worry. I'm going to hit this again, because it has to go. In the Name of Jesus, lungs you be healed and restored. All COPD leave him now. Take another deep breath Isaac." Isaac breathed in… "Wheeze, cough, hack." It still hadn't left.

At this point, Isaac was ready to move on with his day at the fair with his son. He said, "Thanks for trying." So I closed up the interaction by saying, "I'm not trying. I'm believing God for your complete recovery. Jesus said, "Believers will lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" so I'm believing you'll be completely restored. Great to see you man. Have a great rest of the day with your son!"

One year later, my wife and I were coming out of Walmart and I noticed a man on the bench just outside the store with a chrome four-pronged cane. So I walked over to him and was surprised to see Isaac sitting there with no oxygen tank and great color. I said, "Isaac! How are you doing man? Where's your oxygen tank?" Isaac exhaled a big puff of his cigarette and said, "Don't need them no more. Jesus healed me!" Wow!

So I asked him about his cane, and he said that he had a bad back and shooting pain through his hip and leg. I said, "Now if Jesus was able to heal your C.O.P.D., do you think He can heal your back and hip?" I laid hands on Isaac and had him test it. He stood up with no pain and walked with no pain. But I noticed a little too much swagger in his stride. So I asked if we could check his

alignment. He sat back straight on the bench and I held his legs up in front of him. One of his legs was a clear half inch shorter than the other. So I told him to watch his feet and said, “In the Name of Jesus, short leg grow. Perfect alignment now.” His leg immediately shot out until it was even with the other.

I said, “Check it now.” Isaac stood up and began walking with a nice, even stride and no pain at all. He bent over, twisted around… still no pain! Out of habit though, he still had his cane in his hand as he walked, but was not using it at all. I told him, “I don’t think you’ll be needing that cane anymore.” Isaac, then lifted the cane above his head, and began saying, “Yah. I don’t need this no more!” Then he started to get louder, pumping the cane up and down over his head, “Hey, I don’t need this no more. Jesus done healed me!” In his excitement, he started shouting and pumping his cane above his head.

The sight of a large man swinging a metal bar above his head and shouting in front of Walmart began to gather some on lookers. Some were afraid to come too close and were pausing on their way in, while others did the same thing on their way out. And here’s Isaac, still shouting, “Jesus just healed me! I’m healed! I don’t need this cane no more” So I joined in the fun and said, “I just prayed for my friend Isaac, and God healed his back… while he was smoking a cigarette! So I want you to know that Jesus is real. He loves you. He’s ready to take you as you are and change your life. Is there anyone here that has any pain or sickness in your body? I want to pray for you right now, real quick and Jesus will heal you too! Don’t worry about what you believe or how you think you’ve been living. This isn’t a religious thing. This is about God’s love for you. So if you have pain or sickness we want to pray for you real quick. Who has pain or sickness? Anything at all?” Then the Kingdom ministry continued for another 20 minutes right in front of Walmart.

EARS TO HEAR

On a recent mission trip, while walking to the market from my hotel, a young Muslim man began to speak to us in English. He was a seaman by trade but was in port for several weeks. We spoke for a while, so before I left I asked him if he had anything that gave him any pain or problems in his health. He told me that he was very concerned about his ear. Eight weeks earlier he suddenly lost his hearing in his ear. He had no idea what had happened and was very concerned that he would be deaf in his ear the rest of his life. I told him that I had seen God

heal many people through my prayers, and I would like to lay my hand on his ear to pray for his hearing to be restored. He agreed. Three times I said, “In the Name of Jesus Christ, you deaf spirit, come out now. Ear, be healed and whole. Hear.” But each time we checked, he said, “I’m sorry. It is still the same.” So after the third time, I wrapped up the interaction by telling him that I will continue to believe that God will heal his ear quickly.

There was a large part of me that was tempted to be disappointed. After all, this had been an obvious “divine appointment” with an English speaking Muslim who was open to experiencing the power of God in Jesus Christ. I stepped out, laid hands expecting a miracle and nothing perceptible happened. But I knew better than to agree with the temptation to be disappointed. Instead, I stirred myself to rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to Him. “Thank you Jesus for the privilege of representing heaven on the earth. Thank You that you are faithful to stand by the gospel with your power and signs follow me wherever I go. Thank you for opening the door for this ministry. Thank you that believers will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. I thank You in advance that this man will recover his hearing.”

Two days later, I was walking again in the same part of town and I heard someone behind me calling my name. It was this same man. He was jogging up towards me with a big smile. “Mr. Andrew. My ear. It is well now! It is well! I woke the next morning after you had prayed and it was well.” “Completely?” I asked. He said, “Yes. It is perfect.” So we had a nice little chat about how God showed His love for us in Jesus Christ.

Many times at the close of a service, after I’ve prayed for people with little obvious results, they come find me the next day to tell me they are healed. One lady had her tail bone surgically removed because of an auto accident. She was in constant pain and asked for prayer for the pain. That night, the pain went away, but the next day she came to me and said, “It grew back last night. I have a tail bone again!”

Another lady had chronic pain in her hips and legs that was hindering her ability to care for her family and do her job. I ministered to her for a number of minutes and saw some improvement, but not a complete healing. However, she came in the next day with no pain. Months later she is still pain free! You can watch her

video testimony here and see her share one month later here.

In another instance, I was asked by a friend to come to the hospital to minister to his father. His father had been battling leukemia for years but wasn't a believer. He had contracted a disease that had caused large legions to grow in his throat that made it impossible for him to eat or even to swallow water. The doctors were getting worried because they had given him several courses of the strongest antibiotic possible, and it had only gotten worse. At his son's persuasion, he finally agreed to let me come and pray for him, figuring that he didn't have anything to lose. So I laid hands on him and asked him to give me a report, telling him that I'd be happy to come and pray again if need be.

I didn't hear anything the next day or the next. Whenever I would wonder about my friend's dad, I would hear this thought, "The reason they haven't called you is because nothing happened. They are probably planning his funeral. Blah, blah, blah." I didn't agree with those thoughts, but they were there. Several months later I heard from my friend again. He wanted me to pray for his sister. So I asked him, "How is your father?" My friend said, "Oh, I've been meaning to tell you. The next morning, my father woke up and ate a full breakfast and checked out of the hospital that afternoon. He was completely healed. The doctors were amazed. In fact, since then his leukemia numbers have made a huge swing and are better than they've ever been and are still making progress."

I share these experiences not to discourage you from believing God for instant miracles, but to encourage you to believe God for miracles even if they don't happen instantly.

MISPLACING OUR IDENTITY IN MIRACLES

One afternoon, several of my friends set aside some time together to go into the city to touch people with the love of the Kingdom. After we were finished, we gathered back at our house for some pizza and fellowship. I was sent to the grocery store to pick up some drinks and paper plates.

One of the young ladies who had gone out with another group asked if she could come with me. As we walked through the store, I saw a few people that needed ministry, so I started conversations and asked them if my friend could pray for them. After she prayed for the third person, she looked at me and said, "I must

be some sort of jinx or something!" I said, "Huh?" She continued, "I just mean that I'm not seeing miracles, and I want to see miracles!" Although I was excited about her zeal, I felt compelled to address something. I said, "First of all, you are not a jinx. You are a daughter of the living God and an ambassador of His Kingdom. Second, stop trying to get your identity from your ministry results. We don't need miracles to happen to make ourselves feel affirmed. We want miracles for the people who are hurting and for the glory of God."

We turned to go and check out and hadn't walked more than ten steps when I saw a lady who was bent over pushing a shopping cart with a walker inside of it. Her husband was with her so I decided to speak to her husband first. I said, "How are you today? I noticed your wife's walker. Is she in pain?" He told me a little about his wife's condition. Then I said, "Wow! Today is your lucky day! My friends and I have a ministry of praying for people and seeing them healed. Can we pray real quick?" He responded, "Well my hip is in terrible pain." I said, "Great. Then I'll pray for you and my friend can pray for your wife."

As we asked a little more, the wife said, "Not only do I have pain in my back, my bones are a mess. So this is actually as far up as I can go." While I ministered to the husband, my friend, who had just called herself a jinx, laid hands on this lady. The husband said, "It's gone!" He was healed. Then the lady said, "I felt something when you prayed!" She wasn't healed yet, so my friend prayed a second time. This time my friend said, "Can you feel that?" The lady stood up straight and said, "My bones! Oh my, this is strange!" She was completely healed. God had healed her back through my friend.

When we go after miracles so we can affirm our own sense of identity, we get it backwards. We don't get our identity from doing miracles. Miracles come from our identity! We don't look to miracles to tell us that we are children of God. The word of God tells us that! We don't heal so that we can prove ourselves. We are free from all that. Our identity is established in the unshakable union we have with Jesus Christ. As we walk in this, God's power and love flows through us and people are blessed.

HEALING AS A LIFESTYLE

I have had many other instances of people experiencing no apparent change at the moment of ministry who returned later to say, "Do you remember when you

prayed for me? Well, later that night I noticed I had no more pain. I've been better ever since then!" The more you step out, you'll begin to have these same kind experiences. So relax. Love people. Believe heaven for healing. Expect miracles, but if no instant miracle takes place, expect recovery.

This is one reason to get some business cards you can leave in people's hands. So if you don't have business cards with your contact information, let me suggest that you make the investment. They aren't very expensive and they give people the opportunity to reconnect with you or with additional resources that could help them like websites like **JGLMmedia.com** or my own website **FullSpeedImpact.com** that have valuable teaching videos that will establish people in the gospel.

You don't have to give people a way to reconnect with you. God is a big God and is able to reconnect them with another one of His children down the road. I've had times in which I felt strongly that the best thing to do was to leave them completely with God. However, I've had many more times that I've wanted to give people some way they could move forward with God or reconnect with me if they wanted to in the future.

Healing the sick and walking in the power of the Kingdom can be part of your everyday lifestyle. While I believe that it can be important to set aside some time specifically to go out to minister to people in the Name of Jesus, it's more important that this become part of your everyday life. Many people have a fairly full schedule, so it's important NOT to relegate Kingdom ministry to a couple hours on an outreach once a week. Go ahead and schedule some special outreaches, but look for ways to incorporate this into things you are already doing.

Here are some practical pointers to get you started healing the sick as a lifestyle:

1) SHOPPING- Whenever you interact with employees of businesses that you patronize (e.g. store cashiers, floor workers, waitresses/waiters of restaurants, bank tellers, and other service oriented positions) you can ask them if they have any pain from standing around. "How are you doing today? You're working hard and on your feet. Do you have anything that

gives you pain, like your feet or back?" If they have pain, just hold your hand out towards them and ask them, "Give me your hand real quick. I can help you." Once they put their hand in yours, just say, "I'm going to pray real quickly, and God will heal you. In the Name of Jesus, all pain go, be completely healed. Move it now and tell me what's happened."

My youngest daughter, Phoebe, was seven years old when she started to walk in the power of God. There was one evening that she was in our van with Tina when she stopped to get some gas. Tina asked, "Do you want to wait in the van or come in while I go pay?" Phoebe paused and said, "I'm coming in. Someone needs prayer in there." So they went in and there was no one in the entire store except for the cashier. Phoebe walked up to the cashier and said, "Hi! Do you have any pain in your body?" The surprised cashier said, "Well how sweet! Yes, I've got a bad back from an accident. It always hurts." Phoebe said, "Let me see your hand, I want to pray for you." The cashier gives her hand to Phoebe and says, "You are so sweet!" Then Phoebe says, "In the Name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, all pain, you leave her now. Back be healed! Now, move around!" The cashier stood there a little dumbfounded now and said to Phoebe, "You are so cute!" Phoebe looked right back at her and said, "This isn't cute! Move around and try your back." (Yes, she is very definitely on the spunky side.) Then the cashier moved and her jaw dropped, "O my God! Little girl, what did you just do?" Her back was healed. At this point my wife jumped in and shared Jesus with the cashier.

How often do you pass retail workers at cash registers, stocking shelves, organizing merchandize? There are so many people who are working in spite of pain in their body, because they have to. They are doing their best to get through each day with great pain. You can be God's instrument to encounter them with the Kingdom of God.

When you're at a store and need help finding something, before the floor worker takes off, you can say "You're on your feet a lot with this job, aren't you? Do you have anything that gives you pain from standing or moving?" When they tell you about their pain, just hold out your hand, and say, "Let me help you with that. Let me see your hand for a second." If you're holding out your hand (as if asking for money or checking for rain drops) they'll put their hand in yours automatically. Grip it, and say, "Thank you Father for your love and power. In

Jesus Name, all pain go now. Be restored." Then tell them, "Move it now and tell me what's changed."

Recently I was at a store and noticed a lady stocking one of the shelves. I approached her with a smile and said, "Hi!" She said, "Can I help you?" I said, "Well, I don't need any help, but I might be able to help you." She chuckled and said, "Really? How?" I said, "You have a pretty physical job. Do you have anything in your body giving you pain? Anything at all?" She said, "I'm supposed to get my knee replaced in a couple of weeks. It always hurts me. Why? Are you selling something?" I said, "No. I'm not selling anything, but I can take care of that knee replacement right now for free." She said, "You're kidding, right? How?" I said, "It's easier to show you than explain it. (I held out my hand and said…) Give me your hand real quickly." She put her hand in mine and I commanded that all pain leave and that her knee be made new and whole in Jesus' Name. I told her to move it and tell me how it felt and let me know what's different. Her face lit up, "All the pain is gone!" I told her to walk around and make sure. As she did this she said, "This is so strange. I don't even believe this stuff. Oh my, there is no pain." She was still smiling because the pain in her knee was gone. Then her face dropped with the realization that the God she didn't believe in just healed her knee in the Name of Jesus Christ. She looked at me and said, "Well, thank you." The "do not disturb" sign just went up. She was afraid of a sermon. So I gave her a brief hug and told her, "Jesus loves you so much! You have a great day!" and I left. I left her with a new knee, a hug, and the Name of Jesus!

God can use you to touch people wherever they are, even while you are shopping!

2) EATING OUT- Whenever you are at a sit down restaurant, you can truly shine the light by being the most loving customer your table-server, hostesses, bus-boys, and managers has ever encountered! Build a relationship with your table-server. Ask them if they have any pain. You can also tell them, "We usually pray over our meal and we'd love to pray for you too. If God were to do a miracle in your life, what would it be?" You can follow this up by asking if they have any pain or anything for which they take medication, so that you can pray for their healing. You can also use your interactions as an opportunity to speak into their lives. There have been many

times that God has brought our table-servers to tears and we've departed with hugs.

I remember one time that I had just gotten off the plane and we stopped at a restaurant for some lunch. We built some rapport with the waitress by asking her about her day and making some small talk. When she brought us our food, she asked, "Is there anything else I can get you?" I said, "Yes, one thing. We normally pray over our meals and we'd love to pray for you too. Do you have anything that gives you pain or problems physically? We've seen people healed." She paused and got a little flush, not quite sure what to say to such an unusual request, but then she said, "Well, actually I have constant back pain from an accident." So I asked her, "Give me your hand real quickly. I know you need to keep moving." She put her hand in mine, and I said, "In the name of Jesus I command all pain to come out of her. Back be healed." I told her, "Thanks. We don't want to slow you down darling. But you let me know how your back feels before we leave."

She left the table and went back to pick up some orders from the cooks. When she came out from behind the divider into the dining area, she had a tray with several plates of food on her shoulder. She was glowing and tears were coming from her eyes and she looked over at me and mouthed the word, "Thank you!" I knew she had been healed.

After a little while, she got a free moment and returned to our table. She confirmed that she had in fact been healed and filled us in on more of the back story. She had suffered chronic back pain since an automobile accident several years back and that day it had been particularly unbearable. She also was a believer in Christ but had not been walking with Him closely. She felt that God was ashamed of her and was unhappy with her because she had not been walking closely. But when she got healed, she knew that God still loved her and was inviting her to step back into His grace! Praise the Lord!

Before we leave the subject of table-servers… leave a good tip. Demonstrate the extravagant generosity of God with your tip! If you're not going to tip them well, go to a fast food restaurant or stay home. Unfortunately, Christians have earned the reputation of being terrible tippers. This ought not to be! Be generous, even extravagant, in Jesus' Name.

Another thing you can do to bless anyone who serves you in a restaurant, store or business, is to ask to see the manager. When the manager comes over, commend the service of your server to the manager. Often, managers only hear complaints. So if your server did a good job, take a little time to share that with the manager.

3) Develop a LIFESTYLE of Kingdom. Wherever you are, you are *always* an Ambassador of Jesus Christ on God's mission to represent heaven and set the captives free. Stop going shopping. Go and make disciples and pick up some groceries while you're at it. Make conversation with employees and other customers. Seek to impact at least one person for the sake of the Kingdom *every time you leave your house*. If you go shopping, keep your eyes open for people who are walking with limps, canes, walkers, crutches, support braces, oxygen tanks, people sitting on benches while others shop, motorized shopping carts, pharmacy customers, and people in wheel chairs. Taking an extra 5 or 10 minutes in every shopping trip can make a huge difference for tons of people. Over the course of your lifetime, you may see hundreds or even thousands of people come to know Jesus Christ if you'd be willing to do this one thing.

4) If you are involved in a church, tell you pastoral staff that you'd like to visit the sick and infirm that are connected to your congregation. Tell your Bible study or friends that you've been learning about healing and want them to call you if they are ever sick. If you're on the worship team, ask your team members if they need healing for anything in their body.

5) Find a way to connect with the poor. Soup kitchens and parks are places that the homeless often hang out. They often have pain and health issues. The power of God can restore not only their bodies, but their hope, dignity, and value.

6) Go where people are out in public, shopping malls, stores, parks, or other such places. Be available and start conversations. Make yourself available. Be as outgoing and engaging as you can so that you shine with love and encouragement to the people you see. Look for people you can talk to. See where it goes.

7) Go to low-income housing projects or apartments. “Hi, I’m your neighbor and I wanted to introduce myself. I’m here because I believe in free health care for everyone. Is there anyone here who has pain or is on medication?”

8) Find like-minded believers with whom you can partner in the ministry of healing the sick. Policemen have authority and power. The carry a badge and a gun. But they also call on one another for back up.

Among the very religious or anti-religious, I sometimes find that it works best if I don’t ***ask*** people if I can pray for them. When I say “Can I pray for you?” it sets off all sorts of religious land mines planted by the enemy. They want to argue or run away. This has nothing to do with me or my approach. It only shows that the enemy of our souls has been hard at work.

Instead, after we’ve talked about their pain or health condition, I’ll sometimes say, “Would you like to be well?” Or “Would you like to get rid of that right now?” Then I hold out my hand and ***tell*** people, “Give me your hand for a second.” After they put their hand in my hand, I grip and say, “I’m going to pray for you real quickly and God will heal you. “ Then I minister healing. Sometimes, the way the interaction develops seems to require that you let them know *why* you want to talk to them. So instead of asking people, “Can I pray for you?” I have found that it often works better to *tell* them, “I want to pray for you. I believe God wants you well and He’ll heal you right now.”

PRACTICAL ADVICE TO MAKING FRIENDS WITH STRANGER

- Smile, be outgoing. Treat people like they are your friend already.

- Ask questions. Be a good listener.

- Seek to understand people without judging. Be curious and learn about them, their challenges, and their interests.

- Love people. Find their value and ways to express it.

- Develop a sense of humor. Humor can be very disarming and engaging.

- Pay attention to body language to respect their space. Use space and posture to help them be comfortable with your presence.

- Don't worry about rejection. Every rejection is increasing your eternal reward and bringing you one step closer to the person of peace. Just dust your feet and keep going.

So begin to incorporate the power of God into your lifestyle, your routine activities, wherever you are and whatever you do. It can be important to set aside some times specifically to reach out to others with God's love and power, but focus on developing a supernatural lifestyle.

GOING AROUND WALLS

Sometimes people who have pain or need healing may resist your initial offer to minister to them, but with a little persistence, perhaps a brief testimony or two, sometimes you'll see a door open for ministry. For those who are just getting started, depending upon your personality type, pushing through resistance may be more difficult for you. Most people are very receptive to prayer right from the start. As you develop experience, you will also grow in boldness and wisdom that will make you more effective in opening doors even with people who may not be initially receptive. Often they are just leery of "strangers acting strange", so when you continue to persist with gentleness and love, these barriers can be overcome. Regardless, if you approach people with grace, love, and respect, you will still release the fragrance of Jesus Christ in their lives.

Here are a few common barriers and some suggestions you may want to experiment with:

"No thank you. I pray at my church."

With an enthusiastic smile, "Alright! So you already believe this. I do too. I'm going to add my prayers too. Real quick, Father, thank you for this beautiful person. In the Name of Jesus…

"No thanks. I'm fine."

- "All you have to lose is your pain. Give me 10 seconds"
- "I know it may seem strange, but I believe God can heal you right now. (You might share a few brief testimonies… very brief, like I've seen so

many backs healed, cancer, new joints) I know He'll do this for you. Just give me 10 seconds. All you have to lose is your pain."
- "I just want you well. I'm not out to preach to you or anything. I've seen God heal people and know He wants you well. He'll do it right now. So what do ya say? 10 seconds"

"But I am Muslim." (or some other faith system)
- With an enthusiastic smile, "Then you know that there is only one God and nothing is too difficult for Him. This is what I believe. He is good and great in mercy, right? So… Almighty God, thank you for this beautiful person. Thank you for healing. All pain, go now. Be healed. In Jesus Name!

There is no "method" that's going to open up every door. Rejection is part of the process of finding the people who are receptive. These aren't manipulation techniques. These are some lessons I've learned that will help you become more effective at connecting with more people for the sake of the Kingdom of God by avoiding unnecessary arguments. If you get rejected, resist the urge to evaluate yourself or criticize others if someone refuses to receive ministry for an obvious need. Keep yourself encouraged by keeping your eyes on Jesus and His love for others. Pray for the person who just rejected you (between you and God) even as they walk away. Whatever their physical condition, their rejection reveals an even more serious need and your prayers *will make a difference* in their lives for eternity. Continue to be thankful for the privilege of joining God on His mission to reach others and move on to the next person. Don't stop or slow down. As Jesus instructed His disciples, just shake off the dust and move to the next one.

> *"Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' But* ***whenever*** *you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say,' Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near.'…"****The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me****."* Luke 10:9-10, 16

REACH, PREACH, DEMONSTRATE, DISCIPLE… WITH GOD'S POWER!

The demonstration of the power of God through healing the sick is a normal part of every aspect of carrying out our mission.

REACH… WITH POWER- Healing the sick is one of the best ways to reach new people and open the door for the message of Jesus Christ. Everyone who has a body deals with pain and sickness. Healing is relevant to everyone. There are people who have no interest in hearing about God who become extremely interested once they experience the power of God's touch. Not only that, when people see that God works through you, they will begin to seek you out to connect you with other people that need God's touch in their lives.

DEMONSTRATE THE KINGDOM… WITH POWER- While kindness and character are powerful demonstrations of the Kingdom of God, healing the sick is one of the primary demonstrations of God chosen by Him to accompany the gospel. Think about it. He could've given us all rods that would turn into snakes like Moses. He could make our eyes shoot laser light. He could allow us to levitate off the ground at will. But instead He's chosen to make Himself known through healing people. This is one of God's chief signs that accompanies the gospel. It's the music that fits the words of the song of heaven.

When people are healed from their sickness or set free from their pain, they are forced to find an explanation for what they just experienced. The ministry of Jesus in the gospels and the ministry of the church in the New Testament often follow this pattern. God demonstrates His power. Then the message of the Kingdom is proclaimed to explain what just happened. While miracles alone don't create saving faith, they create open doors for the message of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the best and only true explanation there is. "He died to take away your sins, went to the whipping post to heal your body, and rose from the dead to give you eternal life. He's alive now. He's Lord and wants you to know that He loves you. He wants you to be with Him forever."

DISCIPLE… with POWER. One of the driving forces in discipleship is learning to appropriate the power of God. When we are first hearing the gospel and being established, we are often receiving the ministry of God's power, healing our bodies, setting us free from demonic oppression, activating us in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with our heavenly prayer language, and giving us power to walk in victory over sin.

However, when the element of ministering to others in the power of God is added into the mix, some of the "deepest" truths of the New Covenant become self-evident *experiences, instead of just "positional truths."* When you add the power of God into discipleship, believers ***experience*:**

- "It's not I, but Christ dwelling in me"

- "By the grace of God I am what I am"

- "You will receive power to be My witnesses"

- "The old is gone, the New has come"

- "To as many who received Him, He gave the authority to be called a child of God"

When we disciple others by incorporating the demonstration of God's power in the gospel from the beginning, believers have the benefit of the experience that the Scriptures speak about. Otherwise, it's like trying to explain the color red to someone born blind, or the songs of a bird to someone born deaf. As Jesus said, "Unless you are born from above, you cannot ***see*** the Kingdom of Heaven." However, when we have the life of God active within us, we can indeed "***taste and see*** that the Lord is good." Once you've tasted God, you'll never hunger for anything else again!

GROUP EXERCISES:

1. Role Play: Break up in pairs and practice ministering to a stranger with pain. One person should take the role of the infirm person, and the other person takes the role of the minister. Go through this exercise by breaking down the steps and adding one more step each time:
   a. Practice Approach
   b. Approach and Ask
   c. Approach, ask and Minister
   d. Approach, ask, minister, test
   e. Approach, ask, minister, test, rejoice/repeat
   f. Then finally put it all together with a Connect/Close

Each time, you repeat all the previous steps and add one more. This will give you lots of repetition on the early steps, but I've found that the beginning steps are the most important to get comfortable with. The repetition will help you gain confidence and comfort.

ASSIGMENTS:

1) Look over the Eight "Pointers to get you Started Healing the Sick in your City." Select two of these to do this week. You can do this with a partner.

2) Pick a store and go and minister to as many employees as you can. You can do this with a partner.

3) Set a goal of how many strangers you want to minister to this week. Share that with your LifeTeam. If you want, make plans to go out with a partner.

CHAPTER 7
WINNING CIRCLES:
INTRODUCING THE MAN OF PEACE~ THE KEY TO WINNING THE WORLD

"I used to just go to church, but now I'm born again!" Dan Mohler

Without realizing it, most believers have been "raised in captivity." Like bears who have forgotten how to hunt and forage because they've been raised in the zoo, believers have largely forgotten the basic skills that make our lifestyle and mission possible. If bears are simply released into the wild after a life of "zoo-style living", they'd starve even while surrounded by their natural prey, because they'd be looking for where the zookeeper laid out the food for them. We too have forgotten skills, mindsets, and behaviors that fit with the gospel of Jesus and our spiritual instincts resident within the new life planted inside us when we were born again.

Even if we are thriving in the pews, we are still mainly stuck in the pews, and this represents a crisis. Despite the fact that many faithful ministers attempt to preach us out of this crisis, this is usually only perpetuating the problem. As we continue to sit and listen to more great sermons and sing the latest worship song with the coolest bands ever, the world remains mostly untouched because we remain in dire need of hands-on training and support so that we learn how to minister effectively ourselves (and I'm not talking about singing in the choir). We need to learn how to reach the world for Christ and destroy the works of hell with God's power. Sermons *alone* won't fix this, even good sermons.

For the most part, seminaries have equipped ministers to preach sermons, create programs, and lead committees. We've been taught how to build and lead modern congregations. As a result we've all been weakened by a modern church culture that has equipped us to be effective within modern local congregations, but failed to equip us to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ- making supernatural

disciples who bring the Kingdom of God into the world. Some of the talented and gifted few arise to "ministry" on the sanctuary platform, but the rest of us are trained by habit to attend, give, and invite others so that the professionally trained clergy and talented few can have an opportunity to "bless our neighbors as ourselves." (And let's not mistake training volunteers to work as ushers and nursery workers for "equipping the saints to do the work of ministry"… *Do you really think this is what turned the world upside down??? Puh-lease!)*

This is a real crisis! There is an increasing segment of western culture that has no interest in ever returning to a modern church. They won't accept an invitation to church even from a trusted friend or relative… ever… not on a boat, or with a goat, or in a train or in a plane! They've made up their mind because of negative past experiences or prejudices implanted through the voice of the enemy have made them "church-adverse." They won't come to our zoo to be fed, even by our favorite zookeeper. If they are going to be reached for the Lord, we must go to them "out there in the wild" or they will perish. The world needs us to become people who can go to them *on their turf* in the fullness of Jesus Christ so that they can "taste and see that the Lord is good."

LEADING DISCIPLE-MAKERS

In the mind of Christ, every believer is qualified and empowered to be a supernatural disciple who is making supernatural disciples. We must return to the lifestyle of our "new creation species." The love and power flowing from the Spirit implanted within us can only truly be expressed as we "reign in life" (Rom. 5:17) and make disciples of Jesus Christ all around the world. We now only need to be equipped, coached, and supported by others who are living this life and willing to walk along side of us as we grow into this destiny.

Our Lord's chosen way to equip us is through leaders in the body of Christ. You will never reach God's destiny for your life until you are willing to accept His leadership through other godly men and women.

> "*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ…"* Eph. 4:11-13

Each of us need to be equipped by other leaders so that we function strongly in *each one of these areas* so that we are fully equipped to do "the work of ministry", which is only another way of saying ***make disciples***. God doesn't want us to become one trick ponies who are imbalanced specialists, always playing to our strength. The Lord has placed a variety of leaders in the body of Christ who can equip us to activate everything that Jesus Christ put inside of us so that we are more effective at making disciples.

True apostles are not merely those who are sent by Jesus to exercise the authority of the Kingdom of God. True apostles *equip the saints* to "go, make disciples" by walking in the dominion of Jesus Christ. Prophets don't just prophesy. They *equip the saints* to minister prophetically as we make disciples. Evangelists *equip the saints* to reach new people for Jesus Christ. Pastor-teachers equip the saints to care for one another in accordance to the Word of God. We all need equipping in each of these areas so that we can become effective disciple-makers. It's important to realize that we need to leaders in the body of Christ in order to become all Jesus intends.

GOD'S STRATEGY TO REACH PEOPLE

So far in this book, we've covered ground in each of these foundational areas (apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, teaching, and pastoral). Building upon the foundation of our union with Jesus Christ, we've covered a "quick start" basic ministry skill set that allow us to release the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to others in our daily lives. We've learned how to share our Jesus stories, share spontaneous words of supernatural encouragement, and to heal the sick in the dominion of Jesus Christ. These are elements of a truly supernatural lifestyle that require the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ for our lives.

There are a few basic questions that believers must be able to answer in order to step into the supernatural lifestyle of Jesus Christ and fulfill the mission He has given to us:

1) What do I say? What should I do?
2) Whom should I reach? How?
3) Why?

This chapter will focus mainly on the second question, “Whom should I reach? How?”

The short answer for “Whom do I reach? How?” is “everyone, any way you can.” As our brother Todd White said so powerfully, “If you can find someone that Jesus didn’t die for, then you don’t need to love them and minister to them.” The love of God demonstrated at the cross of Christ has fixed our hearts on every person as worthy of God’s love, so we pour out the love, truth, and power of the Kingdom of God simply because God says, “They are worth it!” We don’t evaluate people or do a mental “background check.” We pour out the redeeming love of God indiscriminately. We live a life of “random acts of Kingdom” in a continual flow of healing, encouragement, thanksgiving, and compassion, reconciling all people to God.

Yet, within this life of unconditional Kingdom love, a relational pattern from the life of Jesus, that was continued in the ministry of the apostles, becomes evident. It’s a pattern that deliberately engages entire regions with the Kingdom of God in the quickest time possible. Many missionaries and church planters have begun to recognize and adopt this pattern with amazing results. I’m going to give you a “preliminary description of this pattern”, then show you some examples, both from the Bible and today, that will ground you in this understanding. Then we will discuss how to apply this understanding to ministry today. If this is your first exposure to these concepts, I’ll warn you, they are revolutionary. So if you are prone to defend the status quo, you may want to put this book down and read no further. But for all those brave souls who will read on, can I encourage you to resist the urge to object and argue until you take in the entire chapter? You’ll be glad.

EXTRACT OR INFILTRATE?

The pattern emerges as we think about how we respond to people who are receptive to the Kingdom through us. While we continue to treat everyone with love and minister freely without any strings attached, what do we do when we find someone who is interested in learning more about following Jesus Christ?

God wants to reap vineyards, not just pluck a grape.

In the modern church, the pattern is to invite them to our church or Bible study. We add them to our existing group. As things progress, we invite them to become more involved in our group, which eventually forces them to decide whether to maintain the pre-existing circle of friends or to drop their old friends in favor of friends within the Christian community. People only have a limited amount of time for friends. We say, “Would you like to come to our pizza party and Bible study this Friday?” They respond, “Well, that’s the night my buddies come over and play cards.” We respond, “Well, think it over. We’d love to see you.” Without realizing it, we are treating the pre-existing friendships of a new-believer as competition and force people to decide between connecting with believers and their pre-existing network of friends. We are losing the opportunity to reach an entire new group and we don’t even realize it. In cases like this, people aren’t losing friends because of the nature of the Kingdom, but because of the congregational model of ministry that we’ve been raised within. When you are raised in captivity, you believe that you have to “stay in the zoo to get fed.” The end result is that we extract people out of their friendships. God wanted to harvest a vineyard. We plucked a grape and leave the rest to rot.

The pattern of Jesus Christ and the apostles was different. Instead of extracting individuals “out of the wild”, whenever possible, they started new works by connecting with new believers *on their turf* to bring the Kingdom of God to their entire circle of pre-existing relationships to impact this region. They didn’t extract. They infiltrated. Jesus and the apostles never forgot how to live in the wild. They didn’t live in captivity or build zoos or need zookeepers to feed the saints and keep them alive. They raised up warriors to exercise the dominion of the Kingdom of God in fellowship together.

By refusing to live in “captivity” to religion, Jesus taught His disciples how to advance the kingdom by continuing to live in the world. He provided continual examples of going to new areas, connecting with new people, and establishing an ongoing work of Kingdom that would impact the region. While Jesus and the apostles ministered to strangers constantly, whenever Jesus or the apostles wanted to start new works in a region, they were always doing so in hopes of

finding a key person known as a “person of peace.”

A person of peace is someone who is receptive to YOU and to the GOSPEL, and is willing to CONNECT you with other people. The person of peace is the doorway for the gospel to enter and spread the gospel throughout a community. Once they found a “person of peace” whenever possible, they got involved in their life on “their turf” to minister the Kingdom of God to their friends, family and acquaintances. Instead of extracting individuals, they won entire circles of influence. They went out into the village and found a grape, but instead of plucking it, they realized that “where there is a grape, there is a vineyard.” They left the grape intact with its vine and began to tend the vineyard. The result was consistently huge harvests of souls that transformed entire regions for the Kingdom of God.

Let’s revisit our conversation with our very receptive friend. Instead of inviting them to our pizza party, we may proceed like this. We say, “Who else do you know that needs to experience God like this?” They say, “Well, my buddies and I play cards on Friday night.” Instead of saying, “Well that’s when I go to Bible study at church,” we are now equipped to live in the wild and bring the Kingdom. So we say, “Cool. What time? I’d like to come. Do you think any of them need healing?” They say, “Oh yah! My friend Matt has bad back issues and Terry has bad knee pain. There is probably more, but this is going to be so cool!!” When believers are equipped to walk in the fullness of Jesus Christ, they can go from merely being a pew-sitting-service-attender to launching a new movement of God that impacts an entire region!

GOD’S GOSPEL PATTERN

It is God’s consistent pattern, that whenever God brings one person into His family, He seeks to use that one to reach their circle of influence. There are many examples in throughout the entire Bible. God used Noah to save his family, as did Rahab, Abraham, and Lot. We will be looking at some New Testament examples as well through the remainder of this chapter.

Because families often worked together to run a business or farm, the Biblical concept of household extends beyond the immediate family to the extended family, in-laws, servants, and even close neighbors and friends. It would be similar to all the people on a plantation in the old south (minus the cotton, sweet

tea, and fancy dresses). Today it would be close to what we would call our "circle of influence."

God remains committed to work through people. Throughout the Bible we see God using individuals to reach their families and those in their circle of influence.

> *When the jailer woke and … called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.* Acts 16:27-34

If Paul had not understood God's pattern of winning not just the individual, but the entire circle of influence, what would have been the result? Imagine that Paul, after leading the jailer to Christ begins to pull the jailer away from his family, and even view the jailer's circle of influence as a potential threat to the faith of his new convert's faith, because they ARE pagans after all. It's likely that the jailer's family would see his new found faith as an unwelcomed intrusion dividing their family. Instead of rejoicing together in their newfound faith, the jailer may have even have been persecuted by his family. Instead of starting a vibrant young church in the city, Paul and Silas would have only one isolated disciple of Jesus to leave behind as a witness for this city. If the jailer met you at the market and spoke to you about the gospel, do you think you'd be more likely to believe one solitary believer or an entire group of believers who are living out their faith together?

When you understand that God always wants to use people to reach those around them, you can plant the seeds of faith for people to see their entire household come to know Jesus even while they are in the process of discovering Him. You can speak of the gospel as something that God intends to bless whole families, businesses, and regions. Because the apostle Paul knew that whenever God

brings someone into the Kingdom, God wants to use their natural connections to bring many others into the Kingdom, Paul told the jailer, “Believe in the Lord and you’ll be saved, you *and your household.”*

If you are going to say things like this, you must be willing to back this up by going into someone else’s turf. By understanding and practicing this tactic of reaching your Circle of Influence, you will see groups of people come to know Jesus all at once instead of individuals. You’ll see entire churches birthed in a matter of days or hours instead of years.

It’s very important that you grasp and employ this tactic of winning entire circles of influence to Christ. Eternal destinies are at stake. Pre-existing relationships should not be treated as a threat to new converts but as God’s natural pathway to bringing His light into whole pockets of unreached people! We see every new person as a connector for the Kingdom of God to allow us to infiltrate the enemy’s camp and set captives free. They have become our “contact on the inside” to help us become insiders to permeate a new circle of relationships with the gospel.

KEY TACTICS:

- One of the ways you can reach your circle of influence is by connecting strong Christians with the people in your circle on THEIR TURF.

- Whenever your reach one person, instead of bringing them into an existing group, look for ways to get involved in their life and help them reach their Circle of Influence to start a new group.

- Be a connector. Win Circles, not just individuals. Start new Groups. (Don’t forget, some groups are two or three people!)

The key to make this tactic effective is for the new believer (like the jailer) to have the help and support of a mature believer (like Paul and Silas). The new believer functions as the hub of a new move of God as they introduce the mature believer to the people in their circle of influence and share their story of the

difference that Jesus is making to them.

If you realize that you have a significant circle of influence but don't feel strong enough to reach them effectively for Jesus, partner up with a mature believer and start connecting your mature partner with your circle of influence.

Remember, you are part of a team. Bring some strong believers into your circle. Find a way and make it happen! Don't assume that just because you've hit some "dead ends" with some people in your circle that you've done all you can for your friends and family. Often, people will be more receptive and respectful to a "trusted stranger" (which is how they would view anyone you introduce) than to closer friends or family. Become a person of peace and connect a trusted believer who walks in the power of the Kingdom with your friends and family.

JESUS, THE MASTER CONNECTOR

As we would expect, Jesus is the master of winning entire circles of influence. We see Him advancing the Kingdom by recognizing persons of peace and connecting with new regions through their influence.

I'm going to show you how Jesus employed this pattern in His ministry. Keep in mind, you are watching love in action. This is no spiritual C.E.O. pulling people into his own self-serving agenda. This is God's pure love flowing into this world one life at a time, demonstrating a simple yet profound truth: God, the creator, is a God of relationships. He loves relationships, lives in them and moves through them. God is love.

In the first chapter of John's gospel, we see how perfect love begins its assault on death and darkness. From the onset the Kingdom of God's invasion of this world starts one relationship at a time. First, Jesus goes to see His cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus started with His own circle of influence. John became the first "person of peace." God gave John a revelation of Jesus Christ and John opened the door for Jesus to meet his friends.

> *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"*

> *The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.* John 1:35-37

John proclaims his revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah to all, and a couple of John's disciples want to know more. John opens the door for two of his disciples to begin to follow Jesus. What does God in the flesh do? Jesus invites them to hang out with Him for a day.

> *Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day.* John. 1:37-39

On the spot, Jesus invites them home for the day. Little did they know that they were "hanging out" with almighty God, who had humbled Himself to dwell with us. Jesus freely opened His daily life to these men so they could get to know Him personally. Jesus opened His home to eat and drink with these men. He opened His heart to fellowship with them.

The next day, Andrew becomes a person of peace. Andrew was receptive to Jesus, His message and His ministry, and he wants to help connect Jesus with the people in his own circle of influence. Watch what happens…

> *One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).* John 1:40-42

After this, Jesus sought out Philip.

> *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* John 1:43

I may be wrong on this small detail, but I believe Philip was probably the other

one of “John’s disciples” who, along with Andrew, spent the day with Jesus. Why? Because it says that Jesus “found Philip”, which implies that Jesus knew Philip and was looking for him intentionally. Why? Because Jesus had established a relationship with Philip. He knew that Philip was receptive towards Him and His message. Jesus was giving Philip the opportunity to follow Him. Philip, like Andrew, also became a “person of peace.” He began connecting his friends with Jesus.

> *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."* John 1:44-46

How does God’s love begin its invasion of the domain of darkness? With shock and awe theatrics? Hardly. It starts on the backside of the desert in a small river with a young unknown carpenter’s son walking out to be baptized at the feet of a wild-eyed prophet. Heaven finally had a partner on the earth, a man upon whom heaven could rest and through whom it could move, an image bearer through whom the invisible God could display His likeness. The love of Heaven has a man on the earth. Heaven breaks open, God speaks to John who proclaims the awesome revelation that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the long awaited Messiah. It starts in a dirty river on the backside of the desert with a soaking wet Messiah at the feet of a wild eyed prophet.

From that point on, it pretty much looks like some Galilean blue-collar-workers hanging out with a Nazarene and fellowshipping together. Jesus goes to John the Baptist and meets Philip and Andrew. They hang out. The next day Andrew brings Peter to see Jesus, whom Jesus immediately gave a nick-name. He called him “rock.” Nice. God in the flesh gives people nicknames like “Rock” and “sons of thunder.”

Then Jesus goes looking for John’s other disciple that he had met the other day, Philip, another guy from Galilee. He invites Philip to follow Him. “The Messiah just asked me to be His disciple! Cool. I’ve got to tell Nathaniel. He’ll never believe me.” He didn’t. Nathaniel was a skeptic by nature. But he was Philip’s friend, so he decided to check this guy out and make sure his buddy didn’t get

suckered in by a fake. Nathaniel went with all his guards up, only to be blown away by the real deal. Jesus brought Him into the fellowship. Galilee was being taken over by heaven. That's how the invasion starts. Why? God is love. That's the way love does it. Love isn't just His goal. It's His method.

It doesn't end there.

Remember "Rock"? The invasion of Galilee picks up with Rock. Jesus went to Peter's house, *he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.* Matt. 8:14-16

Peter became a "person of peace." He received Jesus. He welcomed His ministry. He invited Jesus into His home. Then the "Rock" connected Jesus with other people. Jesus healed His sick mother-in-law. Jesus ate with Peter in his house. He healed the sick in the entire village. The Kingdom of God was at hand in Galilee. The love of God was paying a visit and setting people free.

Jesus is modeling a pattern of advancing the Kingdom through persons of peace, a pattern in which all of the disciples were on the receiving end. Their receptivity towards Jesus Christ and His ministry, and their willingness to connect Him with their circle of influence made them the kind of people that Jesus would later instruct them to look for; namely a "man of peace."

God's invasion continues, following the same pattern. Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee and walks up to a tax collector. Who but God would actually walk up to a tax collector?! But that's the way love does it. Jesus calls Matthew to "Follow Me!" Then Matthew throws a dinner party and invites all his friends, some of whom were known prostitutes. The religious leaders get upset because Jesus is "eating and drinking with sinners", but unlike those who were raised in religious cages, Jesus was capable of living in the wild. He was able to live "in the world" without being "of the world." Jesus was able to bring the Kingdom of God to people on their turf. How was it that Jesus came to be so popular with all these sinners? Matthew was a person of peace. Jesus got involved in Matthew's life, on his turf, to meet his friends to win Matthew's entire circle of friends.

Jesus understood “circles of influence.” Instead of treating pre-existing relationships as a threat or competition, Jesus demonstrated the value God places in relationships. They are the intended pathway through which we discover His love and truth through one another. Because Jesus held this view, He was able to work with God’s established pattern instead of against it, and his ministry exploded in just a few short days.

HATING MOTHER AND FATHER

Now if you have read through the gospels, even though you are tracking with what I’m saying so far, you may have the question arising, “What about all those places where Jesus told people that they’d have to leave their friends and family in order to be His disciple?” Does this somehow contradict Jesus’ pattern of working through relationships? While it may seem to at first, on closer examination, that’s not the case. Jesus did say,

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Mt. 10:34-38

It’s true that we owe Jesus Christ our highest allegiance and His gospel often brings division into previous relationships. So how does this fit with advancing the Kingdom of God along the lines of circles of influence?

Relationships are intended by God to be a conduit of the Kingdom of God, not a competing allegiance. So we follow Jesus’ example of valuing the power of relationships to facilitate the advance of the Kingdom of God. Our relationships should be like Andrew and Phillip who connect Jesus Christ with their family and friends. We want God to work through our relationships to show others His great grace. When we love Jesus, we don’t throw up the barrier in our hearts towards others. We bless others with the grace and love we ourselves have received through Jesus.

Sometimes pre-existing friends don't receive the good news of the gospel as good news. They may create a barrier towards you because of your faith in Jesus Christ. Instead of accepting Jesus Christ, they may reject His authority for their lives. As a result *they created a barrier* towards us, not the other way around. Although our heart remains open to them, they have closed their hearts to us because we represent the Kingdom to them.

This assumes that they have seen and heard of the Kingdom of God through us! We've not merely invited them to church or a LifeTeam. We've released healing into their bodies when they were sick. We've spoken to them about God's love and power displayed in the Lord Jesus. We've not required them to come to us or get involved in a new group of "strangers" in order to find Christ. We've connected other mature Christians and to bring the Kingdom of God to them. The Kingdom isn't "out of reach", but it's "at hand."

When faced with a choice, we chose Jesus Christ every time and accept the consequences.

Our first allegiance is ALWAYS to the Lord Jesus Christ. If people in our circle of influence begin to reject us, malign us, and mock us, we continue to love them and love Jesus openly without shame or backing down. We can't stop shining the light. If they start trying to control us and keep us from following Christ obediently, we've already decided that Jesus Christ is our Lord, no matter what it costs us and the waves our lives make. Because our lives now belong to Jesus Christ, we may decide to leave the family business to go into ministry, or resign from a lucrative job to become a missionary, or move out from a long time boyfriend's apartment if they won't get married. When the people close to us begin to resist the agenda of God's Kingdom, we always obey Jesus' exhortation to love and follow Him no matter what the cost, even in our closest relationships. When faced with a choice, we chose to follow Jesus Christ every time and accept the division it brings because those closest to us reject Him.

Yet our hearts must remain open to everyone, to pour out the love of Christ because we put Him first in our lives. Whether they reject us or not, we love them. We pray for those who persecute us. We don't return evil for evil but overcome evil with good. Just because they closed their hearts towards us, we

can’t take it personally. It’s because we’ve identified ourselves with Jesus Christ. In either case, whether our circle of influence comes to love or hate Jesus Christ, once we come into the Kingdom we want to see our friends set free from captivity. Whereas Satan seeks to use relationships to advance his own god-less dominion, we recognize that our relationships exist for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

At other times, we meet people who are pretty disconnected. They come into the Kingdom feeling pretty isolated and alone. Jesus always welcomed people who were disconnected into His circle of influence. The Kingdom of God values relationships, while always exalting our allegiance to God as our supreme ruling relationship.

KEY KINGOM TACTICS:

- Work with circles of influence, rather than against them, to advance God’s Kingdom.

- Never let Satan use your circles of influence against you to cause you to compromise your obedience to Jesus Christ or slow the advance of God’s Kingdom.

- Welcome the disconnected into God’s family.

SETTING ENTANGLED HEARTS FREE

Before leaving this topic, I need to address the issue of pre-existing romantic relationships. The added element of romantic involvement adds complexity. It’s not uncommon for adults who come to know Jesus Christ to be in a romantically involved relationship with someone at the time of their conversion. In this situation, you’d need to apply both principles (“advancing the Kingdom through existing relationships” and “being faithful to Jesus above every other relationship”) at the same time.

A good place for you to start may be to introduce your significant other to the person who led you to faith in Jesus Christ: “I’ve made a life-changing decision that will make a big difference in our relationship. I love you, and I want to introduce you to a new friend of mine.” God intends for your relationship to be

the means of your significant other coming to know Him personally. No matter how your significant other responds to the gospel, your relationship with him or her will be drastically altered by your allegiance to Jesus Christ (and not vice versa).

Jesus Christ is the end of your immoral relationship. Your relationships are no longer your own. You'll need to make your relationship right before God, either by marriage or by abstinence. If you aren't ready for marriage, then you should strongly consider moving out – even if you have children together, even if you've been living together for years. While the particulars of each case may influence the best way to make this relationship right, the relationship will have to change. If you have a mature Christian friend, invite their counsel and help about the best way to proceed.

Recently my wife and I became friends with a young couple. They were very eager to grow in their relationship with God, so we began spending time with them. Eventually we discovered they weren't married and both came from very broken backgrounds. Up to this point, we had just assumed they were married. So the next time we got together, I asked them, "What do you know about God's will for marriage?" Then I listened as they spoke to me about their intention to get married. As they spoke, I also heard them talk a great deal about the brokenness of their past as the reason they were currently living together until they got married. So I asked them, "Not to get too personal, but are you guys physically intimate?" They said, "Of course." So then I asked them, "What do you believe God says about that? Do you think God's okay with this? Or did God give you a free pass because of your upbringing?" Without hesitation they both answered, "No. We know this isn't what it should be." I asked them, "How is this impacting your relationship with God?" I was not surprised to find out that they were both looking forward to getting this aspect of their life on track.

I asked them, "What do you think you should do? How can I help?" At this point, the discussion digressed into how long it took to plan a wedding and how expensive it was. I offered some suggestions: "I hear your sincerity about your intent to honor God and one another by getting married. I can see this is important to you, but I'm not sure either one of you is looking forward to another six months to a year of living in immorality and guilt while you try to get a wedding planned. Let's not go down that path. So, let me run a couple of alternatives past you, and you tell me what you think. Here are a couple of ideas:

Get married legally now through the court system. We can help with any court costs if that's an issue. Then have your nice family wedding when you can afford it. Or, one of you can move in with us until you are able to get married. Do either of those sound like a good alternative to you?" They said that they wanted to pray and discuss these ideas.

We affirmed the fact that we loved them and would stand with them to help them. They eventually decided to go ahead and get married through the courts and have a family wedding when they could afford it. They were amazed at the spiritual benefits they experienced when they got married.

While we are on this topic, let me just point out some important elements involved in this scenario:

- We didn't presume and "preach at them." We asked questions to draw their thoughts and feelings out into the open under the assumption that the Holy Spirit had already been dealing with them about this issue. This allowed us to partner with God's work in them. In this instance, we were eventually able to help them see that they were choosing to live in immorality against their own consciences, because they were still defining themselves through the lens of the brokenness of their upbringing instead of through the wholeness that is theirs in Christ.

- We didn't condemn and judge. Nor did we condone sin by our silence. Instead we obeyed Galatians 6:1, which says, "*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted*." God has given us the responsibility to help one another listen to God and remain true to Him. He does not allow us to abdicate our responsibility to the Holy Spirit. He wants us to partner with the Holy Spirit by embodying the grace and truth of Jesus Christ as we relate to one another.

- We were willing to help them with the practical burdens that might have hindered them. By offering practical suggestions as well as personal and financial help, we made it clear that we were willing to embody the grace of Jesus Christ to them.

- We empowered them to make their own decision. When they said they needed time to talk and pray, we backed off to give them time and space. Ultimately, people don't answer to us. They answer to God. We aren't God's Gestapo. We are God's sons and man's servants.

WHAT ABOUT THE CROWDS?

Some ministers are big-shots. They have incredible charisma, and a massive ego to go with it. Many more are wannabes that have a lust for the perceived status that goes along with certain kinds of ministry. They can't do "ministry" unless they have a microphone, spotlight, and a crowd. They're all show. They don't have normal healthy relationships with regular people. The closest thing they have to a friend is their staff. They're driven by ambition and need to be in control. They've allowed the criticism they've experienced from their public ministry to create a distance and distrust of people. They live in fear of someone getting close enough to see past the façade. The need the distance of the platform to maintain the illusion.

Jesus ministered to the crowds, which shows us that not everyone with a large following has bad motives. There is a great need for reaching the crowds in the Kingdom of God. But before, during and after every crowd, Jesus had his circle of disciples that were "with Him" when everyone else went home. Even in the height of His ministry, Jesus continued to stop and minister to individuals, because this is the key to brining true Kingdom revival to villages and regions. Jesus was never too big to minister to individual people. When a person of peace emerged, love flowed into a new circle of influence.

For example, the woman at the well in the gospel of John became a "person of peace." She not only received Jesus and His message, but she also began to connect Him with other people. This one lady became a superstar person of peace, kicking open the doorway for an entire region to find Jesus Christ.

> *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "**Come, and see a man** who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him… **Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's***

> ***testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."*** *So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "**It is no longer because of what you said that we believe**, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."* John 4:28-30, 39-42

There are many more examples of persons of peace in Jesus' ministry; Zacchaeus, Mary and Martha, Simon the Pharisee, and more. As you read the gospel you will see that Jesus is the master model of reaching new villages by finding a person of peace. Jesus shows us how God works by love through existing relationships to advance the Kingdom. The person of peace is the key person opening up new circles.

Although you are God's key to reaching your own circle of influence, you don't have to do this alone. In the same way that Cornelius sent for Peter and the Philippian jailer brought Paul and Silas to his house, God will usually use you to connect your unbelieving friends with a man or woman of God who will bring them into the Kingdom. It's important that you see yourself as part of a team. You should take responsibility to reach your circle of influence, but don't be a "ball hog." You are not alone. You are part of the body of Christ. Bring other key people into your circle.

This is especially important for people coming out of addictive and immoral lifestyles. If you are maintaining old friends while young in your faith, you will need to have the support of strong Christian brothers and sisters who can infiltrate your circle with the light of Jesus. People with addictive and immoral lifestyles must adjust the way they spend their time so that their closest friends are believers who can build their faith and lead their friends to Jesus. Connect your unbelieving friends with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

While in college, I remember hearing a story about one young man from another university who did this in a radical way. He was so excited about his new found faith in Jesus Christ, but couldn't answer his friend's questions. Instead of getting discouraged, he came up with a plan. He invited about ten of his closest un-saved friends and ten of his new Christian friends to lunch. After everyone

sat down, he stood up and said, “I have to say something to all of you. You guys have known me for a long time. We’ve had some great times together. I’m really thankful that you guys are my friends. You guys also know that recently my life has changed in a huge way. Jesus Christ has come into my life, and it’s made a huge difference. I know He’s real, but when I talk to you guys (pointing at his old friends) I can’t explain it or answer your questions. So I invited you to meet some of my new friends. I want you guys (pointing at the Christians) to share about Jesus with my buddies and answer some of their questions. Help them understand how they can have this too.” Then he sat down! Before they left, several of his friends came into the Kingdom. For others, that was the last time they spoke to him. That’s the way it works.

Just in case this hasn’t dawned on you yet, this is how regions are transformed, with one person walking in the fullness of the Kingdom of God finding a few receptive people who want to hang out with them who want to introduce them to a few of their friends. Before you know it, there’s a whole crowd of people buzzing with the joy of heaven. This is something ANY believer can do! No big budgets or talented musicians or sound systems or religious buildings or seminary trained clergy required! Just one God-filled person releasing the Kingdom who finds an open door of receptive people, people who likely haven’t darkened the door of a church in a long time and don’t plan to in the near future. But that’s alright, “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand!” We’re going to them with love and power.

This mindset shifts the focus from merely winning individuals to Jesus Christ to finding persons of peace to win whole new circles of people to Christ. It starts with reaching out to individual strangers, but once you find the person of peace, you jump into their world and become their new best friend for a while for the sake of the Kingdom. Stop thinking individuals. Think circles. Stop plucking grapes. Start harvesting vineyards. Find the person of peace!

JESUS SENDS OUT THE DISCPLES

A couple of years into Jesus’ ministry, the time came for Him to send out His disciples for a couple of practice runs for their future ministry. Jesus modeled this pattern of loving all in the power of the Kingdom with no strings attached, stopping for individuals, and connecting with those who were receptive to Him

and His ministry and wanted to connect Jesus with their circle of influence. Just in case they missed this, Jesus gives His disciples explicit instruction how to connect with new people and establish His Kingdom.

As Jesus sent his disciples out to new villages, they would be outsiders. But they were to minister freely to strangers in order to seek out “insiders” in the community whom the Spirit had prepared to receive the Kingdom message. It is in these instructions that Jesus defines a person of peace as someone who is 1) receptive to you and 2) to the Kingdom, and 3) is willing to connect you with people in their circle of influence. The person of peace is the doorway for the love of God to touch people you don’t yet know.

Here are a few important observations taken from Jesus’ instructions regarding persons of peace that will help us develop our understanding:

1) **The search for a person of peace begins with prayer for God to send laborers out into His harvest.**

And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest… Luke 10:2, 7-9

2) Our ministry to strangers is part of the process to find a person of peace, someone who is receptive to us, receptive to our ministry, and willing to connect us with other people.

> *And whatever town or village you enter, enquire who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.* Matt.10:11

We don’t wait for a person of peace so that we can start our ministry. We minister the Kingdom as part of the process of finding a person of peace.

3) The person of peace is the doorway to a new circle of influence. Once you find a person of peace, you are no longer a stranger. You become the honored guest of a trusted friend.

> *Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'”* Luke 10:7-9

4) A person of peace wants to be your friend. They are willing to eat with you and open their home for the Kingdom.

> *Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages.* Luke 10:3-5

It's important to notice that the person of peace really isn't expected to do any ministry. There is no pressure on them to do much or know anything or defend the gospel. Once they've received a disciple into their lives, their main function is hospitality and introducing them to the people they know.

Not only did Jesus send His disciples out to new towns and villages looking for a person of peace. He sent them out with a very specific prayer, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2) Although this prayer is answered in part by the disciples going into new towns, it is answered mainly by the finding of the persons of peace.

The person of peace becomes your main disciple in a new area. As they connect you with their circle of influence, they see every miracle and they hear every message of the Kingdom that you share. After a short while, they see and understand how ministry in the Kingdom works. With your coaching they begin to lay hands on the sick and even share some of the testimonies of what they have seen. They are becoming equipped as a laborer in the harvest as they watch your example, listen to your teaching, and begin to take part in your ministry.

The person of peace becomes an automatic "worker in the harvest." Having received you and your message into their lives, they begin to connect you with others in their circle of influence as you keep asking, "Who else do you know that needs healing, deliverance or needs to hear this message?" The person of peace leads the move of God in this new area by connecting you to people on the basis of relationships they already have in place. Because of the person of peace, you no longer have to break through the "stranger barrier" for every new ministry encounter. From now on, you are a stranger to no one. As you are

introduced by the person of peace to their friends, family and neighbors, immediate credibility is established.

People who minister with an understanding of Jesus' teaching and example of the role of the person of peace can maximize their effectiveness and long term impact. Otherwise, they are ministering to one individual stranger after another and constantly dealing with the significant trust barriers that strangers must overcome. Thank God, although we continue to minister to whatever needs we see around us, we can be much more effective at launching new moves of God with substance and magnitude. We don't have to start every encounter from scratch to advance the Kingdom!

Having had a front row seat to watch the Kingdom of God transform their own circle of influence, the person of peace is raised up to be a laborer in the harvest. We see this pattern in the ministry of Jesus, the disciples and Paul. For example, in Luke 9 Jesus sends the twelve disciples out two-by-two into new villages. In Luke 10, Jesus repeats the process, but this time with "seventy-two others." Where did these "seventy-two others" come from? They came from the harvest of the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the disciples in Luke 9.

Key Tactics:

- The workers for the harvest come from the harvest.

- With EVERY new person, instead of adding them to an existing group, look for ways to START a NEW GROUP on their turf by getting involved with them to help them win people in their circle.

- Develop the mindset that everything you do is disciple-making. Everything you do in life and ministry from start to finish is training a future worker.

I WANT ONE. WHERE CAN I FIND ONE?

How do you find a person of peace? Finding a person of peace involves some enquiry. In Matthew 10:11, Jesus says, "Whatever town or village you enter, enquire who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart." You can only find a person of peace as you interact with strangers freely doing Kingdom ministry.

A person of peace will exhibit 3 characteristics. First, they are receptive to YOU. Second, they are receptive to YOUR MESSAGE. And third, they are willing to bring you into their circle of influence.

I've found a simple question that can be used to identify a person of peace as you interact with people.

Here are the **"Person of Peace" Question**s:

1) **Would you be interested in meeting in your home to learn more about how you can experience God in your daily life from the Bible?**

2) **Who else do you know that might need this?**

These are great questions to ask to see who is interested in learning more and going further with their relationship with God together with you. If they are excited to learn more with you, then ask them the second question to see if they are willing to connect you with people they know. Asking this question can open some doors quickly.

Recently I was kick-starting one of my friends to walk in the power of God. We were walking down a main street in his town and began to minister to a lady who was out on her front porch. She got healed and saved. Then she asked me, "Where do you go to church?" I recognized what she was really asking. She wasn't looking for a building to attend. She wanted more of the Kingdom of God that she had just entered. I asked her, "Would you be interested in meeting in your home to learn more about how you can experience God in your daily life from Bible?" She immediately said, "Yes! That'd be awesome." So we talked a little about setting something up. Then I asked her, "Who else do you know that might need this?" She said, "I know a few people who might be interested." I replied, "I didn't say who might be interested. I said who else do you know that might *need* this? Who else do you know that needs to be healed or is dealing with anxiety or depression and addictions like you were today?" She brightened up, "I have tons of friends that need this!" Now we're talking!

TO ASK OR NOT TO ASK? THAT IS THE QUESTION

I don't always ask people these questions when I minister to someone. One word of advice here is to take conversations as far as there is grace. I ask these questions when it feels like I'm offering to give people more of myself. When it feels like you are asking them for something, don't ask it. If you feel like you are forcing the conversation to go further than it should, back off. Give God room to work in people's lives. It's not about you and your agenda. If you feel like people are pulling away, it's probably not the right time to ask this yet. You should probably hold off. Usually you can tell when someone is open to you or not based on their body language. If they are acting like the want to walk away, it doesn't make sense to ask them if they'd like you to meet with them for Bible study in their home.

Sometimes you connect with someone who is genuinely open and eager for more. Sometimes you pray for someone and they ask you, "Where do you go to church?" They usually aren't interested at all about your denominational affiliation. They are interested in connecting with more people like you, but in our culture, that's how we've learned to express this desire to connect. This is a perfect time to ask that second question: "Would you be interested in meeting in your home to learn more about how you can experience God in your life through the Bible?" At other times, you're not sure how interested they are, but it's still okay to ask. You are making yourself available. Whether they take you up on your offer is up to them. Offering to come to their home shows that you are willing to come into their comfort zone, on to their ground. Their response will tell you whether they are open to this or not. If they aren't, let them pick a place that they and their friends would be comfortable to open a Bible and talk about life. Sometimes a local coffee shop or restaurant is a good alternative. Mentioning the Bible and God's power is also important, because they need to realize that they are being invited to discover a relationship with the God of the Bible that is a real and life-changing experience.

A few years ago I was spending regular time on a local college campus to meet students. I had a great encounter with a young man who was telling me that he knew he needed to get his life back on track with God, but he worked on Sundays. So I asked him, "Would you be interested in meeting in your home to learn more about how you can experience God in your daily life through the

Bible?" He almost cried, "You'd be willing to do that for me? Wow!" As it turned out, the best place for us to meet was on campus. As we talked a little more, I asked him the next question, "Who else do you know that might need this?" The very next week I was sitting in a campus cafeteria with several college students eager to hear more about Jesus Christ. Whereas a typical "attender" might have come to a dead end without a suitable meeting to invite a new friend, an equipped disciple-makers is able to launch a new work of God. Any believer who is properly equipped can be used by God to launch new works that will impact their entire region… and beyond. This is how the Kingdom of God infiltrates the world!

If you are a mature believer and lead someone to faith in Christ, you need to make every effort to connect with them on their turf. The first few days and weeks after someone comes to Christ is critical not only for them, but for everyone they know. I do mean EVERY effort to make time to get involved with them ON THEIR turf and connect with their circle of influence. Consider things like taking vacation time or sick days, dropping out of clubs, skipping church or existing LifeTeam. Whatever it takes. Why? This could be key to launching or squandering a new move of God. Souls are at stake. Nations are at stake.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1. In your group, take a few minutes to do the following. A. Individually identify the people in your circle of influence. Write their names in the space below.

B. Now, circle the names of the 3-5 people you believe that the Holy Spirit wants you to make your REACH priority. Begin praying for them daily and making opportunities to share your story with them.

2. A. Who from your Circle of Influence needs to hear your Jesus stories? Think about your salvation story? Your power story? You strategic story? Make a plan to share your stories with the people in your Circle.

2. Share your plan with your LifeTeam. Then pray together and encourage one another.

3. **Get a partner and role play**. Practice asking the person of peace question at the conclusion of a ministry scenario. Then change roles. Repeat the exercise until you are both comfortable asking this question.

4. A. Incorporate the activities that are going to enable you to find a person of peace. Set a specific goal regarding the number people you are going to approach each week for ministry until you find a person of peace. Schedule time to DO it. Share your goal with others.

"I will approach _____ people every week to minister to them,

asking them the Door Opening Questions until I find a person of peace to launch a new move of God in this city."

B. Find a partner from your LIFE Team who will undertake the same goal with whom you can go out together or work more closely.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Who from your LIFE Team can you bring into your Circle of Influence? How? Make a plan. Make it happen. Make some notes below.

2. A. Evaluate your own equipping needs. Read the descriptions below. Put a star next to the area that is the strongest for you at this point in your life. Circle the area that is in the greatest need of equipping for you: **Apostle**- you are equipped with a solid foundation in your union with Jesus Christ so that you are advancing the Kingdom of God by walking in His fullness.

Prophet- you are equipped to hear God and speak spontaneous words of encouragement with divine insight in accordance to the Word of God.

Evangelist- you are equipped to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ.

Pastor-teacher- you are equipped to care for one another and build one another up into mature disciples of Jesus Christ by rightly dividing and applying the Word of God

B. Make a plan to grow in this area that includes the resources available through leaders in the body of Christ. Keeping in mind that this book does cover many aspects of Apostolic, Prophetic, what do you believe God would like to do in your life to strengthen you in this area? Who do you know that is strong in this area that can help you?

CHAPTER 8

CAST OUT DEMONS LIKE JESUS

"You are God's sons, man's servant, and the devil's master."
Curry Blake

For most of the twentieth century, the western church has been fairly ignorant of the demonic realm. Most modern seminary professors teach future ministers how to understand Greek grammar, but not how to cast out demons. We read about it in the Bible, but consider demons mainly as a source of moral temptation. Because we have been so saturated with a naturalistic world-view, we are more likely to attribute our problems to psychological scars from the past or chemical imbalances in our bodies rather than demonic oppression. As a result, we are more inclined to turn to psychologists and pharmacists rather than to a believer exercising kingdom authority over demons. Rarely have western Christians "cast out demons", which, according to Jesus Christ, was the very ***first mark*** of someone who has believed the message of the gospel given to the apostles. (Mark 16:15-18) While the evangelical church scoffs at the modern man who denies the reality of sin, we fail to see that we have fallen into the same ditch by denying the demonic, not outrightly, but practically. How far we have fallen from the truth!

FOCUSING ON DARKNESS DOESN'T BRING LIGHT

Over the last twenty years there has been a significant shift in western culture forcing believers in the western world recognize and deal with demonic activity. People who have come to Christ out of false forms of spirituality and those who have ministered to them have been forced to learn how to access the resources of Jesus Christ to deal with demons. Missionaries who have gone to other cultures soon discover that one of the greatest felt needs of the people whom they are seeking to reach for Jesus Christ is freedom from various forms of demonic

oppression. Until we are equipped to help them, the church will not thrive among these cultures. With the onslaught of new age and eastern religious practices in the west, more people are having spiritual encounters with dark spirits. They need our help, so we must get better equipped in this area.

We have come to a season where the western church is being forced to deal with the reality of demons. For the most part, church leaders in the west have been thoroughly equipped to help you understand how to get to heaven, but don't have the faintest idea how to set you free from a demon. They don't have a clear revelation of the gospel of the Kingdom and its relationship with the demonic.

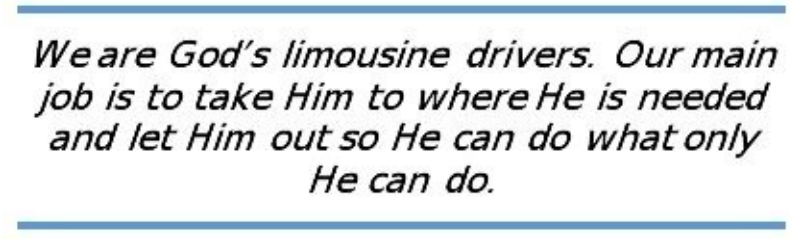
Some have recognized this lack of revelation regarding the demonic, but rather than equipping believers to cast out demons in the Name of Jesus, we have instead begun to teach believers Biblical truths about the power and activity of demons without a revelation of the authority of the Kingdom of God. We string Bible verses together about demonic activity without a clear understanding of our complete victory through Jesus Christ. Believers are being taught about the danger of "generational curses", the ways we can give demons "authority over our lives" and "the right to work in our lives." As a result, we've played into the hands of the enemy by instilling of fear of coming under attack. Instead of establishing people to walk in confidence, victory, and authority as sons of God through the revelation of the absolute victory of Jesus Christ, we have raised up a generation of spiritual wimps who are hoping to stay out of the way of all the "big bad demons."

Additionally, much of the teaching that is available regarding dealing with practical aspects of demonic oppression is extremely technical or completely contradictory to the gospel itself. We are being taught complicated methods, technical formulas, and ritualistic practices to get free from generational curses, breaking demonic strongholds, and healing emotional wounds. Many have begun to style themselves as specialists in "deliverance ministry", "spiritual warfare", or "inner healing." They have become "experts" in getting people free from demonic oppression and quite often have countless formulas, methods, and techniques for dealing for the variety of human needs and demonic oppression-formulas, methods, and techniques which were never taught or demonstrated by Jesus Christ or the apostles. Instead they based their specialized methods and formulas on a combination of Bible verses, personal experience, modern

psychology, and “special revelations.” Therein lies their error…and their influence and income!



Since no Christian who simply reads the Bible and follows the example and teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles could ever come up with these complicated methods of ministry, we must purchase their books, attend their expensive conferences, and pay their ridiculous membership fees. They parade their success stories to entice unstable people to come and learn the secret spiritual knowledge not readily available to those who just read their Bibles and do what it says. When their methods are called into question, instead of re-examining their approach to ministry in light of the full revelation of the gospel in the Scriptures, they skirt the issues and continue to teach others to follow their practices. In the process they become “Christian shamans and witch doctors”, enjoying the affirmation they receive from being sought out by the church, getting their own sense of identity from their “specialized knowledge” of dealing with the demonic.



Whenever we abandon the simplicity of the gospel, we get ourselves into trouble and play into the hand of the enemy. Satan always tries to draw us away from the Word of God by getting us to exercise our own reason based on our sense experience. “Did God really say?” “See this fruit? Doesn’t it look different than God said? Forget what God has said. What seems right to you? That’s where the power’s at!” Whenever we move away from the clear example and teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles, we are taking the wrong road, even if it’s paved with Bible verses. Remember, Bible verses are like puzzle pieces. Jesus is the cover on the box. If you put the verses together in a way that doesn’t look like Jesus, you’ve put them together wrong.

SAME GOSPEL. SAME APPROACH. DIFFERENT NEEDS.

The gospel that Jesus Christ gave to the apostles produces believers who cast out demons in His Name. When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom, He simply told them to "Heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead." None of these things were accomplished by a complicated formula or method. They were all expressions of the same thing, the presence of the Kingdom of God. They could go heal the sick because the Kingdom of God has the authority and power to bring healing wherever the domain of darkness was oppressing people in their body. They could cast out demons because the Kingdom of God has the authority and power to eject demons wherever they had intruded into people's souls. They could raise the dead because the Kingdom of God has the authority and power to give life, whereas the domain of darkness could only "steal, kill, and destroy." The authority and power of Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God is our answer for everything.

One day a lady came to me because she had problems with her knees. She asked me to lay hands for healing. So I said, "Right now, in the Name of Jesus Christ, everything not of God… you go!" I was surprised when she doubled over and began to convulse violently for about thirty seconds. She then raised up with her eyes rolled back in her head and belched a huge guttural belch. Even though she was a small woman, she sounded like college linebacker who just funneled a six pack. Afterwards, she relaxed. Her eyes opened. The distortion of her face disappeared. So I asked her, "Are you alright?" She said, "Yes! I feel well." I asked, "How are your knees?" She moved and smiled, "They are just fine." She got healed and set free from a demon at the same time. I had no idea she had a demon or needed to be set free. I didn't know how it got into her and didn't need to know in order for her to get set free.

Why? When we exercise Kingdom authority and release the power of the Holy Spirit, people will get healed and set free from demons. The Holy Spirit knows whatever people need, and so long as we believe that everything that people need is in Him, our ministry becomes really simple. God is our co-worker. Sometimes I think of myself as God's limousine driver. My main job is to take God to where He is needed and then open the door to let Him out so that He can do what only He can do. At other times I think of the midget riding on the shoulders of a giant.. Although God is truly the brawn *and* the brains of the Kingdom endeavor, He chooses to manifest His power and authority only when

we step out in faith. God waits to release His power until we “call the shots.” Being a co-worker of God means that God waits to work until we are working together. Whenever we act in faith, we “release the giant”, our mighty co-worker. Our divine co-worker is waiting on us to lay hands and believe or to speak a command of faith before He springs into action with His almighty power. We get the easy part. We just believe, speak, and obey. He does all the heavy lifting. He is the one with all the authority and the power to get things done. God created us to be His co-workers when He made us as His image bearers and appointed us rule over the works of His hands on the earth. What an amazingly humble God. What are we willing to believe God to do? When are we willing to act in faith? He has all the authority and power anyone could need to be set free from all the works of the enemy.

Our approach to getting people set free from demons should be basically the same as the approach to healing the sick. When we heal the sick and people are wondering, “How did this happen?” we say, “The Kingdom of heaven is here.” Likewise, when we cast out a demon, we have the same explanation, “It’s God’s Kingdom being manifested.” It’s essentially the same approach for healing and for deliverance: exercise the authority and power of the Kingdom of God. We are commissioned to act as heaven’s ambassadors and enforce the will of God by releasing the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaiming the presence and authority of Jesus Christ.

When we believe that we need to have a separate approach for each aspect of Kingdom ministry, this can become a self-fulfilling doctrine that restricts the Holy Spirit to operate through the constraints of the limitations of our faith. It’s important that we realize that the presence of the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Kingdom of God. “*For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* (Rom. 14:17) He is fully able to accomplish everything that anyone needs in every situation.

We must also realize that Jesus Christ has stripped every demon and principality of any authority. He has ALL authority in heaven and on earth. Since Jesus has all authority, this means that the devil has none! When we enlarge our faith with the revelation of the gospel of the Kingdom, this allows God to flow through us with less restriction. Instead of pouring water through a straw, we become

channels that unleash rivers of living water to flow out from us, bringing wholeness, healing, freedom and fullness to whatever situation people are facing.

Thankfully, the Scriptures have a great deal of information about demons. Let's observe a few basic truths concerning demons, how to recognize their presence, and what to do about it.

1) Physical afflictions are often directly caused by the presence of demons. So casting out demons and healing the sick are often "two sides of the same coin."

And behold, there was a woman who had had ***a disabling spirit*** *for eighteen years.* ***She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.*** *When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability."* Luke 13:11-12

Then a ***demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute*** *was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.* Matt.12:22

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those ***afflicted with unclean spirits,*** *and they were all healed.* Act 5:16

For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. Act 8:7

2) Deliverance from demonic affliction was purchased by the suffering of Jesus Christ.

That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases." Matt.8:16-17

Any "right" that demons may have had to oppress and afflict us was removed when Jesus Christ suffered in our place. Because Jesus was afflicted in our place, the devil no longer has the right to afflict us in any way. Praise the

Lord!

3) Demons never have any authority to afflict or oppress people. Jesus Christ is Lord and demons are subject to the authority of the Kingdom of God.

Behold, I have given you ***authority*** *to tread on serpents and scorpions, and* ***over all the power of the enemy****, and* ***nothing*** *shall hurt you*. Luke 10:19

*And Jesus came and said to them, "****All authority*** *in heaven and on earth has been given to me."* Matt. 28:18

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Col. 2:15

…the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ***far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,*** *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.* Eph. 1:19-23

He raised us up with him and ***seated us with him*** *in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* Eph. 2:6

*To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty****, dominion, and authority****, before all time and* ***now*** *and forever. Amen*. Jude 25

Jesus Christ has taken over planet earth. He has taken back what Adam lost by paying the debt of Adam's race through His work on the cross. Jesus Christ is risen, exalted with power and glory. He alone is now the rightful ruler. Jesus has ALL authority, so this means that Satan and his demons have ***no*** authority. As He sits enthroned at the Father's right hand (which is the place of power and co-reigning) we are seated with Him in heavenly places.

From the moment that we are born again through faith in Jesus Christ, His complete work is applied to our account. The blood of His cross sets us free from entire domain of darkness. We are free to walk in the Kingdom of the Son of God and are no longer under the power of demonic oppression. We don't walk in freedom because we have dug through our past to renounce each particular act of darkness and evil. We have renounced the entire domain of Satan and all his works wholesale in coming to Christ. As we stand in Christ's finished work, we are transformed by His victory. Through Him we have the right to walk in freedom from our past sins, from all demonic oppression, and from all sickness and disease. We have been purchased for God so that He can demonstrate the glory of His grace by blessing us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.

If your child disobeys you, that may put your child in unnecessary danger. But their disobedience does not give criminals the "right" to have their way with your children! "*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave* ***the right*** *to become children of God…"* (John 1:12). Does Satan have any legal right to oppress Jesus Christ? Of course not. Then he has no legal right to oppress any of God's born again children.

4) The only thing we need to know in order to cast out a demon is our authority to enforce the finished work of Jesus Christ. Whatever may be the events that allow the demon to come in, we have the authority and power to make it leave. Faith in our participation in Kingdom authority makes demons come out.

"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, ***if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you****."* Matt.

17:15-20

Jesus had given his disciples the power and authority they needed to set the boy free from this demon. They didn't need anything more from God. It was the will of God for the boy to be set free. It was even the will of God that the disciples set the boy free. Otherwise Jesus wouldn't have been so disgusted that His disciples were still "faithless and twisted." Yet they weren't able to get the boy free. Why? Where was the break down?

It's important to see Jesus' answer. He didn't blame the boy, or the boy's father. In fact, He didn't even "blame the disciples." They were not to blame for the boy's affliction. However, Jesus told them that they needed to take responsibility for frustrating the power of God with their faithlessness and their twisted thinking. They didn't even need more faith. The smallest amount of faith was more than sufficient to move a mountain. Their problem was that they weren't operating by faith. They were in unbelief. The "hose" of their soul was "kinked" so that the rivers of living water could not flow through them. They had become too clogged for the Kingdom to work through them. They were faithless and twisted in their thoughts, desires, and emotions.

We must follow this path as the way forward for us to walk in the full measure of the victory that Jesus Christ has purchased for us. What do you do if you don't see someone get set free? Do you blame the people you are ministering to? Do you blame God? Do you make excuses for yourself? Do you start digging in their past? Do you start talking about "mysterious ways of God" (which is just a theologically sophisticated way to point the finger at God)?

Or do you allow Jesus to remind you, "You have everything you need to walk in victory! You can move this. But there are mindsets inside of you that must be untwisted." That's the path that Jesus marked out for His disciples, the path of taking responsibility to set people free, the path of compassion and victory. It's the path of never making an excuse to save face for yourself. You never blame others and never accept defeat. Nor do you take the blame for people's suffering. That belongs to the enemy. But you do *accept responsibility to set people* free and to *grow up into the image of Jesus Christ*. At times we must join with Paul in saying, "I do not consider myself as having taken hold of it yet, but this one thing I do, I lay hold of that for which God took hold of me… that I would bear

the image of Jesus Christ in His fullness. (author's understanding)" (Phil. 3:12-14). This is the path of the righteous, the path that grows brighter and brighter until the full day dawns! Amen?!

Jesus set the boy free. It was God's will for the boy to be free. It's always God's will to heal and set people free. It's also His will that we get "untwisted" and become "faithful" instead of faithless so that He can work freely through us in every situation.

5) We must demonstrate the presence of the Kingdom of God by casting out demons as we fulfill the great commission.

*And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, **for that is why I came out**." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues **and casting out demons**.* Mark1:38-39

But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. Mat12:28

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. Matt.10:8

If you aren't casting out demons, you're not fully carrying out the mission God gave us. Casting out demons is not reserved for a few specially gifted or called people. It is God's will for every believer to cast out demons. Some people may be especially good at it, but this is something for everyone, like prayer, evangelism, and walking in the Spirit.

6) Teaching others to cast out demons is a fundamental part of making a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.
Mark 3:14-15

If you were one of the original disciples of Jesus and you asked Him to remind

you of the purpose He had you remain with Him for these few years, Jesus would've told you "so that I might send you out to preach and have authority to cast out demons." In the mind of Jesus Christ, if you can't cast out demons, you're not ready to preach yet. He doesn't want us just to preach. He wants us to preach and to have the authority to cast out demons. If we are making disciples after the pattern He has shown us, we will cast out demons and teach others how to do the same. We won't just agree that we should be doing these things. We'll do them!

7) We have authority over all demonic power in the Name of Jesus Christ.

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and ***authority over all demons*** *and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal.* Luke 9:1-2

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even ***the demons are subject to us in your name****!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you* ***authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy****, and* ***nothing shall hurt you****. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that* ***the spirits are subject to you****, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* Luke 10:17-20

I encourage you to cultivate absolute fearlessness in your heart when it comes to the demonic. You have been given complete authority over all the power of the enemy so that you can exercise dominion over them. Don't be like an old lady screaming in panic at the sight of a mouse! Be strong and courageous. Make up your mind that what God says about you is true! Then decide to act like it's true, because it is! Say this out loud with faith and boldness, "I have authority over all the power of the enemy. I trample demons under my feet! They may have stingers and fangs, but they can't hurt me. I'm immune to them. Nothing by any means can harm me. I'm bullet proof. I'm demon proof. I bully devils. I crush them wherever I go." Now, cultivate this kind of aggressive and fearless attitude when it comes to demons. Act on it. Speak it out in prayer daily until it just becomes a part of you.

Recently, my son and I were ministering at the close of a church service in a foreign country. We had divided those who needed ministry into two lines, one for him and one for me. At one point, I noticed some commotion from his side of the room. A lady had begun to scream out and flop on the floor as my son ministered to her. This lady had begun to manifest a demon, and just like it says in the Bible, the demon was coming out with “loud shrieks” (Acts 8:7). In this particular church, they were still in very early stages of having a Biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God. So the people in the church became very worried. But my 16 year old son immediately addressed the situation, “Don’t be afraid. It’s just a demon. It’s defeated and it’s coming out of her.” He didn’t need my help, or even ask for my assistance. He wasn’t intimidated by a devil and wasn’t about to let it intimidate others. The lady was set completely free in only a few minutes.

8) We enforce Kingdom authority by rebuking demons, silencing them, commanding them to come out, and forbidding them to enter people again.

*And Jesus **rebuked** the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly*. Matt.17:18

*But Jesus **rebuked** him, **saying, "Be silent, and come out of him**!"*
Mark 1:25

*And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, **he rebuked the unclean spirit**, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, **I command you, come out of him and never enter him again**."* Mark9:25

Jesus’ ministry towards demons was very simple and straightforward, “I’m in charge. You are trespassing on God’s property and getting in my way. You are wrong and I’m right. Now, come out! Enter them no more.” Jesus always treated the enemy as a defeated, subservient, foe. He never had to go poking around in people’s past to get them free. He got them free and then proclaimed the Kingdom to them so that they could stay free.

If we follow the approach of Jesus Christ and the apostles, there are a few things we will do as it relates to demons in particular. We will **rebuke** demons, **cast out**

demons, **silence** demons, and **forbid demons to enter people anymore**. As we do this, we heal the sick, preach the gospel, and minister the power of the Holy Spirit. We must always deal with demons from the standpoint of the authority of the Kingdom of God. We don't have to do a "background check" to get people set free. We exercise authority and power in the Holy Spirit by commanding them what to do and rebuking them with the Word of God. By the authority of Jesus Christ, we force demons to leave. Any mindset that is trying to figure out "what they've done to give a right to the enemy" is already assuming that the enemy has a right, when in fact he doesn't. We don't need to know the demon's name or discover their entry point into someone's life in order to get it to leave. A police officer doesn't have to know how a thief entered the house or his name in order to arrest the criminal. It's good news to realize that we don't have to go down those roads. We can maintain the "high ground" and set people free because of what Jesus Christ has done for them.

In my experience, demons often put up a fight. They are rebels who will test you every step of the way to see if you are truly standing in the authority of Jesus Christ. When you say, "Leave them now in the Name of Jesus Christ" they might scream, "No, I'm not leaving. I own her. She's mine." Or they may try to make a scene by causing a seizure or violent convulsions. Or they may make the person fall asleep in order to see if they can frustrate you. They rarely just say, "okay, I'll leave now" without testing you to see if you really believe that God has given you the authority to speak and act as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, authority to which every demon must yield.

Demons even tested Jesus. Let me show you a couple of instances in the gospels. First, there is the legion of demons in Mark 5.

> *And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many."* Mark5:7-9

Did you notice that it says, "He *was saying* to him, "Come out the man"" In other words, Jesus didn't just say "Come out" and poof, the demons were gone. Jesus "was saying" indicates a process of repeatedly issuing the command to

demons, “Come out of the man!” The demons weren’t coming out quickly. They were resisting his authority, probably emboldened by the strength of their numbers. What did Jesus do? Did He begin to dig into the man’s background to figure out how each of these demons gained entrance into his life? Did he begin to take the man back into the memory of all his traumatic experiences so that He could speak truth into the darkness? No. Jesus continued to operate in Kingdom authority, commanding the demons to come out.

Jesus didn’t change His strategy. When He asked, “What is your name?” this is no magic formula as if somehow getting the name of the demon gives you some advantage. The demons *never gave* Jesus their names. They only answered back that there was a bunch of them, an entire legion. For all we know, Jesus may have been seeking to see if He could address the man himself by asking him his name, but the demons interrupted and would not yet allow the man to exercise his own faculties. Jesus never withdrew His command for the demons to come out of the man, nor did He change His tactic to begin to investigate the “legal right” that had allowed the demons to enter the man. Jesus stood on the authority of His command even when demons tested Him.

In another situation, Jesus had just come down from the mount of transfiguration to find that his disciples had been unable to cast out a demon from a young boy. Then Jesus called for the boy, and we read, “*And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.”* (Mark 9:25-27)

After Jesus issued the command for the demon to come out, the demon 1) cried out, 2) convulsed him terribly, and on the way out 3) made the boy appear like a corpse. Note this- After Jesus commanded the demon to come out, for a little while things *appeared* to get worse. Demons will test you by “appearances.” I believe that this demon had used this tactic successfully with the disciples of Jesus. Every time they commanded the demon to come out, the demon caused a big ruckus that made it look like it wasn’t working. The demon made it look as if their attempts to cast it out were failing. They did this in the midst of a crowd attempting to divert them from operating in God’s compassion to worrying about

their own reputation. The demon was doing everything it could to disrupt faith. Unfortunately the disciples were fooled by appearances. They doubted God's word and their role in His plans. But when the demon attempted the same tactic with Jesus, the truth was revealed. Jesus is Lord and the authority of the Kingdom of God is with Him.

This is the authority that we walk in. Jesus said as much when He told the disciples that they could command mountains into the sea with only a small amount of faith. So we must saturate ourselves with the Word of God seeking the revelation of the Holy Spirit that removes all doubts rooted in what appears true but is in fact a demonic deception. Then we will be able to stand in faith as sons of the living God in the face of every demonic display. Let us follow in the footsteps of our Master, expecting to be challenged, and expecting to walk in victory to set every captive free.

9) Demons recognize those who understand and participate in the authority of the Kingdom of God and those who don't.

And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because ***they knew him***. Mark1:34

*Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "****Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you****?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.* Acts 19:14-16

In my a recent ministry trip, we began our ministry by coming together with all the leaders of the church from the Island for a worship celebration. After the sermon, we divided up into several teams. We invited anyone who needed healing or to be set free from demons to come forward for ministry. Our ministry team had several people manifest demons. However, they weren't getting free very quickly. As they manifested, I noticed that my African team mates seemed to be obsessed with holding the people's legs, arms, feet, legs, and ears. I later

learned that they had a superstition that binding up someone's body parts made the demons want to leave a person.

So that explained it! The reason the demons were putting up so much of a fight in spite of the fact that I was exercising the authority of the Kingdom is because everyone else in my team was operating in superstition ultimately rooted in witchcraft. It was difficult for the demons to recognize that I truly knew who I was in Jesus Christ because all my team mates were operating off of their play book. Once this came to light, we were able to address this with the Word of God. From that point on, demons rarely dared to manifest as we ministered, and if they did, they went out quickly. So it's essential that we stick with the Word of God without mixture if we are going to be effective at setting people free from demons.

10) We can use Kingdom authority to cast demons out of people even when we are not physically present with them.

And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone. Mark 7:29-30

And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Acts. 19:11-12

11) We can cast out demons even from people who don't want to give up their demons.

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the

marketplace before the rulers. Acts 16:16-19

12) Demons are terrified of the authority and presence of Jesus Christ in us.

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even ***the demons believe—and shudder****!* Jms.2:19

13) Demons like to "inhabit" living things rather than to be "disembodied spirits."

Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him… Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and ***they begged him to let them enter these****. So he gave them permission.* Luke 8:30-32

"*When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places* ***seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came****.* Luke 11:24

Apparently unclean spirits get tired when they are not inhabiting someone. They find rest when they find a willing host. They see us as their house, a place to kick their feet up and relax. Apparently, in addition to people, they can also inhabit pigs, which probably also means that they could inhabit other animals as well.

I recently had a conversation with a friend who was sharing with me his experience in ministering to a lady who needed to be set free from demons. He mentioned that when one of the demons finally gave up and was on the way out of the lady, it almost cried like a child who was lost in the mall, saying, "I don't know where else to go." Demons are terribly insecure. This is why they sometimes put up a fight. They are desperate. They are fighting for what they've come to think of as their home. But it's not their home. They are intruders, thieves, whose only aim is to "steal, kill, and destroy." They belong in hell, not in people.

14) Some demons have a strong desire to stay in a particular geographical region.

> *And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." And he* ***begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country***. Mark 5:8-9

I like going to the 10/40 window, that region through central Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia that is the home of the people groups most unreached by the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, it's not only the people groups that are most unreached. It's the demons that have gone largely unchallenged for over 6,000 years. I love to go into what they think is their territory and show them that Jesus Christ is Lord and that they are defeated.

Satan's ranks have a hierarchy and are organized by principalities, which indicates some manner of regional assignments. Demons are assigned to carry out the schemes of Satan in these regions and are very reluctant to leave the region to which they've been assigned. I'm sure it must be humiliating for them to be kicked out of the very region to which they were assigned. These regions have become a comfort zone for them. When Ambassadors from the Kingdom of God come and cast them out of people, they aren't sure where to go. Their tie to the region is in the people of that region. So when they are cast out of the people, they know that they are also losing the region.

Perhaps also it's because demons enjoy the fact that they have trained the people in "their region" to fear them and to believe their particular lies. They've been the "big fish in a little pond." They are used to intimidating and dominating people, holding them captive in the darkness. When we expose their deception with the light of the gospel, everyone begins to discover that the demons have been waving guns around that don't have any bullets. "*By the cross, Jesus has disarmed the powers and principalities*." (Col. 2:15) So not only do we not fear them, we teach the demons to fear us for we walk in the victory of Jesus Christ. As the church exercises and asserts the victory of the Kingdom in a region, there comes a tipping point when the resources of the enemy have been forced to abandon their positions to such a degree in the region, they've lost their place of dominance practically. As Paul encouraged the believers in Rome, "*The God of peace will* ***soon*** *crush Satan under* ***your*** *feet...*" Rom. 16:20.

When a believer in Christ comes into their region walking as an ambassador of the Kingdom and announces, "Jesus Christ is Lord here in this region," and then

begins to heal the sick and cast out demons at will, we demonstrate the Kingdom of God. Through us God makes known His eternal wisdom to rebellious powers and principalities through the church. We foreshadow to them that their time is short. When soldiers return from the battle front defeated, it's a bad day for that kingdom.

Let's stop ignoring or fearing the enemy. Let's make every day a bad day for the devil.

15) Although every demon is defeated, demons differ in their wickedness and strength.

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings ***seven other spirits more evil than itself****, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."* Luke 11:24-26

16) Scripture records demonic activity manifesting in all of the following ways:

- physical afflictions
- physical disabilities
- harassing thoughts and feelings
- physical convulsions
- shrieks
- speaking through someone
- compulsive behavior
- anti-social behavior
- obsession with death and evil
- seizures
- extreme physical strength
- causing accidents to cause physical harm
- divination
- mocking
- fake devotion to the things of God
- religious devotion that opposes the activity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

- false teaching
- false worship
- fierce anger and rage

This list of demonic activity isn't a comprehensive list that should restrict other possibilities of demonic manifestations. I've seen demons contort people's faces, make people vomit and belch, make people fall asleep, roll eyes back in people's heads, none of which are specifically mentioned in Scripture. Because the "western" mind tends to omit demonic activity, we need some coaching to begin to recognize demonic activity so it makes sense to start with this list of the ways that demonic activity manifested in Scriptures. If this is new to you, recognizing demonic activity may be more difficult than you think, because in the same way that God's Spirit can only manifest through people, demons are also going to manifest through people. So we must begin to recognize that people who are manifesting the kinds of activities that the Scriptures depict as a demonic manifestations may need to be set free from demonic oppression.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

So what next? How do we make this practical? What if I suspect demonic involvement? What do you need to do? Set the captives free. "Preach the Kingdom. Heal the sick, cast out demons…" (Matt. 10:7-8).

I recently returned from a mission trip in area of Africa that is heavily Muslim. In this region of Africa, Islam was just a thin veneer covering traditional African witchcraft. Most of the Imams (mosque leaders) were practicing witch doctors. During puberty, girls would seek to have demons possess them during school, because they would be left alone by their peers for fear of spiritual reprisals. Medical doctors were plan B for medical problems. Witch doctors were plan A, not only for medical needs, but for things like financial problems, infertility, seeking a spouse, and more. So demonic activity was rampant in this entire culture.

Most of the people who came forward for healing ended up manifesting demons. In a period of three weeks, we must have cast out hundreds of demons from people who were suffering physical afflictions. For the most part, it makes very

little difference whether the person to whom you are ministering is suffering from direct demonic affliction or an injury or a disease. All of these things fall under the category of oppression from the devil (Acts 10:38). So if you speak to a disease or injury like it's a person, if a demon happens to be involved, it will know you are addressing it. If you already believe that everything that needs to be healed is some form of demonic oppression, then your ministry of healing is poised to cast out demons already. "Cancer, come out! Now! You leave this body in the Name of Jesus!" will take care of demons, tumors, and the killer-cells all in one swoop. You can watch an example of a demon come out of a lady who came to be healed from an affliction in her lungs here.

If I shoot your body with a bullet, your "spirit" loses its physical container. But if I could remove your spirit from your body, your body would also die. Medical doctors attack disease by trying to kill the physical cells of bacteria, germs, and cancers. It's a viable approach that works as a good plan B. However, by the power of God's Kingdom, we can address the spiritual root of all these things. This is God's plan A. There is a demonic power that is at work in all these things. For example, Jesus saw a lady who couldn't stand up straight. Doctors would have seen a bent spine and suggested a back brace, traction, or surgery. Jesus saw a spirit of infirmity and cast it out. If we use the authority and power of the Kingdom of God to eject the unclean spirit that is taking away our power to walk in divine health or giving destructive power to the bacteria, germs, or cancer in someone, they are healed. The germs die. The bacteria dies. Tumors and cancer cells die. Our power to live in health is restored.

Many times someone came to me so that they could be set free from pain in an area of their body that ended up being a demonic affliction. Whenever you have pain that moves around, or comes and goes, these are a sure sign of afflicting spirits. I remember one lady who came forward to have her shoulder healed. I placed my hand on her shoulder, and commanded all the pain to come out of her shoulder. I had her raise her arm and swing it around. She said, "This shoulder is fine, but now I have pain in my other shoulder." Although I did wonder why she didn't tell me about them both at one time, I just walked around to the other side and commanded all pain in her other shoulder to leave. I had her move it around. Then she said, "It feels better, but now I have pain in my back." At this point I began to realize that I was playing "whack-a-mole" with a demon. So I asked,

“Did you have this shoulder pain and back pain before? Or is this the same pain moving to different places?” She told me what I suspected. “This is the same pain moving to different places.” So I said, “Spirit of infirmity, go now. Never come back.” She was completely healed.

LEGALISTIC LITTLE BRATS

Demons are tremendously literal and legalistic. Their mindset is a combination between defense lawyers and spoiled brats. They look for loopholes, try to pull you into arguments or to get you frustrated, anything to take your focus off of the authority of the Kingdom and the finished work of Jesus Christ. This is why the pain kept moving. I said, “Pain, you leave this shoulder now.” So it went to the other shoulder. This would’ve been just fine if the pain were caused only by an injury. But because there was a demonic “brat” involved. I had to adjust my tactic to take the extreme literal nature of demons into account when commanding healing.

As ministers of the Kingdom of God, we can get people set free without investigating their past or *requiring* their co-operation. We don’t need to have the specific name of the demon or understand exactly what circumstances allowed the demon to enter this person’s life. If you leave your house unattended and come home to find a criminal in the house who won’t leave, you need to call the police to use the authority of the state to enforce its authority. If the police officer arrives and begins to circle the house to determine whether this was a break in or whether you left a door open, you may get a little frustrated. Does it really matter if the criminal entered through the back door, front door, or the second story window? No! What matters is who owns the house and who doesn’t belong there. If the police ask you, “Was anyone in your family part of organized crime, or a convicted felon?” you would begin to think, “What does this have to do with the fact that there is a criminal in my house?” And you’d be right! A police officer doesn’t have to investigate you, the circumstances of the criminal’s entrance into the house, or know the name of the criminal in order to arrest them and get them out of the house. They only need to know that this is your house and the criminal doesn’t belong.

“*Don’t you understand that you are not your own and that you’ve been bought with a price?*” (1 Cor. 6:19-20) We belong to Jesus Christ. We were created for Him to contain Him and express His life. He has purchased us with His blood.

He has ALL authority in heaven and on earth. It's just plain wrong to teach Christians that they have given the devil the "right" to oppress them. People who teach such things are preaching demonic doctrines and advancing the devil's lies. Even if we've cooperated with Satan's deception in our life and unwittingly agreed with his tactics, this doesn't give the devil "the right" to do anything to us. If an elderly man cooperates with a con artist, the con artist should still be arrested as a criminal.

WHAT "RIGHTS" DOES GOD GIVE DEMONS?

Let me address some of the Scriptures most commonly misunderstood regarding the "rights" of demons to oppress people. In Ephesians we're told "*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil*." (Eph. 4:26-27) The word "opportunity" literally means "place." Believers can give the devil a place to work, but this is not implying that the devil ever has any *right* to work in our lives. We are simply being warned not to cooperate with his evil intents to destroy our emotional lives and our relationships. Telling my child, "Be sure and lock the door when you leave the house" doesn't imply that a criminal would have the right to come into my house and take my stuff if my child left the door open. Are there things we can do that can make us more vulnerable to the attacks of the devil? Yes! But we must remember that Satan is a criminal. He is a predator that seeks every opportunity to steal, kill, and destroy. He is a thief, which means that he will try to take things that he knows do not belong to him in hopes that he can destroy and kill. He doesn't operate by "rights." He operates by deception! One of the ways that thieves steal is to convince you that they have a right to take possession of something they know is owned by someone else. Don't be fooled!

Another common misunderstanding today is that Christians are being taught that they are under a generational curse because of the sins of their parents, grandparents, or even great-great-grandparents. On the surface, generational curse teaching seems to have some credibility because of the tremendous influence that our earthly parents have on our lives biologically, psychologically, and socially. However, there are a multitude of problems scripturally teaching that Christians can be under a generational curse.

Here are just a few things to consider:

1) Jesus Christ became a curse for us and redeemed us from all the curses of the Law. (Gal. 3:15)

2) If you are born again, *you are blessed with every spiritual blessings* in the heavenly realms in Christ (Eph. 1:4)

3) Even a false prophet in the Old Testament knew he couldn't curse anyone whom God had blessed. (Num. 23:8, 20)

4) The verse most commonly used to provide Biblical justification for generational curse teaching is this: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:7

These verses do not describe "generational curses" at all, but "generational iniquities." But even in God's dealings with His people under the Old Testament, God's grace ***overrules*** iniquity and abounds to a thousand generations, so all that was *ever* necessary to break free from the cycle of generational iniquity was to repent.

5) Ezekiel 18 explicitly forbids teaching generational curses even among the Old Testament people of God. If this teaching was forbidden under the Old Covenant, how much more is it forbidden under the New Covenant!

6) In the Kingdom, Jesus Christ taught us to "call no man father, because there is one who is your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 23:9) We get our identities and our inheritance from our Fathers. Our Father is blessed, and so are we.

7) "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone. The new has come." (2 Cor. 5:17) Any curses that were at work in my life were eliminated through the finished work of the cross. Walking in the power of this truth requires faith. Generational curse teaching is based on the operation of the old creation and undermines faith in the gospel, which is based on the new creation.

Someone may ask, “What if I’m ministering to someone who is not a Christian? How can I get them free from generational curses passed down in their bloodline?” No problem. Proclaim the gospel to them, call them to repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. When they get born again, God becomes their Father and they are set free from all curses and blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. No need to dig through the family records to break every individual curse associated with every sort of sin that may have been committed by your ancestors. The finished work of the cross broke off the rights of the curses and powers at work in our past life. We need only to discover who we are in Christ and walk in our union with Him. There is no need for any Christian to ever walk in fear of the repercussions of the sins of past generations of their family. If you don’t like the spiritual legacy passed down from your earthly father, just change your father. Get born again so that God becomes your Father. We must shift our identity firmly upwards.

ENFORCE THE GOSPEL

This is not to say that you may need to take your stand on the gospel and *enforce Kingdom of God realities by faith*. I remember one time I was ministering to a young teenage girl who was born again. However, her father had become heavily involved with some alternate form of spirituality. One evening she was at our home with her mother. Although she was normally healthy, this poor girl suddenly lost her voice and her ability to stand. Her mother was with us and explained that since her dad had become involved in this new religion, every weekend that her daughter was with her (they were divorced), the daughter has been experiencing health problems. She felt like they were related to demonic assignments generated by prayers that her dad was praying. That may have been true, but it doesn’t make it right. My response was, “But she’s born again. God is her Father. So we need to enforce the gospel. Let’s get her set free.”

However, the mom’s faith in the power of her father’s prayers was generating a great deal of fear in her daughter. This was making it more of a tussle than it should’ve been for me to get her daughter set free. Understand what I mean here: As believers we have the authority and power to walk in victory over demons. However, we walk in victory *by faith*. “*This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*.” 1 John 5:4. So when we waver in our faith in

the gospel, we are more susceptible to the enemy's attacks. So even though I was firm in my faith, the demons could sense the doubt and fear in the mother and the daughter. So this encouraged them to fight harder in an attempt to weaken my faith and remain in control.

Rather than carrying on with a direct attack, I decided to involve this young lady in her own deliverance by having her affirm the gospel. I had her say with me, "I belong to Jesus Christ. I call no man on earth my father. God is my father. The blood of Jesus sets me free. I am free and have authority to trample on demons. So I command you to go from me." After she said this, I said to the demons, "You heard her. Go now!" Then I told her, "Get up and walk. Begin to sing praises." Her strength returned so that she could walk and her voice came back immediately.

Enforcing our spiritual identity as a child of God requires that we obey Jesus' Words and "*call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven*." (Matt 23:9) This does not mean that we literally disown our parents, but that we reorient ourselves to get our spiritual and emotional identity from our heavenly Father. As we do this we are able to rise above the limitations of our earthly parents so that we can walk into the destiny that comes from our heavenly Father. This empowers us to walk in freedom from every evil pattern and power that we may have received from our earthly parents. It also empowers us to be agents of redemption towards our parents as we see the spiritual roots of their shortcomings through the finished work of the cross. This enables us to love them with the compassion and mercy of God to spite their imperfections and their effects on us. As we take our cues from our heavenly Father, we are able to forgive and rise above the shortcomings of our earthly parents and over all the powers of darkness that are attempting to use family connections to perpetuate their work. No longer do we need to limp through life as "damaged goods" damaging others because of the limitations of our earthly parents. The gospel connects us to the unlimited love and glory of our heavenly Father so that we can walk as His child.

The gospel sets us free. In her case the demonic attack was strengthened by the deception that her earthly father's false spirituality somehow made her vulnerable. It didn't, but her "faith" in the enemy's deception that she was vulnerable *did* make her susceptible to the enemies attack. Did that mean that

Satan somehow had “the right” to attack her? Absolutely not. He doesn’t work by “rights.” He works by deception. He’s a thief and a liar.

When I was young, both of my parents worked. My parents taught me to never open the door to a stranger when I was at home alone after school. But if a stranger were to knock at my door one afternoon and tell me some story that convinced me that I should open the door, does this then give the stranger the *right* to come into our house to attack and abuse me? No it doesn’t! But my temporary “faith” in the stranger’s voice would make me susceptible to an attack. However, as soon as I return to the word of my parents, I can tell the stranger to wait just a moment, then walk to the back of the house and grab my Dad’s shotgun out of the closet and return to the stranger and say, “Get out! I made a mistake to believe your voice. This isn’t your house. This is my house. You have no right to be here. Get out now!” If the stranger says, “Hey, you can’t kick me out. You invited me in” I’m not going to argue. I’m just going keep the gun pointed at him and reinforce my authority and say, “I told you to leave” until he finally decides walks away.

CASTING OUT DEMONS

Often when I am ministering to a believer who needs to get free from demonic oppression in their lives, I will frequently lead them in a prayer to have them affirm specific aspects of the gospel and then have them cast out the demon from themselves while I agree. Or I will cast out the demon from them, and then lead them in a prayer to affirm the gospel and declare their freedom and authority over demons. This is “Holy Ghost multi-tasking”! In leveraging the power of the gospel to coach my brother or sister to stand in their union with Christ, not only are they getting set free, they are getting equipped to stay free and to set others free.



I also make sure that they are truly born again and are filled with the Holy Spirit. I find many born again believers who are demonized and have never been filled with the Holy Spirit, or if they had been, they had not been praying in the Holy Spirit regularly. If they

have not been filled with the Holy Spirit, lay hands on them for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the presence of the authority and power of the Kingdom of God that drives out all demons. "*But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you*." Matt. 12:28 If you've got a room full of darkness, you can spend a lot of time trying to cast out the darkness, or you could just turn on the light and the darkness will vanish. In this way they are not only set free, but they also learn how to keep themselves free. It's amazing how simple this is.

For example, I recently ministered to a young man who said that he was repeatedly having the same bad dream that he felt sure was coming from an evil spirit. Because I wanted not only to set him free, but also equip him to stay free, I asked him if he was born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. He had been born again, but not filled with the Holy Spirit. So I decided this would be a good starting point for ministry. I said, "Let's take care of that. Jesus died to take away your sins so that He could fill you with the Holy Spirit. He said that the Holy Spirit is like rivers of living water that flow out from your belly. Put your hands on your tummy and I'm going to put my hand on your hands. Close your eyes. Relax. Let's pray together. You repeat after me. Lord Jesus… thank you for saving me… I give myself completely to you… and you want to fill me with your Spirit… so I ask you to fill me now with the Holy Spirit…and drive out every other spirit… Amen." Then I said, "Just receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit as I pray now. Fill Him Holy Spirit. Fill Him Lord. Every other spirit, in the Name of Jesus, I command you let him go and come out. Fill him Holy Spirit." In a few seconds, he began to convulse and cough. Then the coughing stopped, and he was filled with the peace and joy of God. He was set free and filled with the Holy Spirit.

In the same way that homeless drug addicts only can only live in empty, abandoned houses, demons look for emptiness. When the Holy Spirit moves in, the demons must move out. "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*." (2 Cor. 3:18)

Sometimes, even when someone is not a believer in Jesus Christ, sharing the gospel and getting someone born again can be the best first step towards getting them set free from demonic oppression. "*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have*

redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:13-14) When we come into the Kingdom of God, our sins are forgiven and we are delivered from the ruling power of darkness over our lives. If we can lead someone into the Kingdom, it's guaranteeing not only their immediate deliverance but their eternal deliverance, which is far more important.

This is *not* always a good approach. Some people's minds, emotions, and bodies are so taken over by the enemy, they are unable to exercise their own faculties to respond to the gospel or exercise their own faith. You must set them free. You can set them free. Jesus has that much authority and power and it is in His Name that we operate. In His Name we cast out demons. Jesus has given us the authority of His own Name to set the captives free. The enemy has taken people hostage. So you must take charge. Take charge of the situation. Take charge of the enemy. Cast them out in the name of Jesus Christ. How?

When Jesus cast out demons, it often says that He rebuked the demon and cast it out. So rebuke the demon and cast it out. Use your words to put the demon in its place. Remind them of the victory and authority of Jesus Christ and their own defeat. Call out the wickedness of their behavior, and command it to come out now! Tell it exactly what you want it to do and expect God to bring it to pass. For example, if someone comes to me to be set free from bi-polar disorder, I may say something like this, "You foul wicked spirit. You listen up. In the Name of Jesus I have authority over you. You have no authority to be in this person or to hurt them. Jesus forgives all their sins and heals all their diseases. So in the Name of Jesus, come out of them. Now! Enter them no more. I command that all systems in their body and soul be free and function properly, with courage, power, stability, and peace." I would also be sure that this person is saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember, we are not just casting out demons and healing the sick. We are also preaching the Kingdom of God! We don't want to just set people free every morning so that they are taken captive again every evening. Let's equip people with the truth and power that God has provided for each one through the finished work of Jesus Christ!

NO DIGGING PERMITTED

Please notice, I didn't start digging into this person's past to find out about whether their dad was part of the Masonic Lodge or whether they had been abused or suffered trauma, or had unresolved guilt. For some people, whenever

they encounter a demon, they immediately embark on spiritual background check that rivals the research of the FBI in an attempt to figure out what gave the enemy his "right" to be there. In so doing, we've already come on to his ground by assuming that the enemy has a right at all. This wasn't how Jesus handled demons. He rebuked them and cast them out. He never assumed they had any right to stay in someone once Jesus told them to leave. They sometimes resisted, but eventually they bowed the knee and took off. Jesus taught us to cast out demons in the same way that He did. We preach the gospel and cast out demons in the Name of Jesus. It's His Name that gives us the right to cast out any demon. Whatever the "root" of the demonic oppression, the very fact that it's a demon that is oppressing them is good news for us, because demons are already defeated and always wrong.

The enemy has no solution to the finished work of the cross or the blood of Jesus Christ that purchased our forgiveness from all sins. This means that the blood of Jesus releases us from spiritual powers that enforce demonic vows, blood curses, generational sins, soul ties, or any other possible claim the powers of darkness may claim over us. Demons have no chance against the power of the Holy Spirit of God. They are disarmed criminals. We always win and setting people free from their captivity is always right. It's the will of God to set people free by the finished work of Jesus Christ! So we proclaim the gospel and cast out demons in His Name.

"*The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes*." Rom. 1:16

One final word… some demons are more stubborn than others similar to the way that some people are more "strong willed" than others. Don't back down. Always win. They know they must submit to the Name of Jesus Christ. They just want to see if you really know and believe this. Lives are at stake. Souls are at stake. "*Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might!*" (Eph. 6:10)

The ministry of the Kingdom of God is very simple. Jesus sends us out to bring others His redeeming love by healing the sick, casting out demons, and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. It's like a song, with both words and music. As we demonstrate the power of the Kingdom by healing the sick, casting out demons, and speaking prophetically, the music of the song of the Kingdom of

heaven can be heard. If others are going to join in and sing along, we must share the words of the gospel. The next two chapters will equip you to effectively share the gospel and respond confidently to any objection so that you can lead people to faith in Jesus Christ.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) As a group, take some time to confess the truth about your authority over demons based on the Scriptures that follow. One of you can lead out, and the others repeat. Speak with faith and boldness.

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal. Luke 9:1-2

For example: "I am called by Jesus (group repeats). He has given me power and authority over all demons (group repeats). When I speak, heaven speaks (group repeats). I speak on behalf of heaven to demons (group repeats). And they must obey me (group repeats)…"

> *The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* Luke 10:17-20
>
> *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.* Rom 16:20
>
> *And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;* Mark16:17
>
> *what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,* Eph. 1:19-22

God raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph 2:6

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm… In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; Eph. 6:10-13, 16

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Col.2:15

1. **PRACTICE:** In this exercise you will practice casting out demons. In many cases this will just be an exercise, but in some cases you'll be surprised to see people get set free from a demon that they didn't ever realize was oppressing them. Get into groups of 3, with one group of 4 if need be. Within your group of 3 you will take turns receiving ministry, leading ministry, and agreeing in ministry.

Receiving ministry- just sit and relax while your team members minister to you. Report anything that you are experiencing as you are receiving ministry.

Leading ministry- You will lay hands on the one who is receiving ministry and cast out any demon that may be attacking them. Keep it simple and bold. "In the Name of Jesus, I rebuke every demon attacking them. You are under my feet. I command you to come out of them. NOW!" Get feedback from the person to whom you are ministering. "Are you experiencing anything as we are ministering?"

Agreeing in ministry- Your role is to increase the "power supply" by releasing the Holy Spirit in agreement with the person who is leading the ministry. Agree in the Spirit. Limit your vocalized ministry to "Amen!" or

praying in your heavenly prayer language.

3. **Discussion and Role Play**- Here's the scenario. You have an unbelieving family member who has suffered from depression, anxiety, and bi-polar disorder for years. As a result of reading this chapter, you suspect that they're being oppressed by the devil. How do you approach them to minister to them? Discuss, then role play.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Develop a fearless and aggressive mindset towards the devil. Take some time in your personal time with God each day this week to confess your authority over the enemy based on the Scriptures we covered in this lesson.

2) Do you have any friends that you believe may be suffering from attacks of the enemy? Make a plan to minister to them. Consider bringing a partner from your group.

CHAPTER 9

PROCLAIMING THE KING AND THE KINGDOM

"God would not have paid such a high price for you if you didn't have such a high value to Him. He didn't die only because you were a sinner. He died because you were a lost son and He wanted to bring you back into the family."

Dan Mohler

I remember hearing a story about a famous evangelist who ministered during the late 1800s. As the story goes, D.L. Moody had begun to regularly go into bars in the communities that he would visit to speak to people about Jesus Christ. One minister heard about this practice and decided to confront Mr. Moody. The minister said, "Mr. Moody, I don't like the way you go into the bars to speak to people about Jesus. There are better ways to reach them that are more suitable for a Christian minister." Moody responded, "You're right. I don't like the way I go into bars to reach people for Jesus either. How do you do it?" The minister retorted, "I don't." Moody sat back and said, "Well, sir, I believe I prefer the way that I ***do*** do it to the way that you ***don't*** do it."

There are thousands if not hundreds of thousands of methods for sharing the gospel. Many of them are very good, interesting, and easy to learn. Knowing what to say can help you develop some confidence in speaking to others about Jesus Christ. Although I will present some practical ways of communicating the gospel in this chapter, I am convinced that proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ works best when it comes naturally, and I believe it comes very naturally for those who are walking in the fullness of Jesus Christ. Like Peter, "We can't help but speak of those things we have seen and heard." We always speak from the overflow of what fills our heart.

BREAKING THE MOLD

The world tries to shame Christians into silence. It puts a constant pressure on us to stop speaking about Jesus as Savior and Lord. It's easy to boast of being unashamed of the gospel when you are preaching to the choir. It's quite another

thing to open your mouth to speak about Jesus Christ after the board of directors meeting, on the street corner, in the multi-cultural center, in the parks and street festivals, at the family gatherings, and when you are out to lunch with your co-workers. Yet these are the very places the gospel of Jesus Christ belongs.

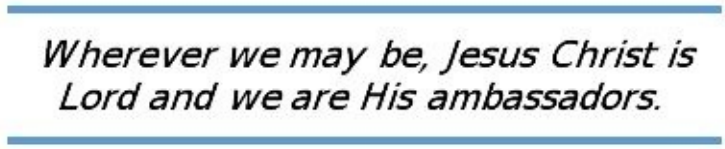
As far as the world is concerned our roles come pre-defined. At work, people are an employee or a boss, in stores we are consumers, and at schools we are students, teachers and administrators. To remain silent about Jesus Christ is not an option for us, yet the world system constantly attempts to restrict any verbalizing of the gospel to church buildings or Bible studies. There has been a strong attempt, especially in the west, to marginalize God to the realm of religion. Ask yourself, "When is it ever considered culturally appropriate to speak about Jesus Christ?" In almost every role and interaction in which we find ourselves, there is some perceived valid restriction on speaking the name of Jesus Christ. This Satanic world system is designed to shame Christians into silence.

But my Bible says Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. Everywhere we go, Jesus Christ reigns with absolute authority. He has the right to be acknowledged in all our ways, wherever we may be. In God's eyes, because we have been adopted as His child, wherever you may be, you are first and foremost an ambassador of Jesus Christ. As ambassadors we are "diplomats of the highest rank, formally representing the head of state, with full authority to represent the government of the kingdom to which we belong." We are heaven's diplomats re-presenting Jesus Christ in all we do… or don't do. We can't speak our own opinion or fail to speak and act on Christ's behalf. We are always on heaven's mission to reconcile men to God.

EXPECT TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD

Most of the persecution that took place in the New Testament was not merely because people believed in Jesus Christ. It was because they proclaimed Jesus Christ. Yet the persecution we face is rarely because, "They won't stop speaking the truth and we don't want to hear it." Jesus was persecuted as a demon possessed false-messiah by the religious leaders who were held in high esteem. Christians are usually persecuted on false pretenses. For example, by the Jews, Christians were persecuted as a cult, yet another Jewish sect following a false-messiah, or for being "anti-Semitic" because they proclaimed that Jesus Christ

sets us free from the Law of Moses. By the gentiles they were persecuted for being “anti-Rome” because they proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord or for being “bad for the economy” when people stopped purchasing idols, or they were looked down upon as being uneducated and foolish by the highly refined intellectuals for believing in the resurrection from the dead.



Usually Christians are persecuted because of misperceptions and prejudice. Rarely will you be persecuted because you were understood and rejected. But we must not allow fear of misperceptions shame us into silence. We must follow the Apostle Paul’s example who “Behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you… and renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by *manifesting the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*” (2Cor. 4:1-2) By doing so, over time we eventually win out, when those who oppose us “have nothing evil to say about us.” (Tit. 2:8)

Regardless, we must stop living our lives in other people’s eyes and live exclusively in the eyes of God. As Lester Sumrall said, “Other people’s minds are a terrible place to try and find your happiness.” The truth sets us free to be straightforward about our life and our message. Why would we worry about people’s approval when we already have God’s? Don’t allow the enemy to pin you down by possible misperceptions and criticism. It’s inevitable. The best way to overcome prejudices and misperceptions is to keep living out the truth so plainly that your enemies begin to look foolish. Go ahead and be strong and courageous. We don’t bow down to cultural expectations that oppose the gospel.

I recently returned from an African nation that is 95 percent Muslim. I found that the Christians I was working with were very excited to discover that the power of Jesus Christ was still at work today. However, when I started to take them outside of their designated religious buildings to go and minister to others, they wanted to take me only to Christians at first. They said, “The Muslims do not accept our prayers. They don’t like us talking to them about our faith.” I understood, but I didn’t accept what they were saying. I told them, “We must go to them even if they shut the doors. We aren’t cowards. We can’t allow the walls

that other people put up become our walls. We must go to them. They don't want your buildings, your songs, your candles, or even your words. But they ***do*** want your Jesus." So we began to go to them and ask them if they had pain or sickness. Then rather than asking, "Can we pray for you?" we asked them, "would you like to be well again?" If they said yes, we said, "Let me see your hand" and briefly commanded healing for their body. In other cases, we made house calls to Muslims by taking some fruit as a gift. As far as the neighbors were concerned, we were bringing fruit to the sick. This keeps them out of any unnecessary conflict and makes them more receptive to prayer knowing that their neighbors would be less suspicious. Regardless of how much opposition we may face, we must adapt and continue to advance! We don't stop. We don't make excuses. We never accept defeat.

GOOD INGREDIENTS

So, how can we share the gospel? There are many good methods of sharing Jesus Christ. There are perhaps hundreds of thousands of ways to share the message of Jesus Christ. Some are complex and others are simple. Assuming our message is accurate, which method is best? Here is my answer: the one that you will use! If you find words difficult, carry gospel tracts and say, "Let's read this together." If you can't read and aren't good with words, partner with a friend who is, or get a cd, dvd, or website that you can put in people's hands.

Rather than thinking about a method, I like to think of the gospel as ingredients. So long as all the ingredients get in the bowl in proper proportion, the cake will turn out fine. Probably the best way to share the gospel is to truly know Him and speak to others out of the overflow of your relationship with Him in a way that connects with whom you are speaking.

Let's examine a little more closely how the gospel was proclaimed by the apostles to unbelievers. Since we want to understand how to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, the majority of the passages we will focus on are taken from the book of Acts. The book of Acts is the main place in the New Testament where we see the gospel presented to unbelievers. Whereas the epistles give us deeper revelation and application of various elements of the gospel for those who already believe.

Read through the passages below and identify the main ingredients of the

message of the gospel that were proclaimed to unbelievers:

Act 2:32-39 *This **Jesus God raised up**, and of that we all are witnesses…Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that **God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified**." Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

Act 4:33 And *with great power the apostles were giving their **testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**, and great grace was upon them all.*

Act 8:12 But *when they believed Philip as **he preached good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized,** both men and women.*

Act 17:18 Some *of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because **he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection**.*

Act 20:25 And *now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about **proclaiming the kingdom** will see my face again.*

Act 28:30 He *lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, **proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ** with all boldness and without hindrance.*

Luk 24:45-47 *Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and **that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem.*

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

1 Cor.2:2-4 *For I decided to know nothing among you except* ***Jesus Christ and him crucified*** *and* ***my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power****, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

1 Cor.15:1-12 *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:* ***that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared … Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead****…"*

Gal. 4:4-7 *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* ***to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*** *And* ***because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts****, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

Col. 1:25-29 *I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the Word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is* ***Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim****, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

As the apostles proclaimed the gospel, they didn't proclaim merely a plan of

salvation, or a bridge to go to heaven when you died. They didn't have any standardized prepackaged formula. They had fire in their bones because the life of God that was in Jesus Christ was now inside of them! The spoke from their experience and personal relationship with the Lord.

Neither were the apostles merely teaching Bible stories with good moral lessons or even spiritual concepts that pre-supposed faith in the writings of the New Testament. The New Testament was written by the apostles towards the end of their ministries and was not even compiled until well after the apostles were gone. What gave their message authority was the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They came preaching with demonstrations of power ***and*** with cold hard facts. They proclaimed Jesus Christ who lived in salvation power, died on a cross, and rose victorious over the grave. He is alive, Lord of all and has poured out the Holy Spirit upon all who believe. This is no religious theory. This is cold hard fact that requires a response. They proclaimed, "Jesus is King" and called all people to repent and follow Jesus trusting Him for forgiveness and power from heaven.

The most prevalent ingredients in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel are the Lordship of Jesus Christ, His death for our sins, His victory over the grave, the presence of the Kingdom of God in the Holy Spirit, and the promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit for all who repent and trust Jesus Christ.

The gospel can be explained simply as we share who Jesus is, what He accomplished, and the difference He makes for those who respond to Him. These are the simple ingredients of any gospel message: who is Jesus, what did He accomplish, what response is required, and what difference does it make in our lives.

"GOD CONTAINER" STORY

Over the years, I've developed a simple way to share the gospel message that is very effective at helping people understand and to share the good news of Jesus Christ. I call it the "God Container Story." Let's take a look at the elements of this story:

God created us to contain Him to be His representatives on earth, filled with His Spirit.

A glove is made in the image of a hand, so that you can fill it with your hand. We have been made in the image of God so that people would contain God on the earth. God created us so that we could be filled with Him and through us He would have "heaven on earth" as we are filled with His love in our hearts, His truth and wisdom in our minds, and His compassion and power in the things we do.

We closed our hearts to God and became empty and alienated from God.

Even though God is good, not everything that happens in this world is good. Instead of being filled with love, peace, and truth, we turned away from God inviting evil into this world. Instead of being filled with love, we are left empty. We closed our hearts to God's light and became darkened. People get hurt and hurt one another when we live without God's love. Jesus said, "You live in darkness, but I have come as Light into the World."

Jesus Christ was a man filled with God, and God in the flesh, rescuing us by dying for us and rising from the dead.

1. **He showed us what God is like, because God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.**

Jesus was completely filled with God. He is like a light bulb filled with God's presence, power, and love. He said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." In Jesus, we see the Father's love, power, and mercy. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. He never sinned and lived a life of redeeming love and compassion. He never made anyone sick. The religious leaders hated Him because He showed everyone what God was really like.

Jesus lived a perfect life for us. Then He died in our place for our sins so we could be forgiven and go free. And He rose from the dead to break the power of death over our lives. God wants to forgive us and put the power of His life inside of us so we will live together forever. By rising from the dead, Jesus

demonstrates that He has the power to change us and the authority to forgive us. He is alive now and Lord of all.

B. He shows us God's purpose for man, to forgive us and give us His Holy Spirit so that we will live with Him as sons forever.

No matter what you've done, you are worth dying for to God. He doesn't want you to be alone, confused, or empty. He loves you and wants you to be with Him forever. He wants to fill your life with His love and power. You can't change yourself. As He fills you, He changes you from the inside so that He can flow through you and bless others.

When we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, He forgives us and gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

You can receive the forgiveness of all your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit if you are willing to entrust yourself completely to God and put your faith in Jesus Christ to make you brand new so that you have the power to follow Him. God sets you free from your past life and puts the same spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead inside of you.

This is why Jesus told people who come to Him to be baptized, which is a picture of burying our old self under the water, being cleansed from our sins, and being immersed into Jesus Christ. Would you like to receive Jesus Christ?

DIGEST THE INGREDIENTS

Rather than memorizing a script or formula to present the gospel, I encourage you to incorporate these realities into your heart through personal fellowship with God. Worship Him and speak to Him about who He's revealed Himself to be and all that He's accomplished for you. Make this a constant practice, a lifestyle. Why? You'll always speak out of what fills your heart. Let God's gospel grip you and fill your heart. You too will have fire in your bones. You'll find that your speaking the gospel truths to God in praise in your private fellowship with God will overflow in the proclamation of His glory to people in public.

When you've got the gospel "ingredients" in you, you can "start anywhere and go everywhere" whenever you need to speak with someone about Christ. What I

mean by this is that you may not cover each of these items in a certain order, but you will share them all. For example, one conversation may start talking about Jesus and how He showed us that God doesn't make people sick and then move into how God created people to contain His presence on the earth. Another conversation may start with sharing about how people became empty because they shut God out of their hearts because someone makes the observation that everyone seems to be looking for love. Then from their other aspects of the gospel message can be shared.

One young lady, Heather, had recently come to faith in Jesus Christ. She was a simple believer who was just beginning to read the Bible, but she was already talking with other people about the difference that Jesus Christ was making in her life.

One day, Heather came into a coffee shop and struck up a conversation with a guy named Randy. Randy was a very intelligent Jesus-hater who delighted in making Christians look stupid. Randy had apparently heard that Heather had become a Christian and had decided that today it was Heather's turn to be run through the meat grinder of his high-minded questions.

At first, Randy was doing all the talking – raising as many arguments against the existence of God, the Scriptures, and the church as possible. Then he paused for a moment and asked, "So what do you have to say to all this, Heather?" Randy sat back with a self-affirming smile. Heather, still glowing, said, "Wow, Randy. You are such a smart person and you have so many questions. I'm really not as smart as you, and I'm not going to pretend that I'm able to answer all your questions. But I really feel like even though you are really smart, you are also really lonely and just want to be loved and appreciated for who you are. That's why you try so hard to impress people with your intelligence. I was doing the same thing in other ways. All I can tell you is that ever since I asked Jesus to forgive me and come into my life, I'm never alone anymore. I'm filled with love from God that's so real and powerful. I'm not the same person any more. I really hope you find that one day."

When Jesus Christ is real in your life and the gospel becomes the reality through which you view all of life, you can allow the message to come out of you spontaneously. The Holy Spirit can pull out the ingredients of the gospel from

you in the order and measure that is necessary in each conversation. Why? They aren't really ingredients! They are facets of a glorious person that you know, Jesus Christ, who did an awesome work for you, who is doing an amazing work in you and through you! When you know Jesus Christ, it's easy to help others know Him.

THE RESSURECTION SAYS SO

How do you speak about the gospel to someone who doesn't believe the Bible? I've had a significant amount of experience in speaking to Muslims, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics and alternate spiritualists who don't believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Although I trust the Bible completely as the very words of God, I've found that it's important to grasp the authority of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the foundation stone for the authority of the message we preach, especially when you are talking to people who don't accept the authority of the Bible yet.

When the church started initially, the gospel was spreading into new cultures, cultures with their own set of religious beliefs and practices. These cultures did not accept the Bible as the Word of God. Yet the gospel spread like wild-fire. The apostles, when they spoke to people who didn't already accept the Scriptures, did not appeal to the authority of the Scriptures. Instead they appealed to the authority of the resurrection!

What I mean by this is that the apostles were not telling people "Believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead *because the New Testament says that it is so*." People were not believing in the resurrection because it was written in the New Testament. The New Testament hadn't even been written yet. The New Testament was written because the resurrection took place! The message they spoke was rooted in historical events, cold hard facts, that couldn't be refuted even by their worst enemies. They believed because they saw with their own eyes, heard with their own ears, and touched with their own hands. (1 Jn.. 1:1) But not only them. Jesus Christ was seen raised from the dead by over five hundred eye-witnesses. (1 Cor. 15:5-6)

The resurrection is the key that I hang my hat on when I speak to unbelievers about Jesus Christ. I'll start where we have the most common ground, building on the truths they already accept and then raise questions for which the gospel

alone provides the answer. Every spiritual truth taught in the New Testament was based upon the foundation of the historical person of the Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth, His amazing life, and His death on the cross. If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead after all that He spoke and did, we should not believe or follow Him today. He predicted His own death and resurrection repeatedly. If He was not truly raised, He was deceived, a false prophet, and no savior. Until the resurrection took place, the disciples were devastated because they thought that Jesus' death on the cross had ended everything for them. They were left to reconcile all the power, grace, and mercy they had seen in Jesus with what they thought was a devastating end… until Jesus blasted back on the scene raised in victory. For the apostles and for us, the truth about Jesus Christ and the authority of everything He accomplished hinges upon His resurrection from the dead. As the Apostle Paul said, *"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."* (1 Cor.15:14)

I often speak to people who are skeptics. They are usually educated, and proud that their education has elevated them above the simple faith of the masses. They scoff at the idea of the Bible (or any other book) being the actual Word of God. They don't even believe God exists, much less whether that He has ever spoken.

Along with learning how to walk in the power of God, we must also learn how to proclaim the gospel. Miracles have an amazing impact when it comes to helping skeptics reconsider the gospel, but you may find yourself in a conversation with a skeptic who is perfectly healthy. They don't need a miracle, but they still need Jesus Christ. Or you may find that even after experiencing a miracle, some people are still wavering about whether to believe that the only explanation for their healing is God. Skeptics are not skeptics because they don't have enough evidence. Continually questioning, requiring more evidence than is needed, and refusing to believe allows them to justify their independence from God. A miracle can show us that our unbelief is unreasonable. But it takes the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith. We must learn how to proclaim the gospel to people who don't accept the Bible as God's Word.

When I speak to skeptics in America, I'll say something like this, "I was once in your position. I suspected that there was likely a God, but I didn't see much evidence of God's reality in any religion. But that didn't solve my problem. If God is real, I wanted to know Him. How? I just needed evidence. This is where

the resurrection of Jesus Christ comes in. This is the key. Jesus Christ claimed to be the very creator of the universe who joined the human race to live as a man for humanity, to die for our sin so that we could be forgiven, and to rise from the dead to break the power of death and give us eternal life. If Jesus truly raised from the dead, then He's the real deal. Case closed. Jesus speaks for God and shows us the truth about life now and what lies beyond the grave. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, Christianity is a myth, no better than a Disney cartoon. Anyone can claim to have an idea of what God is like. But if Jesus Christ really raised from the dead after three days, as He predicted that He would, then this is good news! We are not left to wonder and guess based on blind faith. We have historical fact, a God who showed up in time, space and history to numerous eyewitnesses to show us that He's real, He is good and wants to forgive us and bring us to be with Him forever."

RESSURECTION EVIDENCE

The next question skeptics usually need addressed is, "how do you know that Jesus raised from the dead?" How would you answer this? If your only answer is, "Because the Bible tells me so", this won't help your skeptical friend who doesn't share your belief that the Bible is the Word of God. They pride themselves on requiring "real evidence" and "following the evidence wherever it leads." We can't ask them to assume the Bible is God's Word. They want evidence for everything.

Instead of saying, "Because the Bible says," think about how Peter, James, John, Thomas, Paul and the many other eye-witnesses of the first century would answer. How would they answer? They'd say, "Jesus is alive. With our own eyes, we saw Him die. We buried Him in a tomb with our own hands. We saw Him raised from the dead. He appeared to us for over 40 days giving us many convincing proofs, even appearing to over 500 people at once before He was taken up from us. And He has sent forth the same power, promised by the Father, the Holy Spirit. Yes, I tell you, Jesus is alive. We have suffered much for this testimony and will one day seal this testimony with our blood. Yet we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." This is history. This is rock hard fact available for all to who would care to listen. It's the starting point for how we can answer our skeptic friends about how we know that Jesus Christ has defeated death.

Here's how I would answer a skeptical friend who asks me, "Why do you believe that Jesus Christ raised from the dead?" I would encourage you to familiarize yourself with these answers. It's not highly technical stuff. It's pretty basic.

I would say, "I have three basic reasons that I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the grave and defeated death."

1) Multiple eyewitness testimonies that have never been refuted despite incredible suffering and death inflicted on the witnesses.
2) I've considered the alternatives, and they are absurd.
3) My own personal experience of the power of Jesus Christ in my life.

Let me unpack this a little bit for you.

1) **"Multiple eyewitness testimonies that have never been refuted despite incredible suffering and death inflicted on the witnesses."**
The apostles weren't given tax breaks and a nice congregation of people to pay their salaries for preaching this message. They were harassed and often had to live in hiding until eventually they gave their lives for preaching that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. They were eyewitnesses. Multiple eyewitnesses giving the same testimony in their own words. *In any court of law,* ***this is the strongest evidence possible***. The fact that they lost much and gained nothing in this world except persecution and eventually were even killed for this, and none of them ever recanted their testimony. This gives us strong reason to believe they were speaking the truth.

2) "**When I consider the alternatives, they are absurd."** Here's what I mean. If Jesus DIDN'T really rise from the dead, I have to explain how the message of Jesus Christ rising from the dead gained so much traction.

We only have a few alternatives:

a. His disciples were delusional. He was dead and stayed dead. Perhaps the disciples were all hallucinating, imagining that Jesus was alive, because they were unwilling to accept the fact that He was dead. Hallucinations don't eat fish, bread, and cook breakfast, all of which the resurrected Jesus did with the disciples. Furthermore, Thomas was not willing to go along with the other disciples. Yet, Thomas gave his life in India for preaching Jesus Christ was

raised from the dead.

So when they began preaching that Jesus raised from the dead, why didn't the religious or Roman leaders, who desperately wanted to stop the spread of the gospel, just produce the dead body of Jesus Christ? "Let's just walk over to the tomb and we'll settle this one and for all." They couldn't.

The best explanation I can find is the disciples weren't going along with one another, but had truly encountered Jesus Christ and were independently convinced on this reality.

b. Perhaps the disciples lied. They took the body themselves. Yes, ten untrained Jewish fishermen who didn't rescue Jesus while He was alive, risked their lives and overpowered a trained Roman guard of over 100 men, suffered no casualties, and took the dead body of Jesus Christ. Then they began to preach that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead in Jerusalem so that they too could get persecuted by the same people who crucified Jesus. Eventually they spread out to the four corners of the world preaching this good news to gentiles, who had been hated by Jews up to this point. Despite the fact that they were harassed, tortured, imprisoned, and eventually killed, not one of these men ever recanted their story all the while, KNOWING IT WAS A COMPLETE LIE.

Furthermore, if this had been true, the gospels would be a fabrication also. But if that were true, the apostles would paint themselves as strong heroes of the faith. Instead, the gospels depict the disciples as often confused, arguing, and unbelieving. No liar tells lies that make themselves look bad.

c. Perhaps Jesus didn't really die, and then he resuscitated in the tomb. After being whipped by the Romans with a cat of nine tails, Jesus was crucified, then stabbed with a spear through his side by a trained Roman soldier for the purpose of ensuring that he was in fact dead. Then he was wrapped in cloth, head to toe, including his face (which would have made it impossible for him to breathe) and buried in a cold tomb which was sealed with a large stone and guarded by Roman soldiers. Jesus was certainly dead.

3) **"My personal experience of the power of Jesus Christ in my life today."** If

a man in a suit tells you that you've inherited millions of dollars from a distant relative, you can do all the background checks you want, but you'll really only believe this is real once you see that money in your bank account. You might feel like you are dreaming because this seems too good to be true, but every time you buy something you couldn't afford before, you'll know that it's real. It's the same way with Jesus Christ. He promised that when we turn to Him and trust Him to be our Savior and Lord, then He forgives us and put His Spirit in us to give us His power and presence in our lives. I did this in college, and Jesus Christ has changed my life. I "write" checks from the "deposit He puts in my account" every day. He's real. He's changed my heart, done real miracles in my life, and filled my life with a real experience of God's presence every day. Do you know how Jesus can do the same thing in your life?"

The evidence for the gospel is historical, but it's also supernatural. As it says in the Word, *"If we receive the testimony of men, **the testimony of God is greater**, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God **has the testimony in himself**… And **this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life**, and this life is in his Son." (*1 John 5:11-13) In other words, although we may initially believe the gospel because someone witnesses to us about Jesus Christ, once we believe, we receive God's own witness within ourselves. God puts His life inside of us, which is the most convincing evidence on a personal level. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, God makes our spirits come alive. It sounds too good to be true, but we get to "write checks out of His account" every day. This is "God's testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The very life of the Son of God is now inside of us. When we proclaim the gospel, we bring people into the experience of God's supernatural power.

BUILDING ON COMMON GROUND

I take the approach of building upon common ground and focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ with everyone, even atheists and agnostics. For example, I recall a conversation I had recently with a man from England. After he found out that I was a Christian, he said, "Well, quite honestly I can't think of anything more irrelevant to my life than religion. I mean, it doesn't help me be a better person. And the church in England is particularly corrupt if you just look at the history of it. Who can honestly say that King Henry has actually started a church that has anything to do with God simply because he wanted a divorce?

Come on!”

Wow! I made one reference to the fact that I’m a Christian, and BANG! The lid pops open and out spews a string of assumptions and argument. Was that my fault? Of course not. So do I need to feel defensive? Absolutely not. Do I need to defend the Anglican Church, or King Henry in order to have a credible witness for Jesus Christ? Nope! Do I have some common ground to build on? Yes!

I responded by starting with what we had in common, and focused on Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead. I said something like this, “I couldn’t agree more. There is nothing relevant about religion. Going to special buildings to watch “holy men” do “holy things” is completely detached from life and doesn’t make you a better person. In fact, it was the religious people who were responsible for murdering Jesus Christ Himself.” Then I paused for a moment to let the fact that I agreed with him sink in. Then I continued, “But Jesus Christ, raised from the dead… that’s an altogether different story. There is nothing more relevant to your life than that. It shows us that we were created to have a relationship with God every day of your life. It shows us the extent of God’s love and our sin. It shows us the power and victory of God over evil. It shows us how we can truly know God today. If you could truly know God and experience a relationship with Him in every moment of every day, there’s nothing irrelevant about that, is there? One day you *will* die and you *will* face God. You need His forgiveness. And He paid such a high price so that you can have it. Certainly on that day there will be nothing more relevant than this. Don’t you think? So there is nothing more relevant to your life today, since you never know what you’re missing, or which day may be your last, right?”

I share those examples so that you could see that focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the central hinge for the authority of the gospel will help you connect with people who don’t already believe the Bible. Also, building upon the truths that are already part of your hearer’s viewpoint will help you effectively share the gospel.

Let me share an example of how I find a way to connect with what people already believe. Recently in a Muslim country, I would often begin to share the gospel with them by building upon what they already knew about themselves

and about Jesus Christ from the Qur'an. I would say something like this: "I believe we need something more than information from God. In every religion we are told basically the same thing; to avoid the bad and to do the good. But my problem is that I have found it easy to do the bad things and difficult to do the good things. We all need forgiveness from God, wouldn't you agree? There is no good thing that can make up for the bad things we have done, because to do well is no credit to us. It's our duty to God in the first place. So we need far more than just information from God. We need forgiveness from God and we need the power of God over evil in this world. In the Qur'an, we see that Jesus was far more than a prophet who came with a message from God. Jesus came with the power of God. He was born of a virgin. He healed the sick, cast out devils, and walked a sinless life. Not only this, but Jesus is called an "intercessor near unto God" and "Isa al-masih", Jesus the Messiah. Do you know what Messiah means? This means that Jesus is the savior of the World. Through Jesus Christ, God broke the power of evil and death over the human race by raising him from the dead. Jesus said, "No man can take my life from Me, but I lay it down as a ransom for many in order to take it back up again." The power of God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus is God's appointed Savior. Through Him, God offers you the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of His power over evil in your life. You cannot afford to ignore any of God's great gifts. You need more than just information about God's will. You need His forgiveness. You need His power over evil. You need to call on Jesus as your intercessor. God will only give these to you through His appointed Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you willing to receive Him and follow Him?"

Granted, before I could speak to a Muslim in this way took some time for me to get to understand their mindsets. I was fascinated to learn that the Qur'an teaches that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, worked miracles, was called the Messiah, the Word of God, an intercessor near unto God, and the Spirit of God. It was also important to understand that the Qur'an is essentially a book of rules from God with rewards and punishments. I can use all those things as a starting point to preach the gospel.

RISING UP TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

Here are a few suggestions to help you while you prepare to effectively communicate the gospel:

- Practice with other believers until you get more comfortable.

> You can role play within your LifeTeam or small group. Or you can ask any of your friends to help you by letting you practice with them. Just say, “Hey, could you help me with something? I’m working on learning how to communicate what I believe simply. Would you have five minutes? I’d appreciate any feedback you may have to offer too.” This may give you a great excuse to speak to people in your circle of influence about the gospel.

- Memorize some key Scriptures. Why scramble for words when God’s Word has already put the gospel down in black and white for us.

> The Word of God is called the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) If you want to go on the offense and start setting prisoners free, you need to put a sword in the hands of the Holy Spirit by committing the Word of God to memory.

- Work with another believer who can speak to your friends for you. Teamwork is great in the body of Christ.

- Whenever possible, lead with the power of God. It’s amazing how simple it is to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ after they’ve been touched by His power. Often it is a matter of saying, “Jesus just healed you because He wants you to know He wants to be your Savior. Would you like to receive Him into your life right now?”

- Find a good gospel tract. At the right time, give one to people with whom you’d like to share and ask them to read it, or read through it together.

> - For a long period of time I had a reluctance to use tracts because they seemed so impersonal. However, as I began to use tracts “my way”, I found tracts can be very useful to open the door for a conversation about the gospel with friends, family, or acquaintances. Tracts are also a simple tool to allow people to overcome fear of evangelism.
>
> - Just reach in your pocket and say, “Here. I think you might like this.”

Usually people will say, “What is it?” Then you can say, “It’s the basic message about Jesus and the difference He makes in our lives. It’s what I believe and it’s made a big difference in my life. What do you believe? I’d be interested to hear.”

- After John the Baptist was born, his father was still mute because he had disbelieved the angelic foretelling of his birth. When it came time for John to be named, the family was protesting that he be named John. This was Zechariah’s opportunity to set the record straight. He called for a tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” After he broke through that barrier in writing, his tongue was loosed and he began to prophesy!

Gospel tracts can be used just like this. Use them to break through the barriers of fear and identify with the message of Heaven in the face of whatever resistance that there may be. Just say, “Here. I’d like to give this to you and see what you think.” Break through the barriers with a tract if need be. Then watch what heaven does after you begin to function as a heaven’s messenger on the earth.

Your life of radical love, your testimony, demonstration of the power of God by healing the sick, and the words of life that you speak will open the door for you to communicate the full message of Jesus Christ. Because your heart is filled with the glory of who He is and all He’s accomplished, it will be easy for you to communicate the good news.

THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

One of the most overlooked skills when it comes to ministry, especially preaching the gospel and winning souls for Christ, is asking good questions and being a good listener. The best teachers are those who can ask good questions. When you develop the skill of asking good questions, you can create interest and curiosity. You can invite the people with whom you are speaking to engage their minds. By asking questions, you can be the leader of the conversation without “hogging the microphone.” Asking a question sets the direction and topic of conversation, even while other people speak.

I’m going to share a few questions I call my “power questions” because they work well in directing conversations towards the gospel and helping me get to know more about the mindsets of the people to whom I am ministering. These

questions can be used with strangers, co-workers or friends. Use these power questions to get to know the person you are speaking with. Follow up with more questions. Enquire without judgment. Be honestly curious about them. Don't just listen to their ideas to find something wrong with what they say, but listen to their heart from the heart of God. I'll list these questions first, and then explain how they are used in conversations with some examples.

LEVEL 1 Power Question: OPEN the DOOR

Where do you go to church? or,
What do you do to develop your spiritual life?

LEVEL 2 Power Question: Focus on LIFE IN CHRIST

Have you ever been born again? Do you understand what that means?
Or
Have you ever received the Holy Spirit of God into your life?

Let's examine ways to use the LEVEL 1 and 2 Power questions in more detail to understand how they can be used effectively.

Level 1 "Where do you go to church?" Or "What do you do to develop your spiritual life?"

Yes, I realize that this question assumes that people go to church. But that's part of the plan. If they don't go to church, the question often sparks them to correct my assumption. In the process I learn more about them and their current feelings and beliefs. For example, when I've asked people where they go to church, I've heard all of the following:

- No, I'm an… (Atheist, agnostic, Muslim, Buddhist, ex-Catholic, ex-Lutheran, or any other philosophy or religion)
- Don't be silly, Why would I? All they want is your money.
- I used to but haven't been able to find anything I like since we moved here.
- I used to be a preacher, but I ran into some trouble. Now I work in insurance.

Although it's just a surface level question about someone's religious practice, it

allows you to learn more about the person as well as their views and feelings on church. In many non-western contexts, in addition to asking them about their own faith and practices, you may want to ask them about their experience with Christianity. “Have you ever gone to a Christian church? What do you know about Jesus Christ?” Or you can ask the alternate version of the question, “What are you doing to develop your spiritual life?” As they answer, listen carefully, then ask them, “How do you feel this helps you?”

Often a seemingly surface level question about someone’s religious practice allows you to learn more about the person as well as their views and feelings about God, Jesus, the church, and more. This is important because most people who have heard the gospel but are not yet Christ followers have had a negative experience with church that distorts their understanding of the gospel. Others have a different religious practice altogether, which can also be important for you to know.

If they don’t go to church or don’t consider themselves to be a “spiritual person”, this isn’t a road block. Find out more. You can ask them about their experiences and views. Find out if they’ve always felt the way they do now and what experiences have shaped their beliefs. If they sense you’re genuine and non-judgmental, most people will be happy to share with you. Don’t just listen to their ideas to mount an argument. See them. Understand them. Regardless of their answers, you’ll learn more about their background and views. Many times, you’ll also receive divine insight into their hearts that will give you specific guidance to speak God’s truth directly to their hearts.

Very often I find it helpful to ask the LEVEL 2 power question:

Level 2- “Have you been born again? Do you know what that means?” or (as an alternate) “You were created to contain God’s presence, to be filled with Him, and overflow with His love and power. Have you ever been filled with the Holy Spirit?”

Before you quickly dismiss asking someone “have you been born again” as corny religious terminology (like I did the first time I heard it…), let me encourage you to hear me out on the strategic impact of this question.

Hardly anyone except those who have already been born again understand what this means. Most unbelievers have no idea what this means, or a completely wrong concept. But that's one of the main reasons this can be such a powerful question.

Here are the reasons I use this question:

1. It creates an opening *to explain what it means*. Jesus often spoke in terms that He knew other people would not understand to create an opportunity for Him to explain more.
2. It *focuses* the conversation on *receiving life from God* through Jesus Christ.
3. It provides a simple, yet powerful basis to overcome a myriad of common objections to the gospel without getting sidetracked into intellectual disputes (more on this in the next chapter).

When Jesus used this phrase in his original conversation with Nicodemus, the Jewish leader from Jerusalem, He seemed to use the phrase "born again" for these very same purposes. Like Nicodemus, most people believe that Jesus is good and that God was with Him. But they are missing the fact that Jesus didn't come merely to teach us and heal us. He came to give us life from God, *the life of God Himself* inside of us so that we can enter and see the Kingdom of God. By shifting the direction of the conversation to "being born again," Jesus was able to help a teacher and a leader become a student. After Nicodemus admitted that he never experienced such a thing and had no idea what being born again meant, Jesus was able to reveal this most crucial reality. The curiosity Jesus intentionally created by the phrase "born again" created the opportunity for further revelation.

By following Jesus' example, I've had the same experience. Someone who is born again usually understands this phrase and is happy to talk more about it. Someone who hasn't been born again usually won't understand the meaning of the phrase and is curious about what this means. Church goers may have heard the phrase "born again", but if their church isn't really proclaiming a saving gospel, they won't know what this means either and will be happy for the explanation.

Here is an example of how this may work in a dialogue:

Me: “So, it’s nice to hear that you have a church you really enjoy. That’s great. In your church, have they taught you about what Jesus said about being born again? Have you been born again?”

Friend: “Well, I’m not sure to be honest”

Me: “Then I’m really glad that I asked, because this is very important. In fact, Jesus said, “you ***must*** be born again, or you ***cannot*** enter into the Kingdom of God.” This isn’t an option. And the consequences of missing this are very serious. “Being born again” means that we must receive a spiritual birth from God that we didn’t get from our mom and dad. We were created to contain God. But because of sin, we were born empty and under the power of sin, looking for love, for truth, for power, for peace and identity. We were supposed to have God inside of us filling us with His presence, His love, truth, power, and true identity. Jesus Christ came with God’s life inside of Him. That’s what made Him so different. He had the power of God to heal people, to love everyone, and to live right. He died for our sins and rose from the dead by the power of *this life. Jesus said, “You must be born again or you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”* When you are born again, Jesus Christ becomes your King. He is able to forgive you and put God’s life inside of you now. God promises to forgive you and make you new on the inside by the gift of His Holy Spirit so that you have the power to follow Jesus Christ. Would you like that?”

I want to encourage you to be bold in asking these questions to open the door to speak about the gospel. Don’t assume people are truly saved simply because they go to church, even if it’s a good church. Only those who have received the life of God within them, those who have been born again, have truly believed in Jesus in a saving way. As T.L. Osborn said, “It is the Spirit of God inside a man that makes a Christian.” And as the apostle Paul said, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Rom. 8:9)

The apostle Paul took this same approach in His own ministry. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy

Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19:1-2)

This is why, as an alternate I will sometimes modify the question to refer specifically to the Holy Spirit. “Do you know that God created you to contain His presence so that He can fill you with His power and love 24/7? Have you ever been filled with the Holy Spirit?” You might be thinking, “Wait a second, how can someone who isn’t even saved be filled with the Holy Spirit?” You’re right, they can’t! But that’s what makes this a good question, because in order for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit *they must be saved*. Either of these questions can serve the same essential function of creating an opportunity for you to explain the gospel in terms of how someone can receive the life of Jesus Christ as their very own life.

Take this simple approach of asking people Level 1 and Level 2 power questions. You’ll learn more about the people in your life and have more opportunities to share the gospel. Along the way you’ll also discover who is open to you and your message. You may even find that there have been some “people of peace” right under your nose!

In the next chapter, we’ll go further in learning how to use questions effectively, especially to handle objections and to head them off before they come up.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) As a group, take some time to worship God through the gospel. Don't allow it to be dry or routine. Mix it up and keep it real. Use the main ingredients of the gospel as "touch points" in your worship:

a) Who Jesus Christ is
b) What He accomplished
c) The difference He makes
d) The response He requires

2) Role play with a partner

a) Practice sharing the gospel using the elements of the "God container story"

b) Share the same elements of the "God Container Story" but start in the middle or at the end, then bring the other elements into the conversation.

c) Practice going through the Level 1 and Level 2 power questions.

d) Put it all together. Go through Level 1 and Level 2 power questions and share the gospel.

3) Group Role play: Practice focusing on the resurrection by acting out the following scenario.

a) One of you is a skeptic who says, "You believe in Jesus, but what about Buddha and Mohammad and all the rest? Surely they aren't all wrong, are they?" How will you focus on the resurrection to help the understand the uniqueness of Jesus.

b) The skeptic follows up and asks, "So what makes you so sure Jesus really raised from the dead?" Take turns sharing your answer.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Take a season to make it a point to worship God through the gospel daily. Don't allow it to be dry or routine. Mix it up and keep it real. Use the main ingredients of the gospel as "touch points" in your personal worship:

a) Who Jesus is,
b) What He accomplished
c) The Difference He makes,
d) The response He requires

2) Practice sharing the gospel with someone you know. Use the power questions. Who do you know with whom the power questions could be an effective approach?

3) Practice striking up conversations with strangers. Ask the power questions and see where the conversation goes.

CHAPTER 10

QUESTIONING ANSWERS

"The truth will set you free, but first, it might make you angry!"
Curry Blake

After several years of ministry that was largely focused upon the poor and needy, God began to open my eyes to a stronghold of neglect in my life related to my responsibility to share the gospel. As often is the case, spiritual strongholds are constructed in our blind-spots, usually right in the shadows of our strengths. We often fool ourselves by justifying neglect in one area by our obedience in another area. For me, ministry to the "down-and-outers" had become a comfort zone. I found myself hesitating to speak to people about Jesus Christ who seemed to have their act together, the educated and affluent people in our city.

During this season in which I was having my eyes opened, God spoke to me through Elijah's confrontations with the prophets of Baal: *"And Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long will you hesitate between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' And the people did not answer him a word."* (NASB) 1Ki 18:21 I was captured by the word "hesitate." If there was a word that described this area of my ministry, it was the word "hesitant." I had become so aware of the prevailing prejudice against Christianity in the culture around me that I hesitated to speak freely into the lives of people who weren't obviously broken.



God used his Word to expose the very roots of my hesitation. I was caught between two opinions: the desires of the world and the Word of God. By allowing the lies of the world to keep us from doing God's will, we give lies authority in our lives. In the process, we lower the authority of the Word of God to just another opinion in our lives, regardless of what we may say about our beliefs about the "authority of the Word of God." We know that the world has their opinion of Jesus Christ, the Bible, and evangelism. God also has His "opinion." How long will we hesitate? How long will we lower God's Word to the same level as man's word? How long will we give the lies of the enemy authority to influence our behavior?

Taking our responsibility to proclaim the gospel does not mean that we need to compulsively police the content of conversations wherever we may go. We need to remember that "doers of the Word" are quick to listen. When you take time to listen to someone and to understand the viewpoints of others, you show them respect and value as a person which builds trust and opens doors for better communication. Even when you disagree with someone's ideas, being a good listener is a way of showing respect for them as a person which builds credibility and establishes a relationship. Many believers who are committed to the truth of the gospel spend their lives reading books about cults and false religions and blasting people over the internet from the safe distance of a computer screen and call this their "ministry." But they rarely take time to sit down with real people and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Face to face ministry requires love, time, patience, and respect. Jesus gave all these things to us when He left the glory of heaven to walk among us. Now, as He continues His ministry through you and me, He wants to do the same thing for the people in your lives. As you purpose to become a good listener, you will become a more powerful communicator of the gospel.

Understanding that God wants you to be a good listener can set you free from insecurity that may hinder the flow God's love in your life. Most of the time, if you focus on people from the perspective of God's redeeming love instead of their belief system, God will show you ways to get straight to their hearts with His love and truth while bypassing their religious opinions. As their beliefs come

up, one powerful response is to ask effective questions and be a good listener. You don't have to feel a compulsive responsibility to "prove people wrong" at every turn. Questions can be very powerful tools to help you learn and to guide the direction of the conversation towards the most fruitful avenues.



Soldiers with automatic rifles can walk into the middle of an angry crowd with no fear. When you are effectively equipped to handle even the most aggressive attacks against the gospel, you can be bold in every situation, which allows you to relax and treat each person with love. It's important to be able to be relaxed, secure, and loving around people who have different points of view from your own. Like Jesus, we are driven to set captives free. We must not be quarrelsome know-it-alls. We are freedom fighters, not fighters. We aren't out to police everyone's ideas. We're on a mission to manifest God's Kingdom and set souls free. When you are equipped to handle attacks against the gospel, you will never again be intimidated into silence for fear of "opening a can of worms" because you're confident that you are well prepared for whatever happens. Sometimes you need to "open the can of worms" to catch more fish!

In this chapter, we're going to talk about responding to objections and getting past the road blocks that people can bring up. But in order for me to equip you to respond to objections, we need to equip our hearts as well as our minds. If our hearts are not right, we'll take the gospel and leverage it against people to win arguments. When we set out in the flesh with the gospel, we end up hacking the very people we should be setting free. We need to learn to manage our own hearts to allow the Holy Spirit to swing His own sword.

> *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.* 2 Tim.2:24-26

When people raise objections, the Word of God reminds us:

1) **It's never about us. We are servants of the Lord.**
   Have you laid your ego aside? If you are worried about "winning

arguments" for the sake of your own ego, you'll either succumb to fear or pride. Either way, people will remain in darkness, and you won't be as effective as you could be. Let's not be one of those Christians who have an emotional need to "be right." They don't see people as people. They just see opponents who espouse the wrong ideas. They are driven by a competitive spirit and want to win the argument so that they can feel good about themselves. They have way too much ego at stake. Have you laid your ego aside? Or are you showing off how right you are or how much you know?

2) We aren't quarrelsome, argumentative, or nit-picky. But we do correct those who oppose the gospel.

If you have a passion to start disagreements, you're in the flesh, not in the Spirit. You have the truth to set captives free, not to win debates. Men and women of God are seeking to build agreement with the truth, not to create disagreements.

3) We are patient when wronged.

Unsaved people don't always play fair. They can be insulting, disrespectful, and rude. Are you going to allow sin in them to produce sin in you? Or will you overcome evil with good? Patience isn't passivity. The love of God can be strong and assertive, but always for the glory of God, the good of others, not "because I'm so frustrated!!!!"

4) **It's not enough to correct. We correct with gentleness.**

Like your mom told you, "It's not what you say, but how you say it." What spirit are you speaking in; the Holy Spirit or the flesh? Whose energy is gripping your heart as you speak? Is it the Spirit of God? The only other alternative is *"earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."* James 3:16-17

5) We are seeking to bring people to repentance.

People are often throwing out arguments and objections as a smoke screen for their rebellious hearts. A wise minister of the gospel keeps this in mind. We aren't trying to win arguments. We are winning people to Jesus Christ.

6) **People are not the enemy. They are captives ensnared by Satan to do his will.**
When the attacks of the enemy come, they often come through people. However, no matter how strong we must be in our correction, we always remember that people are captive prisoners. We seek to bless people by setting them free, not to conquer them with our arguments. We are for them, not against them.

As we discuss in more detail how to respond to objections, it's important that you are equipped with a redemptive heart in the midst of heated discussion. The Word of God has been used to "cut off the ears" of those coming out against Jesus Christ, but it has also been used to miraculously "put ears back on" and reveal the power and presence of the Lord Jesus. Let's be those that Jesus can use to set prisoners free and not to insult them for being taken captive.

As we learn ways of communicating the gospel and responding to objections, it's essential that we never adopt an "us *versus* them" attitude. It should always be "us *for* them". We must seek to win people to Christ by speaking the gospel truth in redeeming love. An "us *versus* them" approach is usually driving towards, "Don't you see how illogical you are and how right I am?" But an "us *for* them" approach is driving towards, "Don't you see how amazing God's redeeming love for you is?" We must join our understanding and love for the truth with God's love for sinners.

DEMONSTRATE THE KINGDOM

One of the most powerful ways to handle objections is to demonstrate the Kingdom of God. An ounce of demonstration is worth a pound of words. If someone begins to raise objections, I'll often ask, "Do you have anything that gives you pain? Anything at all?" Then I'll minister to them and allow their experience to sort out their objections.

I recently heard one brother share his encounter with an atheist on the streets. He said, "I was asking people if they had any pain, and a man said that he did. So when I told him that I wanted to pray for his healing, he responded that he was an atheist. Instead of debating him or ending the conversation I said, "I understand. But the reason that you are an atheist is because you've never

experienced God. If you were able to experience God right now, you would know that He's real. So I'm going to pray for you. Then you'll either find out that you are right or be glad to discover that God is real. So either way, it'll be a good outcome for you." Brilliant!

That's a great approach! But as much as I'd like to handle every situation with a miracle, it doesn't always work out that way. Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul certainly walked in the power of the Kingdom of God, yet as amazing as it may sound, they found that miracles sometimes created arguments rather than settled them. So we must press on to be fully equipped to minister in every situation, by the ministry of the word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

GOOD PERSON TEST- T. G. I. F.

Many times people have objections to the gospel because they operating in delusions of their own intellect. So one powerful way to handle objections is to get people to listen to their own conscience. As you go directly to their conscience, you can stay out of their brain and the labyrinth of finely reasoned arguments. Although I've modified his approach slightly, I originally learned this approach through Ray Comfort, the founder of "The Way of the Master" ministries. He was an important encouragement in my life to help me get the equipping I needed to be a more effective evangelist.

God has given every one of us a conscience. Some people don't have a strong sense of needing Jesus Christ as Savior, so it makes little impact to tell them that "Jesus died for them." Their response is, "So what? I never asked him to die for me, so that's his business." They are proud and look down on Christians as weak. But God humbles the proud so that He can give grace to the humble. By asking questions based on the commands of God, you can help people uncover the truth that they may be suppressing through unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18) that will help them discover their need for Jesus Christ.

Here's a powerful series of questions you can use to help people realize their need for the Lord Jesus Christ. What makes these questions powerful is that they are questions. Instead of telling people that they are sinners and need to repent and trust Jesus, you simply ask questions and allow them to come to their own conclusions. You can remember these questions by the acronym T.G.I.F. (Talk about beliefs, Good Person Question and Test, Innocent or guilty, Forgiveness)

1. **T**ALK ABOUT BELIEFS: The first step to winning anyone to Jesus Christ is talking to them. Whenever you are talking to anyone, no matter what the subject, you have the opportunity to speak to them about Jesus. Ask people about their beliefs and views. Do they go to church? Why or why not? Do they believe the same things that their parents taught them, or did that change? What do they believe happens after someone dies? What do they believe about abortion or other moral/ethical issues?

Don't worry about trying to refute or correct anything they believe. Just ask questions and be a good listener. As you do this, realize that you are headed to the next step, which is the "Good Person Test."

For example, "So you are a scientist doing genetic research. Cool! Out of curiosity, have you ever taken a step back and reached any conclusions for yourself about the existence of a Creator God?" Then just listen as they speak. Your next step is going to be the same, whether they say, "As a matter of fact, I've often thought that there must be some sort of Creator" or, "Of course not. I can see everything needed to explain life under my microscope."

2. **G**OOD PERSON QUESTION and TEST: The Good Person Question is simple. It's like this, "So, do you consider yourself to be a good person?" or "Would you say that you are a good person?" or something similar. Ask this question after you are on the subject of talking about their beliefs. This question transitions into the good person test. Most people see themselves as very good people.

If you are talking about religion or life after death with a friend or acquaintance, instead of going into a debate about their religion vs. the gospel, you can bypass many of the objections you would encounter by taking them on in a head-on discussion by bringing up the good person question. You can do this very naturally in the normal flow of conversation.

Returning to our example with our scientist friend, you could bridge into

this question very naturally: “As a scientist, would you consider yourself to be a good person?” You don’t have to talk about evolution vs. creation, Darwin’s black box, or the ontological argument for the existence of God. Just ask them, “Would you consider yourself to be a good person?”

Let’s say you’ve been talking with a co-worker who you’ve now learned is a committed Buddhist who doesn’t really believe in a personal god or an after-life. Now that you’ve learned more about the views of your friend, you can take the next step and say, “So as a Buddhist, would you consider yourself to be a good person?” This works fine with any religion or philosophy, including agnostics, atheists or even Satanists. “So as an atheist, would you consider yourself to be a good person?”

All people are born with a moral compass, a conscience, which the Bible describes as “the works of the law written in their heart.” (Rom. 2:15) Although no one has lived up to demands of their own conscience, they still tend to see themselves as “basically good people.” We do this because we lower our standards by comparing ourselves with one another. As one friend of mine so eloquently put it, “When you are surrounded by monsters, no one feels bad about being one.” People who see themselves as good, moral, and ethical won’t grasp the significance of Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus Christ is often rejected because people don’t see their need of a Savior. Asking questions directed at the conscience will help people see their need for Jesus.

So, when you ask someone, “So, would you consider yourself to be a good person? Are you a good person?” you can expect most people to say, “Yes! I sure am. I may not be perfect, but I’m pretty good.”

When you ask this question, ask it with a pleasant tone and affirming facial expression. You don’t want them to feel like you are challenging them. This will only put them on the defensive. You don’t need to challenge them. They’ll have enough of a challenge just facing their own conscience. Asking the good person question with a tone of affirmation will help them have the courage to do this.

So after you’ve asked them, “Would you consider yourself a good

person", and they've said, "Yes", it's time for the Good Person Test.

Introduce the good person test like this: "That's interesting. Let's do something. I've got a few little questions called the 'Good Person Test' that I think you'll enjoy. It's based on the Ten Commandments and helps people see how good they are. ***I didn't do so well***, but perhaps you'll do better. Ready?"

By admitting up front, "I didn't do so well," you humble yourself and make it emotionally safe for them to fail the test, too. You aren't positioning yourself as their moral superior. By saying, "but perhaps you'll do better," you are also showing that you haven't prejudged them and are allowing for the possibility that they may even do better than you did.

Here is the "Good Person Test." Ask the questions directly, and allow them to respond verbally to each question.

1. In your whole life, how many lies do you think you've told? What do you call someone who tells lies?
2. Have you ever stolen anything, anything at all? Whether I steal a dollar from your wallet or steal your car, I've still stolen. So have you ever stolen anything? What do you call someone who steals?
3. Have you ever spoken a hurtful word, or called someone an ugly name? Jesus said that God considers these things like murder. Hate is the root of murder and one of the first places it shows up in our words. So if you've done this, in the eyes of God, you're guilty of murder.
4. Have you ever had sex outside of marriage or looked at someone who's not your spouse with lust (sexual desire)? Sex outside of marriage is immorality and fornication. Jesus said to look at someone with lust is like adultery in your heart. God looks on your heart and sees even secret sins. So have you ever had sex outside of marriage or fanaticized about sex with someone to whom you weren't married?
5. Have you ever used God's name as a curse word or with disrespect? That's called blasphemy. It's very serious. God gave you life and you use His name as a curse word. It's very

common, but something God considers very disrespectful.

SUMMARIZE: “So let’s summarize how we are doing so far… Now I’m not judging you **because I didn’t do any better at this than you**, but *by your own admission*, you’re a liar, a thief, a murderer, fornicator and a blasphemer. And we’ve only gone through 5 of the 10 commandments. You have to face God on judgment day.”

3. **I**NNOCENT or GUILTY:

After you’ve run them through the good person test and summarized how they did, you’ll want to ask them, “Based on this, if God judges you by the 10 commandments, are you innocent or guilty? (Let them answer)”

People will sometimes resist and say something like, “I don’t believe there is a God” or “I don’t believe in a day of judgment.” That’s no problem. Just smile and respond, “I said ‘***IF*** God judges you.’” You won’t have to argue for God’s existence or the origin of the Divine origin of the 10 commandments or the existence of hell. Just encourage them to move forward as a “What if.” This will avoid getting bogged down in arguments and allow the conversation to move on towards the gospel.

Sometimes they may be really hesitant to say that they would be guilty and say, “I believe God will forgive me.” That’s okay. If they believe God will forgive them, this shows that they realize that they *need* to be forgiven. You can build on that.

In our day, people don’t understand justice. Here are a couple of examples I often share to help people understand justice, “If I speed home at 75 miles per hour and the police officer pulls me over, if he gives me justice I’ll get a ticket. It won’t matter that I normally stick to the speed limit. On this day, I broke the law. If I break the law, I’m guilty.”

Or I might share, “Let’s say that I murder someone and the evidence proves that I was guilty. If I stand before the judge and say that I only killed one person, and I’ve done lots of good things to other people. I’m really sorry and I won’t do it again, would a good judge just let me go?”

With compassion, you can quickly help them grasp the implications of their guilt: “If God judges you by the Ten Commandments when you die and gives you justice, you’ll be guilty and end up in hell. Nobody wants that… including God!” You can also go one step farther and apply this test to the whole human race. “In fact, do you know anyone who would not be guilty? This is why religion doesn’t work. We need more from God than simply a list of do’s and don’ts. We need forgiveness and power to overcome the evil that constantly pulls us down.”

The good person test sets the stage for the gospel in the same way that a black velvet cloth is the best way to see the beauty of a diamond.

4. **F**ORGIVENESS and NEW LIFE:

You can move forward to share the gospel by asking them, “Do you know what God has done so that you can be completely forgiven and made new on the inside so that you can be with Him forever, no matter what you’ve done?”

Every honest person who considers the possibility of heaven and hell would prefer to be in heaven. But everyone knows that a perfect heaven won’t be perfect if God just allows everyone to come in as they are. We need forgiveness and we need to be changed. Only Jesus Christ, who died for our forgiveness and lives to give us life, can give us both.

After going through the “Good Person Test” people are able to understand the gospel when they hear it. Because these questions establish everyone’s personal need for a Savior, they will be better able to grasp the significance of what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross. You can share the “God Container Story” and it will make perfect sense. Asking them questions allows them to listen to their own conscience and gives them an opportunity to be honest with themselves. If we just come out and say, “You know you’ve lied, stolen, coveted, and blasphemed” they’ll just accuse us of being judgmental. But by asking questions, we are leading them to listen to their own conscience. As we keep the conversation moving, this provides the perfect momentum into the gospel.

These questions are very straightforward and can be used effectively in a conversation with a stranger or a friend. Just adopt a pleasant non-judgmental demeanor. Many times people consider themselves to be “good moral people”

and even better than many of the “Christians” they have known, so they have dismissed the gospel. Other people are very committed to their own religion, or believe that all religions are basically the same. In our day, it’s become vogue in some circles for people to try to find fault with the God of the Bible because they don’t see the guilt of humanity, the justice of God, nor the activity of the evil one. These T.G.I.F. questions are perfect to lay a foundation for people to understand the significance of the good news that Jesus Christ died for sinners and rose for our victory to set us free from the bondage of Satan and reconcile us to God.

> “*Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.*” (Rom 3:19)

One of the reasons that God gave us His Law was to humble our hearts and silence our arguments before Him so that we would see our captivity to sin and cry out for a Savior. When someone is already convinced of their sin and wondering how God “could ever love someone that’s been so bad”, there is no need to rake them over the coals of their past by taking them through the “Good Person Test.” However, when someone is proud in their own eyes, the Law of God coupled with their own conscience are God’s appointed tools to humble the proud.

USING QUESTIONS TO HANDLE OBJECTIONS

Jesus was the master of handling objections and opposition. He faced opposition in public and private. Sometimes people were openly hostile and just trying to make Jesus look bad. At other times people were having a real problem as they encountered the “Word made flesh” for the first time. Jesus created controversy wherever He went. Yet as people raised objections and finely reasoned arguments, Jesus often responded by asking a question.

> *And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from*

man? Matt. 21:23-25

This is very unlike typical western communication. We tend to hate it when a politician refuses to give a direct answer to a reporter's direct question. We often associate indirect communication with deceit and hidden agendas, so we value direct answers.

But Jesus did not refuse to give direct answers because He was hiding the truth. Instead, He asked questions and told stories *to draw people into the truth*. He asked questions to reveal the truth to those who were seeking it… and to hide it from those who didn't really want to find it. When He asked a question, people had to become involved personally. If they truly sought the truth, they would find it. If they were seeking something else, they would find that too… and miss the truth. Jesus used questions to guide people to the truth. Jesus knows that very often the thing that is keeping us from acknowledging the truth is not that we don't have access to it, but that we haven't been willing to see it. By asking questions people are forced to deal with not only the answer to the question that was asked but also the true motives of their own heart.

> *And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.* Matt. 21:25-26

"Don't cast your pearls before swine," (Matt. 7:6) Jesus said. We are very often guilty of doing this very thing. To us, the gospel is precious. It's a pearl. To a pig, a pearl is like a rock in your cheerios. They'll take the truth you give them and try to use it against you. Asking questions is a tool that we can employ like Jesus to allow people who are seeking the truth to discover it and to shut down senseless arguments from those who just seek to oppose the gospel.

USING THE POWER QUESTION

Sometimes, the power question, "Have you ever been born again? Do you know what that means?" can be an effective response to someone's objection to the gospel, even if you've not already brought up the subject of being born again.

There are several good reasons for doing this. First, it gets the subject on the gospel, which is where it should be. Second, it provides a "*blanket correction*" for almost any objection. What I mean is this: Jesus said that "*unless you are born again* ***you can't see*** *the Kingdom of Heaven.*" (John 3:3) So until someone is born again, they don't have the faculties to grasp the realities of the Kingdom of God. A blind person may argue with you that there is no such thing as the color yellow, but the only reason they do this is because *they can't see*. No one whose eyes work argues about such things. Once a person is born again, they see the Kingdom of Heaven and things make sense. The best way for people to see heavenly realities is for them to "see for themselves" by getting born again.

Once someone is born again, they have the life of Jesus Christ inside of them, the spiritual lights are on, and they have the ability to perceive the Kingdom of God. No longer are they an outsider unable to perceive what is all around them. Now God has entered into their spirits and faith has become a reality. They perceive God. Whatever questions may remain in their minds, since their spirit has been made one with God through faith in Jesus Christ, these questions are no longer objections to the gospel.

Being equipped with this understanding will keep you from being intimidated around intellectually brilliant people who, "professing to be wise, they have become fools." (Rom. 1:22) They question us about age of the universe, dinosaurs in the Bible, the size of Noah's ark, and the possibilities of life on other planets. They question us about the Crusades, the fate of the unconverted heathen, and the validity of Biblical marriage in today's society. In most cases, these are good questions. In fact, I know many Christians who have the same questions. But this only proves that it is ***not*** necessary to have these kinds of questions answered in order for someone to have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These questions may still be there, but they are no longer barriers standing between someone and Jesus Christ. Why not answer their question by directing them towards true answer to all their questions- getting born again.

Here is an example of how this might work in a conversation. Let's say that you're out to dinner with a co-worker who makes an off-handed comment, "I just don't get these religious fanatics who are so sure about everything that they think they need to tell everyone else how to run their life."

Me: “I’d love to hear more. Why does that bother you so much, because it’s religious or because they disagree with you?
(Listen and respond)

Me: Do you believe it’s possible to have a real relationship with God? (Listen)

Me: Have you ever heard the phrase “born again”? Do you know what that means?

Atheist: I have a loose understanding of it. It has something to do with the experience of being converted, right?

Me: “Sort of. Jesus said you must be born again to see His Kingdom. That’s the reason I asked you. You see, Jesus said that unless you’ve been born again you CAN’T SEE the Kingdom of God, nor can you enter the Kingdom of God. You can’t believe what you CAN’T SEE. But the reason you CAN’T SEE is because you are spiritually dead on the inside. God created us to contain His Spirit. Without Him on the inside, we just can’t see. When you turn to Jesus Christ, He puts His life inside your spirit so that you have the power to see the Kingdom of God. God wants to make you come alive on the inside. Let’s pray and ask God to give you spiritual life so you can know God. Then you’ll see. Okay?”

MORE ON CORRECT CONTRADICTIONS BY ASKING QUESTIONS:
Some people are downright aggressive against the gospel. One mistake that Christians often make is allowing themselves to needlessly be put on the defensive, especially when someone is contradicting the gospel. For some reason, we feel like it’s our job to disprove everything that other people say when that’s simply not the case. Often the best “defense” is “a good offense”, or in this case a few good questions.

Here are two important “principles of engagement” to keep in mind, especially when people raise objections:

1. **Making a confident assertion is NOT the same thing as proving a point.** Many Christians go silent when someone strongly contradicts the gospel to the delight of giggling mockers. Many people today are

quick to make claims like, “Jesus never even existed” or “There is no proof for God” or “I believe in science. Science can explain everything” or “The Bible is just a book of myths and legends” or “The Bible has been changed so many times, you can’t trust it.” However, “the one who states his case first seems right, *until the other comes and* ***examines him***.” (Prov. 18:17) When someone states their opinion, instead of trying to prove them wrong, it’s time to make them defend themselves. Examine them. *Ask questions* (I’ll show you what kind of questions in just a little bit). Which leads to the second rule of engagement…

2. **Whoever makes a claim has the burden of defending the claim.** So if your friend or co-worker claims, “Jesus never even existed” or “There is no god” instead of taking on the burden of to prove them wrong, you should make them defend their assertion. The best defense is a good offense! The way to make them defend their statement is to ask questions.

Good news! There is no need to be afraid of the intellectual antagonists anymore! You can handle almost any assertion by doing what Jesus did; ask good questions. Jesus had a way of asking questions that spun the objection around on its head. He was a master at “giving people enough rope to hang themselves.”

GOSPEL-JUDO

Here are the three key questions I use in a conversation to help people see the problems with their arguments against the gospel for themselves. I call them “GOSPEL JUDO QUESTIONS”, because like Judo, instead of fighting against the momentum of the attack, they grab hold of the attacker and use their own momentum against them, or in this case, to set them free:

1. What exactly do you mean?
2. How do you know? Why do you believe that? What’s your proof?
3. If that’s the case, then how do you explain…?

These three simple questions are very powerful. By asking these three questions, you can handle most any objection. They are easy to use and can be very

persuasive. Many people are used to objecting without ever being challenged to defend their own statements. Silent Christians are easy to walk over. One of the most effective ways of opening the minds of those who are closed-to-the-gospel is asking them questions that help expose the weakness of their own objections. In their heart-of-hearts, those who are outspoken with their objections are often like a young child who is disobeying their parents who are truly just crying out for boundaries and leadership… that sometimes needs to start off with a good spanking.

GOSPEL JUDO IN ACTION:

Friend: “Ahh. That’s a bunch of hoooey. Jesus never even existed.”

Me: “When you say that Jesus never existed, what exactly do you mean?” (Question 1)

Friend: “I mean just that. I mean that there is no proof that Jesus ever existed.”

Me: “How do you know? What makes you say that? What’s your proof there is no proof?” (Question 2)

Friend: “I mean that no secular record of Jesus’ existence exists.”

Me: “How do you know?” (Question 2)

Friend: “Because none has ever been found.”

Me: “First, how do you know? Not everyone in that part of the world is exactly interested in proving that Jesus existed. So even if evidence was found, it could have been destroyed or hushed. Second, even if none has been found, does that mean that none exists? And what gives you the right to rule out the gospels, 4 independently written eyewitness accounts? (Question 2)

Friend: “Because they are bias religious documents.”

Me: “What’s your proof that they are bias?” (Question 2)

Friend: “Because that say Jesus did miracles and rose from the dead.”

Me: “Again, what’s your proof these documents are bias? If they are biased, the people who wrote these things would have to know it was a lie, right? Then how would you explain the fact that they all sealed their testimony in their own blood after years of intense persecution? What did they get out of it? Fortune, no? Fame, no. They were hunted and hated by Rome and the Jews. They obviously believed that they saw miracles. So if the people who wrote the gospels knew they were lying and Jesus never in fact existed, what’s your explanation for the unstoppable spread of the message of Jesus Christ?” (Question 3)

Friend: “Well I just think they made it up to keep themselves from looking bad after following a false-messiah for 3 years.”

Me: “Wait a second. I though you said Jesus never existed. Hmm. What was that you said about bias?”

Sometimes people will try to flip the conversation insisting that you prove your beliefs. Don’t take the bait! I usually respond, “Well, I’ll be happy to share why I believe after we’re done. Remember, I wasn’t the one who claimed Jesus never existed (or whatever it was they claimed). *So I’m just asking you more about what you said*.”

When people are challenged to re-examine their own beliefs, they can see they’ve been deceived and become more open to the truth. I remember having a conversation with Duygu, a young believer in Turkey. I asked her to tell me how she came to faith in Jesus Christ. Duygu explained that her mom recently became a follower of Jesus and challenged her to read the New Testament. Duygu said that when she first read it, “I didn’t believe it. I told my mom “This is stupid.” Then her mother wisely responded, “Then what do you believe?” Duygu said, “I believe the Qur’an.” Her mom then challenged her to read the Qur’an (knowing she had never read this for herself). Duygu said, “When I read the Qur’an for myself, I was surprised, “Oh no, this is *much more* stupider.” Afterwards, Duygu decided to read the New Testament one more time, this time with a heart that was more open, and she received Christ as Lord and Savior.

SUICIDAL ARGUEMENTS

One last useful tactic in handling objections is to apply the objection to itself. Many arguments against the gospel are simply hypocritical. They must use a "double-standard" to survive. If you apply their own standards to themselves, they die by suicide. Their own standard proves them wrong.

Here are a couple of examples of how this works.

EXAMPLE 1
Friend: "You shouldn't take your religious beliefs and force them on other people."

Me: "So let me see if I understand you. You believe I'm wrong for talking to other people about the difference that Jesus Christ makes in our lives. And what you're saying is that I should allow you to force your belief on me and make me stop talking to people, right?" (PAUSE and SMILE)

EXAMPLE 2
Friend: "There is no such thing as TRUTH. Everything is relative."
Me: "Do you believe what you are saying is TRUE?" (PAUSE and SMILE)

EXAMPLE 3
Friend: "Nobody can say that their religion is right and everyone else's is wrong!"
Me: "So you're telling me that I'm wrong and you're right… right? Or that you're right and everyone who believes that they are right is wrong… right?" (PAUSE and SMILE)

Every objection is based on a standard. By taking the standards that people claim to hold and applying them to themselves, you can show people that they are actually being hypocritical. Jesus did this constantly in his ministry. For example, "*With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you…How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?"* (Matt. 7:2-4) Likewise, the apostle Paul used this same approach when he wrote "*Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge,*

practice the very same things." (Rom. 2:1)

By using the approach of testing every statement by its own standard, you can expose hypocrisy and break the power of the enemy's lies. As it says in Psalm 37:14-15 "*The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.* ***Their sword shall enter into their own heart****, and their bows shall be broken*."

QUESTIONING OBJECTIONS

Now that you understand this tactic, you'll begin to see places where this may apply. Meanwhile, you can always apply any of the power questions to handle these objections.

Friend: "You shouldn't take your religious beliefs and force them on other people."

Question 1 "What exactly do you mean when you say that?"

Question 2 "How do you know?"

Question 3 "If that's the case, then what makes you think it's okay for you to force your beliefs on other people that they not talk about their own beliefs even when they believe they should?"

~Or~

"I hear what you are saying, but I need to ask you something that may help give you a different perspective. Have you ever been born again? Do you know what that means?"

Friend: "There is no such thing as TRUTH. Everything is relative."

Question 1 "What exactly do you mean when you say that?"

Question 2 "How do you know that there is no such thing as truth?"

Question 3 "If that's the case, then how can you say that what you've been saying is true?"

~Or~
“I hear what you are saying, but I need to ask you something. Have you ever been born again? Do you know what that means?”

~Or~
“So, do you believe what you are saying is absolutely true, or just relatively?”

Friend: “Nobody can say that their religion is right and everyone else’s is wrong!”
Question 1 What exactly do you mean that “nobody can say that their religion is right and everyone else’s is wrong?”

Question 2 How do you know?

Question 3 If that’s the case then how can you say that you are right and everyone else who believes that they are right is wrong?

~Or~
“I hear what you are saying, but I need to ask you something. Have you ever been born again? Do you know what that means?”

~Or~
“So I guess that means that you can’t tell me that I’m wrong for believing that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and everyone needs to believe in Him. Right? Or do you think I’m wrong?”

TELL STORIES
Many people get very intellectual when it comes to God. The carnal mind loves to exalt itself above the knowledge of God because it is warring against obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. You’ll meet people who are capable of asking questions you can’t even understand, much less answer. If you try, you will wear yourself out, trying in vain to get the carnal mind to agree with God. Most objections that are raised in gospel discussions are not aimed at finding a good reason to believe. They are often smoke screens to deflect attention from the real issue; a heart that doesn’t trust the authority of Jesus Christ. We must also remember that this reflects their bondage to the blinding works of darkness.

They need us to bring them into the light of the glory of Jesus Christ to set them free.

We are called to bear witness of Jesus Christ and to give a reason for the hope that we have in Him. So, instead of answering endless questions, it's usually much more fruitful to find ways to continue to bear witness of Jesus Christ. It's not our job to answer every objection raised against the gospel. Jesus is the ultimate answer for every question. He is the very truth of God. Testimonies are a powerful way to bring discussions back down out of the clouds and back to the difference that Jesus Christ makes in our lives. Jesus Christ is alive and He lives in us. So it is only normal that we would speak about such things. Theoretical ideas must always crumble before the hard facts of experience.

There are two powerful sources for testimonies when faced with objections: your experience and the conscience of the person to whom you are speaking. You've learned how to call upon the testimony of someone's conscience through the "Good Person Test." Let's take a look at sharing stories to handle objections.

The apostle Paul was a master at sharing his testimony in the face of objections. For example, Paul went to Jerusalem to defend the gospel as a message of faith in Jesus Christ apart from any obligation to the laws of Moses by sharing testimonies. "*And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles."* (Acts 15:3) Years later, Paul was arrested at the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22). He could've started teaching a Bible lesson in the midst of a religious crowd, but instead *he told his story*. On several other occasions, Paul gets the opportunity to speak to Roman governors and shares his testimony of how Jesus changed his life. When writing to Timothy, Paul shared His testimony yet again:

> "*Formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost,*

Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." 1 Tim. 1:13-16

When people try to draw you into intellectual arguments, instead of taking the bait and following their lead, you need to follow the lead of the Spirit and refuse to operate according to the mind of the flesh. One of the tools the Spirit of God uses throughout the Scriptures is our testimonies, our personal stories of what Jesus Christ has done in our lives. When you are using your testimony to respond to an objection, you can do this more effectively by using a simple re-direction step that acknowledges their question, but then moves on towards your testimony. "I know you want proof that God exists. We all do. Let me tell you about some of the amazing things God has done in my life since I've come to know Jesus…" Or "I know you have questions and there are probably a number of ways to respond to your question. Let me share my story with you…" Use a re-direction step, then tell them about how you came to know Jesus and how He's answered some of the deepest questions in your life. Keep it simple. Keep it real. Tell stories about the miracles you've witnessed, or better yet look for opportunities to demonstrate the presence and power of the Kingdom by healing and signs and wonders.

DESTROYING ARGUMENTS WITHOUT BEING ARGUMENTATIVE

When the apostle Paul said, "*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Cor. 10:5) he was speaking primarily about the church exercising the dominion of Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the gospel, not merely private mind-renewal (although it certainly can be applied here secondarily). Although we're not looking for arguments, we must engage in the warfare to pull down the demonic strongholds of arguments that have been raised up against the gospel so that we can set captives free from Satan's lies. This means that we *must correct* the misconceptions that are holding people back from faith in Jesus Christ. This will not be done with words alone, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. This includes miracles, but it also includes *the very character in which we relate to people who oppose* us. We are out to demonstrate the kingdom and win souls in the redeeming love, truth, and power of God.

Sometimes even Jesus, who walked in perfect power and love, had to handle aggressive attacks and demonic contradictions. Often those who were attacking

were not ready to be won over, but they needed to be answered because others were present who were more open to the truth. Remember, "*Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,* ***correcting his opponents with gentleness. That God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil****, after being captured by him to do his will."* (2 Tim. 2:23-26) Satan is attempting to work through people who oppose us. Bold yet gentle correction is required to stop Satan's attacks.

Answering those who come against the gospel serves a two-fold purpose of giving grace to the humble and humbling the proud. When we are better prepared to handle aggressive opposition, we are more confident to move out in love and talk to everyone without fear, because we are prepared to gently and effectively correct those who oppose the gospel if necessary. God loves them too, so we must be prepared not only to love them, to speak into their lives, and to demonstrate the kingdom, but also to handle their objections so that we can reach them.

God has set His feet on planet earth once again. Yet people hide behind their arguments, thin leaved as they may be, in hopes of avoiding a God who they suspect is out to crush them. They are unaware that He has come to walk in the garden to redeem man. He has come as man to do what Adam should have done; to crush the serpent's head. His death redeemed man from the curse. His resurrection destroyed Satan's ability to maintain his grip over our lives. God is now calling people to come out from behind whatever it is they are hiding; whether it be their arguments, their religion, or their "scientific" philosophy.

God is still walking around on planet earth *inside of you*, calling out with *your voice*. Allow Him to speak through you the only Word He has ever spoken, the Word that was made flesh. Proclaim Jesus Christ and all He's accomplished for us. Proclaim God's presence. Proclaim God's promises. Proclaim His power and victory. *Demonstrate* the Kingdom by exercising the dominion of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. And call people to come out and walk with God again. Run to them like a Father to a long lost son, with tears in your eyes, love in your heart, and a shout of victory in your voice!

Different people and situations require different approaches. Jesus and the apostles demonstrate a great deal of variety and flexibility in the way they ministered the gospel. We preach the Kingdom and demonstrate its reality as we heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. With a few basic approaches, we can minister effectively in every situation. But every approach requires the love, confidence, and power of God. We are using all of the spiritual weapons at our disposal to set people free and advance the Kingdom of God, both the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Not only do we speak about Jesus and demonstrate His power, but we also manifest His very presence by exhibiting His character in the face of opposition. We show by our very lives that Jesus Christ is Lord with forgiveness and victory for every person as we speak the truth in love.

As we walk in God's love and power, we will see many people come to faith in Jesus Christ. Then what? Do you know what to do to establish a new believer as a solid disciple of Jesus Christ? The next two chapters will give you the understanding you will need in order to root and ground believers in Jesus Christ so that they become fruitful disciple-makers themselves.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) **Partner up for role play.** Write common objections to the gospel down individually on small cards or slips of paper. Objections can be in the form of confident assertions or questions. Mix them up and have the person playing the role of the non-believer draw one out of a hat so that they respond with a random objection.

The person playing the role of the believer should practice using all of the following responses:

a. **Use the "born again" question**
b. **Use the "GOSPEL JUDO" questions**
c. **Use re-direct/testimony to respond.**

Change roles. The person in the role of the unbeliever should draw a new objection each time. Switch and repeat for several rounds to gain confidence and practice.

2) A. In a role play with your partner, practice using the "Good Person Question" and the "Good Person Test. Switch and repeat until you both get comfortable using these questions.

B. Now in a role play with your partner, put the Good Person Question and Test in the context of the entire T. G. I. F. interaction (Talk, Good Person Question and Test, Innocent or Guilty, Forgiveness)

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Have a conversation with a few people who have questions or objections about the gospel. Use the "born again" question, testimony or the GOSPEL-JUDO questions, if appropriate.

2) Have a conversation with at least one person using the T.G.I.F. questions. (You can practice this with Christians or non-Christians outside of your group.)

CHAPTER 11
BAPTIZING BELIEVERS TO MAKE DISCIPLES

"The very ones who killed the son of God are invited to become sons of God, just like the One they just killed. They only need to repent and be baptized and they can be filled with the same Spirit."
Dan Mohler

I came to know Jesus Christ out of a Roman Catholic background. No one spoke to me about baptism in water until almost a full year after I was born again. Then it was more than ten years after my initial conversion to Christ that I was finally baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the early church baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit were experienced from the outset of anyone's initial conversion to Jesus Christ. It was part of the Kingdom of God start-up-package. It's better to lay a foundation and then start building the house instead of trying to pour the foundation after construction has begun. Baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit are both an essential part of the disciple- making process that should be part of the start of our Christian lives.

Since our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, every believer should understand the significance of, and how to minister in these crucial areas. We want to lay a solid foundation in Christ for the people to whom we minister. In this chapter, we'll look at the practical and spiritual significance of baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit. We'll also talk through the practical aspects of ministry so that you will be equipped to be effective in these areas. You'll be able to baptize disciples and to lay hands on them so that they are filled with the Holy Spirit!

BAPTISM IN WATER

The legacy of the Roman Catholic Church and the reformation has created a lot of confusion regarding the Biblical teaching and practice of baptism. There have been many human traditions and false beliefs attached to baptism. The Roman Catholics used "baptism" as a "sacrament" that must be performed by an authorized priest, as they taught that the act of baptism itself saves, even when

it’s not accompanied by the faith of the one being baptized. Therefore they insist that infants must be baptized by a priest and this act alone marks them for heaven. This lie gave a tremendous amount of power to the clergy.

Many of our current evangelical churches that have sprung from protestant traditions continue with some of these same traditions and beliefs, which further adds to the confusion. The protestant reformation was a theological change that was reacting against the abuses of the Roman Catholic church. Therefore the importance of the act of baptism has been under emphasized in our day so that people would understand that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone apart from any of our works, including baptism. As a result the practice of baptism has been neglected and subjected to many church traditions. Today, many believers in Christ are baptized without understanding its significance. Or they have not been baptized at all, thinking that they were “baptized” when they were a baby or that since it’s purely symbolic that it’s not important to do.

What did Jesus and the apostles mean when they used the word “baptism”? If I tell my son to go to the store and buy a ball so that we can play “football”, because we live in America, I would expect him to come back with an oval shaped ball made of brown leather with white laces down the center, a ball perfect for throwing long spirals to wide receivers in the end zone. But if we grew up in Brazil, he’d come back with a round ball perfect for kicking past a diving goalie into a net. Cultural context has a great impact on the meaning of words.

Because I was raised in a Roman Catholic family, I was sprinkled with “holy water” by a priest at a very early age. Is this what Jesus and the apostles called baptism? Did they go around making disciples by sprinkling holy water on little babies in pretty white dresses? Or did they preach the gospel and then take those who had believed to the nearest river, lake, bathtub, or barrel and submerge them under the water to demonstrate that they were now done with their old life, their sins had been washed away, and they were now completely immersed into Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life?

The best way to tell what baptism means is to forget about our own traditions and to look at the passages of Scripture that talk about baptism. There’s a big

difference between a brown oval ball for throwing touchdowns and a white ball for kicking goals. As we look at the Scriptures, we'll be able to discover whether we need a baby in a pretty white dress with some holy water, or a believer and a river in order to fulfill Jesus' command to "make disciples, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit…"

Let's look at some of the key passages dealing with Baptism in the New Testament and make some preliminary observations about baptism. Then we'll pull everything together and make it practical. Here is what the Scriptures say about baptism in the New Testament:

1. **Baptism was popularized by John, who baptized on the basis of repentance in the Jordan River.**

Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him (John the Baptist) in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Matt. 3:5-6

2. **Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River in order to "fulfill all righteousness."**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus ***it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness****." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water…* Matt. 3:14-16

3. **Baptizing people in the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit was the starting point of making a disciple of Jesus Christ.**

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ***Go therefore and 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 that I have commanded you****. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Matt.28:18-20

4. **Those who believe the gospel were to be baptized. Those who believe and are baptized will also demonstrate the signs of the Kingdom.**

And he said to them, "***Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned***. *And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons..."* Mark16:15-18

5. **Apostles called people who believed the gospel to repent and be baptized.**

*And Peter said to them, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit… So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* Act 2:38, 41

6. **Phillip and Ananias, who were not apostles or pastors, baptized people who believed.**

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Act 8:12-13

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; Act 9:17-18

7. **People can be baptized immediately, spontaneously, whenever they believe at the first opportunity.**

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him

*the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "**See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized**?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.* Act 8:35-38

*While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "**Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?**" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.* Act 10:44-48

8. **Lydia and her household believed and were baptized as they heard and responded to the message of the gospel.**

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well… Act 16:14-15

9. **Those who believed in Jesus were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Water Baptism and Holy Spirit baptism were ministered immediately to those who believed.**

*And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." **On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.* Act 19:3-6

10. Baptism is like departing the old life for the new life in an ark of safety through water.

God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as ***an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ****…*1 Pet.3:21-22

11. **Baptism depicts our complete union with Jesus Christ. We are immersed into Him**.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ***We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life****.* Rom. 6:3-4

When you read these Scriptures, did you notice that everyone was bringing their babies to be sprinkled by priests with holy water while they wore pretty white dresses? Did you notice how someone who professed faith in Jesus Christ and was ready to follow Him was required to complete an 8 week new membership class prior to their baptism? Did you notice how baptism was only in official church buildings in a nice heated tub? Did you notice how believers who preached the gospel had to get their pastor to baptize the people who came to Christ through their ministry? Did you notice how people just lead new believers in a private sinner's prayer with every head bowed and every eye closed to get them in the door of salvation and let them work their way up to baptism? Did you notice how people who believed needed to wait before they could baptized in water and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit? No? Then why do we do things like this and call it baptism?

Jesus not only gave us His example of baptism, he also commanded every believer to be baptized. He didn't command believers to baptize their babies. He commanded believers to be baptized, that is to be completely immersed under water depicting the death of their old life, the washing away of their sins, and their resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ in the new creation. In fact, once

someone heard the gospel preached, those who believed were commanded to be baptized as an act of faith. Jesus went so far as to say, “Those who believe *and are baptized* will be saved” Mark 16:15.

Other verses in the New Testament make it clear that neither the act of baptism nor any other work we may do can make *any* contribution towards earning our salvation. It is the work of Jesus Christ and His grace which we must receive by faith alone that saves us from our sin. However, faith that is real is not merely a passive, private acceptance of gospel truths. True faith acts on the authority of God’s Word and manifests His dominion over our lives on the earth in acts that can be seen. True faith *is demonstrated* in the act of baptism and puts our whole life into motion by demonstrating the Kingdom of God as we act in faith in the authority of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ commanded baptism as the beginning step of discipleship. We baptize others at the outset of their new life in Christ because of Jesus’ authority. How? We teach them the gospel and to obey the commands of Jesus Christ. Jesus commands those who want to be His disciple to indicate their intention to obey His authority by being baptized.

WHO? ME?

Large segments of the body of Christ restrict the ministry of baptism for pastors or ordained ministers. But we see that God’s Word depicts baptism as something that *any believer* can practice as they proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Since you, as an ordinary believer, have the responsibility and authority to make disciples of Jesus Christ, you also have the authority to baptize new converts in water. The ministry of baptism is for disciple-makers! If you bring someone to Christ, you have the authority to baptize them in water.

We don’t “pressure” people into getting baptized. We don’t compel people into baptism. We proclaim Jesus Christ and invite people to believe and become His disciple and teach them that baptism is the first step of discipleship. It’s the way that they say, “Yes! I believe and want to break from my old life of sin and identify myself with Jesus Christ by being baptized into visible union with Him.” If people have grown up in other Christian religious traditions, they may need a little time to come to the conclusion that being baptized is an act of

obedience to Jesus Christ and not just man's opinion. So share the message of the Kingdom and allow the Holy Spirit and new believers enough space to have a faith that is based firmly on the Word of God. But while we refuse to employ pressure tactics, neither do we ignore or delay believers from getting baptized. We aim to make disciples who demonstrate the Kingdom of God in their lives of faith… beginning with baptism.

It has taken me some time to allow the Scriptures to peel the layers of traditions off my eyes so that I could come to this understanding of baptism. Along the way we have seen believers get baptized and experience significant benefits. I remember one Chinese lady who came to faith in Jesus. Although she had a strong belief in the gospel, she seemed to always be questioning her own faith, always questioning whether she was truly saved. When my wife and I discussed her faith in Christ, it was clear to us that she believed in Him. She just doubted herself, never feeling like she measured up.

We spoke to her about baptism, and she resisted baptism for the same reason. She didn't feel like she was "strong enough" or "mature enough." So we had her open her Bible and read Mark 16: 15-16, in which Jesus says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." We asked her, "What did Jesus say someone needed to do if they believe the gospel?" She said, "Be baptized." We asked her, "Does Jesus say that they need to be strong or mature believers, or just believe." She said, "They must only believe." So we said, "There are two kinds of people. Those who believe and are baptized and saved, and those who do not believe and are condemned." We asked her, "Which of these are you?" She paused and looked up with a smile, "I believe. So I should be baptized."

Once she was baptized, something very significant shifted. No longer was she paralyzed with the self-doubt that had plagued her with feelings of never measuring up as a true Christian. She had learned to act on her faith in the Word of Jesus instead of analyzing it. That's the way faith works. The wires that conduct the power of salvation need to be connected by obedience to our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit. A butterfly receives blood flow to its wings, which gives it the power to fly, through the act of pushing its way out of the cocoon. As we act in faith, God's salvation power that was put into our spirit when we were

born again is released into our body and soul. In the same way, as our friend was baptized, she was able to step across the line with her entire being. From that point on, she knew that she was a true believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

We know we have faith when we exercise it. The best way to know we are alive is to use the power of life. Jesus understands that, so He wants us to invite people who believe to be baptized in obedience to the Lord's command in demonstration of their faith in Him.

Here are some of the benefits that come about as the result of practicing believer's baptism as the beginning step of discipleship:

1. Faith is activated in practical obedience to Jesus Christ from the beginning.

2. The Christian faith is experienced as more than merely a private conviction, but a public "whole-self-in" demonstration of the Kingdom of God.

3. Emphasizing Jesus' command that believers be baptized reduces (not eliminates) false professions of faith, because it requires an act of obedience to Jesus and counting of the cost from the outset.

4. Our journey starts with a complete break from our past life, the burial of the old man, and the rising up in new life in the Name of Jesus Christ.

5. Baptism provides a "stake in the ground" event for the believer to look back on through the remainder of their Christian life, much like a wedding for a married couple.

6. Baptism openly identifies the new believer as a disciple of Jesus Christ, providing them an opportunity to count the cost and make a definite surrender at the beginning of their Christian journey.

7. False mindsets of attaining to a certain spiritual stature to "become worthy" or "learn more" in order to be a true disciple are put to rest.

Once someone understands and believes the gospel, Jesus Christ says they should be baptized. As far as God is concerned, they are "in" the Kingdom right from the beginning even as they grow as His disciples.

8. As faith is exercised for baptism, the believer is subjecting their entire body and soul to the authority and power of the Kingdom of God. Because of this, baptism has sometimes been the occasion of deliverance from demonic strongholds and physical healing.

9. Baptism is an identifying act for the church and the world to distinguish between those who have crossed the line in faith from those who have not yet "stepped across the line."

10. Every believer is empowered with the authority to baptize those they lead to faith in Christ, further demonstrating that *Jesus Christ makes **every believer** a minister of the gospel*.

CLEARING THE WATER

Let me clear up a couple of common questions. Some people have asked me, **"Are you saying that unless someone is baptized, they won't be saved?"** No. I'm simply pointing out the benefits of following the commands of Jesus and the consistent practice of the church in the New Testament. Jesus Christ saves us by grace through faith apart from any works we do. But Jesus and the apostles taught clearly that genuine faith in Jesus Christ brings us to recognize Him as Lord and acts on the authority of God's Word to manifest the Kingdom. Because of the traditions of men that exist today, some people are confused about baptism. Yet they demonstrate true faith in Christ that obeys His commands in areas where they are clearly understood.

It's clear from the Word of God that "salvation is by grace, through faith, not as a result of works", so the mere act of baptism in water can't save anyone. Some people who have been baptized will spend eternity in hell, because they were never born again and their hearts remained lawless to despite the fact they were baptized. However, according to the Scriptures, true faith is more than a private conviction, and the gospel is about more than getting people into heaven when

they die. If someone is claiming to have saving faith in Jesus Christ but will not obey His command to be baptized even though they clearly understand Jesus' command requires it, I would not consider that person to have genuine faith. As the Apostle James says, "Can such a faith save him?" Genuine faith can be seen by what it does. Baptism is the act that Jesus requires for all believers to demonstrate their faith to distinguish those who have entered into His Kingdom from those who have not. If faith isn't strong enough to move us to obey Jesus Christ with our actions, it's not real and won't save. So baptism in itself won't save you, but neither will a "faith" that isn't willing to commit to obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ.

> Jesus said, *"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."* Mark 16:15-16

Another question that people have asked me in response to this teaching on baptism is, **"Can't we just have people pray the "sinner's prayer" to be saved?"** Perhaps, but that's not what Jesus told us to do. What we should concern ourselves with is obeying Jesus Christ and following Him. He told you to make disciples by baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the consistent practice of conversion demonstrated in the ministry of the New Testament was that people were "baptized, calling on the Name of the Lord." Romans 10:9 does say, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." However, if we are truly confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, we will also do what He says. Rather than just saying that Jesus Christ is our Lord in a prayer for salvation, baptism is the way we act on the Word of God to demonstrate that Jesus is our Lord. Rather than substituting a sinner's prayer for baptism as a starting point of faith, we should follow the commands of Jesus Christ and the example of the early church. "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." (Acts. 22:16)

MINSTERING WATER BAPTISM

Now that you understand that Jesus and the apostles placed the practice of baptism at the back door of the gospel and the front door of discipleship, it's important to incorporate baptism into your normal discussion of the gospel. As

you share who Jesus is, what He accomplished, and the difference that He makes, you can say something like, “Everything I’ve been sharing with you is depicted in the act of baptism. When someone believes in Jesus Christ and wants to be saved, they get baptized. We go down into the water to demonstrate that our old life is buried and is dead because of the death of Jesus. Then, in the Name of Jesus Christ, we are brought back up, raised up with Christ as a new creation to walk in the new life He gives us. ”

You will find that people who believe the facts of the gospel often have another layer of resistance and revelation when you place baptism at the front door of discipleship. You don’t do this to put pressure on people, or to get a “notch on your belt.” You simply proclaim the gospel and teach disciples to “obey everything that Jesus commanded.” Jesus wants us to demonstrate His Kingdom visibly through baptism. So rather than sidestepping this extra layer of resistance that can surface when you discuss baptism, you should work through this with grace, patience, and truth. As people work through this resistance, they experience a greater level of revelation and power, much like a newly emerging butterfly whose wings unfurl through the process of breaking out of the cocoon. The same things that would keep people from being baptized are also keeping them from walking in the dominion of Jesus Christ. Embracing the additional resistance that comes with the ministry of baptism will make you a more effective disciple-maker.

Baptism need not be delayed until Easter or performed by ordained clergy in an official church building. I encourage believers to seek out the nearest opportunity to find a swimming pool, hot tub, whirlpool, or bathtub. Often hotels have swimming pools that allow guests. Even a large rubber trash-can can be filled with water and do the job.

If you can gather some people together quickly, go for it. But it’s not necessary to wait for a large gathering or the next church meeting. Phillip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch at the first watering hole they came across after he believed. They just pulled over to the side of the road, went down into the water and obeyed Jesus Christ! Baptism is a simple act of obedience to Jesus Christ to be taken as soon as someone has understood and believed the gospel.

PRACTICAL STEPS OF MINISTERING WATER BAPTISM

1. **DECLARATION**: While this isn't required or even explicitly practiced in the New Testament, I generally will take dominion over the water itself by declaring, ""In the Name of Jesus Christ, I take dominion over these baptism waters. I declare that everything of the old creation and Satan's kingdom will stay in the water. Only the new man comes out on the other side." This further enforces the fact that baptism is a death, burial and resurrection and a transfer of spiritual kingdoms, not only to the person who is being baptized, but also to the powers and principalities and any demonic attachments that may be lingering in them. Since this is the case, whether explicitly expressed or not, I find great benefit in declaring it to be so. But you are free to adopt this or to decide not to adopt this practice of declaration over the water.

2. **CONFESSION OF FAITH:** Then I have the new believer share a brief testimony of their new faith in Jesus Christ with those that have gathered and ask some specific yes or no questions to review the gospel that serves as a gospel confession. "Have you come to believe that Jesus Christ is the very creator God who joined the human race to live a perfect life for you, die for your sins, and rise again after three days? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is alive today, is Lord of all and the only Savior for the whole world? Do you want to turn away from all your sins, renounce Satan and all His works, and forgive everyone for whatever wrongs they may have done to you? Do you pledge yourself to follow Jesus Christ and obey all His commands in the power that He supplies you by the Holy Spirit? Do you trust in Jesus Christ alone as your complete and perfect hope of salvation and the forgiveness of all your sins? Do you believe the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit and want God to fill you with the Holy Spirit?"

3. **IMMERSE THEM IN WATER**: Put them under the water briefly as you proclaim, "Based on your profession of faith and the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit"

4. **LAY HANDS FOR THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**: We

see that the practice of laying hands upon believers accompanied baptism in water. In many instances the baptism of the Holy Spirit and water baptism are explicitly mentioned as part of the initiation into the Kingdom of God for a new believer. The sequence isn't important. But it is part of the "start-up package" that Jesus Christ wants every one of His followers to receive at the beginning of their Christian life. I encourage every believer not only to baptize new believers in water but also to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit to anyone they lead to Christ. In the New Testament, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and baptism in water were so closely associated, they seemed to be like two parts of one baptism event. Unfortunately, this is not the case today. I encourage you to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit along with baptism in water to any new believer. We'll talk more about how to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the second part of this chapter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is no true expression of Christianity apart from the Holy Spirit's power operating through believers. The church once awaited the arrival of God's own manifest power with fasting and prayer, longing for the arrival of the promise of the Father. Before she could take even the first step in her mission, the church must have Him with her, that same one who had not long before walked "with them." Before Jesus arose from death God promised, "He will be in you." The relationship the apostles enjoyed with Jesus in their midst would be restored just as it was… with one major difference. God was moving this relationship to a new location. This time instead of God *with them*, God would be *inside them*.

As the first followers of Christ huddled in an upper room on the day of Pentecost, He came. The Holy Spirit of God arrived with a mighty rushing wind, heaven's fire, first filling them then flooding their entire being with glorious divine life, love, joy. They could not contain what was being poured out within them. Out from their inmost being erupted a spontaneous flow of praise in untold syllables as stunned onlookers wondered at how this noisy gathering of Jewish peasants were suddenly speaking fluent praise in languages from around the world. Those who were filled with the Holy Spirit had no idea about the meaning of these syllables that flowed from their own mouths, but they continued speaking nonetheless. For they could tell that these strange syllables

were expressions of the power flowing from within them and the glory resting upon them. Yes! *He* was back, but now He was inside of them, and the innermost parts of their own being were now inside of Him. The two had become one.

God's presence is in us. He is "with us, even to the end of the age." No longer do we need to wait on God's presence. We carry His presence and unleash His power through our activities on earth. We need never again to seek God to give us His empowering presence. We need only to learn to walk in the fullness of Him who has been poured out within us, to activate His gifts, to release His power, to learn His ways, and to enjoy His presence. We cannot afford to neglect the great Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, today much of the church remains confused about the baptism and supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit today. On one side are those who believe that the miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit we see in the New Testament have ceased and that any supernatural manifestation is from the devil. Others believe that the works of the Holy Spirit should be happening. But they take entire sections of the church back into the upper room, praying and fasting until He comes because they've failed to grasp that the Holy Spirit for whom they are crying out *is already here, fully available*. And yet on the other side are those who believe in the supernatural manifestations of God and pursue supernatural manifestations without testing every spirit. Their lust for the supernatural is bringing them many spiritual experiences but never results in their lives manifesting Jesus Christ Himself in His power, purpose and character. Instead of developing a lifestyle of healing the sick, speaking the truth, and manifesting God's redeeming love they remain lost in a world of self-absorbed supernatural experience that makes them less effective at making disciples of Jesus Christ instead of more effective. So for the remainder of this chapter, we'll clarify the benefits, the purpose and the ministry of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Today, many people come to Jesus only for forgiveness of sins and eternal life with no thought of the Holy Spirit. This was not the mindset of the New Testament. John the Baptist first revealed Jesus, not merely as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World," but also as "He who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Jesus called people to believe on Him not merely

to escape judgment, but to receive “rivers of living water flowing out from their inmost being.” Jesus even told His followers that it was to our advantage for Him to go away so that He could send the Helper, the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. As the Lamb of God, Jesus purges our record before God so that we can be restored to God’s original purpose. As the one “who baptizes you with the Holy Spirit and fire” Jesus purges and empowers us to live as His ambassadors.

Likewise, when the apostle Peter first proclaimed the gospel, he announced that we must, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, *and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,*” (Acts 2:38) with the reassurance that “the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." When people repent and are baptized in water, they should expect to be forgiven of their sins and to receive the Holy Spirit who pours forth from our lives with tongues, prophesy and signs and wonders to make us supernatural witnesses of Jesus Christ.

As we move through the book of Acts, we see the baptism of the Holy Spirit did not always come with the noise of the rushing wind. Nor was it usually preceded with hours of prayer and fasting. Sometimes the baptism of the Holy Spirit preceded water baptism, and at other times it followed directly after. Sometimes it came upon believers spontaneously at conversion, while often it seemed to require the specific ministry of “laying on of hands” after conversion. But the “blood, the water, and the Spirit” were always in agreement and closely associated with one another. The blood of Jesus Christ demonstrates God’s forgiving grace which becomes activated in our lives as we are baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Acts, whenever the baptism of the Holy Spirit had taken place, everyone knew. This event has evidence of God’s manifest power. Conversely, when the apostles met people who seemed to be familiar with the gospel, they would ask them not only whether they had received Jesus Christ as Savior but “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2) This is a brilliant question!

“Have you received the Holy Spirit?” is a great question to ask as you endeavor to make disciples. As you meet people who have some kind of background in the

faith, this question helps determine not only what someone believes, but whether their beliefs have brought them into the power of God's Spirit in their lives. Often people will respond, "Yes, I think so?" When they say, "I think so," I usually clarify by asking a follow up question, "Do you pray in a heavenly prayer language and experience the power of God filling you?" At that point, many people will say, "No, I've never done that."

This clarifying question is important because there were *always* three experiences that accompanied the baptism of the Holy Spirit whenever it takes place in the book of Acts whether explicitly or implicitly. It was never merely a mystical experience that took place with no evidence. Both those who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and those who were ministering to them knew when it had taken place. Each of these three elements are contained in Acts 2:4 which says that when the church was baptized in the Holy Spirit, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." So the three aspects of the baptism of the Spirit are 1) being filled with the Holy Spirit, 2) speaking in tongues unknown to yourself, as 3) the Spirit supplying divine utterance.

THEY WILL SPEAK IN NEW TONGUES

Because of the close connection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, I'd like to point out some of the New Testament teaching about speaking in tongues before I go further in training you to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit to others.

Here are **seven important truths about speaking in tongues:**

1) **Jesus taught that speaking in new tongues was something for everyone who believed in the gospel that the apostles preached.**

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they ***will*** *speak in new tongues…"*
Mark16:15-18

Casting out demons is not restricted to a privileged group of specially gifted believers. It's for all believers. These same people are the ones whom Jesus said,

"*will* speak in new tongues." (Mark 16:17) That's good news. Many believers have been held back from speaking in tongues because they have ***believed*** *that they are excluded* from the "select group of Christians" given the gift of tongues. When they begin to realize that Jesus says that speaking in tongues is for all believers, the door of faith is opened for God to manifest new tongues through them.

2) Every book of the New Testament was authored by someone who spoke in tongues. So tongues is not some gift that is on the outskirts of Christianity, but is at the core of normal New Testament faith.

Sometimes I meet people who give me the impression that they love God's Word but consider tongues as something for the "weak-minded-experience-junkies." So it's good to be reminded that every sentence of the New Testament was written by a man who spoke in tongues. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude… *all of them spoke in tongues*.

3) The apostle Paul spoke in tongues frequently and wanted everyone to do it.

Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. 1 Cor.14:5

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 1 Cor.14:18

Some people quote verses from Paul's epistles as if the apostle Paul were against believers operating in the gift of tongues. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Time for an attitude check. If you don't yet speak in tongues, you should at least agree with the Holy Spirit's attitude spoken through Paul, and WANT to do it. If God, speaking through Paul said, "I want you all to speak in tongues", not only should you want to speak in tongues, you should also want everyone who believes in Jesus Christ to speak in tongues. It's a good gift from our heavenly Father. God wants all His children to speak in tongues.

4) Believers are encouraged to pursue *every* manifestation of the Holy Spirit that they believe will help them to build others up.

Somehow, people have gotten the idea that the Bible teaches us, “Learn what your gifts are because that’s what you’re stuck with. Sorry.” Paul was not teaching about the gifts of the Holy Spirit to *limit or exclude* any believer from walking in any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In fact, contrary to teaching us to “identify your gifts”, God is teaching us to identify ourselves with the fullness of the Holy Spirit who resides in each born again believer. Rather than limit or exclude believers from any particular operation of the Spirit of God, believers are encouraged to desire and seek whatever operations of the Spirit will help them. Let’s look at these verses.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who ***empowers them all in everyone****.* 1 Cor.12:4-6

Pursue love, and ***earnestly desire the spiritual gifts****…* 1 Cor.14:1

The Corinthian believers were becoming divided and jealous over different manifestations of the Holy Spirit. So God reminds us that all of the gifts are in the Holy Spirit, and we all share the same Holy Spirit. God isn’t favoring one and holding out on others. God *empowers them* ***all in everyone.***

If there is any gift of the Holy Spirit that is functioning in another member of the body, don’t be jealous. Be thankful. Appreciate the way you see Jesus coming forth in them. Then remember that you have the same Holy Spirit and *all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are already in you*. God is working in you to empower these same gifts in you. If you desire to function in any of the gifts, pursue it in love! Go for it! Do it for God and for others without worrying about yourself!

5) The apostle Paul did *not* teach that that there are some Christians who can’t speak in tongues.

What Paul did say was “Not all speak in tongues.” This is not saying some people ***can’t***. This is saying not all do. However, the context of this statement is often overlooked.

Paul writes, *“indeed, God set* ***<u>in the assembly</u>****, first apostles, secondly prophets,*

thirdly teachers, afterwards powers, afterwards gifts of healings, helpings, governings, divers kinds of tongues; are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all powers? have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" 1 Cor. 12:28-39

Please notice that Paul was speaking about "in the assembly" referring to the function of the church when it is gathered. The focus here is to give instructions to help the body of Christ function properly as we gather. Paul had to take up the subject of the function of spiritual gifts in the assembly because the Corinthians had misunderstood the use of tongues, and brought confusion into the assembly of believers. They were getting together and everyone was speaking in tongues at the same time, which was creating confusion for visitors and believers who weren't yet functioning in this aspect of the Holy Spirit.

One of the ways Paul corrected this misunderstanding was to compare the functioning of the body of Christ with our own bodies. "The members of our body don't do the same thing. So we don't all do the same thing at the same time either," was the essence of Paul's point in this passage where he says, "Are all teachers? Do all speak with tongues?" In other words, we don't all come together and do the same thing at the same time. We don't all teach in each assembly, but all believers are encouraged to "teach one another", right? Neither should everyone be speaking in tongues in the assembly, but whoever believes "will speak in new tongues." A body has a diversity of functions. Yet it works together, in coordination to fulfill the purpose of its head. It is the same way when we come together! Our head, Jesus Christ, wants His body to function to build one another up in love. It's not about using or displaying our gifts. It's about displaying Christ to the body in all the diversity that He expresses Himself through us. The diversity of the body of Christ is put on display as His Spirit manifests a variety of operations with wisdom and love.

He was not teaching that some believers ***can't*** exercise the gift of tongues in their personal life. He knew there were some who weren't speaking in tongues regularly, but he wanted them to and even encouraged them to pursue spiritual gifts for the greater edification of the body of Christ. Paul refused to allow any believer to get their spiritual identity from whatever particular manifestations of the Holy Spirit may or may not be not functioning in their lives. They are Sons of the Living God who had each received the same Spirit no matter what gifts

were operating or not operating… and so are you!

6) Although the operation of tongues is not primarily for the assembly of believers, it is still important for building of the church indirectly.

One of the primary uses of speaking in tongues is to build yourself up spiritually. When you are spiritually stronger, you are better prepared to have a greater impact on others.
Tongues is important personally in several ways:

Tongues allows us to build ourselves up in the power of the Holy Spirit
"*The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself*" 1 Cor. 14:4

Tongues is a source of revelation from God.
"*For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit*" 1 Cor. 14:2

When we speak in tongues, we are speaking the mysteries of God within ourselves. This means that God Himself is speaking in and through us. We are receiving downloads from heaven as we speak in tongues. If you've ever downloaded a song, video, or program off the internet, whatever comes into the computer is received in computer language. As the computer downloads, it writes to its own hard-drive, speaking mysteries within itself known only to computers (and the geeks with the "gift of interpretation"). As the computer "speaks mysteries within itself", songs are being prepared, videos are being prepared, and new programs are getting ready to run. God is doing all this and more within us as we speak in tongues. Sometimes we don't connect the dots between the fact that we spoke in tongues that morning and got a word of knowledge for a friend in the afternoon, but God wants us to understand this is one of the functions of speaking in tongues.

7) Once you are operating in the gift of tongues, you have the ability to speak in tongues whenever you want.

Once a believer has been activated in their heavenly language, they can speak in tongues whenever they want. They decide when to do it and when not to do it.

The Holy Spirit is our co-worker, so He co-operates with us.

Look at these instructions God gives to us concerning tongues:

> ***If any speak in a tongue****, let there be only two or at most three, and* ***each in turn****, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them* ***keep silent*** *in church and* ***speak to himself and to God****.* 1 Cor. 14:27-28

This means that God believes that you can *decide when to speak in tongues* and when to keep silent. This also demonstrates that even genuine operations of the Holy Spirit need to be directed by the wisdom and love of God so that they are not misused. But notice, (and this blows my mind!!) that even though the Corinthian believers were misusing the gift of tongues, Paul never said, "This isn't real tongues from the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is truly humble and has been given to us as our "Helper", so He operates at our direction, even if we are somewhat misguided. We need the Word of God to give us the wisdom of God, as well as the power of God.

> **8) One of the purposes of tongues is a sign that a believer has been baptized in the Holy Spirit.**

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

NO LONGER TWO, BUT ONE

Even before I ever spoke in tongues, I was experiencing the operation of the Holy Spirit in my life. I experienced many of the operations of the Holy Spirit, including hearing the voice of God and miracles of healing. I would sometimes feel frustrated when someone told me that I "needed to speak in tongues and receive the Holy Spirit." I knew that I already had the Holy Spirit operating in my life.

Yet the day did finally come when I began to speak in new tongues. Something definitely shifted. There was a significant leap forward in my relationship with the Holy Spirit. Instead of Him operating under limitations I had imposed, it felt as if I had learned to get out of His way and trust Him to flow through me in

ways that were beyond my own understanding. Where I once had sporadic experiences of the miraculous, I began seeing a regular flow of the supernatural operations of God. As I learned how to allow the Holy Spirit to flow through my voice in a new heavenly prayer language, I was learning by experience to trust and to surrender to the operations of Holy Spirit in a deeper way. This allowed the Holy Spirit to operate more freely in my life in many different areas.

Many of us have watched a young child stand at the edge of a pool while their father treaded water saying, "Jump to me. I'll catch you." As long as the child remains on the edge of the pool, as much as they may trust their father in other areas of their life, the father is unable to operate in their lives concerning "life in the water." Or it's like couple who gets married but are nervous about the experience of consummating their marriage. Once you step across the line the first time, you embark on an entirely new aspect of your relationship. When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we are plunged into the water, we are filled with the power of God, and whole new aspects of God's operation become available to us.

All born again believers have the indwelling of the Spirit of God within them (Rom. 8:9-11). The presence of the Holy Spirit within them makes them part of the body of Christ, as it says, "*in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit*." (1 Cor. 12:12-13) However, there is a difference between having the Holy Spirit dwelling *in you* and being immersed in the power of the Holy Spirit so that He is able to manifest His power *through you.* It's possible for someone to have saving faith in Jesus Christ, be truly born again, have the Holy Spirit living and operating inside of them and yet ***not*** have personally received the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

Not sure about that? Check this out.

> *But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women… Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been*

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Act 8:12-16

People were saved, healed, and baptized in water. The disciple-making process wasn't hadn't fully started yet, because Phillip knew that every believer should also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Phillip at least knew enough to know when something was missing, so he sent word to the apostles to share what was happening in Samaria.

Upon examining the situation, what did the apostles do? Like all respected theologians, they simply explained that "the baptism of the Holy Spirit happened with signs at Pentecost, but now these Samaritan converts need to take God's Word by faith that they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit when they were born again. Because the signs had already established the truth of the gospel." Right? Well… that's not exactly how it went. What does the Scripture say?

> *"Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* ***Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit****." Acts 8:14-17*

This is very important to understand! Many believers who believe in the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit have failed to realize that *we are called to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit to believers lacking this experience by laying on of hands*. Today, there are many born again believers in Christ who have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit. We need to take action and return to apostolic ministry by ministering the baptism of the Holy Spirit to others.

How do we do this today? People do sometimes receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit spontaneously. They may be in prayer, in worship, or listening to the Word being preached when all of a sudden they realize that they are filled with the Spirit and speaking in tongues. This is how my wife received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She and some other young ladies were called on in the middle of the night to pray for a crisis that had arisen during a summer mission trip. Then, as Tina explained it to me, "All of a sudden three Southern Baptist teenage girls

realized that we weren't praying in English anymore…" These "spontaneous outbreaks" of the Holy Spirit are not uncommon among believers.

Is there a way in which we can minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit to others who don't just stumble into it? What are we supposed to do then? Do we have people pray and fast until the Spirit of God falls on them? Do we encourage people to seek the "outpouring of God in their lives"? Because the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit that took place on the day of Pentecost happened after much prayer and fasting, many people have mistakenly encouraged people who want this experience in their lives to seek the Lord with prayer and fasting. After Pentecost, things changed.

No longer was baptism of the Holy Spirit waited upon as if we needed God to give us something from heaven that He was withholding until we had prayed or fasted sufficiently. No! The baptism of the Holy Spirit was ministered through the hands of those who had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. After the day of Pentecost, whenever believers didn't spontaneously erupt in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, believers who had already been baptized in the Holy Spirit would lay hands to minister to those who were still seeking. Just look at these Scriptures:

> *Then they (the apostles from the Jerusalem)* ***laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.*** Act 8:17
>
> *So Ananias (NOT an apostle) departed and entered the house. And* ***laying his hands on him*** *he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and* ***be filled with the Holy Spirit***." Act 9:17
>
> *And when Paul had* ***laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them****, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying*. Act 19:6
>
> *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame* ***the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit*** *not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* 2 Tim. 1:6-7

No longer were believers begging God to open the heavens and pour out the

Holy Spirit, as is so often the case with much of today's charismatic movement. Instead, they realized that the heavens were already opened and the Holy Spirit had been poured out and was now living inside of them. Heaven didn't need to open up and pour out the Holy Spirit. ***We*** needed to open up and pour out the Holy Spirit! Because believers understood that God's Spirit was now dwelling inside of them, they would lay their hands in faith to allow God's Spirit to flow through them to those who needed ministry.

MINISTERING THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Let's make this practical. How can you put this into practice in your life so that you can be a greater blessing to people and be even more profitable in the Kingdom of God? There are four things that I would like to encourage you to begin to do from this day forward:

1) Ask people about their experience of the Holy Spirit,
2) Teach about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit,
3) Lay hands to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and
4) Teach believers to use God's power to build themselves up and to help others.

Let's talk in a little more detail about each one of these:

1) **Ask people about their experience of the Holy Spirit.**

Be like Paul, who upon finding people who believed made a further inquiry saying, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Ask people, "Have you ever been filled with the Holy Spirit and spoken in other tongues?" Or "Have you received the gift of a heavenly prayer language?" Be direct. Make it your business to help people enter into all that God has for them. But do this in such a way that people know that you aren't trying to judge them or see whether "they're in the club" or not. You aren't trying to start a theological debate or to evaluate their spirituality. You are looking for ways to help people, to advance God's Kingdom, and give away the riches that you have received from Jesus Christ.

2) **Teach about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.**

Some people shy away from asking people about this directly because they know

there has been a great deal of controversy over the Holy Spirit. The enemy wants to keep the church powerless so he's busy creating controversy, confusion, opinions, and accusations in hopes we'll just stay away from the Holy Spirit. If we shy away because of the controversy, we acquiesce to these tactics and allow the enemy to win this important battle.

If someone objects to the question, or the associating semantics of associating the term "baptism of the Holy Spirit" with the evidence of speaking in tongues, I address it with patience and gentle instruction. As you do so, don't get hung up on terminology. We're not wrangling over words. Stay focused on bringing people to experience "all that God has for them."

Here's what I say:

- This isn't some weird experience for the fringe of Christianity. Every writer of the New Testament spoke in tongues.

- Paul spoke in tongues, wanted every Christian to do it, and would not allow anyone to forbid speaking in tongues.

- Jesus wouldn't allow the apostles to minister until they had it. If they needed it, so do you. If they ministered it, so can we, because they were supposed to teach us to obey everything Jesus taught them.

- In Mark 16, Jesus said that those who believe the gospel that the apostles taught would cast out demons, lay hands on the sick and see them recover, and speak in new tongues. Since Jesus taught it, and told the apostles to preach it, and that anyone who believes can do it, then it must be for you!

When someone isn't objecting, be sure not to "over teach" it. Just get the job done. Prior to laying hands for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I have found a simple way to prepare someone to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit using Acts 2:4 and John 7:38.

Here is what I teach someone as I'm ministering the baptism of the Holy Spirit, "Jesus died to give you the Holy Spirit, not just to live in you, but to flow through you in a supernatural way. Jesus said the operation of the Holy Spirit is like "rivers of living water flowing out of our belly, or inmost being." As this

river begins to flow out from you, it will start by God giving you the gift of a heavenly prayer language just like it says in Acts 2:4 "*they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*." You'll experience God's presence filling you, then you'll need to take a step of faith and begin to speak syllables you don't understand, and God will supply to you a divine utterance."

3) Lay-hands to minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

When I lay hands, I have the believer who wants to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit put their hands on their own belly. Then I'll place one of my hands on their hands, and then lead them in a brief prayer allowing them to repeat after me. I tell them, "Just relax. We're going to pray. Then I'm going to begin to ask God to fill you and then begin to pray in my heavenly language. When you feel filled with God's presence, just begin to open your mouth and speak syllables in faith."

Then I pray and have them repeat after me, "Lord Jesus, I love you (they repeat) Thank you for forgiving me (they repeat). I love you Lord (they repeat). Thank you for your presence (they repeat). Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit (they repeat)… Fill me now (they repeat)… Baptize me with your Holy Spirit (Amen). Amen!"

Then I begin to blast them with the power of God, "Fill! Fill! Fill!" and I begin to pray earnestly in my own heavenly prayer language while keeping my eyes open. I give them and God time. Usually they begin to speak in their heavenly prayer language right away.

Because the human will is part of the process, laying on of hands means working with people "hands-on." Sometimes, I can tell that they are filled and actually holding back tongues because the reluctance of their natural mind to surrender to the Spirit of God. Sometimes people have the misunderstanding that somehow God is going to force them to speak and that deciding to speak somehow invalidates the experience as being an authentic gift of the Holy Spirit. While God can and sometimes does override the whole human soul to come bursting forth in tongues, it's not God's usual way. When you can tell people are getting filled with the Holy Spirit but the flow of God's rivers are being impeded,

sometimes you need to gently encourage people to co-operate with the Holy Spirit.

TROUBLE SHOOTING

Here are a few pointers that I've learned about working with people for their initial surrender to the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

- If it seems like someone is dealing with embarrassment, I will begin to speak in tongues as a mere whisper, and tell them, "Let's just let a little air come across your tongue while you focus on the presence of God." Then, once you can tell the Holy Spirit has begun to supply their tongues, encourage them, "Let's bring up the volume." Begin to speak in tongues at a normal volume, and let them do the same. Then suddenly say gently, "Keep going" as you stop speaking. This allows them to do it on their own and hear their own voice. It's sort of like how you teach someone to ride a bike by letting go of the seat. Before they know it, they are doing it on their own.

- If it seems like someone is holding back because they are waiting for God to take over, I will sometimes encourage them to overcome this difficulty like this, "Just focus on God's presence, and begin to speak out syllables by faith. The Holy Spirit will make it real. If you want the gift of teaching or evangelism, you've got to open your mouth and speak. God's "super" comes on your "natural." So just focus on God's presence, and allow yourself to speak forth many syllables. The worst it can be is sanctified "baby talk", but I believe that as you give yourself permission to speak, you'll see that the Holy Spirit will begin to flow out in a new tongue that He supplies."

You'll never have to teach the divine elements of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit fills us and the Holy Spirit supplies the utterance. Holy Spirit always does His part. But sometimes you may need to work with people to help them learn how they co-operate with the Holy Spirit

When babies are first born, they have a sucking reflex that comes naturally. Just place a bottle, breast, or a fingertip near their mouth when they are hungry, they will start to suck. But if a baby doesn't feed by sucking within 48 hours of birth, they have to be taught to suck again. What would've come completely naturally by instinct, now must be taught! In a similar way, God will use your hands-on

ministry to release the power of the Holy Spirit through you and help people to know how to cooperate with the operation of Holy Spirit's power.

4) Once someone receives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, teach them to use the power of God to build themselves up and to help other people.

When people receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, I encourage them to pray in their heavenly prayer language regularly, even though their mind won't understand. For example, I might say something like, "Now that you have received your heavenly prayer language, you need to know that this is God's gift to you to help you be strong spiritually. It's like vitamins and exercise. When you're driving to work, or walking in the hall, you can be praying in your heavenly prayer language. This is a way to help your spirit be strong every day." To encourage this, I'll usually encourage people to pray in tongues right then. "So that you know you can start this whenever you want, let's pray in tongues for a little bit." Then I'll pray in tongues with them right then. This allows them to see that this is not a once and done experience. They have received a gift that they can use.

Then I will also encourage them to help other people in the same way I helped them. I may say something like, "The Spirit of God lives inside of you and can flow through you to heal the sick and set people free. Don't be afraid to begin to lay your hands and pray for people. Expect the power of God to flow out from you to touch people. If you have any friends that aren't filled with the Holy Spirit, God can use you to help them just like He used me to help you. You can share with them about the Holy Spirit, and lay hands and pray like we did with you. Do you realize you can do this now?" The Holy Spirit has been given to us to empower us to be supernatural witnesses of Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8) God wants all of us to be filled with His power so that the world can see Jesus Christ in us.

> *Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.* Hebrews

6:1-2

Every believer must have a solid foundation for their Christian life if they are going to realize God's full destiny. People should not have to spend their lives meandering their way from one denomination to another in order to finally get all the pieces of the foundation God wanted them to have from the very outset of their new life in Christ. God wants everyone who comes to Jesus to be fully immersed into their identity in Christ through water baptism and the teaching of the gospel that is required to move them to this act of obedience. He also wants to immerse them in the Holy Spirit with the sign of a new heavenly language.

Brothers and sisters, let's be diligent to help everyone we lead to faith in Christ start off with a complete foundation by baptizing them in water into visible union with Jesus Christ and by baptizing them in the Holy Spirit so the Holy Spirit is free to manifest His power through them in ways that are beyond their own understanding.

Baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit to get disciples started. But there is more we need to understand to be firmly "rooted and grounded in Christ." Prepare to be *immersed into God*…

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) **Discussion:** Here's the scenario: You just led your Roman Catholic neighbor to Jesus Christ. When you asked them if they were ready to be baptized they responded, "Oh I was baptized when I was a baby."

What are some things you might say to help them understand what baptism is and why it's important?

2) Practice Praying in Tongues as a group. Hold hands. Speak in tongues fervently for 2 minutes. Then Speak in tongues softly for 1 minute. The Speak in tongues fervently for 2 minutes.

2) **Hands On**- Find out if there is anyone in the group that has not yet experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. If anyone still needs the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, lay hands on them and minister the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

3) **Role Play**- Partner Up. Take Turns 1) asking, 2) teaching about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, 3) Laying hands for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Make sure you actually practice releasing the power of the Holy Spirit in faith.

ASSIGNMENT:

1) Practice Speak in tongues for 30 minutes (3x 10 min. or 2 x 15 min. or 10 x 3 min.) each day for one week. Make a note of any results.

2) Who do you know that may not yet be baptized in water or the Holy Spirit? Make a plan to talk with them. Ask, teach, and minister to them.

CHAPTER 12

IMMERSED IN GOD

"I don't wake up trying to be a Christian. I wake up alive unto God. We're not sinners trying to avoid sin. We are the righteousness of God in Christ and we walk as sons in our Father's love!"
Dan Mohler

We are born empty. From our first moments, we gasp for breath to fill our lungs. We cry for food to fill our stomachs. But our physical emptiness is just a parable of the emptiness of our souls. We are starving for love, gasping for truth, desperate to be filled on the inside. We instinctively reach out for a hand to hold ours, not because our hand needs anything, but because our hearts are afraid of something we feel inside… that we are *alone*. We are born lost, with a terrible case of spiritual amnesia that has stripped us from all but faint echoes of our true identity and our past connection to a soul satisfying God.

Because we are born in this state, we sometimes don't even realize the true plight of our condition. To us, it seems somewhat normal to live with fear, strife, shame, guilt, bitterness, inferiority, boredom, anger, depression, and stress. Although it may seem normal to battle with such things, at the same time, we run from them because they don't fit our original design. We run from failure to chase success and glory, only to find that success is short lived and the rat-race beckons us endlessly. We search for a purpose to inspire us, something to make life worth living; or we dream of finding our true love, only to find that once we're past the surface, we've found someone as empty as we are, hoping to fill their void with us. So we learn to manage the emptiness by lowering our expectations, or we run endlessly into this or that, anything to distract us from the emptiness that gnaws at our insides whenever we are forced to sit still, quietly, alone. We're like sharks, always moving, lest we die. We're tired of

always wanting more. We keep running, skimming across the surface pleasures afforded by the people and things we find in this world, hoping to escape the pull of the vacuum pulsating from the depths of our own soul, lest we be consumed by our own emptiness and take our place among those we call "addicts."

Such was our state ***apart from*** Jesus Christ…

> *For we ourselves **were** once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.* Tit. 3:3

Yet there remains much good in each one of us and in this world. Many are able to capitalize on the talent, intelligence, discipline, or privileges afforded by to them at birth to do a great deal of good for themselves and others. Some of us relish many enjoyable moments. This only worsens the miserable fact that in the end death takes everything from us. Death remains the most dreaded and skillful thief known to mankind, capable of taking everything in this world. It takes every single one of our possessions, our friends, our husbands and wives, and even our children. It laughs at our every accomplishment, taunting us with the reminder that "this too shall be rendered meaningless." It stalks us our entire lives. Every time we turn on the news or drive by a hospital, we are reminded that one day will be our last. There's nothing we can do to change it, and it's not pleasant to dwell on. So we keep ourselves occupied with other things. We run from it as long as we can, but in the end we know it will catch us. Death will win. It always wins. And we hate it!

Such was our state ***apart from*** Jesus Christ.

> *Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ…having no hope and without God in the world.* Eph. 2:12

Then we encounter Jesus Christ. In Him we discover a life that is stronger than death and the fullness of God that satisfies the hungriest of souls. We become born again, and in so doing, we become a brand new species. We are made biologically different from the rest of humanity that continues to plod along with only the life they received through the DNA of their mother and father. We are as different from what we were once as an electric eel is from an ordinary eel, or a butterfly is from a caterpillar. We have parts that work inside of us that don't yet function in ordinary human beings. We now contain a form of life without

beginning or end, a life form that transcends time and space and needs nothing outside of itself in order to thrive. We have *eternal life*. We contain the very God who created all things inside of us, specifically inside of our spirits.

Not only do we contain God, we now *participate in God's eternal fellowship.* We have been swept into the unseen dance that moves to God's never ending song, a melody of love and joy that has been ever flowing between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our insides have become eternally united with God's innermost being. Our mind can now access His perceptions. Our heart can be filled with His love. Our wills are strengthened in the grip of God's direction from within.

We have been invited into the very presence of God, not merely to bow down in trembling submission, but to enter into the joy of God's endless embrace. We've been adopted by the Father into the very place of His own Son. We've been welcomed into the fellowship of the God-head *as an equal*. His love for us is no way less than the love He has reserved exclusively for His own dear Son. What the Son enjoyed by nature and by rights we now receive by grace, a free underserved gift.

> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith* ***into this grace in which we stand****, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Rom. 5:1-2

The gift we have received from God includes the gift of a new nature, the nature of the very Son of God. We are no eternal charity case. We have been made rich. What once was the emptiness of our soul has been filled. We are now the banks and river bottom that contain God's Spirit. The river of God's glory has flooded into the channels of our inmost being. We are no longer two, but one. In times before time, God was the all. He created us to fill us. Now He is the all ***in*** all. We contain Him. He fills us. We are His fullness. Without Him, we are empty. Without us, God has nothing suitable to contain Himself nor capable of expressing His fullness in His creation. Through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, we have become one with God. We are "the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Eph. 1:23)

MAKING DISCIPLES WHO ARE IMMERSED IN GOD

Eternity was very real to Jesus. Although He emptied Himself of His own power and privileges as the eternal, divine Son of God to become man (Phil. 2:6), Jesus was never empty. He was born with His human spirit united with the Spirit of His Father. While walking around in Palestine, Jesus was very conscious of fellowship with His Father in unseen realms. Every moment of Jesus' life was filled with an acute awareness of eternity.

Just listen to some of the things He said:

> …I speak of what I have *seen with my Father*… John 8:38
>
> …the Father *loves* me… John 10:17
>
> …I am *in my Father*… John14:20
>
> …I have kept my Father's commandments and *abide in his love*. John 15:10
>
> …all that I have *heard from my Father* I have made known to you. John 15:15
>
> …Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me *where I am*, to see my glory that you have given me because *you loved me before the foundation of the world*. John 17:24

We know that after Jesus was resurrected, He was "*appearing to them (the apostles) during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God*" (Acts 1:3). When Jesus commanded us to make disciples by "*baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*" He was saying far more than, "this is what you are supposed to say when you dunk a new believer under water." Yes, it refers to water baptism as point of initiation into life as a disciple of Jesus Christ, but it is more than that. It indicates that the way we make disciples is to immerse people into the Trinity. We must be plunged and absolutely submerged into a living awareness of God. We are to drench people in fellowship with God so that it saturates every pore in their being. Can being a disciple of Jesus Christ be anything less?

To Jesus, eternal life ***is*** fellowship with God. "*And this is eternal life, **that they know you** the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*." (John17:3) Eternal life is more than just how long you exist. It has more to do with whether you are connected with God to participate in His life. For the only way in which we "know God" is through an interpenetrating relationship. This is why the Scriptures say, "Adam ***knew*** Eve, and she conceived a son" (Gen. 4:1). The act of marriage is a physical picture of a relationship that points to a much higher, spiritual reality. To know God is to enter into Him, and He into you. His life penetrates your life and your life becomes filled with Him. The pleasure of our union with Him results in the multiplication of life to others. This is why Jesus said, "***In that day** you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."* (John14:20) On the day the Holy Spirit came to dwell inside of us, "on that day", we can begin to know the Father and the Son in the same way that Jesus knew the Father. We would finally have the life of God inside of us, so that we would know Him by His presence dwelling in us. "*And this is eternal life, **that they know** you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*." (John17:3)

I realize that this may be hard to grasp at first, because we are so used to viewing ourselves as separate from God. That's because we were born defective. We were born separate, so we perceive ourselves independent from all other beings. For God it is not so. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always shared one life between them. Each one of them dwells inside of the others in constant and complete interpersonal awareness and enjoyment. Eternal life is this continual flow of fellowship between them. When blood stops flowing in the heart, life stops. When air stops flowing in the lungs, life stops. Life is a flow. For the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is the constant flow of love and fellowship between them.

My wife and I have three children. We've noticed that, in some ways, our children become functional extensions of ourselves. For example, if we sow love, grace, and patience into our children, they receive that love and usually become loving, happy children. If we sow impatience, frustration, and negativity into our children, they become grumpy. When anyone blesses one of our children, we are blessed. When our children are hurt, it hurts us. It's as if there is a "family life" that flows between us, uniting our existence. While it's not a

perfect picture, some of these experiences can allow us to understand how our heavenly Father shares life in fellowship with the Son and the Holy Spirit… and us!

For us, eternal life is a flow of God's life that comes from God sharing Himself within us as our life. We know God as we live by His life. Just look at a few Scriptures that speak of this very reality:

*For to me **to live IS Christ**, and to die is gain*. Phil. 1:21

*When Christ **who IS your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory*. Col.3:4

*Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me.* John14:6

*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Gal 2:20

*That **I may know him and the power** of his resurrection, and may **share** his sufferings, **becoming like him** in his death.* Phil. 3:10

*And because you are sons, **God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"** So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Formerly, when you did not **know God**, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But **now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God**, how can you turn back again.…* Gal 4:6 -9

*God is faithful, by whom **you were called into the fellowship of his Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.* 1 Cor.1:9

*Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me **will be loved by my Father**, and **I will love him** and **manifest myself to him**."* John 14:21

As we help others grow, we must make it our number one priority to help believers understand and experience their union with Jesus Christ. The foundation of making disciples of Jesus Christ is *not* primarily about changing people's behavior, or changing their mindsets, or even changing their desires, though all these things will change. Nor is it primarily about getting people to confess the Word of God, or to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ or to get people activated to heal the sick, cast out demons, proclaim the gospel, and operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. *All* of those things are either fruit of "knowing the Father, and Jesus Christ" or a means of knowing Him.

When God is truly real to people, when we really know Him, when His Words are not merely our confession but our perception, when we are participating in God's own life as our life, when we are not merely living *for* Jesus Christ but living *through* Jesus Christ, then everything else will fall into place. As Jesus said, "*If you wash the inside of the cup, the outside comes clean automatically*." (Matt. 23:26)

New believers don't come into the Kingdom all cleaned up. When I first came to know Jesus, I was into a lot of heavy metal music. Posters of bands like Ozzy Osborn, AC/DC, Van Halen, Kiss, Megadeath and Metallica filled the walls of my bedroom. I had thousands of dollars of music. After I came to know Jesus, there were real changes taking place in my life. But my tastes in music didn't immediately change, even though a lot of the lyrics were dark, violent, or even Satanic.

On occasion, one of my Christian friends would pull me aside to challenge me about my choice of music. At that point in my life with Christ, I wasn't ready to trade AC/DC in for Amy Grant, so I didn't really appreciate my friend's efforts to convince me that I was doing something wrong by listening to music I enjoyed. He was trying to help me clean up my behavior. He was cleaning the "outside of the cup."

One of my other Christian friends had a different approach. As he got to know me, he could see my passion for Christ was real. He could also see that I was obviously a fan of aggressive heavy rock music. So one day, he gave me a few of his Christian heavy metal albums to borrow. For the next two weeks, the only music I listened to was my friend's Christian rock albums. I found myself

worshiping God as I listened to these songs, which was a whole new experience for me.

After two weeks passed, my friend asked me for his music back. I soon discovered that after I returned his music I could no longer stand the ungodly lyrics that filled my old music. I missed the experience of fellowshipping with God as I listened to music. I ended up trading in my ungodly heavy metal music for Christian metal. My heart had been changed by God. God had cleaned the "*inside of the cup*" and the "*outside of the cup*" became clean as well. Jesus Christ living inside us changes our hearts which affects our behavior.

Jesus hasn't changed His lifestyle. It's eternal. He's pretty set in His ways. When we know Him as our life, He's going to impact the way we live. He still loves people with amazing grace, heals the sick and walks in Kingdom authority. He's going to continue to walk in freedom, peace, holiness and joy. He's going to set the captives free and destroy the devil's works. Now, He will do these same things through us as He brings our hearts and minds into line with Him.

God builds into us His compassion for the lost, the sick and the hurting. He imparts a revelation of our union with Him that gives us confidence that we are sons of God. He fills us with a love for God and our fellow man that changes the course of our lives.

How do we make this practical? How do we touch the reality of fellowship with God, so that it's not merely something we agree with, but our *experience*? Are there any handles that we can grab onto that will help us connect and grow in our own awareness of God, and in the same way also to help others? The answer, my friend, is absolutely yes!

I'm going to share with you some of the foundational ways you can grow in your awareness of the presence of God and deepen your enjoyment of fellowship with God. I'm also going to share some of the most common pitfalls and snares that sidetrack people from living through Jesus Christ. As I share these things with you, not only will be able to implement these things in your own life, but you'll be able to use these same principles to help others grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

LEARN TO EXERCISE YOUR SPIRIT

From the outset, every Christian needs to understand that they are an interconnected three-part being.

> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole ***spirit*** *and* ***soul*** *and* ***body*** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thes.5:23

We are spirit, soul, and body. Most believers are able to grasp this best as they consider Jesus Christ Himself. We all know that there is much more to Him than meets the eye. What made Jesus awesome was not His physique, nor His intellect. It was His Spirit. It was this life, living at the core of His humanity, that gave Him the ability to access God; to hear, see, and touch His Father. When Jesus' body was being tortured, and His soul was in anguish, there was a part of Jesus' humanity that could never be touched or defeated by man or devils. "Into your hands I commit my *spirit*," Jesus said. It was the Spirit of Jesus Christ that raised Him from the dead. (Rom. 8:11) It was the Spirit of Jesus Christ that made Him AWESOME.

This is great news for us, because, according to the Word of God, "*the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you…*" (Rom. 8:11), and "*he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him*." (1 Cor.6:17)

You are spirit, soul, and body. Your spirit is perfect, holy, seated with Christ in heavenly realms, and completely one with Jesus Christ. While your body is limited to one place in time and space, your spirit is capable of touching eternal realities beyond time and space. With our body we can eat a hamburger and drink a soda. With our spirits, we can "taste and see that the Lord is good." While God's salvation applies to your entire being including your soul and body, your spirit is the only part of you that has already been perfected, glorified, and seated with Christ. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God is a spirit, so He sees us from the vantage point of our spirit.

Your body is your "outer man" which "is wasting away" and can be attacked with sickness or injuries in this world. God is able to heal and "give life to your mortal body" because "the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you." (Rom. 8:11)

Your soul needs to be renewed according to the Spirit. Your soul can be deceived, distracted or discouraged, but your spirit remains in perfect connection to God, constantly leading you to put to death the misdeeds of the flesh and to walk as sons of God. God's presence in your spirit gives Him access to your soul, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Your emotions may tell you that you are distant from God. But when you understand that God is always dwelling in your spirit, you learn to say to your soul, "*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*." (Psalm 103:1-2)

Even if you, as a believer, should stumble into sin, your spirit will fight you all the way and eventually pull you back into fellowship with God because it always remains in union with God. God never leaves you or forsakes you. He simply remains with you while you "grieve the Holy Spirit", which is why a born again believer who falls into sin is the most miserable person on the planet. It's also why "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he* ***cannot*** *keep on sinning* ***because he has been born of God***." (1 Jn. 3:9) Our spirit is as righteous, holy, and beyond reproach as Jesus Christ, because the Spirit of Jesus Christ and our spirit are one. We need our soul and body to be renewed to who we truly are now because of our union with Jesus Christ.

Once we understand that we are spirit, soul, and body, we need to understand the difference between the way our spirit and our soul functions. Even though the Spirit of God works in our thoughts, feelings, and decisions, we need to understand *how* He does this. Otherwise it's simply us thinking, feeling and doing in the power of the flesh. "Thinkers" mistake their highly refined theology for a powerful relationship with God that empowers them to reign in life and set the captives free. "Feelers" are up and down with their emotions, constantly pumping in worship music and running around to conferences hoping to keep their heart "on the mountain tops." Over time, unless "feelers" become more firmly rooted in the Word, they often become susceptible to deceiving spirits. "Doers" misplace Jesus in all their activism for Him. Since "doers" are born leaders, they can also bring others into their vortex to burn other people out. The problem is not that people think, feel, and do. That's how our soul was designed

to function. The problem occurs when we misidentify our soul as the center of our relationship with God. It's not.

If I want to eat a sandwich, I need to put it in my mouth. I can't think about it or smell a sandwich and get nourishment. My mind and nose are not the organs for eating a sandwich. I need to put it in my mouth, chew, swallow, and allow my stomach to digest it. Our spirit is the "organ" that God has given us to "taste and see" God. When we try to encounter God by operating in our minds or our emotions apart from the Spirit of God, it's like shoving a sandwich in our nose. We're using the wrong organ. We need to operate in the Spirit by faith, hope, and love. This is how our spirit operates, by faith, hope, and love. Our connection with God is in our innermost being. It's "in Christ" and "in the Spirit." When we exercise faith in God, or love towards God, or hope in God, we are operating by our spirit. We touch God. The power of His Spirit is unleashed.

Sometimes when we pray or sing worship songs, it's merely our soul operating out of routine. Other times, we "put our faith and love into it." We aren't just singing. We are loving God in the song. We are fixing our hope in Jesus as we pray, not just "talking to God." Sometimes we're just reading the Word and analyzing what it says. At other times we are exercising faith in the Word or loving God or renewing our hope in God in response to His Word. You've experienced the difference, haven't you?

We exercise our spirit by exercising faith, hope and love as we take our stand in our union with Christ. To enter into eternal realities in the Spirit, we must consider ourselves dead to this world through the death of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:1-3, Gal. 2:20). We must let go of our earthly circumstances and personal desires in this world. As we turn our attention to God in faith, we can become aware of our eternal circumstances in Christ, where we are "seated with Him in heavenly realms" (Eph. 2:4). We turn our thoughts, our feelings and our will to God by exercising faith, hope and love. With our souls subjected to the Spirit and the Word, our spirit is then free to operate in the authority, victory and power of Jesus Christ in whatever earthly circumstances we may find ourselves.

A few years ago, I had just taken over a major program for our business consulting company and was going to lead an important sales meeting involving the presidents and owners of close to twenty companies from all over the United

States. Although I had played a leading role in this program for several years, this was the first time I was going to be the lead presenter and highest-ranking member of my own company at our kickoff meeting. As I walked down to the meeting room and saw all the sharply dressed executives, I began to feel a little nervous.

I decided to take a walk down the hall and be with Jesus in the presence of my Father. As I walked down the hall, I didn't talk to Jesus about my meeting or ask Him for His help. The first thing I needed to do was to forget about my meeting and express my faith and love to God. I wasn't trying to bring my circumstances to God. I needed to let go of my circumstances so that I could bring God to my circumstances!

As I walked, I wasn't really concerned with the words I was saying. I was just allowing my heart to be touched by the heart of God. I said something like, "I love you Father. I belong to You. You are with me today. You are always with me. Lord, you live in me. I give myself to you again. You give yourself completely to me." I began to sense confidence and strength return to my heart. I was ready. So then I felt free to speak about the meeting. I said, "Lord, You are going to do great in me today. Let's do this!" As I returned to the meeting room, I wasn't nervous. I was totally secure. God's love gripped my heart. When your peace and joy come from God, people lose their power over your heart.

> *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And* ***he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself 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.*** John 14:21, 23

As we exercise faith, hope, and love on the inside, we will always keep the commandments of Jesus Christ on the outside. Our outer lifestyle of behavior always expresses what is happening in our soul. We do not obey the commands of Jesus Christ in order to "prove our love" to Him. Our love for Jesus Christ expresses itself in obedience to His commands. Love precedes our obedience. Obedience is a fruit of love. In other words, it's a fruit of operating in the Spirit. But an obedient life is not the only fruit of our love. Loving God also brings us deeper in our experience of the manifest love of God and personal revelation of

Jesus Christ. The presence of God becomes as real to us on the insides as the house in which we live. God becomes our "home on the inside." He's where we live.

USE THE SCRIPTURES TO BEHOLD JESUS AND FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

If we are going to cultivate a lifestyle of loving God and living in the awareness of His presence, every believer needs to spend time communing with God alone. Even Jesus needed time alone with His Father. If He needed time alone with His Father while He lived among us in the flesh, we can expect that Christ living in us today will make this a priority for our lives. We'll have to shut off the TV and forget all the status updates on our social media sites. We may need to be more disciplined about going to bed and waking up. We must do whatever it takes to carve out time to be alone with God.



Here's what I encourage people to do. Make an appointment and establish a routine to the best of your ability. Don't just give God the leftover time from your day. It's too easy to cram your schedule with seemingly urgent activities that are less important in the long run. Decide on a time and a place to be alone with God. Most believers find that it works best to set a regular time aside at the end of the day, first thing in the morning, around meal times, or all of the above. Consider that appointment as if you had an appointment with the president of your company or your nation. God is far more important, so make your time alone with Him priority.

In addition to all these suggestions, when I was first establishing a regular time alone with God, I also used the "buddy system." Although I had decided to make time alone with God a priority, I found that I could easily turn off my alarm, roll over in bed, and sleep through the time I had set aside to be alone with God. I discovered that my friend, Jeff, had the same challenge. So, we

decided that every morning we would set our alarms for the same time. Then, after our alarms went off, the first one that was awake would call the other one on the phone to make sure we were out of bed and on our feet. Just like jogging partners or workout buddies, we partnered up for the purpose of helping one another keep a regular appointment with God.

If you are going to immerse yourself in God, you've got to detox from the world. It's impossible to saturate ourselves with the world and live in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must take regular time away from the world to fill ourselves with God, so that as we go through our activities we are able to maintain a lifestyle of fellowship with God. We walk in the Spirit in public because we've yielded to the Spirit in private. "*But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* (Matt. 6:6) If we are going to live a supernatural life in Christ, we must saturate ourselves with God.

SEE, SAVOR, AND SURRENDER

One of the most valuable tools God has given us to establish communion with Him is the Scriptures. Many times new believers turn to the Scriptures to find an answer to their problems, a promise relating to a need, or "chicken soup for their soul." They may turn to the Scriptures to solve a theological debate and prove their point of view, or to develop their list of do's and don'ts.

While there may be some validity to each of these, I'd like to suggest that ***none of these*** are the primary reason that God has given us His Word. Look at what Jesus said, "*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that* ***bear witness about me****, yet you refuse to* ***come to me*** *that* ***you may have life****.*" John 5:39-40

According to Jesus, the primary reason for the Scriptures is to reveal Himself, to show us a who He is as person. Why? So that we could come to Him, receive Him, encounter Him, fellowship with Him and have the life that we see in Him inside of us!

God has given us the revelation of Himself through Jesus Christ and His Word as a sure guide for a life of fellowship with Him. We're not bumping along in the dark in some form of eastern mysticism that is reaching out to commune with

"the unknown and unknowable force of the universe." No! The Word of God aligns our souls with the Spirit of God, a real person. In Christ we have a clear revelation of God and come to the Father through Jesus Christ. The very Son of God, who was manifested in the flesh, has become our door into the Father's presence so that we can receive all we need for life and godliness. "***I am the door***. *If anyone* ***enters by me****, he will be saved and will* ***go in and out and find pasture***." John10:9

Here is very simple three phased approach to use the Scriptures for experiencing fellowship with God based on how Jesus said we should be using the Scriptures. We see, we savor, and we surrender to Christ in us.

1) **SEE**. Whenever you open your Bible, ask God to help you see more about who Jesus is, what He's accomplished, and how He works on every page. Think of your Bible like a menu, and on every page is another "Jesus dish." You want to open your Bible and say, "Holy Spirit, show me Jesus in what I'm reading! Help me see His character, His grace, His works, and His nature!"

2) **SAVOR**. As you see your Lord in the Word, go to Him directly. Love Him. Worship Him. Exercise your spirit and encounter Him directly. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." You must get heart to heart, face to face, spirit to spirit with the living God. Allow the Spirit of the Son to cry "Abba Father!" through your heart. Allow the Word of God to carry you outside of this world and into His very presence to encounter God in unseen realms. Use the Word to steady and focus your thoughts so that you can exercise love, faith and hope and come to God to encounter Him directly in the spirit.

3) **SURRENDER**. Receive the life that you see in Jesus into yourself as your life. Yield to His life in you so you receive into your soul all of the glory, power, authority, grace, and virtue that is already in your spirit. Receive all that you see in Him into yourself to be your life today. Don't try to make yourself like Him. Just put off the old man. Then put on the new. Put Him on. Let the life of Christ in You become your life. Let the one who lives inside of you express Himself through you. Put Him on display. You can memorize, quote and confess the

"menu" all day long and still starve if you don't truly take the food and eat it.

And we all, with unveiled face, ***beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image*** *from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* 2 Cor.3:18 (NASB)

The apostle Paul points out the same pattern of transformation by seeing, savoring, and surrendering. God has given us His Word so that we can behold His glory. This is the first step. To see the Lord. This then brings us into direct contact with the Lord, spirit to Spirit contact. This is the second step. As we behold God and contact Him in the Spirit, we see that He lives in us. By faith we realize that when we are beholding Him, we are actually looking into a mirror. We thought we were looking at Jesus, but God tells us that we are looking in a mirror. When we see Jesus, we must learn that we are beholding *our life*. As we receive the life we behold in Jesus as our life, we are transformed into His image. This is the third step. SEE, SAVOR, SURRENDER.

WHO DO YOU SEE IN THE MIRROR?

I find that many Christians don't behold the Lord "*as in a mirror*" when they go to the Scriptures. Instead they behold themselves apart from Christ. As a result, they aren't built up in the spirit.

When we behold ourselves apart from Christ, it looks like this. We read "Love is patient, love is kind" and the self-beholding starts, "O brother, I shouldn't have been so snappy with my children. I'm such a jerk sometimes. I've been a Christian for over 20 years. You'd think I'd be able to be a little more patient, but I'm still on first base. It's no wonder God doesn't use me more… blah blah blah." Although this may be exaggerated, it's been my experience that this is what *most* Christians are doing *most* of the time! It's no wonder we don't read our Bibles more!

But when we behold the Lord as in a mirror, it looks like this. We read, "Love is patient, love is kind" and we see Jesus. So we go to Him in faith and love to contact Him directly, "Lord, you are perfect love. You are never snappy or harsh or frustrated. You are patient. You never get worn down loving me. You can love

me all day long on my worst days and never get tired of loving me. You pour out kindness on me day and night. Everything I have is your personal love gift to me. You are so kind." This is AWESOME! But this is only step 1 and step 2. We've seen. We've connected. There's more!

"And Lord, you live inside of me with all your love and patience. You are my patience. You are an endless supply of kindness ready to pour out all day long today. You aren't worn down or sick and tired. So I just put off all that "sick and tired." I put off my snappy frustration towards my children. I receive your power and patience to love my children through me today! Hallelujah!"

Which stay-at-home mom would you rather come home to at the end of the day? Which one do you think is going to love her children more effectively? The one who's been beholding Jesus in a mirror, or her kids and herself apart from Christ?

When we use the Scriptures to help us see Jesus so that we can encounter Him and receive everything that's in Him into our own souls, it makes a huge difference. Ordinary, everyday life becomes supernatural "eternal life" as you inwardly live in the love, joy, and truth you are experiencing in eternal realms. Indeed, "This is eternal life, *that they may know You…*" (John 17:3). As you begin using the Scriptures to immerse yourself into a life of fellowship with God, you'll be able to introduce others into this same fellowship as well. God wants us to make disciples by immersing them into God!

EYES TO SEE

Beholding Jesus doesn't just mean reading the gospels. Every page of Scripture is a revelation of Jesus Christ… if we have our eyes opened with the spirit of wisdom and revelation!

Here are a few key verses that will help get you started in your journey of discovering the depths of Jesus Christ in the word:

1) **Wherever we see God's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification or redemption, we are seeing Jesus Christ.**

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us ***wisdom from***

God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption… 1 Cor.1:30

2) Wherever we see the promises of God, we see Jesus Christ. For in Him every promise is fulfilled.

*For **all the promises of God find their Yes in him.** That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.* 2Cor. 1:20

3) Every aspect of God's Law and commandments are a revelation of the life and work of Jesus Christ.

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish **the Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfill them**.´* Matt.5:17

*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but **the substance is of Christ**.* (Lit. Greek rendering) Col. 2:16-17

4) Every standard or example of Christian living is a revelation of Jesus Christ.

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for **apart from me you can do nothing**.* John 15:5

*I have been crucified with Christ. **It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me**. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Gal 2:20

Once you establish a pattern of fellowshipping with God using the Scriptures, you begin to increase in your awareness of eternal realities. Truths you used to just "agree with" (yawn…) because they were in the Bible, have now become your own perception of reality. Truth isn't just in the Bible anymore. It's inside of you. By God's Word and His Spirit living inside of us, we are beginning to see everything through His eyes, and we're getting filled with what we are seeing. As the love, glory and peace of God floods the eyes of our heart, we find the peace of God gripping our hearts and minds. As we cultivate this fellowship

with God alone, in secret, we begin to experience rewards in public.[7] Our hearts are empowered. Our lives are being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We begin to enjoy a whole new lifestyle.

CULTIVATE HABITS FOR A LIFESTYLE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Along with spending time alone with God in fellowship, there are things you can do to enjoy fellowship with God during the activities of your day. This is one of the great blessings of having "Christ in you, the hope of glory." We are never alone. God is always with us. So we can always enjoy fellowship with Him.

Most people are not in a situation where they can sit and pray with an open Bible all day. We have work to do, people and tasks that need our attention. Many of us have demanding jobs that require a great deal of concentration, so initially the thought of "adding one more thing" like fellowship with God to your plate may not sound appealing.

If you see the invitation to enjoy fellowship with God during your daily like an insecure boyfriend telling you that they are going to be with you all day because they need constant reassurance that you still love him, this *won't* be good news. Thankfully, that's ***not*** how God is at all. It is we who need to "*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*." (Eph. 6:10) Because God dwells in our spirit, we can be fully engaged in a task or conversation with our minds and or body, yet be aware of His life flowing with in us. We don't shut God out in order to concentrate on our work. "It is God who works in us, both to will and to do" (Phil. 2:13) so that "we do our work heartily *unto the Lord*." No longer are we "stuck in a dead end job" or "working for the man." When our lives are immersed in God, we are working unto Him and through Him. Having access to God at all times is wonderful!

I worked in the marketplace for many years as a business consultant. I understand from experience the challenges that come with performance measures, demanding bosses, unreasonable clients, challenging co-workers, an overwhelming work-load, and good ole' honest competition. I would never want to face these things apart from God.

Thankfully, we don't have to leave God in our prayer closet. One of the first

encouragements I would give you is to learn to *never just say "Amen", shut your Bible, and finish your time alone with God*. When it comes time to get on with activities, *transition your time alone with God into active time with God*. Since God abides with us every moment of every day, you can carry right along in fellowship with God as you go through your day. He is "God with us." So we get to be "Sons with God."

God has removed the separation between "secular" and "spiritual." Our entire lives, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do" is now part of our relationship with God. It's all included into our fellowship with God. Our lives are immersed in God. When we work, "we work as unto the Lord." Every relationship, whether within our family, or friends, neighbors or even persecutors, has now become an opportunity to worship.

Here are a few things that I've discovered that have helped me draw near to God during my daily life. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, so He is always with us. Let's leverage that to our advantage by "disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness." There are many other ways we can cultivate fellowship with God during our daily activities, but these are the five that are the easiest and most consistently helpful to me:

1) **Make everyday a running conversation with God.**

Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Psalm 25:5

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thes. 5:17

Have you ever noticed that you talk to yourself? I believe that's because we've been wired for ongoing fellowship. Our flesh just got in the habit of being alone, without God, so our instinct for ongoing fellowship was twisted into "talking to yourself." I found that it takes very little effort to begin to untwist "talking to yourself" so that you begin to "pray without ceasing." The difference it makes is amazing! When I talk to myself, I feel stressed out. But when I talk to God, I feel empowered and peaceful. My soul's inclination for fellowship has found the outlet for which it was designed!

It takes determination to develop this habit. Persevere. Don't be hard on yourself. Don't go by feelings. Just exercise faith and love towards God.

2) Call on the Name of the Lord- single breath conversations with God.

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who ***in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ****, both their Lord and ours.* 1 Cor. 1:2

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who ***call on the Lord from a pure heart****.* 2 Tim.2:22

… For the same Lord is Lord of all, ***bestowing his riches on all who call on him***. Rom 10:12

God has put all of the riches of Jesus Christ in our spirit. God is rich in mercy, wisdom, grace, love, and in healing. He's made it very simple to access these riches. He "bestows his riches on all who *call on Him*." (Rom. 10:12) Just put the Name of Jesus on your lips with faith in your heart, and you'll find the Spirit of God empowering your heart in fresh ways. The best way to "flee youthful passions" is to pursue godly passions!

Sometimes we don't have much to say in our "ongoing conversation with God." That's okay. When I was first dating my wife, before we were married, I sometimes felt compelled to "keep the conversation going." I really enjoyed talking with her, and she was so easy to be myself around. So it wasn't hard. There came a point in our relationship when I stopped feeling a need to find something to talk about. I was comfortable just being together with her. We could sit together and just enjoying being together. I'd hold her hand and give it a squeeze now and then, or I'd look into her eyes. I really liked doing this, so I married her!

Calling on the Name of Jesus, with faith and love in our hearts is a simple way to just "be with God." This is like reaching out to give God's hand a squeeze, or look into His eyes briefly just to enjoy a moment together in the midst of whatever else you may be doing. These are simple "one breath prayers" that help us keep our soul operating in fellowship with God. Often, I simply whisper the

name of Jesus as I'm walking from one place to another, driving, or shopping. Or you may find that God gives you little one breath phrases like "Jesus, I love you." Or "Thank you Jesus" or "I'm yours Jesus" or "Help Lord" or "Bless 'em Jesus." This is a simple way to open up your spirit to recognize the presence of the Lord and to draw strength from Him as part of your daily life.

3) **Rejoice always, overflowing with thankfulness**

***Rejoice always, pray without ceasing**, **give thanks in all circumstances**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*. 1 Thes.5:16-18

Take your blessings personally. God gives them to you personally because of His love towards you. As you overflow with gratitude to God and joy in Jesus, you will make room for a fresh inflow of grace in your heart. "You don't know how difficult my life has been?"

***Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials** of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.* Jms.1:2-3

When you demonstrate that challenging circumstances are not strong enough to steal your joy or to stop your praise, your life has become a demonstration of supernatural power and wisdom. "I did count it all joy, and it helped for a little while. But now, I'm feeling overwhelmed again. Nothing is changing!"

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Phil. 4:4

No one can take your joy from you, because your joy is in the Lord. He is always a constant source of joy and encouragement for you in the toughest of situations. If you find that you are losing your grip on your joy, just RE-joice. Do it again and again. If you focus on your problems, they'll weigh you down. But if you focus on the Lord in the midst of your problems, you'll rejoice and get stronger and stronger, because "*the joy of the Lord is your strength.*" (Neh. 8:10) If you focus on what you could lose and don't have, you'll be fearful and selfish. If you focus on what God has given you that can never be taken away, you'll overflow with gratitude and generosity. So "rejoice with thanksgiving."

By the way, if you continue to find your joy in the Lord when nothing around

you seems to be changing, ***you*** are changing. You are growing more into the image of Jesus Christ! You are beginning to realize that you are unstoppable!

4) **Pray in tongues**

The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself… 1 Cor.14:4

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 1 Cor.14:18

You can pray in tongues more than you realize. If your practice praying in tongues under your breath, you'll see that you can pray in tongues in such a way that no one around you would even know that you are doing any such thing. This means you can be praying in tongues while seated in a business meeting, with your mind fully attentive to the work at hand. You can pray in tongues while you are shopping and no one will even look at you funny. You can pray in tongues when you walk on the treadmill at the gym. You can pray in tongues while you read the Bible or listen to worship music or the Bible on mp3. I know you can… because I do. And it's so amazingly refreshing and renewing. But don't take my word for it. Try it for yourself.

5) **Develop a mindset of continually offering your actions as worship. Make your life a prayer.**

*Therefore, **preparing your minds for action**, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. 1 Pet.1:13

Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning*… Luke 12:35-37*

The best way to get ready is to stay ready. We need to purpose to develop a mindset of making all of life an act of faith, love, and obedience to God. Keep your heart close to God by staying ready to obey Him to the utmost at a moment's notice. Start your day by saying to the Lord things like, "Jesus, you are with me today, living in Me. I'm ready to love you in everything I do and to love my neighbor as myself. I'm ready to speak of your faithfulness and the difference you make in my life, to treat others like you've treated me. I'm ready to heal the sick and to go out of my way to show kindness to friends and strangers. Thank you that you are with me." Then say things like this to God

through your day to keep yourself in a state of readiness. Step out at every opportunity. Take some extra risks, but do it as a sacrifice of worship to God. Put your ego and pride on the altar and let the fire of the Holy Spirit come and consume you. Watch what God will do. Keeping myself in a constant state of readiness so that I'm ready to make the most out of every opportunity for the Kingdom of God at any given moment helps me to keep my heart very near to God.

Have you realized that you can turn any ordinary task into supernatural worship, even when those tasks are mundane, unpleasant, or difficult? How? Put your *love* into it! Instead of just making coffee for everyone at the office, make coffee for the Lord. He's not going to drink your coffee, but He will receive your love as you do "whatever you do as unto the Lord." Don't just unload the groceries from the car. Transform the activity of unloading groceries into an act of worship and praise by turning your heart towards Him in faith and loving Him through your actions.

While most of us love the children, even the most loving parent sometimes gets a little drained by the needs of children. Those cute little babies require a lot of extra time, money, and work.

Apart from God, this can become a drudgery. But through faith in Jesus Christ, it becomes a wonderful opportunity to worship and grow closer to God. Don't believe me?

Jesus said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." Luke 9:48

When we exercise our faith and love towards God in the way we treat other people, we receive Jesus in those activities. Our fellowship with Him is strengthened. When we look at our responsibility and daily activities as opportunities to love God in our activities, instead of distraction from being close to God, our souls are replenished by the power of the Spirit of God even in the midst of a demanding schedule.

And whoever gives one of these little ones ***even a cup of cold water because he***

is a disciple*, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."*
Matt.10:42

So, whether you eat or drink, or ***whatever*** *you do, do all to the glory of God*. 1 Cor.10:31

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And ***he who loves me*** *will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and* ***manifest myself to him****."* John14:21

Many people are aspiring to do great things for Jesus to show their love for Him. Jesus hands us a towel, points out some dirty feet and tells us, "Learn to do small things with great love. Learn to serve other people because of your love for me. This is the way to do great things for me."

Let your whole life become an act of worship by consciously loving the Lord in the things that you do, especially in the way that you treat others. Gone forever is the divide between "secular" and "sacred." Our entire life has become worship, every activity is another opportunity to love God and love others in the power He supplies as He lives through us *as us*.

This is the mindset that sanctifies and fuels an authentic Christian life and ministry. We share the gospel, heal the sick, make disciples, care for widows and orphans, and show kindness to strangers not only because we love them, but because these actions are ways of showing our love for Jesus Christ. Our entire outward life of "words and deeds" has become the overflow of a lifestyle of unseen fellowship with God in the Spirit. Every action is packed with faith and love.

He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 1 Jn. 4:20

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son…
Rom 1:9

God sees the love and faith in our hearts in every activity. Sometimes these activities are pleasant, like eating or drinking. At other times these activities are

very costly, like suffering imprisonment or torture for the ministry of the gospel. The greater the cost to you personally, the greater the opportunity to demonstrate your love for Jesus, and the greater the eternal reward. But the amazing thing is, that even the smallest acts of faith and love have eternal rewards. Every day is packed with opportunities to love the Lord in faith. The busier your day, even though it may present more challenges, it also presents more opportunities to love God as we love our neighbor as ourselves in *everything* we do.

***Whatever you do**, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, **knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward**. You are serving the Lord Christ.* Col.3:23-24

DRIPPING WET WITH GOD IN A DRY AN THIRSTY WORLD

Our souls are like sponges. They're not water fountains. God has placed His Spirit within us, "welling up unto eternal life" (John 4:14). By operating in the Spirit and exercising faith, hope, and love, we can draw all that our souls need from Christ. We can develop a lifestyle of living totally immersed in God's presence, His reality, His fellowship, so that whenever anyone squeezes us, God just drips all over them.

When you are squeezed, what comes out? Even though I don't know you, or what frame of mind you are in right now, I can tell you with 100% certainty what comes out of you when you are squeezed. What comes out of you is *whatever is filling you*. So if you don't like what's coming out of you, you can grunt and groan and try and strain all you want to live differently. But it won't work in the long run. You may be able to grit your teeth and stop the angry outbursts at your wife and kids (which is good), but if your heart hasn't truly changed, you'll end up kicking the dog and yelling at your friends. If you're filled with rejection and pain, you are going to reject and hurt a lot of people. If you are filled with grace, you are going to heal and restore a lot of people. It's that simple.

A tree is always known by the fruit it bears. If you want to change the fruit that comes out of you, the only way to do this is to stop living from the "old tree." We need to go back to the only tree that has ever born good fruit, the old rugged cross on which we were crucified. (You do realize that it wasn't just Jesus who died on the cross, right? *You* were crucified with Him.) We need to take our place in Christ and allow Jesus Christ to be our only life. He is the tree of life

that bears good fruit.

As we are immersed in God, our minds are saturated with the mind of Christ, our hearts are filled with the Spirit of the Son crying, “Abba Father”, and our wills are set to do His will because we’ve yielded to God who “*is at work in us both to will and to do His good pleasure.”* When we are filled with Jesus Christ, when we are squeezed, His supernatural love, peace, and power comes out of us.

I remember when God made this very real to me. He had just opened this revelation up to me, and I was overwhelmed with God’s grace in my life. Then a situation arose that normally would have made me very upset. Something that was important to me got broken by one of my children. I found myself reacting with patience and grace that I had never experienced before. I wasn’t trying to “bite my tongue” (which is very appropriate to do if you need to). I was just so filled with God’s love and grace, I was seeing things through His perspective. My heart was empowered with His love.

After it happened, I was like, “Whoa! Who was that?!!” I was beginning to see that the Christian life is truly someone else living His life through me. I was squeezed and *someone else* came out of me… and everyone in my family liked Him a lot more than me! As I enjoy being loved with a love I don’t deserve as I learned to take the relationship that the Father has with Jesus Christ as my relationship with the Father, the fruit of the Holy Spirit began to overflow from my life.

This is how we know Him, in the power of His resurrection life. We know Jesus Christ more as we live through our union with Him and experience Him living through us. We live through Him. He lives through us. This is what changes the world.

This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

This is what it means to make disciples.

Jesus Christ has given each one of us all we need to be a maker of disciple-makers. God’s vision for you is to walk like Jesus walked, with the power and authority to set the captives free. Don’t settle for anything less! Live immersed

in God and run to a thirsty world to pour out the fullness of Jesus Christ.

As a parting word of encouragement, I'd like to encourage you to connect tightly with other believers who are walking on this path. As Paul encouraged Timothy, "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, *along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*." (2 Tim.2:22) Make your closest connections with people who are cultivating a lifestyle of fellowship with God to walk in the power and love of Jesus Christ. Team up with brothers and sisters to encourage one another and watch one another's back in the midst of the battle.

May God bless you to walk in all the fullness of Jesus Christ and help many others to discover the unsearchable riches that are in Him. My prayer is that God may use this book to help you discover and unleash what God has put inside of you as you make disciple-makers who walk in the fullness of Jesus Christ.

GROUP EXERCISES:

1) DISCUSSION: What is your plan to have a regular time alone with God every day? Where? When? How long? What needs to change to make this happen? Share your plan with your group and see what you can learn from one another.

2) As a group, practice SEEING and SAVORING Jesus Christ in various kinds of Scriptures. For each passage, first discuss together how you see Jesus. After you've done this, partner up into groups of 2s (and one group of 3 if there's an odd number). Spread out and take little time to fellowship with Jesus based on what you see of Him:

1. Turn to Proverbs 11:1-6. Jesus is WISDOM.

2. Turn to Matt 5:3-12. Jesus is the Christian life.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Make spending time alone with God your lifestyle. Use the Scriptures to SEE, SAVOR, and SURRENDER to Jesus Christ. You made a plan, now implement it. Partner up with someone in your group to help encourage one another spend time alone with God each day.

2) One by one, take a day to focus on each of the four suggestions for cultivating fellowship with God as part of your daily life:

Day 1- ongoing conversation with God

Day 2- calling on the Name of the Lord

Day 3- Rejoicing with Thanksgiving

Day 4- Speaking in Tongues

Day 5- Make your life your prayer

3) Who do you know that you can teach how what you've learned about SEEING, SAVORING, and SURRENDERING to Jesus Christ in the

Scriptures? Set up a time to show them what you've learned.

4) Watch this video that will reinforce a lifestyle of fellowshipping with God in Christ.

APPENDIX 1
Short Answers to Six Scriptures
Commonly misused to object to Divine Healing for All

I find Christians have been taught very thoroughly about why God doesn't always heal. However, in Jesus, we don't see any indication that He believed such things. Jesus always healed all who came to Him for healing. So, if our clearest look at the Father is in the Son, we need to reexamine our faith.

Here are six of the most commonly misunderstood passages of Scripture that are usually brought up in an effort to prove that God doesn't want everyone healed today (like He did when Jesus and the apostles were still around).[8]

1) What about Timothy's stomach?

"No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments." (1 Tim.5:23)

If you ever travel to a developing country, you'll be told "Don't drink the water!" Yet, when you arrive, you will see all the locals drinking the tap water. If you decide to go ahead and drink the water, it's very likely you will experience a battle over the health of your stomach even though your stomach is perfectly healthy. The locals are accustomed to the local microbes. You, on the other hand, are not.

Today we have bottled water. In the first century, they had a different solution. They would mix wine with the water to kill the microbes and make the water drinkable. Apparently something had happened that had forced Timothy to stop using wine in the water. This was causing problems for Timothy's perfectly healthy stomach. What was going on? From the context of 1 Timothy, I make the following observations:

- Paul had to remove leadership from the church in Ephesus.

- Even though those leaders were no longer part of the church, they remained in near proximity and were still causing problems.

- Timothy was an outsider in a hostile situation. Timothy remained in Ephesus to raise up new leaders, which would make him the target of much negative scrutiny for anyone partial to the previous leaders.

- As Paul reviewed the standards for selecting elders and deacons, he specifically excluded people who didn't have the right practices regarding drinking wine.

Based on these observations, I believe that Timothy had decided to eliminate his use of wine in the water for fear of unjust criticism. Paul was aware of the pressure Timothy was facing and wanted to prevent people from using his standards of leadership against Timothy. For this reason, Paul specifically instructed Timothy to use wine for the sake of his stomach.

Paul's encouragement to Timothy to resume the use of wine for the sake of his stomach is not an indication that Paul didn't believe in divine healing for all or that there was some chronic problem with Timothy's stomach. Timothy's stomach was perfectly healthy. It indicates that divine healing is not in conflict with common-sense hygiene such as putting some wine in water, boiling water, or refusing to put your mouth on public water fountains.

2) What about the people that Paul left sick? Doesn't that show that even the apostle Paul didn't heal everyone?

"I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus." (2 Tim.4:20)

The Greek word translated "ill" in this passage is the word "astheneo," which is a general word that means "weak." It can refer to weakness because of sickness, but it can also refer to weakness for other reasons such as fatigue, exhaustion, and emotional pressure. It is a general word for weakness and does not equate to physical sickness.

We know from Scripture that the apostle Paul was a driven man with an aptitude for hard work and a high tolerance for conflict. It's likely that Trophimus found himself exhausted and in need of rest when Paul was ready to move on. Rather than wait for Trophimus to recuperate, Paul kept moving. This is a perfectly legitimate understanding of this passage that fits the context and the grammar.

But let's imagine that perhaps Trophimus is sick. It's time for Paul to leave and his trusted co-worker is not feeling well. He's in bad shape, is unable to eat and has fluids coming out of every possible opening. Paul lays hands, rebukes the sickness in the Name of Jesus, and hits the road without waiting around for Trophimus to fully recover. Does anything in that somehow indicate that Paul was unable to release the power of the Kingdom of God for healing?

Everyone I know who walks in the power of God today can share many testimonies of laying hands for healing with no immediate apparent change that resulted in an undeniable miracle in a short while. Just because Paul wasn't one to wait around, doesn't mean the power of God was no longer in operation in his ministry.

3) What about Paul's thorn in the flesh? God wouldn't take his sickness away, because Paul needed it to humble him.

"So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor.12:7-9)

Many have made the assumption that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a sickness or disease. There is nothing to substantiate that interpretation and many reasons to believe that Paul was referring to Satanically inspired persecutors.

However, even IF (just for the sake of argument) we say that Paul had a sickness that was given to him to keep him humble, we must also look at the reason Paul said he received this thorn. Why did Paul receive this thorn? *"**Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations** there was given to me…"* Paul saw the resurrected and enthroned Jesus with his own eyes (Acts 9). He was personally

discipled by the ascended Lord in the desert in Arabia (Gal. 1:16-17). He was taken into heaven and permitted to see and hear things that no mortal is allowed to speak (2 Cor. 12:2-4). He wrote two-thirds of the New Testament.

Good news! Until you write two-thirds of the New Testament, you don't even qualify for a thorn in the flesh. Paul's thorn doesn't apply to you. So let's get you healed!

Here's why I don't believe Paul's thorn was an illness: The phrase "thorn in the flesh" was a Biblical phrase that always referred to people who were persecuting the people of God (Num. 33:55, Josh. 23:13, Jdgs. 2:3). Furthermore, Paul says as much in the next phrase when he says that his thorn in the flesh is a "messenger of Satan." Jesus bore our sicknesses and our sins on the cross, but we must bear the persecution that comes with faith in Jesus.

4) What about Job?

Job wasn't in the New Covenant. He lived before even the Old Covenant. He didn't have the same provisions of grace or revelation that we have today in Christ. The book of Job was in Jesus' Bible too, right? Yet Jesus never turned anyone who needed healing away saying, "I'm sorry I can't heal you. You are supposed to be just like Job and suffer a bit more." So let's fix our eyes on Jesus and walk in His faith.

5) At the burning bush, didn't God tell Moses that he made people deaf and blind?

"Then the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'" (Exo 4:11-12)

We mustn't mistake God's rebuke to Moses as indicating that God wants people blind, deaf and mute. He was simply telling Moses that "I made everyone. I know the limitations and handicaps of every man. I know your limitations and I still chose you. I will be with you. Now go."

I once had someone ask me whether divine healing applied to birth-defects because, after all, didn't God make them this way?

News flash! Our condition at birth doesn't indicate God's will for our lives. For example, I was born a sinner. Yet God's will is for me to be born again.

Jesus and the apostles healed many people who were born blind, deaf and lame even though their Bibles had this very passage. As I mentioned earlier, "Bible verses are like puzzle pieces. Jesus Christ is the picture on the cover. So if you put your Bible verses together and it doesn't look like the cover, you've put them together wrong."

6) Doesn't it say that even Jesus wasn't able to heal people in his hometown because of their unbelief?

Many people have misunderstood the passages that describe one of Jesus' visits to his hometown. People imagine Jesus attempting to heal people with no results. So they reason, "If Jesus couldn't heal people in his hometown because of their unbelief, this must mean that the unbelief of others must be able to stop the operation of God's power, even for Jesus."

But this is a misunderstanding of what happened. Let's take a closer look.

"Coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "*Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him…And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*." (Matt. 13:54-58)

Here's Mark's account: "*And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.*" (Mark 6:5-6)

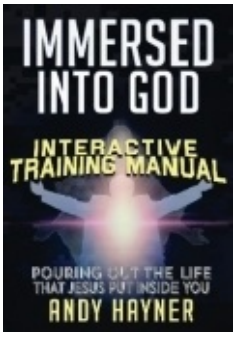
Jesus healed everyone he laid his hands on. Yet "He was not able to do many mighty works." Why? Because they took offense and refused to allow Him to continue to demonstrate that He was the Messiah.

"*He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick*." (Matt. 8:16)

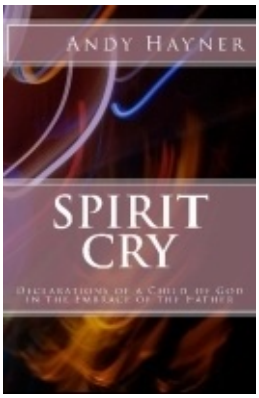
Jesus hasn't changed. Let's walk as He walked and heal all who are sick. Amen!

Additional Resources

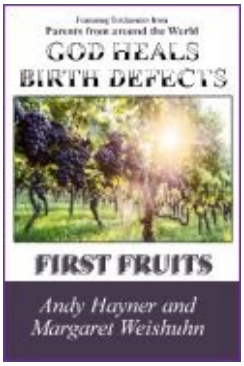
You will find additional resources from Andy Hayner at his ministry website **FullSpeedImpact.com**.



The ***Immersed into God Interactive Training Manual*** is a powerful tool to learn the life-changing content of *Immersed into God* in small groups, LifeTeams, and personal discipleship relationships. You'll **learn for yourself** *through interactive, inductive Bible studies and life-changing practical activation exercises.* This is the perfect resource for raising up supernatural disciples of Jesus Christ!



Spirit Cry, by Andy Hayner, is a powerful devotional tool that will accelerate your personal mind renewal and revolutionize your personal experience of God by adding incredible depth, insight, and power to your personal fellowship with God. You will begin to learn how to use the Scriptures to speak to the Father as a Son and to hear the Father speak to you as a Son. If you are ready to learn how to use the Word of God to encounter the Spirit of God, get this book and get ready to unleash your Spirit Cry!



God Heals Birth Defects— First Fruits is a revolutionary book that will encourage, challenge, and equip you to minister healing in seemingly impossible situations. Written with a team of amazing parents from around the world, this book is packed with testimonies from parents who are seeing God heal their children who are afflicted with diagnosis such as autism, down syndrome, and cerebral palsy.

You will read of:

Doctors amazed by disappearing defects

Children moved to normal classes because they no longer qualify as "special needs"

Organs, bones, facial features, and muscles restored to normal function

Families restored to joy and peace by the truth of God's grace.

If you are looking for hope and practical Biblical answers that will empower you to minister healing to those afflicted with birth defects, and are ready to step into a lifestyle that truly manifests “All things are possible with God,” this book is for you!

At FullSpeedImpact.com you will also find **video and audio packages of complete conferences taught by Andy Hayner,** including:

Immersed into God Training Videos (21 Videos)

Heal the Sick and Walk in Power (17 Videos and Mp3s)

All Things New (6 Videos and Mp3s)

And much more!

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[1] I am using Biblical terms, such as “sons of God” and “bride of Christ” as gender inclusive terms following their usage in the Bible. Men are included as part of the bride of Christ and women are adopted as sons of God.

[2] I will be showing you many practical ways to both be filled with the life of Christ and to release His life to others. The final part of this chapter and chapter 12 are dedicated exclusively to help you be filled with the life of Christ.

[3] The Bible Belt is the southeastern United States, so named because of the prevalence of Christian churches.

[4] My intention is not to criticize seminaries, but rather to point out the limitations of an academic environment to train spiritual leaders for the church. Many seminaries are very good at what they do.

[5] See Appendix 1 *Short Answers to Six Commonly Misused Scriptures to object to Divine Healing for All* for more information. For those wanting in depth Biblical training, I highly recommend *The Divine Healing Technician Training* by Curry Blake available from JGLM.org

[6] See Appendix 1 for resolution to Timothy’s stomach and other scriptures commonly misunderstood to

object to divine healing.

[7] My book "*Spirit Cry: Declarations of a Child of God in the Embrace of the Father*" is a devotional that gives you additional guidance in seeing, savoring, and surrendering to Jesus Christ in a wide variety of Scriptures.

[8] I highly recommend the Divine Healing Technician Training by Curry Blake available at JGLM.org, for anyone who wants a comprehensive Biblical training regarding healing.