

The Overcoming Life

As Believers We Are to Be in the World
But Not of It

*Revelation 3:21(AMP) "He who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant him
to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame (was victorious)
and sat down beside My Father on His throne."*

Jim and Merry Corbett

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Jim and Merry Corbett

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For information, write:

Jim Corbett

Website: www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com

e-mail: jim@awhitestone.com

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Web Site – www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com

The Overcoming Life

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Welcome!

The onslaught of lies against God—which is designed to minimize Him and cause Him to appear powerless, uncaring, and only for the ignorant and foolish—is alive and well everywhere you look. It is an intentional ploy of the enemy of their souls to rob people of their eternal home, and maneuver them into leading man-centered, blindly controlled lives while on this earth. It is also fashioned to pull those who follow Jesus into a weak, atrophied existence that appears uninteresting to those who need Him.

As those in the world war with one another and against anything or anyone that disagrees with their choices, those who truly understand what life is all about have fully surrendered to what Jesus has done. In doing so, they are tucked into the power of the Holy Spirit, capable of walking hand-in-hand above this life with their Father God through Jesus.

Our Father in heaven is looking for a holy people who are waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. What do you say we head wholeheartedly in His direction? What do you say we turn away from the world and its ways, a world where people are turning their backs on their only hope? What do you say we sell out, anticipating supernatural intervention in our lives and in the lives of those to whom we're sent?

It's time to remember our Father God is not only sovereign; He's the unbeatable Almighty One Who is greater than the mind of man can conceive. He simply spoke the Word and the world and everything in it came into being. It's also time to joyfully embrace the fact there is no power greater than that of the cross and the overcoming life Jesus lived, a life that's available to all those who sincerely call themselves His.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to once and for all exchange your address in this world and take on a new address in the secret place

We highly recommend you download and print the entire book and place it in a three-ring binder. This will give you the ability to not only fill these margins, but also add pages of notes to the binder as needed.

*Wouldn't it be
wonderful to
flow in a life
of total
freedom,
intimacy, and
fearlessness?*

of the Most High God? Wouldn't it be wonderful to flow in a life of intimacy and fearlessness with the Lord?

If you desire to be rock solid in the Lord, truly want your life to have significance, and know it's vital to overcome the world just as Jesus did, then God has a plan for you. He has made an unbreakable covenant that guarantees your significance in this world and a place by His side for eternity.

If that is your heart, an incredible way of life awaits you. Not only will you bring joy to the heart of your Father, you'll also walk in the freedom Jesus provided for you at the cross. You will live above the threats and daily challenges of these perilous days. You will, moment by moment, bask in the presence of your Lord, and flow in the anointing of His overcoming life. As everything around you spins out of control, your portion will be one of unlimited spiritual resources as you rest in the shadow of His wings.

According to the Word, as a believer, you belong. You are fully accepted by God. You have been bought with the price of Jesus' blood. That means you are His. You no longer belong to the world. The most wonderful part of His ownership is that He protects, equips, guides, directs, and empowers His own. He is God, and He offers you an overcoming life, if you are willing to exchange your old life with its limited resources for your new life, totally sustained by Him and anchored in His God-ordained plan so you might become everything He intends you to be.

Jesus is waiting to prove Himself strong for you and in you through the power of the Holy Spirit, if you are willing to fully surrender to Him. The price is everything, but the rewards are beyond measure. It's time to purposefully jump in and live for His glory!

How to Use This Study

Most people attempt to classify and use this study in the same way they would use a workbook. Many fall short or become discouraged when they proceed in this manner because of the intensity of this work and the way the Lord asked us to write it.

As you will often be reminded as you read, this is a Holy Spirit-led, lifelong reference and growth study which can be used now and whenever you are led back to it in the future. You will be intermittently encouraged to slow down as you progress to give your heart time to absorb and really hear what the Lord is teaching you. That concept is important enough for us to risk the possibility of you becoming weary of us emphasizing it yet again.

We've been told this study is like a giant spiritual steak—very delicious in the beginning, but too much to chew on in one sitting. You will more than likely want to rest between courses; otherwise, you may get tired of chewing and never finish the meal.

There are a variety of ways to approach this book. Some people begin to read as led by the Holy Spirit, and then put it aside when told to do so. Some pick it up once a week, some daily for a short time; others are on no particular timeframe.

We've heard from one person who delved into the contents for several weeks, then put it down and picked it up again months later after the Lord kept ministering to her heart from what she had already read. We had another person comment that this book irritated her because she loves to read from beginning to end, and the Holy Spirit had her on one paragraph for a week. Some use it as a reference book, setting it on a shelf and picking it up when needed.

Our point is that it would benefit you to shake off the “beginning to end” approach to this book. It is designed to become your personal, well-worn friend over the years. Use it, mark it up, journal in it, wear it out, and cherish the moments you connect with the Lord as you spend time in its pages for years to come.

Please Note: We have purposely left open areas on the side columns and the bottom of pages so you can write down your thoughts as you read and study. We highly recommend you download and print the entire book and place it in a three-ring binder. This will give you the ability to not only fill the margins, but also add additional pages of notes to the binder as needed.

*Moment by
moment
interaction
with the Holy
Spirit!*

What about Group Studies?

We've received feedback from several people who attempted to gather together and use this study in a group setting, then called us after they disbanded because people just couldn't absorb the material at the same rate. It became an obvious example of how the Lord deals on a very personal level and caused us to try to find ways this study could be used in a group setting without just attempting to go from beginning to end or putting people on a schedule that doesn't allow the Holy Spirit adequate time to minister to individual needs before they dive into their next "assignment."

The conclusion we reached was to suggest that the leader of the group select a specific section for any given meeting or series of meetings. For example, the group could be directed to read the short story on Mr. Baxter on page 177 (either beforehand or at the meeting) and then spend time discussing it and using it as a springboard for the rest of the meeting. Throughout the rest of the week, those who have their own copy of The Overcoming Life could establish their own tailor-made schedule with the Lord as to how and when they will use it to help enhance their walk with the Lord during their quiet times with Him.

To receive our daily Father's Heart messages,
like those found throughout this book,
sign up for our free blog,
visit: www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com

Introduction

From Our Father's Heart

Jesus lived a passionate life.
He involved His entire being in every task presented to Him.
Equipped from Our time together
and empowered by Our Holy Spirit,
His presentation of truth caused some remarkable changes
in those who came near to Him.
Ordinary people went on to do extraordinary representations
of My desires because they followed His pattern of living.
That same presence is available to you.
The same Holy Spirit that lived in everyone
totally committed to Our way
is available to you if you will only surrender fully to Him.
Choose this day who you will passionately serve.
Choose each moment to submit fully to the Lordship of Jesus
over every aspect of your life.
Determine to live the kind of life that is your heritage.
Become zealous about presenting the Truth
to a world that lives in lies.
Live as Jesus did.

*The same
Holy Spirit
presence is
available to
you!*

Psalm 111:2 NIV "Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them."

Isaiah 2:22 Amp "Cease to trust in [weak, frail, and dying] man, whose breath is in his nostrils [for so short a time]; in what sense can he be counted as having intrinsic worth?"

Matthew 11:12 NIV "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."

When was the last time you became passionate about the Lord's plans? For that matter, when was the last time the Lord's plans for your life took priority over the other demands you face each day?

God is clearly requiring each of us to make Him our priority. Still, most of us agonize over the demands of simply living out each day - paying the rent, providing for food, etc. To stop, even for a day, and spend it entirely with the Lord should He ask us to do so would be beyond comprehension for some of us. We are convinced the answer is heart commitment.

Merry and I believe that each and every one of us, who call ourselves Christians, must make a choice to live Christ's life passionately throughout our very ordinary days. We are to approach the tasks and the people placed before us with His kind

of zeal and unquestioning love, presenting every one of them as an offering to the Lord for His glory. We are convinced this life is not so much about what we do as it is about the One for whom we are doing it.

If everything we become involved in is truly offered to the Lord and placed under His Lordship, the fluff will fall away and the eternal purposes of God will become priorities to us. Overcoming Life unto the Lord will change us and those around us who are looking for answers.

Take our stuff and replace it with Your stuff, Lord,

Jim and Merry Corbett

*Important
book for
rebuilding
families!*

This Personal Study has a section on marriage. For a more detailed study on the role of the offices of husband and father, refer to our book, The Father Factor.

Overview

This Overcoming Life Personal Study is designed to walk you through the heart positions needed as you personally address and move toward an exciting and thrilling life in Christ that is full of freedom and power.

To live out Christ's life in the world around us with the same passion and heart commitment that Jesus lived when He walked among His creation is:

- 1) the only fitting response to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 2) the proper and honorable representation of Jesus to a world that is dying and out of answers.
- 3) the highest form of praise that can be given to the Lord as you emulate Him.
- 4) the proper response to the call of the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart as a waiting bride for the return of Jesus.
- 5) the only way to overcome the perilous times and seasons in which we are living, so you can fulfill your purpose in life.

Our publications - plus pertinent information on our Web site, www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com and our personal e-mail encouragements - are a "beginning to end" opportunity to seek the Lord in depth for those who embrace fires of refinement in their lives, choose to buy gold and proper clothing from their God, and take proper nourishment only from their Master's table. All are designed to direct your attention to the Lord's covenant with you, break your heart; and allow you to understand your desperate need of a renewed relationship with Jesus.

All of our materials are designed to stimulate questions about your own Christian life in light of what is presented. Go to the Lord for His wisdom, knowledge, and insight on how to pray, how to allow the Lord Jesus to live through you; and most of all, how to repent of any foolish ways you have inaccurately labeled Christianity.

Our novel, A White Stone provides fertile soil to stimulate taste buds for a deeper walk with the Lord. This life-changing novel confirms to the searching heart that there really is more to walking with the Lord than attending church and praying cold prayers. It is often referred to as a book that gave readers clear direction for their lives.

*Print this book
and place it in
a three-ring
binder so you
can journal
your
comments,
thoughts, and
points of
interest in
these
columns.*

*This is a great
place for your
stuff!*

*Important book
for
understanding
the power of
God!*

*Remember,
this is not a
workbook -
it is a personal
study that
shows you
signposts in
your life that
will lead you to
Jesus.*

*Tuck away
quietly with
this work as
you would with
your favorite
book.*

*Make notes on
what the Lord
teaches you
as you read.*

*Talk to the
Lord out loud.*

*Ask Him your
heart
questions and
write His
answers
anywhere you
please.*

This study provides guidelines and insights on how to recognize, embrace, and live out the crucified life. It is a dynamic, interactive work that's designed to help prepare you to live a Christian life that's honorable to the Lord and lead you to an intimacy with your Father God in which you will be introduced to His heart - a bridal heart - as you await the coming of your Lord.

It is written for those who choose to properly respond to what Jesus has done for us, no matter what the cost, and go deeper with God. We call this work a Personal Study rather than a workbook, because it is intended that you use it continually as a lifetime roadmap on your way to bridal love.

As you involve yourself in this work and God uses the enclosed materials to expose your heart, accept them as a means to drive you to prayer and to His lap. Keep them available for reference in the future. Refer to them as directed by the Lord, make notes, and add your own materials as needed.

There is purposely little structure in this study. We trust the Lord will have a unique route tailor-made just for you as you head in the direction of bridal heart preparation. None of us is at exactly the same point in our walk with the Lord, so why would we take a fact-finding, textbook approach where we're all expected to come up with the same answers?

Note: Before you begin, write down the desire of your heart and what you are needing in your life. Take the time to openly express your quest. Make it a prayer, referring to it often to see your progress toward His answering your requests.

We want to encourage you to springboard from what you find in these pages and spend intimate time with the Lord to see what He specifically wants to reveal to you and make real to you through His presence and His Word.

It is vital to remember that no course can change your heart. No amount of reading, answering questions, or memorizing can give you what is needed to be like Jesus. Self-will and determination will possibly make you appear more like a representative of Jesus, but any fleshly work will never form the character of Christ in anyone. Only intimacy with Father God, a waiting on Him to impart Himself to you, will bring forth the life of Jesus in you.

Any attempt to use this or any study, physical abilities, or personal knowledge in place of intimate, heart-searching, prayerful times with God and His Word will bring death, not life. That is why this course is designed as it is. Most studies leave little room for God's intimate direction to your heart. They give step-by-step instructions on where to read, what to study, and what to memorize, which leaves little time for changes to occur by waiting on God – a vital aspect of your relationship with Him – and searching His Word as He directs you.

Plan to have your flesh offended. Plan to have your doctrines challenged. We don't claim to have all truth, but what is truth will stand the test of scrutiny. The doctrines or traditions of man need to make way for what the Holy Spirit desires to work in you, which will always line up with Scripture in its correct context.

If you disagree with some of the statements, opinions, or doctrinal slants presented here, that's fine. However, do not allow the enemy of your soul to hinder your growth because of small differences. Small issues have divided the church far too long. Dig in. Keep going and find a place where the Lord can minister to you.

What you disagree with may be the tool the Lord will use to expose some area of your life that's hindering you from going deeper with God. Only as you are truly broken and turn from what you have been shown to be out of line in your life, can the fragrant oil of the Holy Spirit escape from you to draw others to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As said before, we have provided ample room in the margins for your notes and thoughts, so don't be afraid to mark up, underline, highlight, and personalize these pages. Well-wrinkled and disfigured pages signify a devoted follower of Jesus on his/her way to knowing the heart of God. (Tearstains are optional, but quite effective in showing others how spiritual you really are. That's a joke!) Add pages of your own notes. You may want to initiate a personal journal that will be part of your continued study.

*In most
workbooks,
1+1=2,
so you simply fill
in the blanks
and forget about
it in a few
weeks.*

*With this
personal study,
1+1=whatever
the Holy Spirit
teaches you that
a "2" really is,
while you spend
time with your
Father for
lifetime lessons.*

*Sometimes
it hurts when
the Lord
changes us,
but pleasing
the Lord is
far more
important
than any
hurt we
encounter.*

*Nobody but
you will ever
read your
notes unless
you let them.*

*These are
your "heart
words"
to your ABBA.*

As you journal your thoughts and answer the questions in this series, it would be good to remember no one but you needs to ever read what you write down. This is not a test, and you cannot fail in any way if you choose to surrender to what you are shown with a submissive heart. Take your time. This is also not a race, and you are not in a hurry to finish this adventure of love.

Remember: You, the seeker of the passionate life of Jesus and His bridal heart, must learn to discern and put aside the “alligator fights” of worldly life - those issues that appear to be in need of godly intervention on your part, but actually distract you from focusing on God’s desire that none should perish. Is it more important to focus on a cause or on the souls involved on both sides of the issue?

The Holy Spirit led one woman to ponder a paragraph such as this for over a week, revealing Himself over and over during that time, changing her life.

These pages will guide you to be the honest representation of Jesus Christ to your immediate world. You are to allow Christ’s passionate, overcoming life to be lived through you for His good and for the glory of Father God.

Remember: This Personal Study is designed for continual use, a foundation for other information that comes your way as you grow. Any true work of the Lord must continually modify the hearts and lives of those involved, or it’s simply a futile exercise and of no lasting value. When God uses the materials to expose you, accept them as a means to drive you to prayer. Keep them available for reference for any future need. Refer to them often, and add your own materials and notes as needed, especially when you start reaching out to others when you begin living out Christ’s passionate life.

A life of joyful repentance

As you meditate on these pages, give God the freedom to show you your specific needs through the Word, examples, stories, and text presented herein. This Personal Study is not written to give you answers - although you will receive many - but to direct you to the One who is the answer, Jesus Christ.

Everything else is only a platform for God’s purpose for our lives!

As you grow in Christ, you must learn to joyfully embrace a life of repentance before Him. Delight in what He is doing in you as you are shown who you are not. Understand you are always very welcome in His presence. You are a deeply loved work in progress. Submission to the changes the Lord is making in you develops your ability to present Jesus to the world, which is your heritage and God’s original plan for your life. He knows who you are and everything you are not. Real heart changes are needed in all of us and can only take place when spending quality time with Him to know His heart and looking to Him alone for all things.

Above all, remember that your relationship with Jesus Christ is the most astounding privilege anyone could possibly have. You are cherished.

Keep the following in mind. The sole purpose and singular motive for everything you, as a remnant believer, are to do is to glorify and please God through spending time with Him, finding His will, and living it - in His love - for Him and for others.

That posture for living is translated into two simple heart actions:

- 1.) Submission and preparation for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ by seeking God's face to become like Him; and
- 2.) The urgency to bring as many souls into the kingdom as possible before the Lord calls us all home.

Take your time to cultivate a working intimacy with your Lord during this experience. Talk to Him, sit quietly and open-heartedly before Him, listen to Him; and then keep your ears open to His heart's desire throughout each day as these materials challenge you. You will be surprised at how much His life in you will increase.

Thoughts and prayers

Go over what you have already read to see what you might have missed for your life. Wait on God to show you what He has planned for you to learn. Read each sentence carefully and determine in your heart to wait on God from now on.

Fight the urge to "get on with this" as one more project. You are not in a race. You may be nourished in ways that will surprise you if you take your time and look for the Lord's "private manna" in the simplest of sentences.

Include God in your reading and your thinking process. Begin to find a new understanding of waiting on God during this introduction and throughout this work. Allow the Lord to teach you from His hand, rather than simply following instructions.

Now write down what you have learned or indicate how you need His help.

*Don't rush
through these
beginning
pages.*

*The Lord is
setting the
stage for deep
lessons further
into this work,
but many
heart
decisions must
be made now
before that
can happen.*

*There is much
"hidden
manna" in
these
beginning
pages.
Enjoy the
hunt.*

*Embrace what
you learn.*

*You will need
it as a
foundation for
your other
lessons*

Overcoming Life Personal Study
2022

*Time to
overcome the
world as
Jesus did!*

As believers, we aren't called to be the huddling, fearful masses during bleak and seemingly hopeless times. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we're called to overcome the world just as Jesus did and prepare as a bride would for His return as her Bridegroom. In doing so, we can experience the most amazing promises made to mankind through God's unconditional and conditional covenants!

The bottom line for living an overcoming life is basic Christianity 101. You have the privilege of overcoming any stronghold in your life by submitting your entire life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. By the grace of God, become passionate about living only for Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Your submission to His Lordship in every area of your life is the key that separates you from those who have no power to overcome and no answers for their lives.

*See page 45
for possible
considerations
about the
rapture*

Jesus is coming soon! Yes, those words have been uttered for centuries—after He ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit came to represent Him and help us—and yes, Jesus still hasn't returned. However, those four words spurred believers in every generation to head for living a life wholly devoted to God, (regardless of the actual date of Jesus' return,) which is where every believer should be heading if we say we love God and are followers of Jesus Christ. That same call is going out in this generation. Let it spur you on to sell out and let God have full sway in your life. You will be ready for whatever comes in life whenever it comes.

Determine to live the life of a preparing bride. That simply means you allow the Holy Spirit to show you who you are in Christ—and, also who you are not—so you can walk with Him toward a wholly dedicated-to-God life. Learn to live a life of joyous repentance as He reveals the sketchy places in your heart. Learn to embrace His loving influence on you as you become more like Jesus with every encounter. Join Paul in His quest—to live a life that resembles the life of Jesus more and more each day.

¹⁰ *[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]*

¹¹ *That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].*

¹² *Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.*

¹³ *I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,*

¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.*

¹⁵ *So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also. Phil 3:10-15*

As you begin, why not ask for joy in the journey?

Galatians 2:20 Amp "I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]: it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Jesus lived an exuberant, passionate, overcoming life because He loved deeply and knew the truth. Everything He did had love as its foundation, its continual motivation, and its ultimate goal. Nothing, not even death, could move Him from expressing that love to and for those around Him. He's calling each of us to do likewise.

Because He was One with and knew His Father intimately, He understood the truth about the fate of mankind as a result of the fall. Because He lived with His Father in all of eternity past, He knew what separation from His Father for all eternity future really meant for those He loved and created. He felt His Father's heartbreak because some would perish.

Jesus was brought into a world so perilous children were killed at the whimsical edict of an evil king, crucifixions were as commonplace as morning walks, and people were held in slavery to ignorant teachers and foolish guides, yet He was absolutely fearless. His passionate love, His intimacy with His Father, and His zeal for imparting truth made Him "Teflon" in a world seething with infectious evil and eternal danger. His presence in any society was a gift of love from His Father God. We are in training to be the same kind of gift to those around us wherever our Father sends us.

*He was
fearless!*

Are you?

*You are
supposed to
be if you
really are in
Christ!*

Jesus could be fearless because He loved perfectly. He cared only for others and desired nothing for Himself. Even though He had all power, He was under full submission to the will of His Father. In His heart, He had given away everything, so He had no fear of someone robbing Him, even of His life. He held Himself in lower esteem than everyone, even the lowly leper, so no one could destroy His reputation. Jesus' love was so pure He was absolutely free from any peril the world would attempt to place on Him. We should be like Him!

I John 4:18 Amp "There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! For fear brings with it the thought of punishment, and [so] he who is afraid has not reached the full maturity of love [is not yet grown into love's complete perfection]."

*We really
don't know
what love is.*

Why is that?

*Ask your
friends.*

Ask God!

Most of us, in contrast, love only ourselves. Few of us really know what it is to love God, each other, and those around us. We mouth the words, sing the songs, and build the right-sounding programs; but we have little effect on our world because few people see the kind of love Jesus expressed when He was with us. We live in fear of the loss of the things we own - that own us - every moment of our days to the point that our lives are consumed, weak, fruitless, and absent of any of the characteristics of Jesus' kind of love in the eyes of the One we say we serve.

Throughout most of our lives, the enticements the world offers us, not the passions of the Lord, have proven to be the focus of our attention. They are the basis for our selfish pleadings to our Father and really are the gods we serve.

Many in today's church are motivated by fear. We fear losing our freedoms, our bank accounts, our rights, etc. We say we follow Jesus, but how can we compare ourselves with the heart of Jesus, the heart that took Him to the cross? He lived in perfect love, so nothing made Him fearful, not even the loss of His life. In fact, He embraced every challenge that came His way because He knew it pleased His Father and knew how life-changing the results would be for us.

What's the cause of your fear?

Would you rather hang on to that fear or be free from it? If you chose freedom, why? Is it for your good because you just don't want to be there anymore, or would you like to be delivered from it, so your life pleases God?

Ask the Holy Spirit to expose your real motives for wanting to be delivered from your fear. When He does, step into the joy of repentance and submission to His ability to change you. You will land on the path of freedom. Gal. 5:1 *“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

*God is
calling
those who
will listen.*

What did the Holy Spirit show you?

The Holy Spirit is wooing the church of Jesus Christ to prepare as a bride would prepare for a coming wedding of hearts. Through trials, tribulations, and extreme challenges, He is posturing each of us to get our priorities straight. By leading us to the end of ourselves and placing a new hope in those who will listen, He is calling us to set aside all the ways of the world and embrace the ways of Jesus as our only reason for living. In doing so, we will be prepared for His coming and able to overcome the hazards that are soon to come our way.

*Holiness is
attainable for
those who
submit fully to
the Lord's
work in them
and should be
pursued by
each of us.*

This call is a call to holiness - a pursuit oftentimes not considered attainable or even a necessary part of every Christian's heart - which will initiate a bridal heart desire that will allow the Lord to live His passionate life through devoted, surrendered vessels. It can be one of the most exciting adventures of your life if your heart's desire is to increasingly make room for more of the most priceless treasure ever given to anyone – Jesus Christ. As you respond to the heart of God and increasingly develop a posture of waiting for Jesus' timely return, you will then guide others to His heart as more hear the same call.

*We really
don't know
what love is.*

Why is that?

*Ask your
friends.*

Ask God!

The Holy Spirit is asking each of us to reevaluate all of our reasons for doing what we do and reexamine some of the life-changing wonders that are included in our incredible relationship with our God through the death, resurrection, and continued life of Jesus. He is asking us to study them, embrace wholeheartedly what is truth, and discard what does not represent the heart and character of Jesus. We must then allow Him to incorporate whatever is absolute truth into our lives, through the power of His Holy Spirit, as we wait on our God to change us.

Few of us even know how to wait on God for Him to reveal Himself and His desires, and for our true nature to be revealed to us so we can repent and turn fully to Him. That is why there is very little memory of what has been studied when we read the Word, and

little continued life change soon after most organized studies have been completed.

*Why don't you
begin to thank
the Lord for
showing you that
now is the
perfect time for
change in your
life?*

Only as we examine our ways in the light of the Holy Spirit, compare them to the ways of our Lord, and realize our own bankruptcy, do we have any hope for change. We need the Holy Spirit to direct us to guideposts in our lives that God is using to break us, remove our flesh, and bring us closer to Jesus.

*Why don't you
determine in
your heart to join
Him in the
destruction of
everything that
will stop you
from becoming
who you are
really supposed
to be.*

From Our Father's Heart

As I challenge each of you to become like Jesus,
you must remember one very important fact.
I am the only One
who can make the changes that are needed in you.
You can never change yourself.
Any attempt to do so enters into the realm of religion
and destroys My concept of relationship.
Religion is man's vain attempt to become good before Me.
It causes striving,
a system of good works in an attempt to impress Me,
and much condemnation
when you realize that you will never achieve the goal of holiness.
A person who has an honest relationship with Me, however,
understands his complete and total bankruptcy.
In his deepest inner parts, there is no hint of the possibility
of achieving anything in his own strength.
Anything that might be accomplished in him
or through him is understood to come from Me.
That is the kind of relationship for which Jesus died.
He died so that you could cease
from any striving to better yourself.
I promise to do all of the work of perfecting you
and making you holy.
All I ask you to do is come and spend time with Me.
As you do that, I will impart Myself to you.
Each time We visit, a little more of you is perfected.
While We enjoy each other, My Word is accomplishing its task.
The call that I have on your life
is impossible for you to accomplish,
especially in the coming times and seasons
when I will require the out-flowing of Jesus in your daily walk.
It will require total death to your flesh, a painful process.
Although there will be times of agony,
when all you can do is hang on to My promises,
I will be hanging on to you, holding you close to Me.
In the easier times, let's have fun together
while I am accomplishing My work in you and for you.

*The realization
of your total
inability to
achieve
anything in
your own
strength is
total freedom
and the
beginning step
on the road to
the Lordship of
Jesus.*

*Jer.2:13 Amp "For My people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and they
have hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which cannot
hold water."*

*Gal.2:20 Amp "I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I
have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ
(the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live
by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in)
the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

Phil.2:12b-13 Amp "...work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).

13) [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight."

*We are perfect
in His eyes now;
we are being
made holy!*

*Do you really
know that you
are accepted by
God as perfect if
you have
surrendered
your life to the
Lordship of
Jesus?*

*Talk to your
Father about
how you feel.*

*Are your feelings
in line with His
Word?*

*The Lord is in
the process of
allowing us to
lovingly say
"ABBA,"
not grudgingly
say "uncle."*

Hebrews 10:14 NIV "because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

Those who desire to draw closer to the Lord and become all they are intended to be know that religion, good works, and striving have no part in their lives. Sometimes, however, every one of us has a tendency to fall into the trap of each one of those elements, especially when we hear the call to holiness and preparation for the coming of our Lord.

As the Father reveals all aspects of His heart, sometimes I reel with the overwhelming challenge I am called to face. I begin to condemn myself for who I am not, cower at the prospects ahead of me as a Christian in the coming times, stagger at the weight of my responsibility to represent Jesus properly; and become discouraged as I attempt to prepare for His return. It is then that I remember none of this was my idea in the first place. My Father has ordained my life and has promised to fulfill His plan for it and in it. My job is simply to need Him desperately.

In the above verse in Hebrews 10, I am so encouraged by the statement "those who are being made holy." The wonderful part of "have [already] been made perfect" [in God's eyes] is pretty incredible and difficult for me to understand fully, but "being made holy" soothes my heart.

At this very moment - and every moment until we are with our Father in Heaven - the process of making us holy is being accomplished, because we have surrendered our lives to Jesus and His completed work on the cross. When God is in the process of breaking us, He's not trying so much to get us to say "uncle" as He is trying to get us to say "Abba."

Isa.30:18 The Living Bible "Yet the Lord still waits for you to come to him, so he can show you his love; he will conquer you to bless you, just as he said. For the Lord is faithful to his promises. Blessed are all those who wait for him to help them."

It is time for each of us who are responding to the call to holiness, desiring to please Jesus above all else with our lives, and choosing to live His passionate life for all the world to see to jump on the lap of our Father and whisper “ABBA.”

How comfortable do you feel with allowing the Lord to change you rather than you attempting to change yourself?

As Christians, it's very important to remember that *we're* not the ones who are doing the changing. We're the ones who have the privilege of announcing what God is doing and changing through *His* mighty power!!

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

Go where
God calls you
to go!

Most of you, My children,
have become thin-skinned and easily offended.
You can receive nothing, because you run from correction.
You immediately take offense
when you are challenged to rise to a higher standard in Me.
You separate yourself from those
who call you to places to which you need to go,
so that you can mature.
What will you do when those who hate you enough to kill you
are in your face?
What will you do when those who thrive on hatred
are in your world?
Will you hate them back?
Will you despise who they are
and harbor unforgiveness and murder in your own heart?
You are missing the very essence of My Word
and what I am doing in those who are My remnant.
I am moving those who love Me
to be able to love even their enemies.
It is the way Jesus loved.
I call you to love as He does.

Jeremiah 12:5 Amp "[But the Lord rebukes Jeremiah's impatience, saying] If you have raced with men on foot and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? And if [you take to flight] in a land of peace where you feel secure, then what will you do [when you tread the tangled maze of jungle haunted by lions] in the swelling and flooding of the Jordan?"

Amos 3:3 KJV "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Luke 23:34, NIV "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"

Rev. 3:19 Amp "Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]."

Father God is developing a bridal heart and the same character that Jesus has in those who will respond. We must be like Him in our hearts if we are to intimately walk with Him and live passionately for Him. Can you imagine Jesus coming for a church that is selfish, self-centered, and harbors murder in her heart?

Can you imagine Him enjoining Himself to one who looks to the delicacies around her that please her more than He pleases her? Does it seem possible Jesus would function in a relationship where His bride would not have the same desires, the same motives, and the same purposes in all they do together? To think so is ludicrous!

How then is Jesus going to form us, who need His character developed in us during these end days, before He comes? He is going to allow us to see who we really are. He will allow us to face ourselves, so we can come to repentance. He will do what it takes to expose our sin. Each time we repent, He will change us to be more like Him. It is an act of astounding love on His part. It is also our choice to respond or reject His efforts.

Jer. 17:9 Amp "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and corrupt and severely, mortally sick! Who can know it [perceive, understand, be acquainted with his own heart and mind]?"

Here's a thought! Let's all declare personal bankruptcy, so we can function as that new creature in Christ, which we became when we put Jesus in charge of our lives. Confusion and difficulty arise when we continually try to become better Christians.

God never asked us to do that. His desire is that we become empty, so the life of Jesus is free to function in us. We seem determined to add our own efforts to God's plan for us, and then we never reach the fullness that total dependence on God brings. Selah! (Pause, and calmly think of that!)

John 15:5 Amp "I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing."

*Time to look
and act like
Jesus so He
is glorified
and the world
can see who
He is!*

Take Time to Reflect with the Holy Spirit's Assistance

What has the Lord been trying to get through to you over the last years? Months? Days? (Pray about it before you answer.)

*You know
this book is
designed to
be marked
up, scribbled
on,
highlighted,
and written
in.*

*Are you
using it to
express your
heart, and
write down
your
opinions?*

*Are you
asking God
to reveal His
heart to
you?*

What is the most recent thing God has been trying to work in you? Do you see the trials in your life connected to it?

What have your trials taught you? Do you see them as an act of love on God's part?

What has been your response to your trials? Is your main focus to get out of them? Why or why not?

2 Cor. 1:8-10 NIV "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.

9) *Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*

10) *He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us..."*

What do you desire most when you think about your association with the Lord? Is it His desire, too? (If so, He wants it infinitely more for you than you want it for yourself.)

Additional prayers and thoughts

Let's Start to Become Like Jesus
(so His Reputation Is Not Tarnished)

*Do you know
that the world
considers the
things of God
laughable?*

*Could it be in
part because
they have never
seen the power
of a person
under the
complete
Lordship of
Jesus exhibiting
the power that
took Him to the
cross?*

*Would you like
that to be you?*

Why?

*How do you
feel about
the
statements
in these
paragraphs
and your
part in what
they are
saying?*

In the eyes of the world, most of the church of today is little more than a carnival act. It's a sideshow that's discredited and laughed at by those who boast of their sin openly. Unbelievers see it as powerless to hinder them or help them in any way. They have no fear of strong words that are meant to challenge them and little or no respect for the ones who speak those words, and rightfully so.

Many of the visible actions, traditions, and expressions purported to be God's Word or as having God's hand upon them are nothing more than well-rehearsed slight-of-hand and practiced deception. Fools have taken His Word out of context and out of line with its original intent for their own purposes, which has confused the distracted, the needy, and the spiritually hungry. What is heralded across the land as having the presence of God associated with it is often nothing more than emotional manipulation coupled with Biblical text to supposedly give it authenticity.

You, the real church of Jesus Christ, have quietly been in training and are being prepared to represent Jesus properly. Although it may not appear to be so during the trials you are being taken through, you have been learning discernment directly from the heart of God. You are being exposed to absolute truth at the feet of Jesus, driven there by the pressures put on you by your own attachment to sin, the sin-embracing world, and some parts of the church.

You are now being invited to receive the heart of God in the presence of God during your intimate moments with Him. We believe you will soon be brought forth in power to affect this closing generation with the truth and presence of the Word of God.

In the near future, we believe the real church of Jesus Christ will rise from the ashes of the lives of those who have willingly submitted to the refiner's fire. The true church will consist of those who have craved holiness, truth, and only the presence of God in their lives. She will be adorned with the wonder of the heart of Jesus, equipped with the mighty sword of the Word, and dressed in the spotless garments of the glory of God. She will not have a hint of flesh, nor the slightest taste for anything the world has to offer.

The remnant bridal heart is now in training and will soon be a sold-out, holy people who are looking only for the coming Bridegroom and moving only for His desires. She will be a holy people in their world, making proper choices when others flounder, always serving everyone as Jesus did; but completely set apart from those who have chosen to remain in their empty religion.

Do you choose to submit fully to God's hand of training?
Why?

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

*We pay a
high price
for things
that have
little eternal
value.*

If Jesus would return today, where would you stand?
Do you think that you would go with Him,
or would you be left behind?
Let me ask you some questions.
Is the priority of every moment of your life
to submit to Him in every way,
so that He comes back for an unblemished bride,
without spot or wrinkle?
Is looking for His return
the most important thing in your life?
Are you preparing for Him so that He is pleased,
or so that you can go?
Unfortunately, many in My church are filling their days
by padding their comfort areas,
instead of preparing for His return.
You need to make sure that whatever you have in your hand
is worth the price that you have placed on it.
It may be far more expensive
than you could possibly have imagined.

*Matthew 25:1-13 NIV "At that time the kingdom of heaven
will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet
the bridegroom.*

(2) Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

*(3) The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil
with them.*

(4) The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.

*(5) The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all
became drowsy and fell asleep.*

*(6) At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom!
Come out to meet him!'*

(7) Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.

*(8) The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your
oil; our lamps are going out.'*

*(9) 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us
and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for
yourselves.'*

*(10) But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the
bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to
the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.*

*(11) Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the
door for us!'*

(12) But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

*(13) Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day
or the hour."*

Whether you equate the above verses with the return of Jesus for His bride or not is not the point of the use of these verses. The point for this discussion is the heart position of the virgins in the story.

First off, all of the characters mentioned are called “virgins” in contrast to the other people in the world, most of whom are probably not even aware of the pending wedding banquet. The others not mentioned were probably tending to the priorities of their lives, happily unaware that something wonderful was about to take place in their midst, a wedding banquet of all things!

They either had no idea there even was a banquet, or they ignored all the invitations that probably came their way over the years. Could it be this “unaware” group was the vast majority of those living at that time and the two factions of the “virgin” group are a very small percentage of the total number who could have come if they had chosen to prepare themselves?

*See more
about
Matthew 25
on page 49*

Matt. 7:13-14 NIV “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

This small “virgin” group was narrowed down even more. They were divided into those who were called “wise” and those who were called “foolish,” a label significant enough to keep the “foolish” from entering the banquet, even though they were aware of it and had taken the time to consider it important enough to wait quite a long while for the bridegroom to appear.

Wherever you choose to place the “trimming of lamps” upon the heralding of the bridegroom vs. “lamps going out,” we can all agree that the idea of having enough provision to be able to wait for a tarrying bridegroom is vitally important. The time it took to go and buy more oil was just too much time, regardless of what the oil is.

For our study, I would like to suggest that the “oil” that’s needed refers to heart position and heart preparation. (I realize that most, if not all, interpretations believe that the “oil” is the Holy Spirit. In a very prominent way, that’s true because the Holy Spirit woos, encourages, teaches, and directs - among other things - everyone to intimacy with Jesus. As one draws close to Him, a proper bridal heart - one identical to His heart - is available to those who hear the call and respond.)

*God is always
concerned
about the
heart!*

It seems the “foolish” virgins arrived on the scene because they heard of the banquet and knew it would be very good for them to be a part of what would be taking place. The problem was they were not ready to enter in, and what they lacked could not be given

to them by the “wise” virgins. They had to get it themselves. Unfortunately, they missed the deadline.

On the other hand, the “wise” virgins had come prepared. Taking the invitations seriously over time, they more than likely investigated what they would need for acceptance into the chamber. They probed all the possibilities and prepared themselves to please the bridegroom. They had “enough” to wait out any delay or any situation. Their time was His time. Their purpose for being there was to please Him, not because it was good for them.

In these end times, we are convinced that many invitations to prepare for our Lord have been given out, whether it be for His coming, or simply for His proper representation on this earth. Our experience has been that the vast majority of those who call themselves followers of Jesus Christ are not responding. Business as usual is the order of the day.

Do you feel uncomfortable with most of what is called “Christianity” today? If so, why do you think that is?

*You could start
now!*

*Ask Jesus to
change your
heart.*

*See page 46
for possible
considerations
about the
rapture*

Those who are aware of the times and seasons in which we live are divided into two groups. One group is preparing with moderate zeal because they understand how wonderful it would be to be part of what might soon take place. They are flowing in their usual “this is gonna be good for me” attitude and believe it will be adequate for whatever happens, whenever it happens.

The other group, those of you who have chosen to live as Jesus lived, have heard the same call, only you have learned from intimate times with the Father that compromise is not part of the character of Jesus. You know that the kind of heart that finds satisfaction in anything other than the Father’s will is in no way similar to Jesus’ heart.

You have learned it’s important to the Father that Jesus recognize Himself in those who are waiting and/or working for Him. You know that responding to the present call to intimacy is important to God and are willing to do so for no other reason than to glorify the Father and please Jesus. You know that falling in love with Jesus, a vital and often missing part in the fulfillment of God’s plan, is necessary and you desire to do what it takes to go there.

Allow the Holy Spirit to give you His insight into the above scenario. Write down what He brings to your mind. (Share it with someone doing this study if you're led.)

Here's a Thought

There's a fair amount of controversy over what most call the rapture of the church. There seems to be an abundance of people who are hanging on to their "Get Out Free" card, meaning they don't believe it's necessary to prepare their hearts in any way to meet Jesus.

That attitude doesn't seem to be the best way to glorify the Lord in a time when the Holy Spirit is calling believers to prepare as a bride would prepare for her wedding for the good of others and the glory of God. Nor does it seem to be the best way to overcome the darkness that is rapidly covering the earth.

If we would allow the Lord to develop the heart of the bride in us now, then it would no longer matter at what point the rapture does or does not occur. The reason is we would be prepared and ready no matter what the Lord's timeframe is; and if we are prepared as a waiting bride, our hearts will have the proper motives for who we are and what we do.

Our passion will be to continually be on the lookout for our Bridegroom for His reasons, whether that be to function another day on this earth or to go and be with Him for eternity. Our motives would be founded upon our love for Jesus our Bridegroom, the One with whom we are enamored, the One we long to please for His sake.

*If we choose
to become
totally
devoted to
Jesus, He will
be glorified no
matter what
season we
are in!*

Prayers and thoughts

Getting to Know Father God is Really Important

*It's
wonderful to
know that
we are loved
and fully
accepted by
our Father in
Heaven.*

Jesus could love His Father passionately because He knew His Father intimately. He could love others because He had His Father's love in Him to do so. They were one in every way. His death and subsequent resurrection provided a way for each of us to have that same relationship and shared intimacy, if we choose to embrace all the provisions we need to do so.

Our relationship with God through Jesus is, above and beyond anything else, a wondrous love story between an omnipotent Father God and His precious children. It is the foundation of all of history, the focal point of all past and future generations; and the promise we have for eternal well-being. No other biography in all of time is packed with more adventure, intrigue, danger, excitement, and moment-by-moment thrills.

*God has
created an
opportunity for
each of us to
have wealth
and freedom
beyond our
wildest
imaginations,
no matter what
is going on
around us.*

If you were to take all of the imaginations of mankind, all of the wealth, knowledge, and power of all of the men and women that have ever lived and combine them, multiplied by one million to the millionth power, it would not compare to the wonder of one moment of God in His ordinary (for Him) daily activities and interactions with us. With all our Father God is and has and has done, His heart has favor toward the opportunity He created for those He formed from the ground of the earth to be in association with Him.

This love association is an unparalleled drama that has overwhelmed the mind of the scholar, disgusted the heart of the bigot, softened the heart of the needy, and filled to overflowing the heart of the child. In all of the wonder that is our God, the most amazing aspect, which has baffled mankind throughout his time in existence, is the well-put phrase in the Book of Psalms, "Who is man that you are mindful of him?"

To grasp the concept that our Father God is the originator of all life is more than enough for most scholars; but to understand that He loves us deeper than we could ever know and His focus is on our existence for this time in creation is the most difficult truth to understand. It is beyond our scope of thinking. It must be received by the faith in your heart that He really means what He says, if you are ever to grow closer to Him.

"But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out]." Heb. 11:6 Amp

To go any further in this study, and for that matter in your walk in Christ, you must cease viewing your relationship with God as a series of religious dogmas and right-looking actions. You must begin this very moment to embrace the truth that all of what has

been accomplished through Jesus was done because your Father in Heaven craves to be intimate with you. He desires to know you as a husband and wife who are deeply in love know intimacies with each other. If you do not choose to embark on that kind of relationship, you might as well close these pages, and remain in the state in which you are. Hopefully, there is a stirring in your heart, which won't even allow you to consider that.

To understand the depth of what has transpired to allow mankind to have the privilege of associating with such a magnificent God and Father, we have to put aside all of the typical character traits that make us "normal," and have wounded us in the world.

There is no place for us to hold on to the idea of rejection in our association with God, especially when we feel we have been "bad." We cannot accept the typical concept that we are separated from Him when things are going "badly," and fully accepted when we see things are going "well."

2 Samuel 14:14 NIV "God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him."

Do you believe Father God pursues you rather than rejects you when you sin? Why or why not?

Is your belief in perfect alignment with the Word and heart of God? How?

To go deeper with your Lord, you must be willing to accept the concept that a loving Father has gone about the business of purposely designing everything He has done – no matter what it looks like – so you and He can enjoy a vibrant, fulfilling relationship on this earth and for eternity. Remember, He initiated the salvation process with Jesus.

Once you grasp the concept of the kind of love the Father has for you, and you understand that when you go to Him, He will impart Himself and His desires to you, you will see that one of His desires is that none of us should miss the kind of life He offers. If you approach Him in this way, you will begin to take on His heart

*You are
always
accepted by
the One Who
created you!*

and its passions. Seeking Him this way will convince you that everyone needs to come to Him through Jesus; and that after they do, they should be directed to His kind of love relationship. As Jesus was a passionate advocate for His Father and is now our advocate, we are to be advocates for both of Them, one another, and for those who need to see who He is.

How have you approached Father God in your prayers?

Is your time with Him delightful and restful, or full of cautions? How would you describe it?

*You may need
to stop and
think right
here.*

Do you sometimes go to Him because your time together is so wonderful and pleasing to Him? Why or why not?

Maybe it's time to reevaluate your association with your Father God! Since you know Jesus, the Father really is your "ABBA," you know!

Prayers and thoughts

We Must Learn to be Advocates for Father God, for Jesus, and for Each Other if We Are to Live Christ's Passionate Life

The dictionary definition of "advocate" is "one that pleads the cause of another." Our mission is to be advocates for one another, maintaining a cause for each other in prayer at a minimum, and with our very lives as Jesus did, if necessary, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The New International Dictionary of the Bible defines "advocate" as "counselor, comforter, supporter, backer, helper." It says, "The Holy Spirit is the advocate of the Father with us, therefore our Comforter (KJV, John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; RSV, NIV translate, "Counselor"). As applied to the Holy Spirit, the Greek word is so rich in meaning that adequate translation by any one English word is impossible. The KJV "Comforter" is as satisfactory as any, if it is taken in the fullest sense of one who not only consoles but also strengthens, helps, and counsels, with such authority as a legal advocate has for his client."

Allowing the Holy Spirit to comfort us in the full sense of that word and then extending that comfort in the Name of Jesus is what is commonly referred to as Christianity. It is seen in action as we study the passionate life of Jesus as He walked on this earth. It should be seen in our everyday actions as we follow Him. To do less is a modified form of following Christ, which causes a partial presentation of the Gospel to the world and a cold, fruitless life.

Even though we are at the very center of the heart of God, we must never place ourselves and our needs at the center of our attention. We must allow the Holy Spirit free reign to move us to desire the very heart that Jesus had for His Father and for others, and allow our own needs to fall by the wayside, so to speak, knowing that our Father knows them well and will take care of them as we go about His business. What a concept!

Be Encouraged

As you grow toward Jesus and His passionate life, chart your progress. Don't give up or get discouraged as God reveals your deepest sins and the true motives for all you do, and you realize you are light years away from the life that's intended for you because of Jesus. Your sins must be exposed, so you can know of the desperate need you, along with all of us, have of His mercy. Once you realize the extent of your bankruptcy, you will be able to truly repent and allow His wonderful changes to take place.

*When was
the last time
you
defended
your best
friend,
Jesus, as
He was
belittled or
lied about?*

*When have
you stood
with
someone
who was
standing
alone in
his/her
passion for
Jesus?*

*What really is
Christianity in
action?*

*It's a good
thing to see
what needs to
be changed.*

*Who do you
love more
than
yourself?*

True submission is a life-long heart attitude and process. Keep pressing in, possibly referring to parts of this study during your prayer time on a continual basis as you live this adventure day by day, year by year. Make these pages your personal notes to God. Use them as you would use a diary, expressing your most intimate needs to Him.

Prayers and thoughts

There is a Difference Between Knowing God and Just Serving Him

Oftentimes we choose to serve God rather than get to know Him, because it is easier to focus on and control what we do than it is to focus on becoming who God desires us to be. The Lord's main concern centers on us reflecting the character of Christ, and the only way that occurs is by spending time in His presence. Interestingly enough, it's also the only way to truly serve Him, because how do we really know what He desires us to do if we do not wait in His presence to find out?

*It's all about
who we are
becoming, not
what we are
doing!*

Remember, even Satan would be pleased to have you busy with good things if it stops you from becoming intimately acquainted with the Lord and walking in the real power that comes through surrender and obedience.

Study the chart below and note the differences between serving God and truly knowing Him.

Serving God (What We Do)

1. Tends to focus on self and how we see things
2. Easier, more controllable by us, flesh tends to intrude
3. Performance-based (man's criteria,) formulas, position of strength
4. External, issues regarding man's approval or disapproval
5. Can produce pride
6. Can feed the flesh, it's about us
7. Gifts emphasized (false sense of power)
8. Can become ritual, formulas, and worshiping worship

Knowing God (Who We Are)

1. Tends to focus on Him and how He sees things
2. Costly, God's in charge, crucifies the flesh
3. Becoming (God's criteria,) intimacy, position of vulnerability
4. Internal, produces confidence in God
5. Produces humility (we see who He is/ who we are not)
6. Feeds the spirit, it's about Him
7. Fruits developed (true power)
8. Presence of God, relationship, worshiping in spirit and in truth

What areas are out of line with the above chart at present?

*Loving deeply is
sometimes
scary.
It makes us
vulnerable.*

Do you agree there's need for change if you are to fall deeply in love with Jesus and, for that matter, with others who are sent to you?

Author's note

We are convinced perilous times are on the horizon. Biblical times and seasons that parallel the kinds of seasons that are labeled as the "Biblical end times" are unfolding right before our eyes. Soon, the world and most of the unresponsive church will be walking around in a fearful stupor because of the unprecedented anguish that will start to consume them. Only those who heed the call of God that is being heralded now will be prepared for what is ahead.

To live victoriously during these next years, you must renew your relationship with Jesus. You must shake off all the traditions, dogma, and habits that hinder you from living the full, exuberant life of Jesus in your ordained sphere of influence. Do not be afraid to be different from those who also call themselves Christians. If they are not moving closer to Jesus with a passion as their only reason for breathing, find new friends who are.

*It's not scary to
love Jesus
deeply.*

*He will always
love us back and
teach us to love
others.*

Can you determine if there is anything that is stopping you from selling out completely to the Lord at this present time? What is it? Is it more than one thing?

When peril comes, most of those who call themselves Christians will "hunker down" in an attempt to be safe; but they'll be powerless to protect themselves. In a time when the Jesus they have said they serve is needed most, they will not know how to call on Him or even know who He really is. Therefore, they will hide in

fear, thinking they will find a place of safety. Wherever they go, it will be a tomb for them spiritually speaking.

The only place of safety is to be solely and completely locked up in Jesus Christ, living His passionate, overcoming life. In times of peril, His overcoming presence will not be with the cowering masses. He will be displayed in all of His radiant glory through those who take the time this very day, perhaps this very moment, to surrender fully to Him and His ways. He will be with those who use their every breath of life for His benefit and the benefit of those who need to see Jesus.

As the Holy Spirit changes you, you will be acquiring the tools you need to not only overcome perilous times, but to prosper during them through the power of the Holy Spirit. You will move in anointed power to represent the Lord.

What was just said? Please use your own words and detail what was said above. Add your own comments and modifications. Make it a statement of belief for yourself. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

Note: It is a fact that our relationship with others is the day-to-day working out of insights we receive from God.

Learning about Jesus and not living like Jesus is incomplete Christianity. It leads to cold, dead people, who sit in the frozen pews of useless churches that are doing little to further the work of God, even though they are engaged in many programs. (If that last sentence seems too strong, wait on the Lord quietly to see how He feels about it.)

*Somebody
really needs
you!*

At first, this kind of active loving may be foreign to you, but soon you will be surprised at how much your spiritual life will increase. Begin to see that your relationship with others is as important to God as your relationship with Him when you are in Jesus Christ. Jesus never sat on the sidelines, stuffing Himself on the Father's "goodies." He took what the Father gave Him and gave it to others. He was alive with His passionate life to share.

Remember: You are not necessarily to start doing more things for God or becoming more active. The passionate life of Christ was birthed in fellowship with His Father and implemented only when and where His Father said it should be done.

When Jesus walked this earth, I'm convinced He was a joy to be with, even through the most intense expressions of His Father's will. He had fun and freedom in doing His Father's desires because His heart was in the posture to do only that.

No one, in either the church or the world, is attracted to a religious prune face. The best part of your adventure with God is the covenant fact of your security in Him and His great love for you. Learn difficult lessons with joyous enthusiasm, astounding acceptance, and open arms.

Rev. 3:19 Amp "Those whom I [dearly and tenderly love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]."

Navigate hard times with loving, humble aggressiveness, knowing you are being drawn closer to the Lord and a valuable lesson is being learned as you choose to hear what it is. Reach to others during these times, so the enemy doesn't nullify your testimony.

*You're going
to do great!*

As you are shown areas that need to be changed by His loving hand, respond graciously. Your exhibition of a dedication to responding joyfully will be a magnet to those who follow in your footsteps in developing an intimate relationship with Jesus. Be encouraged. You are valuable!

What is your impression of the character of Jesus as He walked on this earth?

Do you truly believe you can walk as He walked when He was on this earth? If you do, explain. If not, why not?

The Rapture

The concept of the Rapture is so controversial, that if you gathered 25 Bible scholars and asked their studied opinion about it, you could easily have 25 different perspectives as to when, why or even if it will occur. We ask you to guard your heart if you disagree with what's presented here regarding the Rapture. Don't allow the enemy to rob you of what God would like to show you overall because you may disagree with what's written about the Rapture on the following pages.

We have taken a posture of the Lord coming for His prepared and waiting bride. To those who haven't chosen to heed the warnings to make Jesus their priority (not only for their good, but for His glory and honor,) He will be seen as a thief in the night.

Although this is our studied opinion, we present it mainly to challenge you to dive into the Word to know for yourself what you really believe, instead of simply following the crowd's accepted theology with no research done on your part. You need to ask yourself what honors the heart of Jesus.

Either way, the most important need for you to address is your relationship with Jesus. Seeking Him as your priority in life so that He is glorified is Christianity 101. Your intimate relationship with Jesus is most important to Father God, and it should be to you, too. We pray the Holy Spirit will reveal truth to you, regardless of what conclusions we all embrace on certain issues.

We talked earlier of the church being divided into two main groups, those who are preparing their hearts with moderate zeal and those who have chosen to live as Christ lived. The moderate group is preparing for Him as their guide and shepherd. They are self-focused and see Him as the One Who takes care of all their needs. He's their protector and provider Who will blanket them in safety during the dark times ahead.

These believers generally take on a "business as usual" attitude, waiting and hoping for things to return to some semblance of normalcy. They believe God will preserve what they've achieved in life. However, lurking around the periphery are thoughts and fears that what they've amassed might well be taken from them. Unfortunately, these thoughts and fears may very well come to pass when darkness comes, and what they've learned and achieved in times of peace will not be sufficient to carry them through extreme difficulty.

The other group, those who have chosen to live as Christ lived, is preparing for Jesus as a bride would prepare for the appearance of her Bridegroom. They live a life of honest love and joyous repentance as the Holy Spirit partners with them to reveal

Really get this. You will need to make choices to be able to glorify the Lord in the coming seasons!

They are overcoming the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*You would
think that
people with a
true bridal
heart would
want to
prepare and
purify
themselves
to please
Jesus - to be
like Him, their
Bridegroom,
in every way.*

*Think about
it!
This is the
glorious Son
of God, Who
is fulfilling the
plan ordained
since the
beginning of
time!*

*Most of us
focus on how
good it's
going to be
for us!*

*This
traditional
wedding will
be covered in
detail
beginning on
page 138 of
this book.*

and remove whatever remains in them that doesn't look and act like Jesus. Their desire is to have their garments cleansed to honor God and His desires.

As they allow the Holy Spirit to reveal any hidden sin or idols in their lives, they die daily to the ways of the world. They are no longer attracted to the world's siren songs. Preparing for Jesus' return is their focus and priority. They will occupy until He comes, anticipate His arrival, and gladly submit to any suffering for His sake if He calls them to do so, all for His glory.

We must remember that Jesus is the focus, not us!

It is important to remember that the season we're talking about has been on the heart of God since the beginning of time. It's part of the culmination of His plans for mankind. It's the purpose of the cross. God's bottom line is that His Son is finally returning for those He died for, those who care about His heart and have prepared themselves to be like Him in every respect so that He recognizes them as His own.

If Jesus is coming back as a Bridegroom, are you focused on yourself, or on how you would like to please Him? Explain

What if Jesus Comes Secretly as a Thief
to Whisk Away Those Who Are Prepared to Meet Him?

We would like to present an option to what is commonly used to define future events in God's timetable. We ask you to examine the Word and address it in prayer. We don't claim to have the definitive answer; but as a possible option, it may fill in some scriptural blanks regarding the rapture concept and help you prepare to be an overcomer with a bridal heart.

First, Let's Glance at the Traditional Wedding Feast

Many patterns, prophecies, and Jewish traditions in the Old Testament give insight into the unfolding of the end times. The account of the traditional Jewish wedding of old is one of them. The bride meticulously prepares herself for the groom. The groom leaves to prepare their home, and the father tells the groom when the home is sufficiently completed, so that he may come for his bride.

With his father's approval, the groom "steals" the prepared bride in the middle of the night. The best man heralds his coming

so the bride will be waiting for him when he arrives, and they go away for seven days. This scenario is very much like the overcomers and their relationship with Jesus, as they meticulously prepare to be with Him for when He steals them away, rather than being swayed and embroiled in the world's ways and agenda.

It's All about Mercy and Judgment

As we proceed, it's important to remember that everything God does is His mercy in action. Even in times of refinement, the concept of mercy upon mercy will unfold, but God's perfect judging of the heart of those involved will also be in place.

Good to Consider

Since the resurrection, the Holy Spirit has called those who could hear to be totally committed to Jesus. Even though considered overzealous, those who thought Jesus was coming for them in their generation prepared for it and responded to the call to love Him without reserve. They were "caught up" with Him, meaning totally immersed in Him. Even though He didn't come for them before they died, they heard the call of the Holy Spirit to purify themselves, to be holy as God is holy, which is Christianity 101.

*Different
heart
positions!*

For what we're trying to convey here, they set a course in life to "wash their robes" to please their only love, Jesus. Because of their pure hearts, their turning from idols, and their heading for holiness (determined to be wholly His,) those who chose to prepare in every generation since the resurrection of Christ likely had the opportunity to be part of the waiting bride.

Jesus Has Gone to Prepare a Place for His Bride

Do not let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated). You believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely on God; believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely also on Me.

² *In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going away to prepare a place for you.*

³ *And when (if) I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. John 14:1-3 AMPC*

Jesus has promised to return for those who are waiting for Him. We propose that this waiting time should include heart preparation.

Is it possible the Holy Spirit is heralding a call to holiness and preparation for the coming of the Lord at this very moment? There are those in the body of Christ (the overcomers) who hear the call and are responding by preparing themselves to love Jesus

whole-heartedly as their focus in life. This overcoming group has chosen to love Him by preparing as a bride would prepare to please her groom, cleansing her wedding garments of any spot or wrinkle (sin).

We Suggest the Following Call Could Apply
to Every Believer in Every Generation

And to the angel (messenger) of the assembly (church) in Sardis write: These are the words of Him Who has the seven Spirits of God [the sevenfold Holy Spirit] and the seven stars: I know your record and what you are doing; you are supposed to be alive, but [in reality] you are dead.

Take action.

² *Rouse yourselves and keep awake, and strengthen and invigorate what remains and is on the point of dying; for I have not found a thing that you have done [any work of yours] meeting the requirements of My God or perfect in His sight.*

The Lord will
come upon -
not for - those
who are
foolish
enough to
ignore the
importance of
being
prepared.

³ *So call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them, and repent. In case you will not rouse yourselves and keep awake and watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know or suspect at what hour I will come.*

⁴ *Yet you still have a few [persons'] names in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes, and they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy and deserving.*

He will
appear to
them as a
thief.

⁵ *Thus shall he who conquers (is victorious) be clad in white garments, and I will not erase or blot out his name from the Book of Life; I will acknowledge him [as Mine] and I will confess his name openly before My Father and before His angels.*

⁶ *He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the [Holy] Spirit says to the assemblies (churches).*

Those who
have
cleansed their
garments will
look for Him.

Consider that the verses above show both factions of today's church— those who need to wake up and repent, and those who have conquered the world and have white garments that don't require washing.

The following verses show the call for the church to prepare their hearts as they wait and look for the promised return of Jesus.

The first time
was when He
made the
covenant of
the cross.

Even so it is that Christ, having been offered to take upon Himself and bear as a burden the sins of many once and once for all, will appear a second time, not to carry any burden of sin nor to deal with sin, but to bring to full salvation those who are [eagerly, constantly, and patiently] waiting for and expecting Him. (Hebrews 9:28).

Bridal talk!

The Lord Jesus said, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me*" (Revelation 3:20).

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14 ESV

In the Air or In Secret?

Could it be that Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming for the overcomers—those who are alert, prepared, and looking for Him—**in secret**, as the bride of old was stolen away in the middle of the night while others were asleep? Could those waiting and preparing right now be the wise virgins in Matthew? Is the waiting bride those who have responded to the Holy Spirit and are working with Him to overcome the world and its ways and are in training to allow nothing to adversely affect their relationship with Jesus?

All are Virgins (Believers), Some are Prepared

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

² Five of them were foolish (thoughtless, without forethought) and five were wise (sensible, intelligent, and prudent).

³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take any [extra] oil with them;

⁴ But the wise took flasks of oil along with them [also] with their lamps.

⁵ While the bridegroom lingered and was slow in coming, they all began nodding their heads, and they fell asleep.

⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, Behold, the bridegroom! Go out to meet him!

⁷ Then all those virgins got up and put their own lamps in order.

⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.

⁹ But the wise replied, There will not be enough for us and for you; go instead to the dealers and buy for yourselves.

¹⁰ But while they were going away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were prepared went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut.

¹¹ Later the other virgins also came and said, Lord, Lord, open [the door] to us!

¹² But He replied, I solemnly declare to you, I do not know you [I am not acquainted with you].

¹³ Watch therefore [give strict attention and be cautious and active], for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come. Matthew 25:1-13 AMPC

If you simply look at the times and seasons today and take note of the world's plans to usher in a one-world government with a one-world leader as foretold in the Bible, it's difficult to ignore that the world is moving swiftly toward biblical conclusions. This very day, it appears the Bridegroom could very well be ready to come in

Study the traditional Jewish wedding - the stealing of the bride, the unaware townspeople, and all its implications.

Details on page 138 of this book.

The works and desires of the world and the plan of God are visibly running parallel in these days.

One is looking for their Messiah

The Other is looking for the return of the Lord

Warning to the “sleeper”

Every believer is perfect in the eyes of the Lord because He looks at us through the blood of Jesus.

However, there is a sanctifying process God desires of us.

secret for those who are consistently developing ears to hear and continually preparing in earnest for Jesus’ return for his bride. Led by the Holy Spirit into true intimacy with their Lord, they are separating themselves from the world and being wooed and trained to answer the call of the Bridegroom when it goes forth.

The Holy Spirit Is Calling Those Who Will Listen to Prepare

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

³ While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 ESV

There is a distinction noticed by God between those who hear the call and respond to it and those who don’t. Outwardly they appear the same, but some have prepared themselves and others haven’t. (For this study, some have prepared themselves as a bride would prepare and others haven’t.)

Speaking again of the Matthew 25 virgins, we understand the use of the word “virgin” to mean they all had a relationship with the Lord, having been made righteous by the blood of the Lamb. All ten had prepared themselves for the banquet, but only five of them prepared in a way that allowed them to enter. It seems the wise virgins prepared themselves for the best interest and glory of the Bridegroom, while the foolish virgins prepared because it was very good for them to attend the wedding feast. This is remarkably like the different heart positions in today’s church.

If we consider the time in which Jesus lived on earth, we could probably assume that all the townspeople in any given small town would be aware of a wedding feast simply because of the town’s size. Let’s equate the townspeople to the body of Christ.

If the town had one hundred people, for example, then only ten percent found it important to respond to the invitation and attend. Of the ten that decided to participate in the wedding feast, only five had enough oil in their lamps and were properly prepared for the banquet. That means probably ninety-five percent of the townspeople didn’t participate in the wedding feast.

Equating the five percent to those who are considered righteous and wholly committed to the Lordship of Jesus, we have a sad situation if this is a possible assessment of the division in today's church. It appears as if a large number of believers - those who don't feel or know of the need to prepare as a bride would prepare for her Bridegroom - could possibly need to wash their robes. They feel no need to separate themselves completely from the world and its ways while waiting for the Lord.

*A small
number
prepared.*

*That means a
large number
didn't
prepare!*

Each of us has the opportunity to overcome the world and prepare as a bride for the wedding banquet of the Lamb during this present time of upheaval; and if we don't respond now, could it be that we may go through some form of refiner's fire during the tribulation period?

*There is a big
difference
between a
system of
works and
someone who
desires to
please Jesus
out of a deep
bridal love.*

How many believers have even thought of this as a possibility? In some cases, the comment has been made that we don't have to prepare at all because we'll be gone before the tribulation period starts. What do we do with all the Bible verses where we are specifically told to prepare?

Could this be the wise and foolish working side by side?

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son but only the Father.

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴² "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matthew 24:36-44 NIV

*This finally
makes
sense!*

*What does
"be ready"
mean?*

Let's Continue On

It seems to follow that after the heralding of the Holy Spirit to prepare as a bride would prepare, the Lord comes for those who have sold out completely to Jesus and have overcome the world with all of its idols and sirens. The bride is taken away and the remaining church becomes aware that the Lord appeared as a thief in the night to claim His bride.

*How many
hearts will see
Jesus as
someone who
came when
they were not
expecting Him
and were not
prepared?*

“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him” (Matthew 25:6).

For you yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the [return of the] Lord will come [as unexpectedly and suddenly] as a thief in the night. 1 Thessalonians 5:2

So call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them, and repent. In case you will not rouse yourselves and keep awake and watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know or suspect at what hour I will come. Revelation 3:3

Jesus and His Bride Enjoy the Marriage Supper

Let us rejoice and shout for joy [exulting and triumphant]! Let us celebrate and ascribe to Him glory and honor, for the marriage of the Lamb [at last] has come, and His bride has prepared herself.

*Prepared,
summoned,
and ready—
resplendent
in perfectly
clean white
robes*

⁸ She has been permitted to dress in fine (radiant) linen, dazzling and white—for the fine linen is (signifies, represents) the righteousness (the upright, just, and godly living, deeds, and conduct, and right standing with God) of the saints (God's holy people).

⁹ Then [the angel] said to me, write this down: Blessed (happy, to be envied) are those who are summoned (invited, called) to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me [further], These are the true words (the genuine and exact declarations) of God. Revelation 19:7-9 AMPC

Those Believers Who Are Not at the Marriage Supper

Consider the possibility that while the bride and Groom celebrate the marriage supper, those who would not respond to the heralding to become wholly devoted to the Lord will go through a process of cleansing their garments, something they were called to do before the Lord claimed His bride. We believe this is the call that's out this very day.

*A vast
number!*

*Too many to
count!*

⁹ After this I looked and a vast host appeared which no one could count, [gathered out] of every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. These stood before the throne and before

the Lamb; they were attired in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

¹⁰ In loud voice they cried, saying, [Our] salvation is due to our God, Who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb [to Them we owe our deliverance]!

¹¹ And all the angels were standing round the throne and round the elders [of the heavenly Sanhedrin] and the four living creatures, and they fell prostrate before the throne and worshiped God.

¹² Amen! (So be it!) they cried. Blessing and glory and majesty and splendor and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might [be ascribed] to our God to the ages and ages (forever and ever, throughout the eternities of the eternities)! Amen! (So be it!)

¹³ Then, addressing me, one of the elders [of the heavenly Sanhedrin] said, Who are these [people] clothed in the long white robes? And from where have they come?

¹⁴ I replied, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they who have come out of the great tribulation (persecution), and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev 7:9-14

Consider the washed robes. Is it safe to say that you can't wash a robe unless it's in your possession? That being said, what if the washing of robes in verse 14 refers to a born-again people who didn't submit to the refiner's fires that would've purified them and made them ready to meet Jesus when He came?

If that is true, future trials would accomplish in them what they chose not to do earlier in their walk with the Lord. Extreme challenges would drive those who are complacent now to submit to the purifying process of the Holy Spirit during the tribulation. Keep in mind that trials are often designed to bring godly changes.

Let's also look at Revelation 7:15-17, noting the phrase, "For this reason" at the beginning of verse 15. Tying what came before it to what comes after it may bring clarity to the explanation of these verses.

7:15) *For this reason they are [now] before the [very] throne of God and serve Him day and night in His sanctuary (temple); and He Who is sitting upon the throne will protect and spread His tabernacle over and shelter them with His presence.*

16) *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun smite them, nor any scorching heat.*

17) For the Lamb Who is in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to the springs of the waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

As wonderful as it will be to serve God both day and night, those who decide to serve God without intimacy while they are on

Where do you put these verses?

I tell you, many will come from east and west, and will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,¹² While the sons and heirs of the kingdom will be driven out into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Matt 8:11-12

For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. 22:14

Who else can they be but believers dressed in their cleansed white robes?

Those who come to the Lord during the tribulation are given robes.

Rev. 6:9-11

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

10) *They cried out with a loud voice, O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*

11) Then they were each given a white robe...

*...Train yourself toward
godliness (piety) [keeping
yourself spiritually fit].
For physical training is of
some value (useful for a
little), but godliness
(spiritual training) is useful
and of value in everything
and in every way, for it
holds promise for the
present life and also for
the life which is to come.
1 Timothy 4:7-8*

*See the comparisons in Ezekiel
44 about the difference
between the Abiathar and
Zadok priesthoods on page 59
of this guidebook.*

*One could remain intimate with
the Lord; the other could only
serve Him because they did not
keep themselves clean.*

*Very visibly
removed for
everyone to
see.*

*Not quietly
as a thief.*

*After the
tribulation*

earth appear to be called to function in like manner throughout eternity.

It seems to make sense that Jesus would only share the intimacies of His heart with those who desired to know them here on earth. According to the Word, those who choose not to prepare as a bride would prepare will be given what they craved in life - safety and comfort - but they will miss out on the heavenly kind of intimacy with God that they never sought while they lived on earth. Jesus will be their Shepherd, not their Bridegroom (verse 17.)

After the Marriage Supper

After the marriage supper, it seems that Jesus comes for His elect, those who felt no need to wash their robes before the tribulation. Even so, they are still His. (This equates to the foolish virgins and all believers who didn't choose to attend the wedding for whatever reason.) They washed their robes during that treacherous time. Jesus is their Shepherd, not their Bridegroom.

To understand this whole scenario, it's important to keep the perspective that our Father is very concerned that everyone has been given the opportunity to choose a holy life and He's committed Himself to do what it takes - for their good - to prepare them for it. The command to be holy (completely separated from the world and its ways) as He is holy is Christianity 101. How can we ignore that?

A Removal of Believers in Front of Everybody

It follows then that after the seven-year tribulation, the remaining believers (those who have now cleansed their garments) and the dead in Christ respond to a heavenly trumpet. Generations of those who are not part of the bride rise from their graves. Believers who are still on earth will follow them to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever.

²⁹ *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

³⁰ *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and beat their breasts and lament in anguish, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [in brilliancy and splendor].*

³¹ *And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect (His chosen ones) from the four winds, [even] from one end of the universe to the other. Matthew 24:29-31*
AMPC

¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

¹⁸ *Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 ESV

¹⁷ *The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' Let each one who hears them say the same, 'Come.' Let the thirsty one come—anyone who wants to; let him come and drink the Water of Life without charge. Revelation 22:17 TLB*

There is such mercy exhibited by the Lord Who shows His compassion by relieving the thirst of those who are His. There is also an integrity shown by God in His covenant promise to make those He loves holy as He is holy, knowing that it is good for them to become so.

⁵⁰ *But I tell you this, brethren, flesh and blood cannot [become partakers of eternal salvation and] inherit or share in the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (that which is decaying) inherit or share in the imperishable (the immortal).*

⁵¹ *Take notice! I tell you a mystery (a secret truth, an event decreed by the hidden purpose or counsel of God). We shall not all fall asleep [in death], but we shall all be changed (transformed)*

⁵² *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the [sound of the] last trumpet call. For a trumpet will sound, and the dead [in Christ] will be raised imperishable (free and immune from decay), and we shall be changed (transformed). 1 Cor. 15:50-52*

Those in Both Removals from the Earth Must Be Changed
to Be Able to Enter Heaven

⁵³ *For this perishable [part of us] must put on the imperishable [nature], and this mortal [part of us, this nature that is capable of dying] must put on immortality (freedom from death).*

⁵⁴ *And when this perishable puts on the imperishable and this that was capable of dying puts on freedom from death, then shall be fulfilled the Scripture that says, Death is swallowed up (utterly vanquished forever) in and unto victory.*

1 Corinthians 15:53-54

Time for a Very Important Decision

*It's not a
system of
works, but a
love response
to Jesus.*

We believe the present times and seasons are here to either prepare God's people to be a spotless bride waiting to be stolen away or at the very least, prepare them to be able to walk through the darkness that is on the horizon. Either way, they would become equipped to overcome the dark days ahead in the power of the Holy Spirit regardless of what these days hold in store for the body of Christ.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

*Wouldn't it be
wise to dive into
the Word and
prayer to either
confirm or deny
what has been
said?*

We realize that the idea of the bride being whisked away in secret and the remaining believers staying on earth to wash their robes is foreign to most believers. However, it does seem to shed more light on many bible verses that address the times and seasons. Do you think maybe it's time for us all to reexamine our positions? It certainly appears that if we choose to remain in a state of business as usual, there will be consequences for our inaction.

*If you confirm it,
please do what
it takes to be rid
of every idol the
Holy Spirit
shows you. Let
Him change you
and remove it by
His power!*

Compare the concept of a rapture of the entire church and the concept of Jesus coming for His bride in secret. How much of the Word backs up what you believe? What do you sense in your spirit? Have you studied scripture in the past to reach your conclusions or just took someone else's word for it without any study at all on your part? Now what?

*This could be
anything from a
quick work to a
lengthy process.*

If you're being prompted to seek the Lord and His Word, have a joyous time of discovery! Use the lines below to express what's on your heart right now.

Note: There are qualifications to being kept safe from the trials coming on earth. If we choose to be overcomers, all of us need to ask ourselves how this applies to what has been said above.

"Rev. 3:10 Because you have guarded and kept My word of patient endurance [have held fast the lesson of My patience with the expectant endurance that I give you], I also will keep you [safe] from the hour of trial (testing) which is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell upon the earth.

The comparisons between the overcomers and those who need to wash their robes are quite striking. This would be a good place to explain the word "overcomer" before we go any further.

What is an Overcomer?

The original word for the word overcome is “NIKE.” It’s a verb used in either passive tense, meaning “impartation” or active tense, meaning “to conquer.”

The following scriptures are examples of the use of the passive tense of the word NIKE - meaning an impartation, given through the unconditional covenant that was established through the cross and resurrection. These are irreversible promises that can’t be broken.

...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4

Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 5:5

“...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” Rom. 10:9-10 NASB

*You have
beaten the
enemy by
surrendering!*

The confession of your mouth of Jesus as *your Lord* and belief in your heart that God raised Him from the dead bring an impartation of eternal separation from the world. We are no longer affected by the curse of the world. We are overcomers because we are born of God through Jesus Christ, Who now lives His life through us. We have a guaranteed promise that we’ll spend eternity with God.

The next scriptures are examples of the use of the active tense of the word NIKE – meaning to conquer, to actively participate. Most are conditional covenants—contracts that allow the believer to make choices within the safety of the unconditional covenant of the cross.

*Look at the
whole Bible
as a source to
make you
whole!*

With a conditional covenant, “if” is a very important word. It’s God basically saying: *If* you do “this,” I promise to do “that.” By no means is this a system of works, but an opportunity for the believer to make a willing decision to love and honor God out of a completely dedicated heart that just desires to please Him alone.

The Heritage for Those Who Choose to Overcome the World
in This Life

“Revelation 2:7 He who is able to hear, let him listen to and give heed to what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). To him who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant to eat [of the fruit] of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Traditionally a white stone is given when a person is totally vindicated at a trial or used as an invitation to a wedding feast.

“Rev 2:17 He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). To him who overcomes (conquers), I will give to eat of the manna that is hidden, and I will give him a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone, which no one knows or understands except he who receives it.

“Rev. 2:26 And he who overcomes (is victorious) and who obeys My commands to the [very] end [doing the works that please Me], I will give him authority and power over the nations;

Bride and Groom talk.

“Rev 3:20-21 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he [will eat] with Me.

21) He who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame (was victorious) and sat down beside My Father on His throne.

“Rev. 12:10-11 Then I heard a strong (loud) voice in heaven, saying, Now it has come--the salvation and the power and the kingdom (the dominion, the reign) of our God, and the power (the sovereignty, the authority) of His Christ (the Messiah); for the accuser of our brethren, he who keeps bringing before our God charges against them day and night, has been cast out!

The Word talks a lot about overcoming!

11) And they have overcome (conquered) him by means of the blood of the Lamb and by the utterance of their testimony, for they did not love and cling to life even when faced with death [holding their lives cheap till they had to die for their witnessing].

Do you think it's important to God?

Jesus overcame the world so we can also overcome it through the power of the Holy Spirit!

“John 16:33 I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]”

From Our Father's Heart

*Exchange darkness for light,
fear for a submersion in My power,
anger for peace, and hatred for absolute love,
and you have a mustard seed of understanding
what living in My Kingdom with Me is all about.
Separation from me in any way is the worst place for you to live,
so I have invited you to live in the kind of intimacy
that Jesus has with Me, where I live.
Your life in Me is all about choices.
You can remain who you are,
never really growing through My power,
or you can walk in the fullness of My Spirit
as I free you from all of the entanglements of the world.
Your walking above the ways of the world means that you have
determined to follow My Son with all of your heart.
That pleases Me and glorifies My Son.
It is very good when I am pleased!*

In Ezekiel 44, the section on the Abiathar and Zadok priesthoods seems to confirm the heart God has for those who dedicate themselves to minister to Him, in comparison to those who allow the carnal nature of the world to influence their lives.

Intimacy vs. Service

The Levites were a people set apart by God, much the same as believers are set apart by Him today. They were called to minister to Him in the sanctuary, receiving the specific honor among their people of experiencing an intimate relationship with Him. God was to be their only focus and provision. The sons of Zadok kept themselves pure before God when everyone else - including the family of Abiathar – succumbed to compromise.

Because the Zadok priesthood didn't compromise their lives through attachments to the world, they were allowed to continue to minister to God. The Abiathar priesthood, who defiled themselves through their interaction with the world, were restricted to serving the people. They lost the privilege of an intimate relationship with God.

Their portion seems akin to the portion that will be given to those who had to wash their robes in the great tribulation since they didn't head toward holiness and intimacy with Jesus while navigating their life on earth. The spirit and intent of the words in Ezekiel 44:10-16 are very much the same as that in Revelation 7:15-17.

*Looks a lot
like those
who chose
not to prepare
as a bride
would
prepare.*

10) *The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin.*

11) *They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them.*

12) *But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the house of Israel fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

13) *They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices.*

14) *Yet I will put them in charge of the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it.*

15) *But the priests, who are Levites and descendants of Zadok and who faithfully carried out the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

16) *They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me and perform my service.*

Even though these are Old Testament verses and we live in the New Testament of grace and are not under the law, it appears there could very well be some consequences to our actions here on earth if God's point has always been to have His creation head toward holiness and overcome the world during their earthly journey.

Today is the Day, Now is the Time

These days we are involved in a refining process, which is designed to prepare the body of Christ as a bride who is waiting to meet her Bridegroom. This time frame will accomplish many things on many levels.

For one thing, it will be a time of judgment, where a pure line of separation will occur between right and wrong as far as God is concerned in contrast to the line that is continually being moved away from God to suit the world's latest whims of the day. This separation will make clear God's perspective on worldly Christianity and the world in general. It will mean refiner's fires for all followers of Jesus as nations fall in line with what God says will happen to them in His Word.

*The line is
being drawn
by God!*

Only God knows the scope and intensity of these times, but we, as believers, must remember the wisest thing we can do is to keep our focus on purifying our hearts, since much is going to happen that will challenge our personal world, some of which will probably happen quickly.

The good news is this is the best thing that could happen, regardless of when Jesus is returning! It's God's desire that His children walk as Jesus walked. We're to be set apart for Him - free of the sirens that call out to us every day and depending one hundred percent on Him in all things. It's a spiritual war against our flesh, and there is no better way to approach the coming days.

This is a good time to take a breath and ponder all that is written above. Whether you agree with the application of all of the verses or not, it seems that there is a thread of total dedication and a pursuit of holiness that is woven as an overall heart position that can't be denied. Ask yourself the following question.

Why is there even a debate as to whether we should sell out completely to the Lord or not? If you haven't already done so, submit yourself and all that you are to the complete Lordship of Jesus Christ. Do it now!

Father, I give everything to you. I surrender everything I am, everything I own, and every step I take to your Lordship. From this moment on, everything about me is owned by you. Thank you, Holy Spirit for guiding every bit of my life from this day forward.

Signed, _____

Spiritual Warfare Overcoming as Jesus Overcame

Also see
page 57
and pages
126-131

There is a story of two shepherds tending their sheep in the same field. One of the shepherds spotted a wolf on an adjacent hillside and scurried to tell the other shepherd of his discovery. The first shepherd prepared himself to get rid of the enemy. That's how he approached anyone or anything that came after what belonged to him. Leave no stone unturned. How he hated wolves!

The other shepherd made preparations to protect his sheep. His heart only cared for the safety of the flock, and what keeping them safe meant to his employer and those who depended on the sheep for their livelihood.

Sheep
protectors
versus wolf
killers!

That night both were positioned to move when the wolf appeared. Although they looked the same to the casual observer and both would take appropriate action to eliminate the enemy, one was at war with the wolf. He was a wolf killer in his heart.

The other understood the direness and danger of the situation very clearly, so he, too, was prepared to do what was necessary. However, he prepared out of love for his sheep and for the good of others. He was a sheep protector, not a wolf killer, in his heart. Those are two vastly different heart positions.

We Do Not Belong to the World

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. John 15:19

"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:14

We Do Not War as the World Does

I have found no better explanation of true spiritual warfare than this explanation from my friend, Pastor Ron Auch, who is now home with the Lord.

"Many intercessors and leaders in spiritual warfare seem to think we have to some way, somehow, "deliver" a city from spiritual oppression or past evil curses in order to have the way paved for the presence of God to come into that city. However, the goal of spiritual conflict is not to usher in the presence of God by that

means. Spiritual warfare is not the way to bring in the presence of God, but quite the opposite.

“It is not the battle that ushers in the presence; but rather, it’s the presence that originates the battle. The presence of God is the starting point. Because of the presence of God, there will be war since the inhabitants of darkness cannot stand His presence.

“All of our strategies, banners, chants, and shouting “per se” will do no harm to the devil. In fact, we can be sure that the devil will help us do our “spiritual warfare” as long as we are replacing the presence of God with our own battle turmoil. I believe along with some others that the devil has been teaching the church how to do spiritual warfare!

“The Israelites marched around, shouted, sang, worshipped, broke pots, suddenly pulled out torches in the middle of the night, and fought battles in usual and unusual manners; but it was not the strategy or the activity that gave them victory. It was the presence of God who went before them. Without the presence, they would have been the most foolish army in history.”

The “Winning by Surrendering” Side of Spiritual Warfare

It’s important to remember that the Word gives us strategies to overcome our flesh nature as we prepare ourselves for the return of our Bridegroom. It’s a different aspect of spiritual warfare that’s often missed by those who are going solely after the “wolves” that are seemingly greeting them at every turn.

Understanding the war against our flesh is critical in heading toward a bridal heart, a life wholly devoted to God, and the return of Jesus. The operative word is “*repentance*.” It’s the key to having total submission and freedom in Christ. It’s the key to being properly prepared for Him when He comes for His bride.

Winning through White Flag Warfare

The Holy Spirit reveals in us whatever is not like Jesus, so it can be eliminated. It’s a war against our flesh that’s won on our knees in full submission to God’s will. It’s a white flag heart position, one of surrendering and submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit against our flesh so we can win every battle in that arena.

Repentance is a sure-fire weapon to bring us close to the Lord and His changing power. It brings heart revival. It overcomes all the enemy’s strategies against us. It ultimately changes nations. (Closely study and understand 2 Chronicles 7:14.)

As we surrender and repent, answers fall in place, obstacles are overcome, and the impossible becomes the possible due to

Don’t quit.

*Finally
surrender
everything
you are and
everything
you are not to
Someone
much more
powerful than
you!*

*White flag
warfare is
surrendering
to the power
of the Holy
Spirit to
overcome our
flesh and
preparing as
a bride would
prepare to
meet her
Bridegroom.*

*Favor is
God's
supernatural
ability
imparted to
accomplish
His plans for
us.*

God's hand of favor upon us. We know we're winning when we stop praying for *things* to change and determine we need to be changed, so we can overcome every hindrance in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we repent and turn from our idols and our sin, we tap into the most powerful arsenal of weapons provided for us via the cross. We begin to abide in the heavenly realms in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God that is alive and at our disposal.

It's about Love, not Hate

Just as the true sheep protector postured himself to accomplish his task from a heart of love, this war is rooted in and accomplished by love. Jesus loves us so much that He gave us His all. Father God loves us so much that He wants to make us like Jesus, knowing it's the most wonderful life available to any believer. Whether we've known it or not, part of our covenant agreement with God is to submit to His hand of correction upon us so we can be changed into the likeness of Christ. Even better, Gal. 2:20 tells us: *I have been crucified with Christ; and it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

We, in turn, are called to love God so deeply that it's our desire to have everything that does not glorify Him removed from our lives. Our moment-by-moment posture then is to surrender all that we are and all we're not to His loving hand, so that our determined purpose becomes to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength throughout our days, which the Holy Spirit will work in us as we continually stay in a surrendered state and submit ourselves to God for His purposes and glory. This amazing vertical spiritual relationship, so to speak, becomes even more amazing as we allow the Holy Spirit to take our vertical relationship with the Lord and work it into our horizontal relationships with one another as believers.

*It really
comes down
to building up
the body of
Christ, rather
than
attempting to
destroy the
enemy!*

This oneness with God and fellow believers, which is possible through His love, is what differentiates us from the world and its ways. It's why we have been born and then born again. Cultivating this love relationship with God is the most important endeavor any believer can undertake. It should be our reason for living.

The simplest expression of white flag warfare strategy would be this: submission—not rebellion, repentance—not apathy, becoming—not doing more, bridal preparation—not attempting to change the world, love—not hate. It's a winning strategy that pleases God!

The Battle to Prepare for Battle

There used to be a newspaper comic strip that started back in 1948 called Pogo. One of the most famous lines from that strip is “We have met the enemy and he is us.” At first blush, it may not seem to have biblical connotations, but it actually rings true when applied to becoming more like Jesus. Although there are times when we take authority over demonic forces because of the power given to every believer (see Luke 10:19,) our main war is against our fleshly nature.

*We have met
the enemy and
he is us!*

For many years Christians have fought those “bad guys” out there. We’ve been sidetracked away from the focus of submitting to a life of repentance as the Holy Spirit shows us who we are and who we are not. We’ve become weak and vulnerable as a church whenever we embrace any wind of doctrine that allows us to remain in our comfort zones. We love to think we’ve won a battle; when, in fact, there are times we’ve been fighting on the wrong battlefield in a fight that is not ours to address.

*Being
impatient and
moving
without
waiting on
God for
directions
means
walking in
weakness, no
matter how
you’re
dressed.*

In our weakness, where is the power to forgive as Jesus did? We forget He loves our enemies as much as He loves us. We however, hate them when they spitefully use us or harm those we love.

The enemy is delighted when we go after all the “bad guys” and “bad situations,” while we harbor, embrace, and enjoy pet sins in our heart. He relishes the fact that we are weak and helpless while we fight battles in a way that allows us to hold onto those sins. He encourages us to be proud of doing good deeds for the kingdom of God; when, in fact, most of us are clueless as to what the real battle is.

Learn How to Overcome by Surrendering to the Power of God

Up, sanctify (set apart for a holy purpose) the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: There are accursed things in the midst of you, O Israel. You can not stand before your enemies until you take away from among you the things devoted [to destruction]. Joshua 7:13 AMPC

Just as the Lord was speaking to Israel in the days of Joshua, He is speaking to us today. He’s calling us to be a wholly devoted people who will war against anything that hinders us from preparing ourselves as a bride would prepare for the coming of our Lord. He’s calling His church to be holy as He is holy. This bears repeating: it’s a war against our flesh, fought from our knees and won through the overcoming power of an intimate relationship with Him.

*Time to
wave the
white flag
of
surrender
to the
Holy Spirit
if you
want to
overcome
the world.*

That intimacy has been provided for us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As extreme as it may sound, the wholly-devoted-to-God way of living and bridal heart preparation are simply Christianity 101. It's the life believers have been called to live since the time of the resurrection. It glorifies God and exhibits the work of the cross of Jesus Christ, while building in us the spiritual wealth needed to overcome the world as Jesus did. It ushers in the incomparable presence of God into our lives and our way of seeking Him.

*The joy of
repenting!
What a
concept!*

As you walk hand-in-hand with the Holy Spirit and make joyous repentance a lifestyle, the real war against all you are or are not is being won on your behalf. The things devoted to destruction are being removed as you continue to submit yourself daily to the Lord, walk in His strength, and obey the Word. You are being sanctified and prepared to overcome all the enemy's tactics that would keep you weak and vulnerable. You are quietly preparing as a bride would prepare. You have the privilege of resting in Jesus far above the world and its ways. Learning to win every battle by surrendering our war to the Holy Spirit is wisdom.

White Flag Warring Verses

The following verses are meant to kickstart you into the Holy Spirit's heralding of the kind of heart direction that will be needed during the end times. It also presents the armor of God from a perspective you may not have considered before. It's an encouragement to focus on what God is doing rather than attempting to win those battles that aren't ours to engage in. We are to be God followers, which will keep us from turning into demon chasers. The enemy won't come into the light where Jesus Christ is truly Lord.

*Watch for a
different
perspective of
the purpose
for the armor
of God.*

The verses we'll examine are not just suggestions. They're directives from the heart of God. The pursuit of this kind of Holy Spirit-led life provides answers to the world, which is out of answers.

A Stellar Example of Overcoming the Enemy through White Flag Warfare

Acts 4:29-32 AMPC

*See pages
126-130
about casting
out spirits*

²⁹ *And now, Lord, observe their threats and grant to Your bond servants [full freedom] to declare Your message fearlessly,*

³⁰ *While You stretch out Your hand to cure and to perform signs and wonders through the authority and by the power of the name of Your holy Child and Servant Jesus.*

³¹ *And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak the Word of God with freedom and boldness and courage.*

³² Now the company of believers was of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed that anything which he possessed was [exclusively] his own, but everything they had was in common and for the use of all.

The spirit of the people within the building determined who was in charge of the situation!

There they were, a body of believers surrounded by the enemy, who was housed in people who hated them because of their faith in Jesus. Today's church would've conducted all night prayer sessions and spent their time binding the strongholds, calling down angels to surround and protect them, casting out the dark, evil spirits they were convinced were causing the persecution, and feverishly petitioning God to deliver them from the "bad guys."

Instead, these saints did not think of themselves or their own safety. Their lives had long ago been counted as nothing in their own eyes. Their hearts wanted only the Gospel message to go forth at any cost. Their desire was to show those who hated them Who Jesus was, so they might embrace Him.

Wait, What?

They didn't pray for deliverance. They prayed for boldness to continue proclaiming the Word. They even prayed for the hand of God to help those who hated them, so unbelievers could witness signs and wonders; and what happened? God gave them even more freedom and Holy Spirit power than they already had.

Wait, What?

Because of their Christ-like caring, their fear of loss dramatically decreased, and the Spirit of Christ flowed so freely in them that they experienced an even deeper dimension with God. They did something unheard of in the world that was observing them and even in those who were believers. They gave up properties they owned so that none had need! That was incredibly stupid to those who didn't understand, but what an incredibly powerful witness to illustrate to observers the heart of Jesus!

Wait, What?

They became a stronger, more visible example of the character of Christ. Instead of exhibiting hatred toward those who were observing their lives, they exhibited love toward one another in front of them. They were given the power to look like Jesus without even saying a word. They won the war against the enemy. More importantly, they pleased the One Who gave His life for them and for those who hated Him.

Wait, What?

White flag warfare gives no place for the flesh to participate in the power of God's hand. It submits completely to the Holy Spirit, so that God is the central focus of the outcome in any situation. It locks out the flesh from grasping for the glory due to God alone.

Really?

Those people in the verses above may very well have literally lost their lives for following Jesus, but their testimony lives on to teach us how to live and love as Jesus did. Did they win the war as Jesus did? Absolutely!

Just like Jesus, nothing could touch them!

*Result!
Jesus won the
war, the
believers saw His
power by
surrendering to
the Holy Spirit,
and the world
saw an example
of how Jesus
lived.*

*Talk about win,
win, win!*

*If everyone in
every
fellowship
sold out to the
Holy Spirit,
what kind of
fellowships
would we
have?*

*Who would
win in every
situation?*

*Ask the Lord
to teach you
when to
surrender to
the power of
the Holy
Spirit, and
when to make
use of the
authority you
have been
given in
Christ!*

*Wisdom
would be to
wait for His
power rather
than moving
in weakness!*

Earnestly take time to hear from the Lord about this portion of spiritual warfare. Ask Him to help you discern when you are to use the authority you've been given and when it's time to surrender as an act of warfare and hand the battle over to Him. Write down what He's telling your heart.

List several instances when you may have confused these two positions in Christ.

Now It's Your Turn to Learn How to Overcome!

In the previous example, the enemy was soundly defeated, and the believers experienced the power of Holy Spirit deliverance. Now it is your turn! Find the kind of life the early believers discovered. Approach the following verses through their eyes and the eyes of Jesus. Use them to train yourself how to win any spiritual war as Jesus did, as He desires us to do as well.

As you go deeper with the Lord, gather your own verses to help you maintain your focus on Jesus, rather than the war the enemy and the world are purporting. Respond to the Holy Spirit as He amplifies the Word in your heart, while exposing those sins that keep you from flowing in the forgiveness, love, and power available to you as a believer who is preparing to glorify God in all you do. By making God your priority, you will also be able to supernaturally flow in the authority and the calling you have been given to overcome any plan that is not of God.

Remember, God is after our hearts so that we can walk in the power that overcomes the world. He is in the business of revealing who we are and are not, so He can make us who He's called us to be, as we live a life of repentance. It's a good thing!

Be very aware that it's God's loving hand on you as the Holy Spirit is aggressively showing you what needs to be changed in your life. Never let the enemy tell you that God is angry with you, because the Holy Spirit is showing you all the ways you need to

change. Be thankful! Get enthusiastic about the fact that He's noticing you and helping you become more like Jesus. It's an amazing act of love!

Overcoming by Understanding the Proper Use of Your Armor

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:10-18

The Lord has given us all authority to overcome the world and its ways. His Word gives us strategies to overcome all the power of the enemy. The Word provides all the power we need to defeat any commands or situations the enemy may plan against us.

The armor of God will protect believers; however, there are some requirements that need to be in place before it can accomplish its intended purpose. Let's examine what those verses are saying.

It's not Just Mentally Putting on the Armor while Saying the Verses!

The belt of truth – Sin inhibits our ability to see truth. If we walk contrary to the Spirit of Christ in us by walking out from under His Lordship, we become vulnerable to the lies and deceptions all around us. To benefit from the belt of truth, a believer must cultivate biblical truth as a way of living.

You put on the armor of God by selling out to Jesus in every way for every piece.

Each piece of the armor is a catalyst to have you examine yourself, so you can stand without fear when you face any situation.

Each piece of armor requires a commitment and a purposeful dedication to the Lord.

The armor is ours, but it doesn't fit if our hearts are not right before the Lord.

Are there any ways in which you are not fully functioning under the Lordship of Jesus Christ?

*It's all about
heart
motives!!*

The breastplate of righteousness – The breastplate covers the heart. Heart motives are very important if a believer chooses to remain in right standing with God. Cultivating integrity - by making sure there are no selfish, sinful motives blocking your relationship with God - allows the breastplate to function for you.

Who are you when no one else is around? Do you need to address the issue of integrity with God? Are you trustworthy?

*Getting ready
means
waiting on
God!*

Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace – If your steps are ordained by God, you'll be where you're supposed to be, when you're supposed to be there, for God's reasons. You'll be ready in any season to share the Gospel, not in your own strength but in the power of the Holy Spirit within you.

Do you spend enough time with the Lord to allow Him to ordain your steps? If not, what do you need to eliminate from your life?

*After you
have done
everything
and submitted
yourself to the
scrutiny of the
Holy Spirit,
you stand
prepared!*

Is spending time with the Lord a great joy for you? If yes, why? If not, why?

The shield of faith – Without an unshakable faith in God - knowing Who He is and who you are in Jesus - there will be little power in your life to overcome the fiery darts (lies) of the enemy. God is looking for your total dependence on Him. He is and has available everything you need to live an overcoming life in Christ. The

enemy, on the other hand, will try to convince you that you can't trust God at all times. (What else would you expect from a liar?) As you continually spend time with God and truly get to know Him, you will see more and more clearly that you have all the power of heaven backing you up against an already defeated foe.

*He really is
the Creator of
all things!*

Do you really believe God is Who He says He is? Is that unshakable truth for you? Why or why not?

The helmet of salvation – The helmet is a vital piece of body armor. It protects the thinking process. Salvation is the key to gaining access to the kingdom of God. It gives us daily protection, wisdom, actually everything we need to live an overcoming life on all fronts because of the covenant we have entered into with God through Jesus Christ. It's not a one-time occurrence; it's eternally ongoing.

*Stop listening
to the
imaginings
you have
learned since
birth!*

Remember: Not all the thoughts in your head are *your* thoughts! God's thoughts line up with His Word. The enemy's thoughts are attempts to lead you down the wrong path and get you to function unlike Jesus. Your own reasoning is insufficient. Side with God! He knows the plans He has for you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Read His Word!

As a believer, you have been given the ability to flow in the mind of Christ as you cast down and cease to entertain the lies and imaginations the enemy throws at you. If you choose to be vitally connected with the ways of Jesus rather than the ways of the world, your cumulative, ingrained, worldly habits, thought patterns, and unbelief will be seen as nothing more than lies that should be continually dismissed from your thought process. As you learn to function like Jesus day by day, you'll learn to think like Him. When the enemy attempts to derail you, his counterfeit thinking will be recognizable, and you can reject it before it has time to settle in.

*Sometimes
it's good to
hand the lies
and
imaginings
over to the
Lord,
admitting your
inability to get
rid of them in
your own
strength.*

In what ways have you chosen to cast down your own imaginations that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God?

The sword of the Spirit – The Word of God is absolute truth no matter how the enemy attempts to undermine it or destroy its effectiveness. Jer. 1:12 states that God is watching over His Word

The Word!

*Ah! The
power of the
Word!*

to perform it. Heb. 4:12 tells us: *For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.*(AMPC) As we pray and speak the Word, God is waiting to perform it on our behalf, whether it's used to address our spiritual enemies or the things in us that need to be changed by the Holy Spirit.

*Enjoy the presence
of the most
powerful sheep
protector ever.

His Name is Jesus!*

One word of caution: Some believers take on the posture of “wolf killers.” They see the enemy behind every event in their lives and blame him for all that goes wrong. They’re continually at war against all those “bad guys” and difficult situations they face. In doing so, they live a joyless life, fighting battle after battle, sometimes even fighting non-existent battles or battles that aren’t theirs to fight. Often, the Lord places us in difficult situations to refine us and make us like Jesus. Be mindful of that.

Do you consider the Word of God alive and powerful?
If not, why not? If so, why?

*Read about
the wealth of
praying in the
Spirit in
sections
throughout
this book.*

Pray in the Spirit – Having a spiritual language that allows us to pray the heart of God is a privilege available to every believer. Praying in the Spirit edifies our spirits and also affects situations and people that God wants to address. He is well able to accomplish everything without us, but here is one more way He includes us so we can be changed in the process while praying the perfect will of God. Being in continual communication with God through the power of the Holy Spirit is the most effective way to avoid the pitfalls the enemy tries to use to trap us and keep us weak.

Do you know how to pray in the Spirit? If you don’t, who do you know and trust that can explain it to you?

Overcoming the World as Jesus Did Is God's Plan for Us

Overcoming through Gaining the Patience of Jesus!

"I am able to do nothing from Myself [independently, of My own accord—but only as I am taught by God and as I get His orders]. Even as I hear, I judge [I decide as I am bidden to decide. As the voice comes to Me, so I give a decision], and My judgment is right (just, righteous), because I do not seek or consult My own will [I have no desire to do what is pleasing to Myself, My own aim, My own purpose] but only the will and pleasure of the Father Who sent Me." John 5:30 AMPC

*Waiting on
God is good!*

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven." Matt. 16:19

"Truly I tell you, whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven."

Matthew 18:18

Waiting on God to tell us when to move and when to stand fast is probably the biggest war most of us face, especially men. We all have a tendency to think it's important to remain in control over some areas of our lives. That's deception and it means we haven't surrendered to the complete Lordship of Jesus Christ. Not a good strategy. This hinders the Holy Spirit from working fully in our lives. In fact, it shows we don't trust God! We're not in full submission to Him!

*Waiting on God to find His
will before you move is a
really good idea!*

We apparently believe our timing is better than His. We sometimes think God forgot about us or is late with whatever we need. If we're in this state, we can be assured He's after some sin and He'll do what it takes to see that it's no longer a part of our lives. (He may also be working in us to draw close to Him as our "go to" place.) Either way, our complete trust in Him is God's priority, so we might as well make up our minds that whatever we feel is our main battle in the moment is not the reality. God is probably focused on the destruction of the idols of pride and rebellion. Surrender your sin as often as you need to and watch Him bring His power so you can overcome it along with any upcoming battles in your life.

*If you don't
know where
you are to be
when you're
supposed to
be there, you
will wonder
what those
spiritual
explosions
are all around
you!*

Note: If we pray and are impatient with God and we don't trust in His timing, we'll find ourselves looking for reasons as to why our prayers aren't answered. We may even resort to binding this or loosing that, or worst-case scenario, walking away from Him rather

than digging in with the Lord no matter what to understand what He's doing.

It's tempting to engage in skirmishes to stop whoever or whatever we think is hindering the fulfillment of our seemingly crucial needs. The trouble with that is we can easily miss what God is doing when all we care about is the end result. Keep in mind the journey is usually far more important than what you think you're waiting for. The enemy loves it when we enter into battles of our own making or wars that are not ours to fight. God is interested in who we are becoming as trials come our way. The enemy sends trials to defeat us. God allows them to make us like Jesus!

How good are you at waiting for God's plans to develop in your life? Name the times when even though you know God's timing is perfect, you moved ahead of him anyway.

What was the result of your impatience and what did you learn?

Overcoming by Destroying Old Habits

Clothed in the full armor of God, it's important to learn how to overcome any challenge that comes your way.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One), 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 AMPC

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 KJV

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

We can never truly prosper if we try to straddle the tall fence between living what the Word says and living the way the world says we should. It's impossible to get either foot on solid ground. It causes us to be double-minded. We can't live in two camps at the same time. We need to choose. Jesus said in Luke 11:23, *He who is not with Me is against Me.*

*Stop looking
over the
fences placed
in your life by
the world.*

Until we established a spiritual relationship with God through Jesus, we functioned in the supposed wisdom of the world. We formed worldly habits and conclusions on who God is, how we think, what we do, how we evaluate, how we act in relationships, etc.

*There is
nothing good
for you there!*

When we come to Christ, we discover we need to align our lives and everything about us with the Word of God in order to live successfully in the world God created. He set the standards! This takes time, changing our priorities to suit God's plan for us, life-long joyous repentance, and the power of the Holy Spirit to continually make changes in us to make us more and more like Jesus. We use the Word of God to course correct throughout our lives.

What imaginations (those things you learned before you came to Jesus) do you follow as truth? Name the things you believe to be true that are contrary to the Word of God. (Take time to simply wait on God quietly during the next few days and let Him reveal them to you.

Overcoming by Allowing God to Change You

Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]. Revelation 3:19

*You have
been made
different by
the cross.
Now it's time
to live in that
covenant.*

So repent of this depravity and wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, this contriving thought and purpose of your heart may be removed and disregarded and forgiven you. Acts 8:22

Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]. James 5:16

And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [separate you from profane things, make you pure and wholly consecrated to God]; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound and complete [and found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). 1 Thessalonians 5:23 AMPC

Get ready to be changed! Join the Holy Spirit in searching for those things that need to be eliminated. Don't be surprised by the number of things you've unknowingly hung onto. Embrace the continual cycle of repentance, forgiveness, and joy as your new lifestyle.

Are you enthusiastic when the Holy Spirit relentlessly reveals those things that need to be changed in you? Why or why not?

Do you consider these revelations a gift from the Lord, Who desires to give you His very best so you can become everything He intends you to be? What do you plan to do so your heart can change and embrace what the Lord wants to lovingly accomplish in you?

Overcoming through Pursuing Intimacy with Jesus

But he who keeps (treasures) His Word [who bears in mind His precepts, who observes His message in its entirety], truly in him has the love of and for God been perfected (completed, reached maturity). By this we may perceive (know, recognize, and be sure) that we are in Him:

⁶ *Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself. 1 John 2:5-6 AMPC*

Being called to walk as Jesus walked while He was on this earth is an impossible task without the involvement of the Holy Spirit. Representing Jesus to others by loving as He loved through the power of the Holy Spirit shows them Who He really is. Many in today's church tell others about a man they've heard about. Jesus

wants us to tell others about our best Friend, the One we know intimately, which enables us to live His life before them.

To become minimized enough so that Jesus can live His life through us is a war against our own personal opinions, passions, lusts and entrenched idols. It is won only through the power of the Holy Spirit. That overcoming spiritual power is available to us if we request it and our hearts are convicted to pursue it.

What areas need immediate attention so you can more accurately represent Jesus properly to those around you?

How do you plan to take responsibility for those areas in your life where you are not like Jesus? What steps can you take now to posture yourself for lasting change?

Overcoming by Understanding God's Kind of Warfare

If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves, pray, seek, crave, and require of necessity My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. 2 Chron 7:14 AMPC

The verse above is probably one of the most misused verses of the Bible. For many years, it has stood as a banner verse for those who are bent on changing cities and eliminating the strongholds over those cities. Countless nights of "warfare" have been spent mapping regions, casting "this" perceived stronghold down and commanding "that" darkness to leave. It's used as a license to be a wolf killer rather than a sheep protector, whose focus is all about becoming everything you can be in Christ.

For all our past "spiritual" activity, we now live in a nation that has turned its back on God. We live in communities that are infested with all the cares, pleasures, and deceptions of the world, and a land that is far from being healed.

Look again at II Chron. 7:14. God is speaking to HIS people. Nowhere in that verse does He refer to those who don't know Him. The responsibility is on what we now call the church of Jesus Christ. It's up to us to repent, turn from our wicked ways, receive forgiveness, and be grateful for any healing God brings on the land.

*Maybe it's
time to quit
trying to do
the
impossible
and allow the
Holy Spirit to
do His job!*

*See page 62
about spiritual
warfare*

Don't fight!

Repent!

*You were a
"bad guy"
once, weren't
you?*

Think about it!

We must get quiet, pray, and discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us. Without question, we need to examine our own hearts and repent of what He shows us. Then we can address in prayer and in person whatever further steps are needed. Too many members of the body of Christ are focused on the sin outside the church, when God says we're in a war of repentance over the darkness in our own hearts.

Are you willing to spend time with the Holy Spirit so He can reveal those things that call for repentance on your part? Are you willing to walk out the healing process in honesty and obedience? Why?

Are you willing to pray for others to receive a healing in their lives through repentance? Can you hold up that person in prayer with the love of God in your heart? How can you prepare your heart to protect you from being critical and judgmental?

*We have met
the enemy
and
sometimes he
is us!*

In the area of relationships, what if you are part of the problem? What steps are you willing to take to become instrumental in the healing process?

Overcoming by Taking Responsibility for Your Sin

What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fighting's) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members?

²*You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask.*

³*[Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your*

intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures.

⁴ You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God!] Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.

⁵ Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?

⁶ But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it).

⁷ So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.

⁸ Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

⁹ [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].

¹⁰ Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant]. James 4:1-10 AMPC

Are You Ready to Pray This Prayer?

Ouch, but You're right, Lord! Thank You, Holy Spirit, for giving me the opportunity to take responsibility for my sin and my unChrist-like attitude. Bottom line: I am disloyal. Please forgive me. I do have other loves. Change my heart. Help me to resist the devil by coming close to You. I choose to surrender everything to You!

Are you at a point in your walk with the Lord that you can receive these truths without feeling hopeless? Can you see sin as the thing that hinders you from being free? Can you view the directions given in James 4 as your opportunity to overcome those things that stop you from being more like Jesus? What steps do you need to take at this moment?

Breaking your marriage vow or your covenant with God is not a good thing to do!

Some of us pass it off as if it didn't mean much to Him.

When you take responsibility for your sin and place it under the Lordship of Jesus, you are free!

Overcoming by Learning to Love as Jesus Loved!

*Jesus prayed
for the best
interests of
the man with
the hammer
in his hand
and the one
who had just
made His
flesh like
hamburger.*

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

Luke 6:27-30

But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop (leave it, let it go), in order that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you your [own] failings and shortcomings and let them drop. Mark 11:25

Invoke blessings upon and pray for the happiness of those who curse you, implore God’s blessing (favor) upon those who abuse you [who revile, reproach, disparage, and high-handedly misuse you]. Luke 6:28 AMPC

*We are called
to love those
who want to
kill us or kill
those we
love.*

Never return evil for evil or insult for insult (scolding, tongue-lashing, berating), but on the contrary blessing [praying for their welfare, happiness, and protection, and truly pitying and loving them]. For know that to this you have been called, that you may yourselves inherit a blessing [from God—that you may obtain a blessing as heirs, bringing welfare and happiness and protection]. 1 Peter 3:9 AMPC

Here are a few things that may help you as you walk through the process of forgiving. First of all, forgiveness begins as a choice. Once you make the choice to forgive, surrender the matter to the Lord and let the Holy Spirit work you through the offense.

*Father, flood
them with the
same mercy
you have
given me!*

A while back, we had to deal with a very difficult situation that brought great turmoil to our family. In the course of walking through it, the Lord told us: “They’re doing the best they can.” That immediately changed the atmosphere, and we were able to proceed in God’s peace. Even today when we deal with other sticky situations, we try to remember, “They’re doing the best they can.” It goes a long way in moving the healing process along.

Ever hear of the mercy prayer? You may want to use it during your prayer time at some point. It’s very simple. “Lord, please flood them with the same mercy You have given me.” Doesn’t that bring peace to your heart?

List the names of anyone you need to forgive. Now what happens?

*Holding
anything over
anyone is a
spirit of
control!*

How will you prepare for the time when the darkness in the world comes against everything you are and all you believe in?

*Forgiveness
brings
freedom in
Christ!*

What needs to change so you can love your enemies and forgive those who spitefully use you just like Jesus did?

If you don't love others more than you love yourself, what steps do you need to take so you can?

Overcoming by Praying in Holy Spirit Power

He who speaks in a [strange] tongue edifies and improves himself, but he who prophesies [interpreting the divine will and purpose and teaching with inspiration] edifies and improves the church and promotes growth [in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, and happiness]. 1 Cor.14:14 AMPC

But you, beloved, build yourselves up [founded] on your most holy faith [make progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], praying in the Holy Spirit; Jude 1:20 AMPC

The definition of the word "edify" means: To instruct especially so as to encourage intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement. Praying in the Spirit builds up and strengthens your inner being - the eternal spiritual being that is designed to love and serve Jesus.

*The Holy
Spirit was
present
when you
were
created. He
understands
how to
intercede for
you and
edify you to
make you
whole!*

In the following section of this document, there's a more in-depth description of the importance of having the ability to speak to God spirit to Spirit through the Holy Spirit. Suffice it to say, at this point, that much is accomplished, and many wars are won in the power of the Holy Spirit by praying in the Spirit. It's an opportunity to communicate with God, edify your inner being, and have your own personal prayer language to use any time you choose, especially when you don't know what to pray.

If you find yourself resistant to the idea of having your own personal prayer language, please state your reasons why.

Do you see how communicating directly with God by the power of the Holy Spirit could be valuable in preparing as a bride would prepare for the return of her Bridegroom? What steps would you take if you decided to investigate this opportunity?

Overcoming by Living for Others

The giving of yourself for someone is one of the highest forms of intercessory prayer.

“My little children, for whom I am again suffering birth pangs until Christ is completely and permanently formed (molded) within you Galatians” 4:19 AMPC

“With this in view we constantly pray for you, that our God may deem and count you worthy of [your] calling and [His] every gracious purpose of goodness, and with power may complete in [your] every particular work of faith (faith which is that leaning of the whole human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness)”. 2 Thessalonians 1:11

Self – focus is a bondage

“[For I always pray to] the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation [of insight into mysteries and secrets] in the [deep and intimate] knowledge of Him,” Ephesians 1:17 AMPC

Self-focus is the bondage most of the church is in. If the enemy can keep us focused on the ways of the world and the plans

he has to hamstring us and others who believe, he wins every war he initiates.

When you pray for the best interests of others, you can't help but get your eyes off yourself. When you care for the needs of others more than you care for yourself, you function in concert with the heart of Jesus. That posture is very much needed on your way to learning how to relate to others with the heart of Jesus.

What does it mean to "birth" something in others as Paul said he was doing?

If you are willing to labor on behalf of someone else's need, how do you think the Lord would have you begin?

How do you plan to begin to care for others more than you care for yourself?

Overcoming by Keeping Your Covenant with God

From Our Father's Heart

*"Don't you think that I would love to give you everything
that you would like from Me?
Do you for one moment believe that I do not see your need and
desire to meet those needs with all My heart?
I would!
You see, however, we have an agreement.
You have agreed to allow Jesus to be Lord over everything that
you are, all that you own, and every situation in your life.
I have agreed to conform you into the image of Jesus.
Those two commitments are working together
to accomplish truth for your life.
You have no ability to become anything
other than what you have always been.
You need Me to change you.
To do that, I place you in situations, bring people into your life,
and allow hardship to come your way to carve away
at the person you used to be,*

*What if Jesus
cared only
about Himself
and His
comfort?*

*This is
sometimes
quite painful
until what's
needed is
accomplished
in them!*

*Understanding
this is pivotal
in your growth
in Christ and
your ability to
overcome the
world and its
ways!*

*in order to allow room for your new inner being
to come to the forefront.
I am never far from fulfilling all your desires.
Before I do that, however, your desires need
to be conformed to those of Jesus.
When that is accomplished, it allows you to fulfill
your commitment to Me and My promise to you.
It is allowing everything to work together for good.
Is it not time for you to stop asking Me only for things?
Those will all come as you grow up
and I am able to send them your way.
Begin to work with Me
and allow My promise to come to pass in you.
You will be amazed at how delightful your life will be.
Be assured that I will keep My promise to you.
While I am doing that, I am helping you
to keep your commitment to Me.”*

*For I received from the Lord Himself that which I passed on
to you [it was given to me personally], that the Lord Jesus on the
night when He was treacherously delivered up and while His
betrayal was in progress took bread,*

²⁴ *And when He had given thanks, He broke [it] and
said, Take, eat. This is My body, which is broken for you. Do this to
call Me [affectionately] to remembrance.*

²⁵ *Similarly when supper was ended, He took the cup also,
saying, This cup is the new covenant [ratified and established] in
My blood. Do this, as often as you drink [it], to call Me
[affectionately] to remembrance.*

²⁶ *For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you
are representing and signifying and proclaiming the fact of the
Lord's death until He comes [again].*

²⁷ *So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the
Lord in a way that is unworthy [of Him] will be guilty of [profaning
and sinning against] the body and blood of the Lord.*

²⁸ *Let a man [thoroughly] examine himself, and [only when
he has done] so should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

²⁹ *For anyone who eats and drinks without
discriminating and recognizing with due appreciation that [it is
Christ's] body, eats and drinks a sentence (a verdict of judgment)
upon himself.*

³⁰ *That [careless and unworthy participation] is the reason
many of you are weak and sickly, and quite enough of you have
fallen into the sleep of death.*

³¹ *For if we searchingly examined ourselves [detecting our
shortcomings and recognizing our own condition], we should not be
judged and penalty decreed [by the divine judgment].*

³² *But when we [fall short and] are judged by the Lord, we
are disciplined and chastened, so that we may not [finally] be
condemned [to eternal punishment along] with the world.*

1 Corinthians 11:23- 32 AMPC

When you study what a covenant is and what a covenant meal signifies later in this guidebook, you will have much more insight into the magnitude of these verses.

You see, the Passover meal - held in high esteem by the Jewish people - foretold the coming of their promised Messiah right up to the very moment Jesus broke the bread and said that it was His body, broken for them. He was saying He was the One they were waiting for.

At that moment, a spiritual and legal transformation was being made. Before the cross, the meal was celebrated in hope of the coming Messiah. After the cross, it was to become a covenant meal in remembrance that the Messiah had come. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." In essence, "I'm the One. The promise is being fulfilled right before your eyes. Your Messiah is in the room with you at this very moment!"

Jesus goes on and tells His disciples that as they continue to celebrate this new covenant meal, they should remember they've entered into a covenant of total submission to Him as the one and only sovereign Lord of their lives.

We Have Entered the New Covenant with God

Even though our salvation is sealed by the terms of the eternal covenant, when we live according to our own ideas apart from His Lordship as New Testament believers, we violate that covenant and must come to repentance so our relationship with Him is back in order. It's so important that there are no roadblocks in our covenant with God!

In I Cor. 11:25, Paul shares that Jesus speaks of a new covenant that was put into play through His death and resurrection. It opened the door for a restored relationship with God. In simple terms, God offers us everything He is and has. We, in turn, offer Him the same. (No question of who got the better deal, is there!) However, as life goes on, we tend to forget that in accepting the covenant, we agreed to offer ourselves in total submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We agreed that He is free to do in us whatever He desires in making us more and more like Jesus. Those little words, "Yes, Lord," pack a mighty big punch.

Let's move on to communion, the commemoration of the new covenant between God and followers of Jesus. It's a covenant meal. At a covenant meal, the terms of the covenant were agreed upon. We are given the opportunity to take stock in where we're at in regard to the terms of our eternal covenant and then reaffirm our desire to be wholly devoted to God. Is everything in order? What do I need to repent of that has gotten in the way of my total submission to the Lordship of Jesus?

You will understand the significance and importance of celebrating the covenant meal with an honest heart as you study covenant starting on page 190 in this book!

It is a spiritually legal transition.

Study the covenant terms beginning on page 190

You will wonder why stuff just isn't working for you!

You are looking for blessings when God wants to change you by placing pressure in your life.

*Because of
your
ignorance of
the
importance of
this
commitment,
you will
wonder why
your spiritual
life is on idle!*

Repentance is the key that brings us back into submission to the Lord so that He can give us what we need to accomplish His desire to make us like Jesus and we can honor our commitment. Many believers and churches are asleep, even spiritually dead because of violations to the eternal covenant when they refuse to turn from the pet sins they embrace and then participate in the covenant meal. They overlook their sins and still act as if they're following the terms of the covenant. They have broken their promise to make Jesus the Lord over those areas of their lives many times, and still participate in the covenant meal as if they haven't violated their agreement. They are spiritually and/or physically weak, sickly, asleep, unforgiving, overwhelmed, or unaware because of sin. They have little effect on the saved or unsaved.

Our rebellion and arrogance in participating in communion in an inappropriate manner causes God to act on His covenant promise of doing all He can to make us like Jesus; in essence, to bring us back into the covenant contract terms we agreed to. Under the judgment of God, His hand is bringing us to repentance so our relationship with Him is repaired and we can walk in confidence with His favor.

*God is
devising
means to
bring your
heart back to
Him.*

But God does not just sweep life away; instead, he devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from him.

2 Samuel 14:14b NLV

In observing the life of one who has violated covenant, things can become pretty miserable. In the spiritual realm, things are in place to bring that person back to repentance, which restores wholeness.

This Concept is So Important to God and His Church that
We Want to Reinforce It
with the Following Paragraphs

*We act as if
we haven't
broken
covenant and
still want God
to bless us.*

Eating of the bread and drinking of the cup is ratifying covenant as God sees it. Many in the church have fallen into the sleep of death. As a dead person cannot be awakened, there is very little that can stir the hearts in some people who call themselves Christians. Do you think this pleases God?

The saying that approximately twenty percent of the church performs like the church when called upon is no joke, but an abomination. The unforgiving, sin-filled church is truly asleep as if dead. Even many of those who are attempting to move with Jesus are weak and sickly, either spiritually or physically, because of sin. Could this be why God is calling those who will listen to become totally devoted to Him?

Just like one who is feeble due to illness has little power for overcoming, many of us stagger through life, having little effect even on our family, neighbors, or friends who aren't saved, not to mention the enemies of the gospel. It is impossible to love or be passionate with such hindrances.

We are under the judgment of God (His hand is bringing us to repentance) for covenanting with Him, while choosing to remain in some of our sins. Our pride, unforgiveness, anger, hatred, selfishness, worry, fear, etc., judge us before Him. No wonder the world can't see Jesus in us! We don't even mean what we say to God. Why do we stay there if we really want to please God?

*Did you
know that
you were
lying to
God?*

Note: Take the time now to sit quietly and reflect on your attitude toward communion and all its wonders. It is covenant. It is a contract. It is a promise! We have the privilege of restating our desire to be in covenant with God each time we participate. In covenant with God, it's easy to remember that all He is and all He has is ours; but what about that part of the covenant where all we are (or aren't) and all we have are His? If we've made Jesus Lord, isn't He free to do what He wants with us, making any necessary heart changes? That's what we agreed to when we came into relationship with Him.

Do you understand a little better how we are basically lying to God about our total commitment to Him if we participate in a covenant remembrance meal and refuse to examine ourselves for sin? What are your thoughts?

Lord, this is between You and me. What should I do?

Overcoming through Intimacy with God

"Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and nothing shall in any way harm you. Luke 10:19 AMPC

"And He replied to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." Mark 9:29 AMPC

In Luke 10:19, each of us is given authority over every demon because of our position as believers. That's not to be taken lightly because it's no small thing! Even the moderate believer has

absolute authority because of the power of the cross and the defeat of the enemy when Jesus said, "It is finished."

*Don't mess
with the dark
side unless
you're
spiritually
prepared and
completely
sold out!*

However, there are higher echelons in the demonic realm to be dealt with that require from us a more focused devotion to the Lord. Mark 9:29 talks about prayer; some manuscripts add fasting. It might be more meaningful if we say that our authority is limitless, so to speak, if we live a life of continuous communion with the Lord and fasting from all the ways of the world - not a mediocre relationship and just tinkering with the notion of sin. Walking in the absolute power of God is not understood by the believer who is skipping a couple of meals, living a self-focused life, and mistakenly thinking they can overcome a spiritually dark situation in their present condition. This is about truly knowing our God and the depth of our faith in Him.

What is stopping you from selling out completely to God?

Overcoming Fear with God's Kind of Love

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18 NIV

An accurate word to replace the word "punishment" in the verse above could be the word "loss." A person who is afraid of any kind of loss lives in constant fear. This fear cripples anyone who desires to prepare as a bride would prepare for her Groom.

*Hanging on to
stuff is a big
problem for
most of the
church!*

Jesus had no fear of loss. He owned nothing physically and - more importantly - in His heart. He cared for nothing of this world, even the loss of His life; so, no one or nothing could touch Him.

Because Jesus could function in perfect love, He overcame the world and any attachments it could bring. As believers, we can live in the same freedom if we choose to live in His kind of love by the power of the Holy Spirit. Living in fear is a war designed by the enemy and lived out by our flesh as a stumbling block to total freedom and a hindrance to our ability to live as Jesus lived.

What attachments do you hang onto that hinder you from functioning in perfect love?

Overcoming by Dedicating Yourself Completely to God

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-11 NIV

God has given us everything we need to live a godly life, which we gained by coming to know Him. He has also given us promises that enable us to share His nature and avoid the pitfalls of the world. We are to make it a point to engage with His promises. Peter presents it almost like a chain reaction.

Starting with the promises, add your diligence. Then in exercising your faith, develop virtue. In exercising virtue, develop knowledge. In exercising knowledge develop self-control. In exercising self-control develop steadfastness. In exercising steadfastness develop godliness. In exercising godliness develop brotherly affection, and in exercising brotherly affection develop Christian love.

Growing in this way, the more useful we become to the Lord and the more certain we are of His keeping power and the steps we take as we each walk the path God chose for us. This process solidifies our relationship with Jesus and keeps us heading for our eternal destination with Him. It's an extraordinary recipe for spiritual victory!

*Step by step,
walking hand
in hand with
the Holy Spirit
brings you to
a wonderful
freedom in
Christ!*

Overcoming by Making Things Right with Others

From Our Father's Heart

One of the
most
important
heart
actions for
preparing as
a bride,
winning the
war over
your flesh,
and
overcoming
any
challenge
you may
face.

*"You walk in unforgiveness
and still claim to be My vessel of service.
How can that be?
Forgiveness is what the cross of Jesus is all about.
He died so that you could be forgiven.
Forgiveness is what you have received so that We could talk.
Forgiveness is what you are counting on
when you stand in front of Me on that last day.
Would you like to be given the same forgiveness that you have
given others, especially those close to you?
That is what will happen unless you change your heart.
Forgive as Jesus did.
Forgive as you have been forgiven.
Don't think that I am with you in anything you do
until you have forgiven everyone who has harmed you.
Come to Me; I will help you!"*

If You Have No Desire to be Right with God
and Right with Others, You Need to Examine Yourself
for the Sin of Unforgiveness

You will
have no
passion for
Jesus, if
your only
passion is to
be in control
of everything
and
everyone
around you.

Unforgiveness is a controlling sin. Along with its root sin of pride and its companion sins of anger, hatred, and murder, it causes more weakness in the body of Christ than most have imagined. The Bible says if you ask with the wrong motives, you will not receive.

*"[Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives."
James 4:3a Amp*

Hidden beneath many prayers are motives driven by the sins that accompany unforgiveness. Therefore, because of His integrity, God cannot move on your behalf.

Let's Examine the Sin of Unforgiveness Before We Go Any Further

A Key to a
powerful life
in Christ

Matthew 5:23-24 NIV *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,*

24) leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

Remember: The root sin of unforgiveness is pride. Because that's rarely recognized, it's never really dealt

with as such; and we evade submitting the root sin to the total Lordship of Jesus Christ. Anyone harboring unforgiveness toward another has, in essence, determined to hold that sin (real or imagined) over that person and has chosen to be the “lord” of that incident or grieving situation.

The dominance and control exercised by the unforgiving party denies all that was promised to God when they committed to the Lordship of Jesus in all areas. This area, therefore, remains under the dominance of Satan. Pride caused him to be expelled from the presence of God, and he is delighted when we follow his lead in any area of our lives.

If God has forgiven the person who has offended you, but you won’t, are you not telling Him that your position is loftier than His? In light of the truth, that’s not possible, is it? What do you need to do at this point?

God requires that we forgive if we desire to be truly free. He even shows us in Luke’s account of the crucifixion that Jesus forgave all those who harmed Him, and also the repentant thief, just before He died. We must do the same.

Unforgiveness, although often deeply masked by wounds, scars, and self-pity, is one of the greatest causes of weakness in the body of Christ and it will cripple any attempt to draw close to the Lord if left unconfessed. Once this main stronghold is acknowledged and confessed, a tide of healings and freedoms are able to surface and it can be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

List anyone you have anything against.

Now forgive them, one by one if necessary! It starts with a choice.

*The attitude
of “I will
remain in
charge” is
the antithesis
of submitting
to the
Lordship of
Jesus Christ!*

*Playing God
is a
frightening
and
dangerous
position to
occupy!*

*Reconcile if
you are the
offender or
you have
been
offended.*

*Very big, and
VERY
important!*

What about You?

*What about
forgiving
yourself?*

Have you even forgiven yourself for failing God so many times? (Remember, you are totally forgiven by Him when you repent. You are under the blood. Remember also, God knew how many times you would fail Him, and He still asked you to be His through the Holy Spirit. Your sin is no surprise to Him.) What sin of yours are you sure that God can't forgive?

If God forgives you, but you won't accept His forgiveness by holding that sin over yourself, so to speak, have you not told Him that your perspective carries more weight than His? In reality, that's not true, is it? What are you going to do now?

*The verses
we've shared
are only a
limited
sample of
how to win
the white flag
war of
surrender.*

*Finding more
could be a joy
and a healing
process
throughout
your life as
you pursue
the heart of
Jesus.*

Thoughts and prayers

Remember Who You Are Because of the Cross

At this juncture, it might be good to take a moment to reflect on what's been provided for us to overcome the world and participate with freedom in the eternal covenant God made with us through Jesus. Although we will cover this amazing covenant later in more depth, let's savor a few things at this point.

As you see the times and seasons in which we live, it is paramount that you know who you are in Christ and what has been provided for you to overcome the world and all its ways. You need to understand why you, as a believer, can rise above all the commands and demands you face to keep you captive to fear and control.

Allow the Holy Spirit to bring His peace and wisdom to you as you simply wait on Him to reveal your spiritual provisions and position. As you go further in your relationship, remember that when you surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, all heaven responds in a manner beyond any of our wildest imaginations.

All the promises of the covenant with God are put in play on your behalf. Every dark element that has controlled your life is broken and ineffective. You become a spiritual being capable of living in the presence of God. Heaven makes room for one more eternal occupant. Your eternal address changes. Think of yourself as a spiritual being having a human experience! On earth, equally remarkable God-empowered promises, privileges, and miracle actions take place on your behalf through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as you confess His Lordship over your life.

Do you believe there is more to the cross than salvation? Explain!

How has your life changed since you gave your life to Jesus? What are you willing to do to live in the promises of the Bible?

The Most Wonderful Plan Ever Made
and
We've Become Part of It

*This is so
cool!*

One reason Jesus came to earth was to set God's plan in motion that those who choose to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord will be freed from all the tentacles of the world and capable of living in God's *spiritual* kingdom every day if they choose to do so. God's plan included the incredible new spiritual reality of the kingdom of God coming down to this earth.

Five Amazing Components of Our Salvation

We have the following five essential and life-giving heavenly tools available to us through Jesus now that the kingdom of God has been spiritually established on earth.

---1---

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 3:2

*"And behold, the curtain of the **temple** was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split." Matt. 27:51*

*Jesus
established a
spiritual
kingdom for
us to enter
and escape
the horrors of
the world!*

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..." Matt. 6:7-13 ESV

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16:19 ESV

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 18:18

Jesus initiated a powerful spiritual kingdom that offers any believer the opportunity to rise above all the horrors of this present darkness. It began when the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom by Father God Himself. Because He did so, those who believe are invited into the Holy of Holies with God in His very presence, an act that was unthinkable before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This spiritual kingdom provides a place where the will of God can be implemented and accomplished on the earth through those He entrusts with its freedoms—those who believe in Him. It has a direct connection with God’s eternal kingdom and by-passes all authority given to the enemy when mankind fell. No other power can access or overcome God’s spiritual kingdom on earth.

Remember Jesus’ words when asked how to pray: “...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven... He was saying that we request the will of God to be present on this earth in the same way it is done in heaven.

Jesus mentioned the kingdom of heaven 31 times and the kingdom of God 51 times in the Gospels. Kingdom living and what the kingdom is like are mentioned 151 times in the New Testament alone. He was establishing the truth that once Satan was defeated at the cross, part of the result would be the overcoming of the kingdom of the earth. In the Garden, authority over the earth was given to the deceiver. God would legally reclaim it as a new residence for those who belong to Him. Instructions on how to function in the spiritual kingdom of heaven on this earth were explained in Matt. 16:19, when Jesus shared with Peter the key to living in the spiritual kingdom and in Matt.18:18 where He included the same instructions for all of us.

*Thy kingdom
come so Thy
will can be
done on
earth, just like
it is in
heaven!*

Did you know the spiritual kingdom of heaven is available to you as a believer? If you do, do you still choose to function under the authority and power of the world that is still controlled by Satan? What are you going to do about it?

How do you plan on learning to live in the spiritual kingdom with God in Christ?

---2---

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Cor. 5:17

When you accepted Christ as your Savior and Lord, you immediately became a new spiritual creation capable of functioning in the spiritual kingdom Jesus established. Jesus said the ways and powers of this kingdom were near at the beginning of His ministry, then they were upon us (or imminent) as He walked on earth, and they are within us after His resurrection once we surrender to Jesus.

*You are a
brand-new
creation!*

You may not look like it outwardly, and you may not feel like it as you live day by day; but as a believer, you are not the same as those who function without Jesus. The life that can stand in the presence of God has been permanently cemented within you as a spiritual being.

*Now you are
a spiritual
creation,
capable of
living in the
spiritual
kingdom He
has
established!*

You have been invited to live above the physical world that those without a commitment to Jesus live in, the world you may have existed in most of your life. Also, your eternal address is now different from theirs. Before you came to Christ, your eternal address was in a place totally separated from God. Now you have been changed into an entirely new creation so you can spend eternity with Him.

Why do you think the world and its ways are still so appealing to you, when your new life is yours for the asking?

*Think of the
wonder of
that!*

What are you going to do about learning to walk in the kingdom of God with Christ as a new creation capable of doing so?

---3---

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." Acts 2:38

²⁵ I have told you these things while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you. John 14:25-26 Amp

"And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Romans 8:27 ESV

²⁰ But you, beloved, build yourselves up [founded] on your most holy faith [make progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], praying in the Holy Spirit; Jude 20 AMPC

When you gave your life to Jesus Christ, you were given the opportunity to communicate Spirit to spirit as a spiritual being. This spiritual language is initiated by the Holy Spirit for you and through you to communicate beyond your natural thinking. It provides the means for you to pray as the Lord would have you pray, rather than praying about the carnal things you feel you need in the flesh. It provides for continual communication with God even when you don't know how to pray or what to say to Him. In Jude 20, it says your renewed spirit can be built up and edified by praying in the Holy Spirit.

Being a spiritual language, it allows our spirit (as spiritual beings) to communicate spirit to Spirit by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's called our personal prayer language or tongues. (This is notably different than the gift of tongues and interpretation, which is designed for the benefit of the church.) Jesus Himself told His disciples He would have to leave, but the Holy Spirit would come to reveal the Father and the Son to those who believe.

Please note: Any attempt to fully explain the magnitude and wealth of being able to function in the depth of the Holy Spirit will fall far short of its goal. Even a lifetime of prayer and study will never be enough to fully express the amazing impact the Holy Spirit can have in the life of the believer. Having said that, our hope is that you will be encouraged to pursue further understanding of what is available to you through the wonder of the Holy Spirit and His presence in your life. Find someone you trust who has their prayer language and ask them to pray with you about receiving this wonderful privilege.

Go to the Word and see how your personal prayer language is a gift from God that can be imparted by the laying on of hands. It can also become available to you as you ask for it and surrender yourself to receive it when God answers your request. Don't allow the prejudice of people's opinions to sway you from receiving this amazing privilege and benefit offered to you by Jesus Himself.

Remember that Satan's playground is the mind and man's intellect. He hates the idea that believers can bypass their thinking process and his control by connecting spirit to Spirit in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why he's been trying so diligently to see that speaking in other tongues remains a controversy. Unthinking members of the church willingly play into his hands when they misunderstand, malign, (and if they've received their prayer language misuse) this very effective way to communicate with God on a level far above any connection the enemy can muster up.

As we communicate in our prayer language, one of the things the Holy Spirit does is pray God's plan for our lives. He's always been with the Father and the Son. He knows the plan They intend for our lives and prays for it to be implemented. He will also

*Your inner
being - the
eternal "you" - is
now capable of
communication
with and
through the
Holy Spirit.*

*It's really more
amazing than
we can fathom
with our puny
minds!*

pray so your spirit is edified. Also very important is the fact that the Holy Spirit will have you join Him in interceding for others. This is especially helpful when we don't know what to pray.

Communicating with God to understand His plan for you will help you to be where you're supposed to be and when you're supposed to be there for the reasons God would have you there. You can be standing with God on the solid rock of His desires for your life rather than attempting to navigate the shifting sands of whims, opinions, or worldly controls.

Think of praying unceasingly in your prayer language as a spiritual battery charger that continually pours the wisdom, knowledge, and power of God into your inner being. As the Holy Spirit prays God's plans for you and supplies the power needed to establish those plans in your deepest spiritual parts, there's no power anywhere that can stop the covenant power of God from flowing to you.

*Find
somebody
that you trust
and do what it
takes to
satisfy your
heart about
the baptism in
the Holy
Spirit.*

*You will never
be the same!*

Spiritual Language Given upon the Laying on of Hands

“When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Acts 8:15-17 NIV

Spiritual Language Given before being Baptized in Water

“For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” Acts 10:26-47 NIV

What questions do you have about praying in an unknown language?

Are you willing to put down any preconceived notions to investigate and pray about receiving your own personal prayer language? If not, why not?

Who do you know and trust that has their prayer language and could biblically help you to learn about receiving and benefitting from your own personal prayer language?

---4---

"...whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." 1 John 2:6

"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. John 5:30

"Saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but [always] Yours be done." Luke 22:42
AMPC

"Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires..." John 8:42-44

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ..." John 1:1

Jesus showed each of us how to walk in His spiritual kingdom as a new creation. His life - all He said and did, and everything He stood for - was a pattern for us to follow as spiritual beings, while functioning in the spiritual kingdom of heaven on this earth. He overcame all the powers that control those who are still walking with their father, the devil. We will also overcome the world and its ways as we follow the patterns He set.

All that He was, said, and did began through communion with His Father. He knew where and when to go about His Father's business—for His Father's reasons and as an example for us to follow. Because God established His spiritual kingdom on earth and made us spiritual people, who are able to function in that kingdom through Jesus' death and resurrection, we can walk as Jesus walked by studying His life, living a life of obedience to God, and submitting to the changes the Holy Spirit will make to remove anything in us that doesn't resemble Jesus. He had full access to

What an incredible impact your life will have on others if they see Jesus everywhere you go!

He showed you how to do it throughout the Gospels.

Why wouldn't you emulate the One who knows how to overcome everything?

the heart and desires of God; so do we. He understood the wealth of rising above the dictates of the world; so can we. He functioned in perfect love; so can we. It would be wise to study Jesus, understand His heart, and then surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit to make us like Him so the world can see Who He is as we reflect Him.

We are to emulate Jesus so we can say with Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ." He could make that statement without the slightest bit of pride because he had made a study of Christ his life's goal. He submitted to the Holy Spirit to do whatever it took to make him into an overcoming believer, alive in the world but dead to its demands.

Getting to know
Jesus, fully
understanding
who you are in
Him, willing to
do what it takes
to become like
Him so you can
no longer be
touched by the
world.

"[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] ¹¹ That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body]." Phil 3:10-11

Seems like a
wise path to
take, doesn't it?

(The verse above will be dissected on page 170 in this study to show its life-changing wealth.)

Once again, do you believe you can walk above the world in the same way Jesus did because of what He has done for you on the cross? If not, why not? What does God say? Be a Berean and find out. ☺ (If you believe it but you don't want to do it, that's a whole other discussion!)

Do you know of others who really desire to prepare as a waiting bride and are devoting themselves to learn of Him and how to do so? Who are they? Do you pray for them? Do you spend time with them to mutually encourage one another?

---5---

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.." Col. 3:16

“For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12 AMPC

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matt. 24:35

You were given the Word of God to guide you past all the horrors of the world into the safety of the arms of your heavenly Father.

Following the living Word and studying the words that were given to us by His apostles and prophets are truths to help us navigate through life far above the ways of the world. They are remarkable spiritual directions and a perfect roadmap for every facet of true life.

A perfect road map for life!

Do you believe the Bible is the infallible word of God and that you can rely on it for absolute truth? If not, why not? If not, how is this affecting your life and those around you?

You might want to ask yourself how much you function in the provisions the Lord makes available every day. It might be a good idea to ponder them one by one and do whatever it takes to get them solidly in your spirit before you go any further.

Take a Moment to Rest and Remember
Do This Often!

By continuing this far, you have answered the call of the Lord and are being shown how to move away from a formal, cold, religious lifestyle. You're joining those who have discerned the times and seasons and have chosen to prepare themselves for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His bride. We commend you for choosing to break from the ranks of the business as usual and pursue the freedom of a crucified life that was always intended for those who call themselves Christians. Realizing that many have gone before you, and many will come after you, be assured that your Father in heaven is very pleased with you.

Good move!

*Soon,
business as
usual will not
be enough.*

Don't Compare Yourself to Others

*Others focus
on stuff,
even good
stuff.*

*You focus
on Jesus.*

*When loving
Jesus is
your priority,
there is so
much peace,
even in
times of
pressure!*

*Think of it!
The Holy
Spirit is
taking His
time to help
you become
all you can
be in
Christ.*

*He is
investing in
you!*

The overcoming life and a life that waits and prepares as a bride would prepare is a heart position of pursuing selfless love, which means a purposeful death to everything that is fleshly vs. choosing to hold onto some of the things that "can't be so bad because they are widely accepted." People looking for Jesus to be their Shepherd rather than their Bridegroom will work hard for Him and appear spiritually prosperous, but they won't choose intimacy with Him as their priority.

Your choice to respond to the call that draws you closer to the Lord is a good indication of your desire to be at the center of what God is doing at this time and a positive response to the heralding by the Lord - which is at hand all across the land - to sell out. Just delight in your Lord! As you press in with Him, you'll acquire a heart to minister to Him in His inner chamber, seeking only His face, and prepared for the true service of unconditional love to others and living the passionate life of Jesus in the coming end times. There's no more wonderful place to be! It's why you've been born.

A Note about Refiner's Fires and How the Holy Spirit Is Preparing Your Heart for the Times and Seasons Ahead

As you respond to the heralding of the Holy Spirit to prepare as a bride would prepare to meet her Bridegroom, you will likely go through a demolition and remodeling process as God removes what is not like Jesus and makes way for the life of Jesus to shine through you. Nothing could please the heart of Father God more.

Never tire of the Holy Spirit directing His laser light of conviction on every part of your life, giving you the opportunity to joyfully repent of any spot or wrinkle on your garment. He's leading you to the place where Jesus truly is Lord of everything in your life. This is the kind of life that will allow you to overcome life's hardships as challenges arise.

Make sure you always consider the Holy Spirit a Friend Who takes you by the hand and walks you through every step you need to take to be prepared to welcome Jesus with the proper heart motive, that of a bride anticipating her eternity with her beloved Bridegroom. Don't listen to the lie that this way of life is an exercise in legalism or works.

Being diligent in attempting to please God out of love for Him does not deny the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus shed for your sins on the cross. It's simply a heart attitude of love and gratitude to the Lord for Who He is and all He's done for you. Laying your life down is an act of worship, so He can be glorified in a world that

fights so hard to ignore or negate Him when they so desperately need Him.

“Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations.³ Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience.

⁴But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4 AMPC

Don't be alarmed when trials too big for you to handle come your way. Your Father in heaven is not angry with you. In fact, the opposite is true. He trusts you to remember to need Him. Because He loves you so much and desires to make you more like Jesus, the safest place you can be is where you recognize your need to trust Him in everything, taking nothing for granted. Just as Jesus said and did nothing of Himself but relied completely on His Father in all things, you are designed to do the same. Needing Him for everything is a good thing!

*Needing
God for
every
thought and
every move
is a very,
very good
thing!*

Let's continue when you're ready!

Thoughts and prayers

From Our Father's Heart

As I promised,
I am going to make you into the likeness of My Son, Jesus.
The challenges before you will be death to your flesh.
Sometimes they will cause you to despair
if you don't understand that I am truly rebuilding you.
While we are working together and you are being prepared,
I have some suggestions to help you along the way.
As you go, I will convict your heart
and help you with other thoughts for your journey.
Start here.
Let's delight in the journey together.

Jesus endured the cross because of the joy of what it was accomplishing. In contrast, so many of us walk around prune-faced because God is doing some carving of our flesh. Because of how we function during times of trial, most people would not desire to serve the Lord, no matter what we say. Our countenance would drive them away.

Why wouldn't we approach this incredible walk with God not only from a spiritual aspect, but from the physical also, so we can be a proper witness all the time? We prepare for everything else we do. Why wouldn't we take some logical steps to ensure things that hinder us from accomplishing our journey are eliminated? Why wouldn't we add anything to our lives that would help us be a better witness?

*List your
reasons
why!*

Things that have no bearing on a proper relationship with our Lord get in the way. They are like rocks in our backpack. Why would we give notice to them, much less carry them?

Begin Now!

Love passionately.
Have more fun, knowing that you are in the Lord's hands.
Sell or give away at least one third of all that you own.
Eliminate everything in your life that "owns" you.
(Get rid of or limit the use of your TV, your phone,
and video games; they own you.)
Do not walk closely with fools
who talk of foolish ideas that are not in the Word.
Eat right.
Take long walks alone or with a friend.
Decide to love people through Jesus.
Determine to see others as Jesus sees them.
Smile a lot.
Smile some more.
Become a study of your mate's needs.
Love your mate passionately.
Go on dates with your mate.
Pray with your mate.
(If you don't have a mate, focus your love on Jesus.)
Be satisfied with your present state.
Stop striving to achieve something in the future,
even good ministry goals.
Physically bless your mate and your children.
Study your children as the gifts that they are.
Love your children passionately with holy love.
Spend time with your children or help someone with theirs.
Find some way to honestly compliment everyone.
Take more time to do everything; slow down.
Be at peace with your relationship with Jesus,
especially when He is challenging you.
Sing more.
Rest more.
Sit and talk with God anytime you can.
Go to God more often, simply to be together.
Cultivate Biblical reasons to be hopeful.
Get your eyes off of yourself and your own needs.
Learn to devote yourselves to the needs of others.
Tell others that they are valuable.
Forgive.
Forgive.
Forgive some more.
Seek to make new friends.
Remember that this life is not a trial run;
it is the real thing.
Remember why you are living this life.
Do not be afraid to live it as passionately as Jesus would live it.
Jesus desires to live His life through you.
Be blessed in your comings and goings.
God loves you!

*Make sure
that you are
led by the
Lord with all
of this.*

*This could
be fun!*

When You Are So Busy Doing,
You Have No Time for Becoming

*Your future
is bright!*

This relationship with God we have entered into because of Jesus is the most astounding life anyone could live. Our future is bright. We need to do what it takes to eliminate anything that clouds our perspective of the inner joy we should be having in the journey, even in rough times.

Romans 9:16 Amp says: "So then [God's gift] is not a question of human will and human effort, but of God's mercy. [It depends not on one's own willingness nor on his strenuous exertion as in running a race, but on God's having mercy on him.]"

Waiting on God
by
Andrew Murray

An incredible book!

*Own one when you
can.*

"We have as little power to increase or strengthen our spiritual life as we had to originate it. We "were born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the will of God." Even so, our willing and running, our desire and effort, avail nothing; all is "of God that showeth mercy."

"All the exercises of spiritual life, our reading and praying, our willing and doing, have their value. But, they can go no farther than this; that they point the way and prepare us in humility to look to and depend upon God Himself, and in patience to wait His good time and mercy. The waiting is to teach us our absolute dependence upon God's mighty working, and to make us, in perfect patience, place ourselves at His disposal. They that wait on the Lord will inherit the land; the promised land and its blessing. The heirs must wait; they can afford to wait."

from Waiting on God by Andrew Murray

Waiting on God

One of the most misunderstood and yet one of the most foundational forms of prayer is waiting on God. The simplest definition of waiting on God would be a continual life devotion to God and an immovable expectation and awareness that He will intervene in your life.

There was no separation between the life of Jesus and the life of His Father in heaven. He did nothing of Himself, and more importantly, He wanted to do nothing of Himself. He had placed His life as an offering before His Father, so the Father could do with it as He pleased.

With that heart position, His life became a continual prayer. The perfect will of His Father in the heavenly (spiritual) realm became manifested in the physical realm unhindered. As the

perfect vessel, Jesus imparted the very nature of His Father to the world.

Today, waiting on God is our portion of that kind of life, whether for our own needs or on behalf of someone else. As we devote ourselves to our heavenly Father, wanting only His will as our life's purpose, we become the same kind of vessel to accomplish His will to be "done on earth as it is in heaven."

Waiting for the will of the Father to be revealed to us and then waiting for it to be accomplished in and through us is truly the blessed life. Think of it! In our everyday, ordinary occurrences we call "life," we are actually conduits for the will of God to be accomplished.

We have the privilege of waiting in God's presence until His power is with us to accomplish His will. Think of it, if we set aside time reserved for our Lord, the Holy Spirit will continually provide an atmosphere of love, acceptance, peace, and freedom.

As His children, the right to be in His presence was exemplified when the veil of the temple was torn in two when Jesus died. What a powerful foundation He's made available to us to live out His perfect will in our lives!

Is there anything you can think of that is more important than waiting on God, waiting for God as a pattern for living your life?

What stops you from waiting on God as your priority in life?
(Additional pages may be needed here.)

From Our Father's Heart

Ignorance of Me is a liberty in which
you cannot afford to indulge.
It is now time to bring those who will hear
to a renewed knowledge of who I am
and what I desire to accomplish
in these end times.
I sent My Son to show you how to act before the world,
so that many would come to salvation.
Few see His likeness in you, so they will not turn to Me.
That is about to be over.
Soon My power will change the heart
of anyone who desires to hear My call.
I will develop His character in surrendered individuals
and then corporately change My church.
I am raising up a holy people, a true bride who is looking
only to be formed into His image.
If you surrender to My heart,
the world will see Jesus in you and come to Me.
Understand that I am not wanting you to do more to be like My
Son.
I am going to do more in you, so that you will be like Him.
You must surrender all of you;
I will do the rest.

*He's saying it
again.*

*Your world is
about to
change.*

*Will you be
ready - for the
proper
reasons?*

Jesus never intended His followers to be fearful, stodgy, or religious. He never wanted anyone who didn't love Him to tell others about His reasons for dying on the cross, attempting to do so because of obligation. Before the cross, He sent His friends two by two into the cities. He said, and I paraphrase, "You guys tell that city the kingdom of God is about to exist in their midst."

He was saying their world was about to change. Life as they had known it was over and would never be the same again because He had come. Those who received His message became His friends. He allowed those who didn't to go on their way. He loved them but did not choose to deal with them at that time, nor allow them to be part of what God was doing in their midst. There were too many with an open heart who needed Him and would respond to what was being done.

After the cross, He sent all of those who believed He was God to tell others of His "death-to-self" kind of life. He created exact reproductions of Himself by supernaturally imparting His very Spirit to those who believed. His disciples showed others who Jesus was because they lived like Jesus would live in front of them. In the time He was with them, He showed them how to live.

After He went to heaven, He imparted His nature to them. All of His characteristics, loves, desires, and available communion with

His Father through the Holy Spirit was theirs. He was originally one, who became twelve, who became thousands.

If you have given your life to Jesus, you are one of the millions upon millions of reproductions almost 2000 years later who have inherited His marvelous heart and exuberant, wonderful life. We have the freedom to become passionate about the things He is passionate about, because we have inherited His character as part of our new birth.

Do you believe you can live and walk just as Jesus did when He was on this earth?

Why have you answered as you did?

Is your answer in perfect alignment with the Word and the heart of Father God? Why or why not?

As stated before, when Jesus walked on this earth, He was showing us all how to live. He had the ardent desire and the God-inherited freedom to be deeply in love with His Father and with every day, ordinary people. Most of those whom He loved freely, and therefore touched the deepest, didn't have a clue as to who He really was at first. They only knew deep down in their hearts that this special man who lived in their midst somehow loved them in a way they had never been loved before. It was a love that contained a mysterious kind of power and they wanted to find out what that power was.

*This must
have been fun
to watch!*

Seeing His bright-eyed, mouth-open kind of happiness when they were healed or delivered, people knew He had something special to give them and that He was probably worth following, at least long enough to learn more about Him. When He put His hands on and embraced the outcast, or when He intimately contacted the lonely, chastised leper - something that just wasn't done in His society - He was viewed as being noticeably different. When He

laughed and bear hugged in the wonder of the healing moment with that same lower element of society, He broke their stony hearts and planted a new kind of hope in their souls.

Would you like to be this free? Why?

What is really stopping you from displaying this kind of passionate life?

Are your reasons valid biblically? Why or why not?

The life of Jesus was a stark contrast to the stagnant religion of the self-important, pompous, segregated, and aloof religious leaders of that day. Ordinary people were free to love Him because He loved them first, something never equated with things that were called “godly” up until that time.

Honest, longing people enthusiastically chased Him everywhere He went to hear more about and experience His kind of love. They chased Him until they themselves were caught up in the wonder of eternal life.

*I think Peter would
have been
interesting
to observe.*

Have you ever wondered about the situations and conversations Jesus had with His chosen twelve that were never chronicled? Have you ever thought about the jokes they played on each other, and the fun they must have had together? Remember, the guys Jesus chose to be with were “from the street.” They were all very worldly and full of typical “guy stuff.”

It’s easy for you and me to forget He was on a “God-designed” mission of love, His Father’s deep kind of love. He was fellowshiping firsthand for the first time in the wonder of those He had created.

When Jesus walked on the earth, God was physically present with His creation for the first time since the Garden of Eden. His “adventure” allowed Him to experience the joy of those He loved

firsthand, while expressing His love to them, and at the same time birthing His Father's kind of love in their hearts.

He may not have spoken a black '57 Chevy convertible with fender skirts and a continental kit into existence for their entertainment or anything like that; but when He left their immediate presence, He sure had a bunch of devoted people to carry on His work. They were crazy in love with Him - crazy enough to enthusiastically set a passionate, overcoming life course that would probably lead to their deaths.

After they understood the full impact of what they were called to do and were empowered by God to do it, they embraced their mission heartily. They chose an all-out, fully committed, enthusiastic denial of self, and embraced the life of the One who showed them what love really was. Their passion set the world on a course of change, just as yours could in this day. In fact, that is exactly what you have the privilege of doing.

The kind of adventure the first century church embarked upon didn't begin in them because the Lord simply preached good stuff, exhibited a sour countenance to hearty fishermen, or compromised His teachings while in private. They followed the example of a life worth following, a life worth dying for.

Comment about your perspective of Jesus and the way He might have lived.

Is it a little different than the way you are living?

Would you like to have been able to watch Him? Why?

*When Jesus
was around,
the people
He was
close to fell
crazy in love
with Him.*

*What kind of
life course
are you
ready to set
for yourself?*

We've Missed Jesus
(Because We Don't Know Jesus)

I believe we have dropped the ball of exhibiting Jesus' kind of wonderful love to others. Because we don't show His kind of love to them, few people see enough of Him in us to leave their dead-end existence so they can embrace His future-filled eternity.

*We really don't
know how to
do this.*

Our Generation Also Misses Jesus

Almost two thousand years after His resurrection, Jesus is still joyously reproducing every fiber of His being in anyone who embraces Him as Lord and chooses to sell out to His kind of life. That is the Father's chosen way of bringing lost people to Himself.

The life of Jesus is imparted to us through the Holy Spirit and we are supposed to simply carry Him to others by allowing Jesus to live His life through us. It is a wonderfully ordained concept of one living God's way in front of another, who does the same in the midst of others, and so on.

How can it be then that we, as exact reproductions of the Lord because of His Holy Spirit living within each of us, can live daily among the inhabitants of this land and go unnoticed as resembling Him?

Today, most of us tell the story about a man named Jesus and expect people to embrace it unto salvation. Because of our lackluster Christianity, we talk of miracles of the past to show the power of God, name the heroes of the faith as the only testimony of God's kind of life being lived through people; and rely on "preachers" to evangelize those to whom we should be showing Jesus. It never dawns on us that we are the message as well as the messenger. That's too big a price to pay for most "Christians."

*Possessing
the full
character of
Jesus is the
perfect goal
for our lives.*

We Need to Give Christ to Others

No one can give away what he does not possess. We can only give away what we actually own. If we do not "own" the life and character of our Lord, it is impossible to exhibit that character to anyone.

Your talk may resemble the talk of someone who owns the character of Jesus, but your walk will not back up His kind of life

unless His life is actually allowed to flow through you. If His life does not flow through you, people will see your powerless life and never be drawn to Jesus no matter how much you preach at them, do good works in front of them, or even show them about Him through the testimony of others. They want to see Him in you.

One day the full life of Jesus should be your only desire. That desire can only come from being with Him all day, every day, as your only reason for living. When it is impossible to be with Him because of everyday circumstances, your only desire should be to get back into His presence. You must be ardent in your desire to have anything that stops you from getting to be like Him eliminated from your life.

Is it?

It's Not Necessarily Who We Are in Christ, It's How Much of Christ We Allow to be Lived Through Us

We get confused, just like the early disciples did. We think Jesus has come so we can finally be somebody special. He fooled our carnal thinking. He gave us the example of dying to self, so we could do the same regarding our own lives and allow Him to live His life through us.

In God's economy, if you want to truly be somebody, you have to become nobody – not something the flesh wants to embrace. Greatness in the Kingdom of God centers on servanthood, not on being seen and served.

How does that differ from what you've been taught?

How do you feel about the concept of serving everybody else?

You need to note and be careful of this: If we spend our time pursuing the concept of who we are in Christ, there is a tendency to become self-focused and even self-exalting, which sets us up to allow for the patterns we followed when we functioned in our old nature, that nature that always wanted its own way. If we become too self-absorbed, we even get to the point where "dying to self" becomes self-centered and all about us!

Note!!!

What do you think is the solution?

The solution to your dilemma is to find out who Christ really is and then make it your life's work to fall in love with Him! If that becomes your goal, your focus will be on the wonder of His Person, and everything else will begin to fall in place.

Note: Initially, as you begin to see who Jesus is, you will also see who you are not. Please do not let that deter you from pursuing Him. It should actually drive you to Him, because you cannot be truly free until you realize your total bankruptcy, inabilities, and desperate need of Him. That realization alone can cause you to cling to the Lord and is a great step in the direction of being able to depend solely upon Him and who He is, not upon yourself and who you are (or aren't.)

*Being
bankrupt is the
perfect heart
position.*

Believe it or not, recognition of personal bankruptcy can become a very peaceful place to be because it will constantly remind you of your need for God in all areas, and the fact that He is always looking for you to depend on Him in all things. As we all pursue Jesus, we will eventually become so taken up with who He is, that we will no longer come out of need, but out of love – the highest form of relationship. Then watch what happens!

Are you comfortable with being totally bankrupt before God? Why or why not?

Before we go any further, what is in your heart at this moment? Take the time to really pray through your thoughts before you answer.

Once Upon a Time (A Short Story)

Once upon a time in a far-off land there lived a gracious, benevolent, all-powerful Father King. The castle home of the King was arrayed in the most precious trappings available – gold, silver, jewels, the finest appointments. With its spacious rooms, magnificent architecture, and palatial integrity, it was almost more than one could comprehend or fully appreciate. The sprawling gardens, rivers of purest water, and finest orchards on vast landscapes that blanketed the magnificent terrain – unlimited resources farther than the eye could see - provided a totally fulfilled life of joy for its residents.

This kingdom, aside from its splendor, had one quality that made it unique in comparison with all the kingdoms that surrounded it. Far more beautiful, far more valuable - actually priceless – was the ability to have true intimacy between the Father King and all those who chose to live in His Kingdom home.

This intimacy, the unashamed sharing of oneself, allowed the Kingdom home to radiate with a beauty that left all other kingdoms in darkness by comparison. The King's heart wanted only what was best for those who lived in His home. They, in turn, served the King and each other with the same intimate heart He had. Life in the home of the King was joy beyond measure, for people cared more for each other and their King than they did for themselves because the heart of the King was firmly engrafted in each of them. Being of one heart, there was no reason or need to function in any other way. This allowed the King's love to continuously radiate to everyone. This way of life burst forth and was visible to all the kingdoms of darkness that surrounded the King's home.

It was the greatest joy of the King's Son to make this heart of His Father available to anyone who desired one. Although He was the Son of the richest King in the land and heir to the throne, He would dress Himself in His well-worn servant's garb, and move from town to town in each kingdom, sharing the need and wonder of receiving the King's heart while loving His people. He knew there could be no real life without His Father's heart.

No one could enter His Father's home unless this unique heart was accepted and engrafted into his or her own life. The desire and love for those in need of the heart encouraged Him onward. After all, He Himself had His Father King's heart: They were one. He also knew that one day, without warning, the heart would no longer be available; and those without it would never be able to live in the Kingdom home of His Father. They would never share the intimacy that set this Kingdom apart from every other kingdom. Without this new heart, the desire for intimacy was absent, and the Father could not impart Himself to them.

Others, who simply didn't understand, were buying, selling, or giving away other hearts from other kingdoms that made them feel needed; but the Father King's heart was unique in that once

imparted, it created a desire for intimacy with Him and Him alone. As all who fully accepted that heart turned in one accord to the Father, His Kingdom grew strong, for all desired only what the Father and Son knew to be best for everyone.

These other counterfeit hearts would be tainted, containing pieces that appeared to come from the Father King's heart, but actually did not. In their kingdoms, good deeds, moral restraint, folklore, and religious traditions were evident. As the people were caught up in these pursuits, they had no desire for intimacy with the Father King, nor any desire to live in His Kingdom home or follow His ways. Oh, how important it was to receive the heart of the Father King and no other!

As the inconspicuous Servant Son traveled from kingdom to kingdom telling of His Father's home and the need for a new heart as a requisite to living there and partaking of its everlasting love, some joyously received the new heart. Having tired of other hearts from other kingdoms, they could easily see the value of this one. They fully received it, allowed it to change them, and even shared the Servant Son's good news with those around them.

Some felt no need for a new heart or a need to live in a better place, if that place really even existed! Others laughed at the foolishness of the Son, very willing to stay in the dark kingdoms. Still others tried to stop the Servant Son from telling others about the new heart. If someone accepted the heart of the Father King from the Son, it was one less customer for the seller of the counterfeit heart.

The majority of the residents of all of the surrounding kingdoms, however, saw great value in only selected parts of the Father's heart. Feeling a totally new heart was unnecessary, they modified the Father King's heart to suit their own understanding. Most removed the part that required intimacy, for it took too much time away from the things that seemed much more important. The heart still looked very much like the Father's, but the light of the Father's life could not radiate from it because He was not an integral part of it.

The people with the modified hearts would visit the Father King's home and enjoy the visit very much, but they never got close enough to the Father to make it a permanent stay. In many cases, they looked and acted very much like the residents of the Father's home, but it was only a cover for deeply disturbing selfish interests that were hidden inside of their lives.

Some even came back to the Servant Son and other residents of the surrounding kingdoms to convince them their modified hearts were as good, or even better, than the Father King's heart. They insisted their hearts made the kingdoms of darkness that pervaded the other kingdoms a brighter and better place to live. Oh, how they sacrificed much for the Father King's home (or so they said;) and they pointed out how they even made those who accepted other hearts from other kingdoms do the Father's will because of their sacrificial efforts. The majority of residents of most of the surrounding kingdoms embraced these modified hearts,

believing they were as good and powerful as the Father King's heart. This grieved both the Father and the Son.

Wonderful times were available to those who lived in the Father King's home. The Father was always available to His people. As they spent time with Him, He would reveal the wonders of His Kingdom home in greater and greater detail and the plans He had for all of the residents. He always imparted Himself to those who desired this intimacy. Each encounter revealed who the Father really was, and the plans and reasons behind all He did. Hearts joined in intimacy with the Father exploded with love. There was no room for fear or self or need in the hearts of those enjoined to the Father King.

All was in order at the home of the Father King, which was a great contrast to the homes of the other kingdoms. The modified heart kingdoms and their residents could not understand why there was so much peace and brightness there and why the Father King would not help clean out all of their kingdoms. Some even cursed those who lived with and for the Father King. How could those in the Father's Kingdom not help with all of the needs when there was still so much darkness? The modified heart could not see that the darkness could not be changed; it would always be there. It could only be given a new heart from the Son to make it bright, and it had long ago rejected that as its only option.

It came to pass that a great banquet was being prepared in the Father King's home to honor His Servant Son. In anticipation of this glorious event, all the residents of the land ceased from any activity that interfered with their preparations. Each examined his banquet garment to make sure it had no spots or wrinkles or anything that was not bright, for no form of darkness would be allowed at this event.

Much joy was evident as preparations were made. The whole Kingdom began to ring with a wondrous sound as intimacy with the Father King increased, knowing of the upcoming, wondrous event.

This harmony brought strength and power to the Father King's land, which could be felt in all the surrounding kingdoms. Those who were steadfast in their belief that their modified heart was as good as the Father King's heart were disgusted at the sound of the preparations because there was so much other work to be done. Their distaste for the Father King grew deeper and deeper as the joyous sound of the preparations got louder and clearer.

Increasing numbers of the residents of the kingdoms of darkness heard the sound and accepted the Father King's heart, so they could live in His land and help with the preparations. Others, however, hated the sound and did all they could to block it from their hearing and from the hearing of others. A great effort was put forth in the kingdoms of darkness to cover the sound with a noise of their own. This created much strife in these kingdoms as the battles needed to change the land, which were being fought by the modified hearts, increased with intensity.

With more and more warriors from these kingdoms accepting the Father's pure heart and leaving the battle lines to live in intimacy with the Father King in His Kingdom home, less and less progress was being made to bring brightness to these kingdoms even though the efforts increased. Weariness, fatigue, and frustration were the daily fare of the modified hearts. Violent anger would manifest itself toward the Servant Son who was busy giving the Father's Heart away, seemingly oblivious to all of their battles.

The leaders of the modified hearts agreed something had to be done. "We must present our needs to the Father King. The few battles we win are more than nullified by new battle fronts, and we need help to fight."

It was decided the modified heart leaders of all the battles in the surrounding kingdoms would join together to seek an audience with the Father King to tell Him of their dire circumstances. He surely would side with their causes and help them, for they were right and just.

The day arrived when all the leaders of the surrounding kingdoms met to begin their pilgrimage to the land of the Father King to share their woe. They traveled for many days and overcame many perils to get to the home of the Father King. Weary and battle worn, the peace and serenity that overwhelmed them as they entered the land of wonder when they arrived only kindled their anger.

As they traveled toward the residence of the Father King, the stark contrast between the preparations for the banquet honoring the Servant Son and their own battle preparations only served to intensify their disdain. Their minds seethed with the thought of the many warriors they had lost to this seemingly unnecessary effort. Did the Father King not care at all? Didn't He see the need to help them? By the time they reached the castle home of the Father King, the leaders were convinced their missions were a necessity, their causes were just, and their anger was righteous. They were ready for an all-out war, if necessary, to win their right to be helped in their plight.

The splendor, majesty, and peace of the Father King's home and the radiance of the Father King Himself did not dampen the zeal of the leaders of the surrounding kingdoms. They had come to plead their causes and were determined to stay as long as it took to achieve their goals.

"Unfair!" the modified heart leader from the Kingdom of Perversion declared. "I have a heart that sees what is wrong, but You won't help me fight the battles. The Kingdom of Perversion grows darker no matter how hard or how often we fight!"

"That's right!" chimed in the modified heart leader from the Kingdom of Murder. "No matter how convincingly we show them how wrong it is to murder, they still kill. In fact, as it grows darker, they even believe we are the ones who do that which is wrong, and they have determined to kill every one of us."

"The same thing is happening where I live!" declared the modified heart leader from the Kingdom of Covetousness. "All of

our properties and rights are being taken away. No matter how hard we fight, they just change the rules to suit their own needs. They don't care if things are fair or honest anymore. They're only concerned with rules that allow them to function unhindered. We lose more of our rights the more we fight."

"The same with us," added the leader of the Kingdom of Woundedness. "We have asked you for help to get close enough to our enemies to be able to reason with them; but when we try, they only hurt us more."

Each leader was impassioned in expressing his battlefront to the Father King, who listened attentively. Finally, after each leader had his say, the modified heart leader of the battle in the Kingdom of Religious Fervor asked, "Why would You direct us to fight these battles and then not provide the means for us to win? In fact, you even took most of our warriors away with the announcement and sounds of the preparation for the banquet for Your Servant Son. And He doesn't seem to care either! Why would You be so cruel as to leave us alone in the battles You have created?"

With that, the Father King held up His hand for silence. A great hush fell over the assembly of the surrounding kingdom leaders with their modified hearts as the Father King rose to speak.

The Father King began, "I have great sorrow for all of you and all of your concerns. However, I have allowed the kingdoms of darkness to exist for many years to be a catalyst so you can make proper choices. It has grieved My Son and Me to see how many of you choose to live in darkness when all this is available to you." He gestured toward the vast expanse of His wondrous Kingdom as He spoke. "Every opportunity to receive My heart has been presented to each resident of every kingdom. The choice has been yours as to where and how you wanted to live – either in pain and darkness forever or with Me in abundance and joy. I wish none of you would choose darkness, but such is not the case; and it saddens Me more than you could ever know."

The compassion in His voice deepened as He stood to move closer to the modified heart leaders. "But," the Father King stated, "it must be so. Freedom to choose must be extended to each resident. It is then that I know who truly desires to be with Me and be a part of future works and future kingdoms I will build or who desires to do everything independent of My will and pay the consequences.

"The simplicity of accepting My pure heart is the means I have chosen so all residents, regardless of their past, would have access to the joy of My Kingdom home. No one can ever say that he or she could not achieve the right to live with Me, for citizenship in My Kingdom is freely given and available simply by asking for the new heart from My Servant Son."

The modified heart leaders became restless because it seemed the Father King was avoiding their petitions. They knew battles were raging in their home kingdoms even as they were

listening. Accustomed as they were to warfare, they had difficulty quieting themselves to hear the Father King.

“What about us?!” cried a voice from the rear of the assembly. “What about our needs? While all of the turmoil is going on, our homes are threatened, our freedoms are being destroyed, and the darkness gets worse. What are You going to do about that?!”

“I have already done all I am going to do,” the Father King said to the astonishment of everyone present. “My plans have been laid out for everyone to see from the beginning, and all is proceeding according to schedule. It is in proper order,” He said calmly.

Then, raising His hand again to quell the rising tide of hostility that sprang up among the wide-eyed leaders, He continued: “You have come here today to tell Me of My need to help you in your quest to change the kingdoms in which you live. I would like to ask you these two questions: Who has asked you to fight the battles in which you have engaged? And from whom have you received your orders and battle plans?”

“Why, You did!” came the unanimous response. “You showed us the difference between right and wrong, and we have spent our lives showing others what we know and what they need to do. We have worked only for You – to bring Your desires to those in our kingdom homes. Our only purpose was to please You, for we know how much it grieved You to see the darkness. Our only intent was to make our fellow residents see the light of Your Kingdom home and to try to make their darkness light, too.”

“Friends!” the Father King exclaimed, as He walked among the assembly and placed His hand on their shoulders to calm them. Please listen carefully. I have appreciated your zeal and desire to please Me. I have noticed your efforts with great concern, but you have been mistaken as to My ultimate purpose for what you see happening. My purpose for you has never been to change the kingdoms in which you now live. My purpose has been for you and those who you reach with My heart to come out of them and live here with Me, for they are destined to grow darker and are doomed to failure.”

“Nothing can live apart from the light of My pure heart. You’ve seen that anyone who receives My pure heart leaves the battle to live with Me and then returns only to assist My Servant Son in giving away more of My pure heart. You’ve seen My Son Himself focus only on those who would receive My heart from Him; others He allows to go their own way.

“Don’t you see that as My pure heart is received, the accompanying desire for intimacy with Me eliminates all strife and fears and empowers you to discern the wonder and joy of doing things My way? As I share My plans and desires with those who come to Me, they see there is no longer a need to engage in the kind of battles determined by the kingdom of darkness. Our warfare is different. I only ask My people to bring others to Me, so they too can receive all of Me and understand their part in My plans. When

all is in order, and the timing is perfect, nothing will hinder My brightness from overcoming all of the darkness that seems so strong to all of you and your kingdom residents.

“Those who choose to live in the darkness will perish. My only desire for you is to accept My heart. I would rather have all of you with Me than have you win all of your battles for Me. The most important gift you can give Me is yourself. I desire to be with you above all else. Out of the intimacy we share, you will desire to tell others about My heart; and they, too, will share My love. The rest is already planned, and I will accomplish it very soon. Have no fear, for I choose to protect those who accept My heart from any eternal harm or strife.”

Then the Father King paused and looked at those assembled with eyes that held a love they had never seen before. He stepped closer, and with words that were given as gifts to be unwrapped by each of them, He said, “Don’t you see? If you give yourself completely to Me, I take you as My own. And as you come to Me in intimacy, I impart Myself to you and We become one.” His voice grew quiet and impassioned with love. Almost whispering, He continued, “All battles are already won through My Servant Son and His ways, which are My ways. All I want is all of you, for I love you.”

A great calm came over the assembly as the Father continued to reveal more of Himself to those gathered there. He walked close to the crowd, touching some of them as He spoke. Many times, as He had a specific word of encouragement for certain individuals, He would take their hands or hold their shoulders and look them directly in the eyes as He spoke intimately to them.

As the wealth and wisdom of the Father King’s heart and His plans for those who chose it were unveiled, antiquated weapons were quietly laid on the floor throughout the great room. Tears of repentance flowed freely from the battle-hardened warriors. Now that they were experiencing the Father’s love first-hand, an urgency to tell of that love - available only by accepting a true heart - replaced anger and hatred in their hearts, even toward the enemies of the Father King. Worn, bloody battle raiment was exchanged for clean white garments of submission and praise in honor of the Father King.

The wisdom of accepting the pure heart of the Father King overshadowed all other desires of all the leaders, as one by one they received the pure heart and all it contained. The thoughts of distant battles seemed like forgotten memories as the Father King’s wisdom and love unfolded before the eyes of the awestruck assembly.

Clenched fists of fury became open hands of service to the Father King. Striving zeal gave way to peace and freedom, as the desire for intimacy replaced the cold urgency of warfare. A knowledge of the true mission of bringing residents out of the kingdoms of darkness, rather than changing those kingdoms, soon became the only mission of the gathered warriors. All those who came to see the Father King that day came to a place of rest,

knowing the battle was already won by Him and their “battlefronts” were only distractions that obscured the Father King’s true purpose.

The return trip home was filled with much wonder for the newly impassioned followers of the Father King. The sounds of preparation for the great banquet now brought overwhelming joy to the changed travelers, as they peacefully journeyed toward their former homes. The bountiful landscapes of their new home welcomed them at every turn, increasing their desire to return as soon as they made the Father King’s heart available to those who were left on the raging battlefronts.

The now pure hearts were at peace as they returned to the kingdoms of darkness, which they knew were about to perish. The commitment of every heart included the realization that the same zeal with which they had fought against darkness would now be implemented for the brightness of the Father King and His Servant Son. There was much rejoicing in the Father King’s heart as He bid a temporary farewell to His new Kingdom home residents.

Soon afterward, the time for the great banquet arrived. A call was issued throughout the land to all who had received the Father King’s heart. All was now ready for the Father King to reveal the wonder of all that was available to those seated at the banquet table.

The weariness of preparation and the warfare that occurred during the distribution of the Father King’s heart became only faded memories as His servants received their reward of eternal splendor.

While the kingdoms of darkness spiraled to depths of decadence never observed before, the Father King presided in all of His glory, rejoicing at the joy of His servants as He unveiled His provision to those who chose to live with Him.

His greatest joy, however, was the presentation of His Servant Son – now the glorious King – to the pure-hearted. All power, honor, and majesty to destroy the kingdoms of darkness and reign throughout the Father King’s land were given to the once inconspicuous Servant Son. The Father King rejoiced as the pure hearted received His now radiant Son with love. All was at peace and in order in the Kingdom home of the Father King.

From Our Father's Heart

"There is No You Without Me!"

I wish to make something very clear to you.
"There is no you without Me."
So many of My people have brought Me down to their level.
I have become something they have added
to their lives, instead of their only source of life.
Do not make that same mistake.
Ponder what I've said until it becomes truth to your heart.
It will change your life, increase your faith,
and renew the proper sense of awe
needed to trust Me fully once again.
I gave the first breath to Adam.
If I should turn My attention from you for a single moment,
you would cease to exist.
However, you need to fear nothing.
Your days are planned by My desire and are numbered by Me.
No one and nothing will rob you of a single moment.
Fear nothing!
Love everyone!
Begin to see a larger picture of things.
I spoke the universe into being.
I formed you and I keep you.
You will live by My will.
It would be wise for you to live for My will.

Psalm 46:10 NIV "Be still and know that I am God..."

Psalm 150:1-6 Amp "Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the heavens of His power!

2) Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to the abundance of His greatness!

3) Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with lute and harp!

4) Praise Him with tambourine and [single or group] dance; praise Him with stringed and wind instruments or flutes!

5) Praise Him with resounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals!

6) Let everything that has breath and every breath of life praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (Hallelujah!)"

Jeremiah 15:19 Amp "Therefore thus says the Lord [to Jeremiah]: If you return [and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair], then I will give you again a settled place of quiet and safety, and you will be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile [cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwarranted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness], you shall be My mouthpiece.

The Very Basics

As stated previously, you and I have been given an invitation to be intimate with our heavenly Father. There is no question that the blood of Jesus has given us the right and the favor to call Him “ABBA,” but it never gave us the right to diminish who He really is because of our pride. Most of our words about our sovereign Almighty God have lost their impact because of familiarity and loose usage.

*Father God is
ABBA, but He is
Sovereign.*

*He is
El Shaddai!*

*Very important
to remember!*

Because of His abounding mercy and grace, some of us have lost perspective and minimized Him as God in our eyes. Some have brought Him to the level of being made in our image, demanding He serve our needs, rather than understanding we are made in His image and are formed to serve Him.

In this present time, there is an onslaught to destroy the faith of weak or ignorant Christians. The best way the enemy can destroy who we are, or what has been done for us through Jesus and the corresponding wonder of our relationship with Him, is to diminish who God really is in our eyes. We must never forget that this is the very same God Moses could not look upon because of His glory.

The “smaller” our God and Lord can be made to appear to us, the weaker He will seem and our faith will become. The weaker He seems, the less we will be in awe of Him. That is hazardous to our walk with Him; and consequently, to our wonder *of* Him and trust *in* Him as God.

Fact is, there is only One God. He is El Shaddai. He is more powerful than any need, greater than any foe, and worthy of all honor and glory. His will brought everything into being by simply speaking it into existence. He is God and there is no other. He held our first breath and owns our last. It is right to serve Him and live only for Him.

It is vital that every one of us understands where we are placed within the eternal plans of God. This life we live is about His plans and not ours. The extent to which we grasp that truth, right or wrong, will color every one of our actions as we go on this journey called Christianity; and in this case, Overcoming Life.

Does the idea that your life, ideas, needs, and wishes rank a far second to anything God desires and plans shake you up at all? Do you have to modify your thinking somewhat to operate fully in this truth? Explain!

How does the phrase, "There is no you without Me (God)," affect you? Explain!

What we deeply believe will determine who we are, why we pray, how we pray, why we attempt to bring others to see who Jesus is; and cause us to form a perception of why He did all that He did. This perception will be a foundation for how we interpret the Word of God; and consequently, how we carry out what we have learned, also showing others that same perception.

Where we place God in our plans will determine how we perceive the nature and purpose of our salvation. Wrong perception in this area will cause us to flounder blindly in a fog of religious activity, striving to find purpose for our life at best, and actually working against the real desires of God at worst.

Before you go any further, write down your honest perception of God as you have seen Him up until this point. Then write down how you view your relationship with Him and your view of what He thinks and feels toward you.

Note: You may not have enough room for all the Lord shows you as you wait on Him, and you should really start a special notebook for your thoughts and journaling.

We Need to Remember Who God Is and Who We Are in Christ

God is the Creator and absolute Ruler over everything, including all the vastness of the heavens and the earth.

But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. Jeremiah 10:10

“Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord. Jeremiah 23:23-24

*Father God is
ABBA, but He is
sovereign.*

*He is
El Shaddai!*

*Very important
to remember!*

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” ... Psalm 139:7-12

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalm 90:2

*Someone once
said: “God is
El Shaddai!
That means
there ain’t
nobody bigger
than Him!”*

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. Psalm 145:3

‘Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.’ Jeremiah 32:17

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, ...Deuteronomy 10:17

Do you consider Satan to be in any way equal with God? If you do, where did you get that information?

Do you have a fear of Satan, even though the Holy Spirit of God dwells within you? Why?

Watch How Small Satan Really Is!



There are Three Kingdoms:

The Kingdom of Heaven – God’s kingdom with all the vastness of endless galaxies, plus all the vastness of the spiritual realm in the heavenlies and on earth

The Kingdom of the Air– Satan cast down to only one of the vast number of planets - the earth

The Kingdom of This World – Where mankind physically lives under Satan’s spiritual authority until we are Christ’s

Satan has been cast down to the heavens that surround only the earth.

“The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”
Rev. 12:9

“On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.””
Job 2:1,2

“About judgment, because the ruler (evil genius, prince) of this world [Satan] is judged and condemned and sentence already is passed upon him.”
John 16:11

All Mankind Is Under the Control of Satan until We Become Christ’s.

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.”
John 8:42-44

“We know [positively] that we are of God, and the whole world [around us] is under the power of the evil one.”
1 John 5:19

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”
Eph.2:1-2

When everything is complete there will be a new heaven,
one absent of the demonic realm,
and a new earth.

The Enemy of God’s People Has Lied to Us About His Power!!!

Satan has been cast down to the heavens surrounding only the earth.



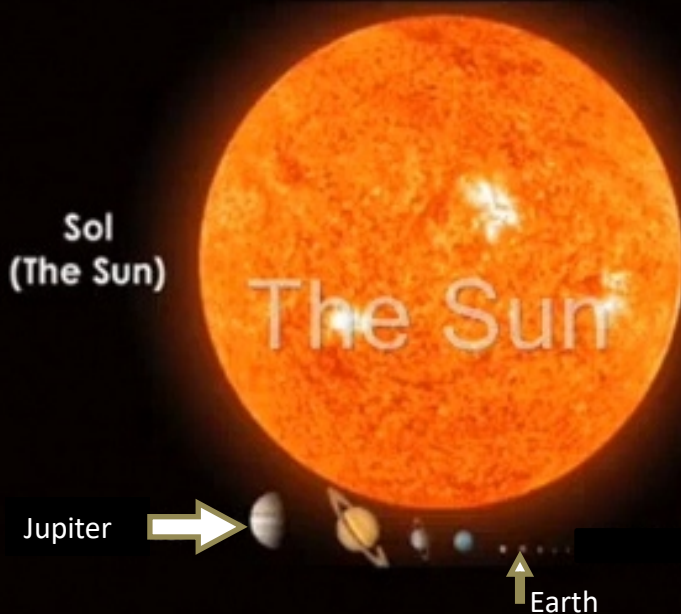
"AND you [He made alive], when you were dead (slain) by [your] trespasses and sins ²In which at one time you walked [habitually]. You were following the course and fashion of this world [were under the sway of the tendency of this present age], following the prince of the power of the air. [You were obedient to and under the control of] the [demon] spirit that still constantly works in the sons of disobedience [the careless, the rebellious, and the unbelieving, who go against the purposes of God].

Eph. 2:1-3 AMP

In the original Greek text, the word "power" (Exousia) is a collective term meaning the whole empire of evil spirits, and the term "air" (aer) means the lower atmosphere around the earth.

The demonic center of power to rule over fallen mankind, according to this text, is limited to the lower atmosphere around the earth.

Let's think about that and then put it in perspective!!!



Observe and remember how small the earth is in comparison to our sun. Our sun is 109 times bigger in diameter than the earth.

It gets even better!!!

The earth is only one very small planet, in one small galaxy, in the midst of billions of other galaxies.

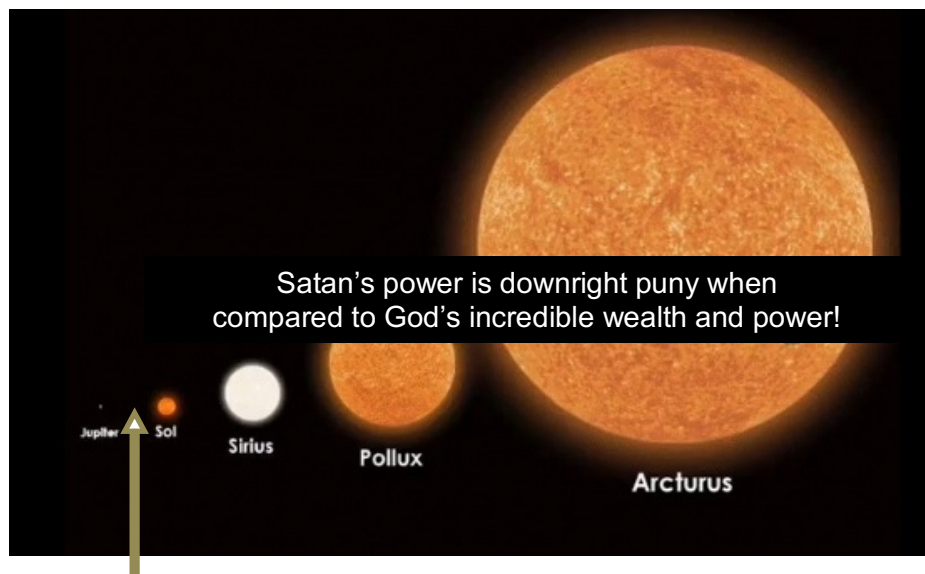
Although all God's dealings with mankind center around earth, in size, we are not a prominent planet in God's creation.



Remember: Satan has been cast down to the heavens that surround only the earth.

What an amazing God! What a liar and thief the enemy is!

God has power over everything. The expanse of the heavens with countless galaxies is overseen by Jesus. See Hebrews 1:3



Satan had quite a demotion.
Before his rebellion, he was with God in all the heavens.
Now he is only a defeated ruler within the limited atmosphere around one of the smallest planets in the vast array of countless galaxies.

Life Changing Truth

*We have been
given all
authority over
Satan in Luke
10:19*

*How we use it
takes wisdom
and God's
direction.*

*Satan cannot
touch you
unless you
begin to play in
his territory!*

*The astounding
wealth of being
fully accepted by
God is far more
important than
the power we
are given over
the enemy!*

*Holding on to
your sin invites
the enemy to
participate in
your life or your
fellowship.*

*Your
"White Flag"
warfare; your
submission to
the Holy Spirit,
extinguishes any
threat.*

See page 67

It's vitally important to remember how limited Satan's power is compared to God's power! It's also important to remember the power that is given to you as a believer because of the work of the cross.

Satan's Sentence because of His Rebellion

Satan and his followers were thrown from the vastness of heaven and removed from the presence of God to a spatially insignificant planet – the earth. He was given very limited authority around that planet, only available to him until God's purposes are fulfilled. He was soundly defeated through the cross of Jesus Christ. He's now under the authority of every believer through the Name of Jesus. He can only lie, cheat, steal, and wait for his final demise at the will of God. He can only bluster and boast of his power through those ignorant of God and those who gain their information from unreliable worldly sources.

"The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.'"¹⁸ He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:17-20 NIV

The Church Has Accepted the Lies!

Satan can't participate in any believer's life unless he is somehow invited to do so through their refusal to fully surrender to Jesus. Any threat he may try to carry out falls dead to the ground when aimed at a dedicated, Christ-focused child of God. Any weakness within an individual, community, or fellowship is due to partial commitments to Jesus. Satan feeds his lies to these compromised individuals. The lies are embraced. They spread. Spiritual wisdom is then needed to know how to address the situation.

An example would be a fellowship where the majority of participants embrace spiritual lethargy or live in fear of loss. To attempt to cast out spirits of lethargy and fear is futile when members remain in that detrimental position through choice or ignorance, when confession and repentance are required to restore spiritual wholeness and defeat the enemy. The only answer is awareness and repentance.

Except in extreme cases of complete demonic possession, where a deliverance will likely be needed, a true believer or repentant fellowship doesn't address the enemy when things are out of order. They turn to God, requesting the Holy Spirit to examine

them for any sin so it can be eliminated. When things are back in order with the Lord, Satan is once again powerless to remain or accomplish anything.

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

You Can Trust Our Big and Loving God to Be in Charge

What do you say we choose to stop believing all the lies we've adopted over the years about who we are or are not and begin to allow Father God to destroy our flesh (that undoneness He already knows about) and bring us into His truth regarding Who He is, who He would like us to be, and who we are in Him? Let's make way for Him to bring our eternal "inner being" to the forefront. (It's gonna be OK, really!)

*If you really
get this, your
world will
never be the
same.*

After many years of full-time ministry, we have come to the conclusion that most of us, as members of the most wonderful association ever created - the covenant association between our Father in Heaven and us through Jesus Christ - have little clue as to how to function in it properly. We believe all of our weaknesses, tangent doctrines, and downright foolishness as God's family have these two common traits:

- 1) We simply do not know our God.
- 2) We do not really know what His intentions are for our association with Him. Most of us have been so busy listening to self-serving teachings, that we have missed the astounding wealth of submitting ourselves to the Lord to keep our old man crucified and allowing the resurrected life of Jesus that resides in us to burst forth in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit.

*If you
haven't
already
done so,
write down
the exact
day, hour
and moment
that you
chose to sell
out to the
Lord in
every area
of your life.*

To find this treasure chest of "God-ordained life" means a purposeful death to our own lordship in every area of our lives and a full abandonment of doing anything in our own strength. It means a conscious submission of all we have been, are, and desire to be to the cross and leaving it there.

*Determine
once and for
all that you
will never,
never turn
back*

The following three Father's Heart messages represent the cross, the tomb, and the resurrection. It would be wise for you to spend time with the Lord, waiting on Him, so you can gain His perspective on the bridal heart and what is needed to attain it.

From Our Father's Heart
"Stay Dead"

The Cross

You, My people, have missed some steps in your walk with Me.
You have avoided the cross, fled the grave,
and attempted to live a resurrection life
without My life-giving hand upon you.
When Jesus returned from My presence,
He was flesh and bone.
There was no blood or humanness in Him.
(The life of the flesh is in the blood.)
That blood was shed,
so that you don't have to shed yours to be like Him.
Your inner being has been renewed into the likeness of Jesus.
It has been born alive to the Spirit and responds only to the Spirit.
Pray that your inner man is endued
with power and might
by the power of My Holy Spirit to be free
to respond to My ways.
Pray for the determination to no longer walk
in the futile life of your flesh.
Pray for the power to become dead
to all that resembles the world and its ways,
so that you will be aligned with My ways and in My perfect will.
It is the way of the cross.
It is the way of Jesus.

Luke 24:39 NIV "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

John 20:17 NIV "Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.'"

*Religion never
works!*

1 Cor. 15:50 NIV "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

Ephesians 3:16 Amp "May He grant you out of the rich treasure of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]."

Many of us attempt to approach the things of God by using our own reasoning and strength. That is one of the main reasons our attempts to approach God and affect our world fail. The things of God are spiritual, not religious, and certainly not of the flesh.

When Mary met with Jesus at the tomb, He had not yet gone to the Father. He could not be touched or contaminated by anything of the world. He was on His way to complete the most wondrous event ever. Jesus was about to seal everything that had been done in the perfect blood covenant with His Father. This act was an unbreakable, spiritual covenant made for every one of us. The life of Jesus, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection, all led to what was about to take place.

The removal of our flesh and the entering into the power of our covenant with God, (in any equation with God for that matter,) always follows the pattern established by Jesus.

It is first the cross - an initial submission of our entire being to the Lord, with subsequent submissions each time our flesh intrudes upon our new life.

Then comes the tomb - the waiting on God as if dead, so that Lordship is completed in us.

Finally, there is the resurrection – the empowering of our spiritual being by the Holy Spirit, that new inner man that receives spiritual power and might and responds in spiritual ways. The result is the ability to flow in the compassions of Jesus through the perfection of God's established ways.

As Christians, it's very important to remember that *we're* not the ones who are doing the changing. *We're* the ones who have the privilege of announcing what God is doing through *His* mighty power!!

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart
"There is a Time to Come Forth"

The Tomb

When Jesus was dead in the tomb,
it was just a matter of time before I said, "Come forth."

My intervention was inevitable.

Remember, it was absolutely necessary for Jesus to die.

It was also mandatory that He overcame death.

So it is with you.

When you submit to the absolute Lordship of Jesus,
your old form of living ceases to exist.

You die to who you were.

If any area of your life has not fully submitted to that death in Him,
I must complete that work in you.

I cannot leave you as you are.

When the time is right, however,

when the work that needs to be done is completed in you,

I will say "come forth" to you just as I said it to Jesus.

I will raise you up to a renewed life in Him.

One more step has been completed for you to serve Me fully.

I will intervene in your life to complete
what has been started at the cross.

It is inevitable.

It is because I love you.

*Rest in the fact
that God knows
where you are.*

*He will call you
when the time is
right.*

*In the mean
time, delight in
Him!*

*Psalms 106:12-15 Amp "Then [Israel] believed His words
[trusting in, relying on them]; they sang His praise.*

*13) But they hastily forgot His works; they did not [earnestly]
wait for His plans [to develop] regarding them,*

*14) But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted
and tried to restrain God [with their insistent desires] in the desert.*

*15) And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into
their souls..."*

*Galatians 2:20 Amp "I have been crucified with Christ [in
Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but
Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I
live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust
in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

The heart revival that is being implemented all across this land in those who are submitting to the will of the Lord is a renewal of the absolute Lordship of Jesus in our lives, and absolute trust in God. That means an absolute death to our own lordship in every aspect of our lives and a death to doing anything in our own strength. It means a conscious submission of all we are to the cross.

True crucifixion means a death must happen. We are called to be dead in Christ, so His life can be lived through each of us. The hardest thing about being dead in Christ is lying on the slab as if dead until He calls us forth.

*Have you
ever
become
impatient
with God?*

Most of us, instead of patiently waiting for the Lord to intervene in our lives, get up off the slab, pace around the tomb, kick at the stone; and yell at God to roll away the stone because we feel we've been there long enough. When our patience wears out, we take a pry bar, move the stone ourselves (doing whatever we can do in our own strength to get us out of our pressure situation,) and go forth in very much the same manner as we did before - powerless, fully alive to our own strength, and "lean of soul" in the work of the Lord. We have no real power to give others, because we have not allowed Christ's power to be formed in us.

Can you recall any time you have "worked" to get out of any refining fire in which the Lord placed you? Name them!

Do you realize the Lord sent other challenges your way to complete the refining process in that area? Amplify!

There is a little ditty, (I didn't even know I knew the word "ditty,") that goes like this: "I anticipate the inevitable, the supernatural intervention of God, I expect a miracle..."

As the Lord completes the needed work in you, lay on the slab of your spiritual grave as if fully dead, anticipating the supernatural intervention of God in your life. Expect a miracle. Let Him remove the stone. He will call you forth! He will raise you up in His power, in His time! He will fully live His life through you after He has removed every trace of your old life completely! It is His way. It is inevitable.

From Our Father's Heart

"I Will Roll Away the Stone"

The Resurrection

A new season is at hand.
To those of you who understand
that there must be a crucifixion of your flesh,
you must also anticipate the joy
that is your heritage after your resurrection.
Understand that I am taking you to a death
of everything that you were,
all that you own, and all that owns you.
I must do this, so that you can be trusted with My presence.
You must be an empty vessel,
so that My presence is all that is in you after I call you forth.
There will be a resurrection.
I will roll away the stone of your grave.
I will raise you up for this end-time work.
Here is what must happen.
You must die to yourself.
That work is in progress as we speak.
Submit to My hand and the trials that you are encountering.
They are refiner's fires
that will allow you to embrace the cross as Jesus did.
Next, you must rest as a dead person would rest,
waiting for Me to move in your situation.
Your submission will have planted the seed in you
of the anticipation of My resurrecting hand upon you.
Then in My time, when all is ready,
I will once again bring forth My light to the world.
It will be in you as fully as it was in Jesus.
Consider this the holy work that it is.
Soon, I will call you to come forth.

Galatians 2:20 Amp "I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Phil. 3:10-11 Amp "[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]

11) That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].”

So many of us desire to have all of the good stuff without going through the suffering that conforms us into the image of the Lord. We also miss the suffering Jesus feels for those who will be separated from Him for eternity. We don't really care about the souls of those who are going to hell for eternity. Consequently, we take our head knowledge to those around us. The further consequence of that is few, if any, people are changed by head knowledge.

God is right this moment calling for a holy generation - a resurrection generation, one that has embraced the cross, waited as if dead to our own abilities to push the gravestone aside; and allowed the Spirit of God to completely eliminate our flesh and renew our spirits. We are a remnant, waiting as if a bride for the Lord to complete His work in us.

There are no shortcuts to completing the work that needs to be accomplished in each of us. Our Lord is very good at placing us in situations and circumstances that are intended to change us. He wants all of us. That's how much He loves us.

Only by Your strength, Lord!

Please note: The themes of the Cross, the Tomb, and the Resurrection have been continually interweaving and overlapping in the last few Father's Heart messages. So it is in our own lives as the Lord weaves Himself into them if we have sincerely desired to be totally His, living as if a waiting bride for the soon return of her Groom, Master, and Lord – Jesus!

If we are to learn of our position in Christ while we wait for Him, we must study Him. There is no clearer example of the posture we should be taking than that of the betrothed woman of old as she accepts her responsibilities as a waiting bride. Her posture and attitude for living is a type of life we are to embrace while we wait for the return of Jesus.

The Bridal Call

The bright light of the moon gently touched each corner of the small room, highlighting every object that for many years had been so important to Sarah. Now, however, as she sat at the open window, looking past the beautiful meadow to the small grove of trees owned by Benjamin's father, she felt distanced from them. "It's funny," she thought to herself. "Things that for so long meant so much to me are no longer important at all. It's almost as if they had always belonged to someone else." She was amazed at how much her heart had changed toward the familiar and the comfortable in every area of her life, since she had accepted the cup of betrothal offered her less than six months ago.

Lying covered in the corner, one item in the room had become pivotal in most of her thoughts and preparations for her upcoming marriage. Under several layers of protection from dust and light, her fine, linen wedding garment was fitted and ready. Countless hours of preparation, peaceful moments of meticulous examination to make sure every stitch, every bead, every thread was perfect, had been lovingly spent. To make sure all was in order, the garment had become the outward testimony of the inward changes she had made over recent months.

In the tradition of previous brides, under the loving guidance of her mother, Sarah learned the importance of preparing herself while she waited for Benjamin to come for her. As he was being taught patience, thoroughness, and responsibility by building their wedding chamber under the tutelage of his father, she prepared her heart for him. The requirement that her garment be spotless and without blemish was a catalyst for her to look for any hidden darkness, selfish motive, or uncleanness of any kind that might hinder her ability to devote herself completely to her new husband. "What dishonor I would bring to Benjamin if my heart was not fully his, completely devoted to his needs," she thought to herself.

Moving from the window seat, Sarah lit the oil lamp near the table where the garment lay. In the dim, flickering light, she gently smoothed a small corner of the protective cover. As she did, she offered a silent prayer to her Lord, asking again if there was any kind of blemish in her heart. A quiet peace settled on her; she was ready.

On her way back to the window seat, Sarah again checked to see that the jar of lamp oil they would take with them was full. Assured that it was, she rested expectantly, her eyes straining to see through the darkness, her ears attentive to the smallest sound, hoping it would be that of the groomsman heralding the coming of Benjamin and the wedding party.

In the silent beauty of the late evening, Sarah waited, knowing all was in order. Across the meadow just beyond the small grove of trees, an excited Benjamin stepped out of the completed bridal chamber. With the approval of his father, who earlier that day had decided all was finished, he had given permission to his

groomsman to go ahead and announce his arrival. Soon, he would follow. His heart leaped for joy.

The traditional Jewish wedding of old, with its bridal chamber being built by the groom while the bride prepares herself, is a perfect analogy of our time of preparation as we wait for our Bridegroom, Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

John 14:1-3 Amp "Do not let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated). You believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely on God; believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely also on Me. 2) In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going away to prepare a place for you. 3) And when (if) I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also."

Jesus Was Speaking to Tax Collectors and Hearty Fishermen as
a Bridegroom Would Talk to His Prospective Bride

To understand the full impact of what Jesus was really saying, it is vital for us to examine His words through betrothal covenant eyes. Jesus spoke to His followers using language they could understand. The terms He used and the illustrations He gave were clear pictures for those living at that time. After His death and resurrection, early generation Christians clearly understood their position and its requirements, privileges, and benefits because of the terms He used and the way He spoke.

The covenant and its characteristics, the wedding and its significance, fully explained the purposes of God to them, the mission of their Lord, and their standing in Him because of His great love. Most of these terminologies and the intensity of their meanings have been lost over time to the point they are relatively meaningless to this modern generation. We have, therefore, in this day lost the impact of many of the words Jesus was saying and the truth He was imparting.

Does This Sound Familiar?

- 1) The bride and groom of old would make a binding agreement.
- 2) The groom would go away to prepare a place for them to live together.
- 3) Only the father of the groom could say when the place was completed, so the groom could go to get his bride.
- 4) When the father said all was finished, he would give the groom permission to go and get his bride. The bride would not know when he was coming; she just had to be ready.
- 5) The best man was sent by the groom to herald his coming so the bride had time to prepare for his coming.
- 6) The groom would “steal” her away to be with him at the marriage supper.
- 7) They would return after about seven days to greet those whom they knew.
- 8) Their return would confirm who the bride and groom were and what had taken place.

One more time:

*Now He's talking
to the overcomer.*

John 14:1-3 Amp “Do not let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated). You believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely on God; believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely also on Me. 2 In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going away to prepare a place for you. 3 And when (if) I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Prayers and thoughts

The Wedding - a Legal Agreement or Covenant

Our examination of the characteristics of the wedding traditions of Jesus' time will amplify the position we have with our Lord and Master. (Please note: This study is from the perspective of a perfect agreement with perfect responses to that agreement. The human factor, with its selfish need for personal gain, ulterior motives, and any other human frailties, has been avoided for clarity's sake.)

To begin a betrothal covenant agreement, the prospective bride would be approached by her future husband - either the one she loved or the one chosen by her father - with a binding, lifetime contract stating the terms of the marriage and the price that would be paid for her hand.

"You were bought with a price..." I Cor. 6:20

If everything was agreed upon, this covenant or betrothal agreement would be written down and signed by all parties involved. The groom would then present a cup of wine to his prospective bride.

The bride's acceptance of this "cup of betrothal" signified her willingness to fulfill all the terms and sealed the agreement. This was no small matter, for in doing so, she no longer was her own person; but was now a devoted property of her husband. By law, she had been bought with a great price, ceased to live for herself; and now lived only for him from that time on.

Note: We are going to concentrate more fully on the bride's part of the betrothal agreement and its significance because it is a portrait of our part of the agreement we have made with our Lord.

The Biblical definition of something devoted to another includes the fact that the object is now set apart, no longer the property of the former owner. Something devoted was to be utterly destroyed, no longer existing as it once was. The bride, by accepting the cup of betrothal, had voluntarily chosen to die to her own desires and fulfill those of her new husband.

Acts 20:28 Amp "Take care and be on guard for yourselves and the whole flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you bishops and guardians, to shepherd (tend and feed and guide) the church of the Lord ... which He obtained for Himself [buying it and saving it for Himself] with His own blood."

I Cor. 6:20 Amp "You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own]. So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body."

Although there was no cup present, we accepted a covenant agreement when we gave our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

All of the terms and agreements have been spelled out in the Bible.

The prospective bride shows us the principles of living passionately for Jesus

The bride's commitment to the betrothal set her on a course to utterly destroy her independent life.

I Cor. 7:23 Amp "You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for by Christ]; then do not yield yourselves up to become [in your own estimation] slaves to men [but consider yourselves slaves to Christ]."

*We are
devoted
property
and,
therefore,
have
covenanted
to no longer
exist as we
once were.*

*The Lord
has
promised to
change us
into the
image of
Jesus and
we have
agreed to
submit to
that change.*

*This was
every one of
us before we
gave our
lives to
Jesus.*

*Our father
was not God
and,
therefore,
we did not
choose to
listen to
Him.*

Anyone who is truly surrendered to Jesus has taken of the "cup of betrothal" and has entered into a binding covenant with God, whether it has been stated formally by that person or not. In absolute truth, we have been paid for by the very expensive blood of our Master, Jesus Christ, and our lives are no longer our own to do with as we please.

We now belong to God in a binding, legal contract, which is accomplished and on file in the heavenlies. The Lord has a legal right to do whatever it takes to make us cease to exist as we were before. That is part of His contractual promise to us. We are to submit to this process willingly and out of love. If we choose not to, the Lord has a legal right to do what it takes to get us to submit.

We agreed to this process by receiving all of the other benefits given at our surrender, including our salvation; and willingly or unwillingly, we are being formed into the image of the proper bridal heart of Christ. This process is slow and tedious for those who have a rebellious heart. It is the ardent desire of the submissive heart.

The initial stage of that process has already taken place upon our acceptance of Jesus as our Lord. We were changed, so we would be able to live in the spirit realm with Him forever.

This change signifies new ownership. We are made completely new, so we can understand the communication God desires with us. Our Father is now the same Father Jesus has, so we can hear His words. Before we gave our lives to Jesus, we could only understand our old master, the devil.

John 8:42-44 NIV Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.

43) Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.

44) You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45) Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

46) Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?

47) He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to Go

Remember We Have Been Made Totally New Because of Jesus

II Cor. 5:17 Amp "Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!"

This is us now.

John 3:5-7 Amp "Jesus answered, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a man is born of water and [even] the Spirit, he cannot [ever] enter the kingdom of God. 6 What is born of [from] the flesh is flesh [of the physical is physical]; and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not [do not be surprised, astonished] at My telling you, You must all be born anew (from above)."

I Peter 1:23 Amp "You have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin (seed, sperm), but from one that is immortal by the ever living and lasting Word of God."

This bridal heart response stage into which you have entered - the heart devotion to serve only the Master and to have His singular desires in mind – is in process at this very moment.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Amp "Therefore then, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who have borne testimony to the Truth], let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us. 2 Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]. He, for the joy [of obtaining the prize] that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising and ignoring the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

*Instead of
fighting God
and making
Him
orchestrate
things to get
our hearts
right, we have
the potential to
be brought to
the place of
full
cooperation
and
submission by
the Holy Spirit.*

The Time of Waiting

John 14:1-3 NIV “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

2) In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Once the marriage covenant was sealed by the taking and drinking of the cup, the groom would begin to prepare the bridal chamber. Before leaving the bride, he would promise her that he would return for her at some undisclosed future date upon completion of the bridal chamber (a house or a room in his father’s house.)

The groom could not give her a specific date for his return because it was the groom’s father who determined when the bridal chamber was complete; and therefore, when the groom could return for his bride. This tradition was established so the groom, in his enthusiasm, would not return too soon. If he would come to get his bride before the wedding chamber was complete, she would not have the protection and comfort he had pledged to provide for her as part of his agreement promise.

The groom’s father would oversee the construction process. There were several reasons for this other than the one stated above.

The bride, in concert with the groom’s preparation of the chamber, would begin preparing for the wedding and its requirements. The truly wise bride understood that the position of her heart was of far more concern than all the physical tasks at hand. This was a process that could not be rushed. From childhood, she had been instructed in the Scriptures and steeped in the traditions regarding her role as a wife. Now that she knew who her husband would be, she could directly address all the issues in both of their lives that would facilitate a proper marriage.

*This is
where we
come in.*

*We should
be preparing
in earnest
just as the
bride would
prepare.*

*Are you
ready to do
so?*

Proverbs 31:10-31 Amp “A capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman - who is he who can find her? She is far more precious than jewels and her value is far above rubies or pearls.

11 The heart of her husband trusts in her confidently and relies on and believes in her securely, so that he has no lack of [honest] gain or need of [dishonest] spoil.

12 She comforts, encourages, and does him only good as long as there is life within her.

13 She seeks out wool and flax and works with willing hands [to develop it].

14 She is like the merchant ships loaded with foodstuffs; she brings her household’s food from a far [country].

15 She rises while it is yet night and gets [spiritual] food for her household and assigns her maids their tasks.

16 She considers a [new] field before she buys or accepts it [expanding prudently and not courting neglect of her present duties by assuming other duties]; with her savings [of time and strength] she plants fruitful vines in her vineyard.

17 She girds herself with strength [spiritual, mental, and physical fitness for her God-given task] and makes her arms strong and firm.

18 She tastes and sees that her gain from work [with and for God] is good; her lamp goes not out, but it burns on continually through the night [of trouble, privation, or sorrow, warning away fear, doubt, and distrust].

19 She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

20 She opens her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her filled hands to the needy [whether in body, mind, or spirit].

21 She fears not the snow for her family, for all her household are doubly clothed in scarlet.

22 She makes for herself coverlets, cushions, and rugs of tapestry. Her clothing is of linen, pure and fine, and of purple [such as that of which the clothing of the priests and the hallowed cloths of the temple were made].

23 Her husband is known in the [city's] gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes fine linen garments and leads others to buy them; she delivers to the merchants girdles [or sashes that free one up for service].

25 Strength and dignity are her clothing and her position is strong and secure; she rejoices over the future [the latter day or time to come, knowing that she and her family are in readiness for it]!

26 She opens her mouth in skillful and godly Wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness [giving counsel and instruction].

27 She looks well to how things go in her household, and the bread of idleness (gossip, discontent, and self-pity) she will not eat.

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied); and her husband boasts of and praises her, [saying],

29 Many daughters have done virtuously, nobly, and well [with the strength of character that is steadfast in goodness], but you excel them all.

30 Charm and grace are deceptive, and beauty is vain [because it is not lasting], but a woman who reverently and worshipfully fears the Lord, she shall be praised!

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates [of the city]!"

*This is where
you are heading
with Jesus.*

*We will be like
Him.*

*This is in
process right
now if we
choose.*

*We are known
as
"Christians,"
followers of
Christ.*

*This is
important stuff
to God.*

At that time in history, the wife was the completion of her husband and destined to be in total accord with his every emotion, desire, and need. As seen in the above verses, the wife is the helpmate of her husband in the truest sense of the word. She represented him with every one of her actions, as if he were there himself. Her actions would either bring honor or dishonor, glory or disgrace to him.

The bride, knowing this, became a study of her future husband during the time of waiting. By the time he came to get her, she - to the best of her ability - knew not only his daily needs; but every wish, desire, care, and cause he had. She was "like" him in her heart. Because of that heart position, she could represent him properly.

He, on the other hand, was about to bestow on her the highest honor he could give to anyone - his name. With the sharing of his name, he was also bestowing the power-of-attorney in all of his household affairs to her. He was actually giving away who he was and all he had. She, knowing the impact and importance of his commitment to her, took this time very seriously, looking out for his best interests.

Note: The seriousness of the act of giving away a name, the representation of another as if you were that person, and being joined together have lost their impact in today's throw-away society. To really grasp these representations, you will need to study and discuss their true meaning until you understand their importance.

Take the time now to ponder these concepts. On page 190 in this study, we will be discussing what a covenant is and its impact on the participants to help further your understanding. Do not allow the magnitude of these studies to go by unnoticed. They will make a vast difference in your ability to function in the covenant into which you have entered.

Today, we violate the trust of another and go about our business as if nothing has happened. We leave him/her wounded and hurting, giving little thought to the consequences of our actions. Violation of these vows in past times could mean stoning, imprisonment, or the horror of total rejection by a society, a fate sometimes worse than death.

God was showing His future intentions for us by using the marriage betrothal illustration of those times, clearly stating its seriousness and importance - unlike our watered-down, selfish "commitments" of today. Our shallow comprehension of commitment according to today's standards is a true deterrent to our spiritual growth and to understanding what our relationship with God actually entails.

Ponder on what has been given to you so far. What has surprised you about the marriage betrothal and its picture of your relationship with the Lord?

Do you see your end of your relationship with the Lord in need of change? Explain!

Do you see the comparisons, the intents, and even the words of the Lord being brought to life as you learn about the betrothal process? What are you feeling?

Now might be an opportune time to stop and talk to your Lord. Share the things that have risen up in your heart. Repent of your attitudes and your nonchalance regarding your relationship with Him. Thank Him for all He has done! Maybe even write a short letter to Him, expressing your heart.

*You are not in a
hurry.*

Neither is God!

Prayers and thoughts

We Are Waiting for Our Master

*Praising Jesus
with our mouth
is hypocritical,
if we do not
choose to
praise Him by
emulating His
life before
others*

As the bride waited for her master, lord, and husband to return for her, we wait for ours. The command to occupy until He comes (Luke 19:13) is little different than the maiden – who was veiled to show that she was set apart and spoken for – going about her days with the single heart-purpose of learning to please her future husband. For the devoted bride, the distractions of each day could not sway or dissuade her from her mission of knowing only him, so that she might be of great pleasure to him.

The prospective bride's study of her groom would become a continuous source of joy to her husband after the wedding as he would observe her going about the business of managing his affairs with practiced ease and knowledge of his ways. In the times of companionship and intimacy, he would be able to savor the fragrance of true devotion as his every need and desire were lovingly and knowingly met, thus enhancing his joy.

Her pleasure during the time of waiting would be fulfilled with the anticipation of his pleasure in the time of completion. She understood her commitment to live no longer for herself and only for him. Ours should be no less as we wait for Jesus.

*The highest
pleasure for
Jesus was to
bring us back
into the Father's
presence.*

Note: The concept of living for the best interests of another is foreign to most of us. Few of our actions are selfless, even when we're following hard after the Lord. To think the highest pleasure one could achieve for oneself would be to help someone else attain happiness or fulfillment eludes us.

*He knew that
nothing would
please His
Father more and
that what He
was doing would
also be very
good for us.*

We may do something for someone else, which makes us feel good for a while; but to desire nothing but the pleasure of another and to commit our way to achieving the best for another as a lifetime process and priority for the rest of our lives seems impossible. Our thoughts eventually migrate to "What's in it for me?"

Still, that was the heart of Christ. He left heaven, walked as a lowly man, and died for those who hated Him, all so they could have eternal bliss.

Could you spend your whole life for the best interests of someone other than yourself? Could you do it with a joyous heart if that person hated you, maligned you at every opportunity, and had no inkling of your service to him/her? What about living for the best interests of everyone else who ever comes in contact with your life as Jesus did? Why not?

1 John 2:5b-6 Amp "...By this we may perceive (know, recognize, and be sure) that we are in Him:

6) Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself."

The Foolish Bride Would Think of Herself

In the deepest, surest sense of reality, the Master of all things, Jesus Christ, is coming very soon for those who are truly His. Upon the command and approval of His Father that all things are complete, Jesus will send forth the Holy Spirit to herald His imminent appearance. (We are convinced in our hearts that the heralding has been present for several years and is increasing in intensity each day. The Holy Spirit has directed those who have ears to hear to prepare in earnest.)

While the foolish perceive the time of waiting in this present day as a time to learn only of the ease and comforts they have inherited because of the wealth and love of their Lord, those with a bridal heart – you, the waiting ones – are choosing to study and learn only of Him for His delight when He comes for you. You are studying and applying heart lessons, so He will be pleased and glorified.

As the unconcerned boast of their position in Christ by attempting to change their surroundings with their authority, the devoted hearts see their need to be changed from within that they might truly please their Lord. As the foolish rest in the promised wealth that is theirs, the true bridal heart reexamines her wedding garment over and over to make sure all is in order to honor and glorify her approaching Bridegroom. Her heart has considered the cost of His approval and has covenanted to do whatever it takes to please Him.

*Jesus will
look for
those who
look like Him
in every
way.*

*If we are
wise, we will
have
prepared
ourselves for
His good
pleasure.*

Before you go deeper in this study, write down what you think it means to follow Jesus.

Write down your perception of what you committed to when you said you would make Jesus your Lord.

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

"Foundations"

Do you really believe what I have told you in My Word?
Do you understand how important it is to Me
that you submit to My Spirit,
so that I might reveal truth to you?
Some of you have become so involved
in your own perceptions of My plans and purposes,
that you are weak, vulnerable, and helpless to overcome.
Your life is useless in bringing others to Me.
The time is now to repent and turn back to My true ways.
There is an absolute plumb line that I have established for you –
My Son, Jesus Christ.
Become a study of Him by drawing close.
Go back to the basics.
Study the absolutes in My Word.
Be confident again of My sovereign power.
Be assured of My willingness to draw near
and impart Myself to you,
if you choose wholeheartedly to draw near to Me.
Start over.
Start fresh and pursue the intensity of first love.
Abandon all outside, worldly influences
and make My Son, Jesus Christ, your only love.
We can then again be with you in power.
Come now; let's walk together.

James 4:8-10 Amp "Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

9 [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].

10 Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant]."

I Chronicles. 29:5 Amp "... Now who will offer willingly to fill his hand [and consecrate it] today to the Lord [like one consecrating himself to the priesthood]?"

The Marriage Contract or Covenant

The bride and groom signed and sealed a contract that reduced to writing all the promises and agreements their union entailed. We have that same agreement with God in the form of our Bible. Its pages define all the terms and commitments into which we enter.

As it was mandatory that both parties agreed or covenanted to live by the dictates of the marriage contract, which meant that all of its statements were now law to them, so must we. You are going to sign some agreements in this section.

*Most people
who call
themselves
Christians do
not know that
they have
made
commitments
and need to
live up to
them.*

*As far as God
is concerned,
you and I have
made
promises to
surrender our
lives fully.*

You may already know this, but you have agreed to every one of the following statements as far as God is concerned. You must also realize that from the moment you said “yes” to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Father God has been creating ways for you to become aware of your lack of commitment, so you can fully surrender to His ways.

Note: The signature on a document is simply stating in written form what your heart intentions are. To hesitate to sign or to avoid the signature altogether when entering into an agreement means that something is wrong. If you can’t sign these commitments now, continue on with the study. Sign the document as the Lord softens your heart into submission. You must one day be able to sign them freely and joyfully, or your commitments to the Lord and your intentions of service are hazy to say the least.

II Sam 14:14 Amp “...God does not take away life, but devises means so that he who is banished may not be an utter outcast from Him.”

As you begin to understand what is required of you and submit this knowledge to the Lord, you will be provoked to repentance by the Holy Spirit for your lack of commitment to God. This is a very good thing, not something to fear. You are pleasing God every time you see any error in your ways and come to Him for forgiveness.

Your Signature Is Required

I believe the Bible is the absolute truth; that God has covenanted with me through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. I further believe this detailed agreement is the only and completely accurate record on which I can base every decision for every area of my life.

I accept all the Bible's truth and disregard all other knowledge, circumstances, situations, and tradition that may dictate differently. I believe there is no other wisdom or direction given to me for my life, and rely on all its truths alone. I freely invite the Holy Spirit to lead me to the absolute truth of the Word of God, separating me from all falsehood in any form.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Read the statement above again and again if necessary. By signing your name, you are saying you believe all of the Bible's truths and submit to its agreements. If you cannot do so, it almost guarantees that the full, bridal intimacy God intends for you will be short-circuited. There is no way you can live passionately for Jesus unless you believe every word of the Bible is absolute truth.

By basing all your life on anything other than the truth of the Word, you can be assured that hindrances - such as untruths from the past, man-made traditions, and erroneous doctrines - are stopping you from going on with God in freedom.

You must agree you will believe only what the Bible says, or else wounds, sins, former teachings, and formed, invalid opinions will dictate your actions and color your perspective on God's love and promises. Allow the Lord to deal with them throughout this study and every day of the rest of your life. Submit to the truth that the Bible is God's inspired Word to you and for you for His glory.

Big! Big!

*Very important
truth.*

Write down the hesitations you feel about signing the above statement, should you have any.

Mark 4:24 Amp "And He said to them, Be careful what you are hearing. The measure [of thought and study] you give [to the truth you hear] will be the measure [of virtue and knowledge] that comes back to you - and more [besides] will be given to you who hear."

Do You Accept the Cup of Betrothal?

In signing her agreement letter (betrothal covenant) and accepting the cup of betrothal, the bride agreed to walk in her master's steps. A high price had been paid for her, and she made a conscious decision to live no longer for herself, but for him alone.

Her internal death, the death of her singular ways, began her new life. Her old life passed away at that instant, and the betrothed life in her lord began.

2 Cor. 5:17 Amp "Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!"

Now It's Your Turn

*Lordship
means that
you are no
longer lord
over any
area of your
life.*

*You are now
sold out
to Jesus.*

I fully accept that Jesus Christ is the only Lord of all. I submit that He is my Lord, and I fully surrender all areas of my life to Him. He is now the unchallenged Lord over every breath I take, every thought I think, and every move I make. His glory is my reason for doing all I do from now on. I willingly give Him unquestioned mastery over all my causes, needs, desires, everything I own, and all that owns me.

I resolve, by His power, to submit fully to His every desire as stated in His Word, my covenant agreement; and choose to lose my every desire if it does not line up with His.

I recognize that through this agreement, by the terms set forth in His Word, I am submitting to being conformed into His image. I am no longer my own; I have been bought with His blood and choose to live for Him alone by His mercy and grace. I embrace the fact that He has a right from this time forth to live His life through me by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Have you
submitted to
His hand to
change you,
instead of
becoming
more like
Jesus by
doing good
stuff and
trying
harder?*

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Romans 10:9 Amp "Because if you acknowledge and confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in, and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Note: It is impossible to keep any of the agreements you make with God, or with anyone else for that matter, if you intend to keep them in your own strength.

Your relationship with God is His extended hand of love toward you. As you understand the concept of Jesus living His life through you, you will realize that God's extended hand holds the power for you to receive the life, power, and available character of Jesus to accomplish all that needs to be done to fulfill God's plan for your life.

Has the Issue of Lordship Been Dealt with Once and for All in Your Life?

It is suggested that most weakness, impurity, and loss of integrity in God's church could be traced to this issue of whether or not we have truly submitted to the Lordship of Jesus. In times past, times when full knowledge of the impact of a commitment was understood, the time of conversion truly settled the issue. The converted individual knew what it meant to commit his life to God.

In those times, a simple walk down the aisle, the asking of forgiveness for our sins, and jubilant hugging of those around us was unheard of. During times of true heart revival through the Holy Spirit's conviction, a person went to be alone, or in later days, stayed at the tarrying bench or at the altar until the issue of the Lordship of Jesus Christ had been fully dealt with in the life of that individual. Just as the bride became one with her new master, the newly converted knowingly became one with Jesus Christ, and only Him, at the altar. They were informed that ownership of anything - their rights, loves, material possessions, and even their lives - was to be placed under the Lordship of Jesus. They were bought with the blood of Jesus and were no longer their own.

In contrast, today's conversions are mostly centered around the aspect of forgiveness and its freedoms. Today, the new convert is told he/she is forgiven, and the word "lordship" is used, but rarely fully explained or understood; so, he/she proceeds with the new life thinking that all is in order. This kind of conversion is actually one-sided, and without power in times of difficulty.

The individual who surrenders only for forgiveness, believing that the relationship is mostly for the answers to his/her needs and comforts, is soon disenchanted when all prayers are not answered in the way he/she deems proper. There is no understanding that at the time of conversion, God Himself promised to do His part to fulfill the covenants of the relationship according to His Word, and deals with the relationship as Lord, just as He promised.

Because of this lack of understanding, most of the self-focused convert's days are spent unfulfilled, confused about God, and wondering "What's wrong?" as God begins the refining process He promised to do. God's time is spent wooing the person into true

*Whatever you
own in your
heart has not
been
surrendered to
Jesus.*

*That even
includes your
right to be
right or your
right to have
your own way
over the Lord's
way.*

*You cannot
be
passionate
about your
life with
Jesus and
desire to live
only for Him
if you are in
this
relationship
for your
good!*

submission to His Lordship, instead of being able to use that person productively for His work of showing others a true picture of Jesus through his/her life.

Do you know for sure that Jesus is the absolute Lord over every aspect of your life? Have you ever purposefully placed yourself, all you are and all you own under His Lordship, knowing that in doing so, you are no longer the owner of any of it? Can you do it now? If you can't, why not?

Do You Trust in a Living God?

All other so-called gods are dead. They have always been spiritually dead, and eventually are physically dead. However, we have the assurance of God that Jesus Christ is very real and alive. He is the Bridegroom who will soon come to bring us into His presence for eternity.

The full acceptance of this fact, the understanding of His very real presence with us now, allows us to trust completely in His continual interaction in our lives. This acceptance ensures God's invoking of the bridal covenant to bring about the new birth, sanctification, and the subsequent holiness God promises to us as Christ's dedicated ones, waiting for Him as a bride.

*Probably
the most
important
decision
you will
ever
make!*

Do You Choose to Renew Your Covenant with God?

I fully trust and rely on the fact that Jesus Christ is alive now. He is my soon coming Master, Bridegroom, and Lord; and I resolve to prepare myself to submit to Him, study His ways, and live only for Him by His covenant power until He returns for me.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

You Have Entered into Covenant with God!

You have read the above agreement, proclaimed it to be absolute truth, and signed it, agreeing that Jesus is your unchallenged Lord.

You have taken the cup your Lord has offered to signify your acceptance of His desire for you to have His bridal heart forever and you have agreed to it.

The Groom, Jesus, has gone to prepare a place for you and has promised to come back for you when all is ready there and also in you, the one with His heart.

The Father has assured you that in the fullness of time, all would be ready. He will oversee all the preparations. From now on, all His dealings with you are as the loved and accepted chosen of His Son. You are now in the family. Your agreement to no longer remain as you are enacts His promise to make you like His Son. He will accomplish it all. You are as the waiting bride and His disciple, the student of your Lord.

*The best
decision you
have ever made!*

The Prelude

My children,
you are the righteousness of My Son, Jesus Christ.
All that He is will be formed in you to My glory.
From the beginning,
I have planned all that is taking place throughout the world.
Each of you, My children, has a specific role for which to prepare.
Each task is very important to Me.
I ask you to persevere and prepare.
Submit to My Word at work in you, and My hand upon you,
as you are being developed for your part.
I am forming you.
I am changing you.
I am molding you to represent Me properly.
The plumb line of righteousness has been moved,
not by Me, but by your traditions, doctrines, and personal habits.
I am, however, bringing it back to My center in your life.
For too long, what I consider to be a normal way of life
has been looked upon as extreme to many in My church.
No more!
Normal is absolute purity, devotion, dedication, and zealous love.
It is a heart that is broken for those that are lost.
Normal is Our restored, intimate relationship
from which spring holy works,
which allow people to see My glory in you.
Normal is joyous self-sacrifice and an ardent desire
to be purged from all unrighteousness at any cost.
Normal is an eternal perspective
on all that you do and on everyone that you meet.
You are being made normal again,
so that I might be able to trust you with My Word
in all circumstances.
It is My great joy that you be excited, encouraged,
and at peace, for I AM at work
and aware of all of your needs.
Know that I am training you to live a normal life as I see it.
Your life will then be a plumb line.
Those who choose My ways will observe you
and come to Me because of how you live.
My Son showed you how to live a normal life.
Now I will empower you to do it.
Devote yourself to Me.
I love you!

*Being normal
is to be
passionate
about
following the
ways of Jesus.*

*Abnormal is
following the
one who has
been defeated
at the cross -
in any way,
shape, or
form.*

How are you doing? What hesitations do you have so far?

Has your perspective about God changed any? How?

Are you concerned at all about any part of your relationship with Him? What is it?

*Note: Remember you are valuable to God. You are greatly loved, so whatever is being exposed in you - such as your inabilities to be all you are called to be - is no surprise to your loving Father God. The road to freedom is honesty with God and subsequent repentance to Him, acknowledging who you are not. This allows the Holy Spirit to do a completed work in you. Your repentance is freedom. The eventual outcome is intimacy and a passion for His heart as you continually go to Jesus.

God loves the fact that you are going deeper with Him.

Prayers and thoughts

Quietly rest in the fact that you have placed your entire being in the loving hands of your heavenly Father, a Father who loves you with a holy love.

How Do People Really See You?

The following is a letter written as if from someone who has encountered a bigoted Christian.

*This is not the
way Christ
lived.*

*It is not the
way that we
have been
called to live.*

“You call yourself a Christian. Why would I want to know you or listen to what you say? I have been observing you. You condemn me for sinning, but your Bible says your hate condemns you for murder. You act like you are better than I am, but your Jesus told you to esteem others higher than yourself. You say you serve a God of peace, but you fight against those who don’t see as you see; and I see no peace in your heart. You talk of the joy of knowing God; but there is only fear, sorrow, and sadness in your life. You say you represent Jesus, but I see no love for me or for others in you. If you represent what Jesus is like, I don’t like Him; and I won’t serve that kind of God. Goodbye.”

Jesus Wants All of His Disciples to Follow in His Steps

Thousands of years of promises came to pass before the disciples’ eyes, all in their lifetimes. The Messiah, the Christ, had come and walked among men. The Rhema of God Himself was made visible to fallen mankind as He walked through the society of those days. His presence was undeniable to even the most skeptical. His teachings about love, life, wisdom, foolishness, real strength, and real weakness caused even the foolhardy to at least take note that He was different.

The hardened of heart hated all He was and all for which He stood. Even in the presence of miracles - the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand, the many unexplained healings; and the preaching of the Scriptures under the anointing of having come directly from the Father - most could not understand who He really was.

The World Could Not See

Some said He was John the Baptist returned from the dead. Some said He was Elijah or some other prophet. The rumors ran rampant as unbelieving man attempted to find out who Jesus really was.

The Bridal Heart Saw

However, those who had been chosen to see at that time - Peter, first, and then the others - knew it to be true. He was Jesus, the Christ. They were privileged to see, as it were, "on the other side of the cross," and call Him the Messiah, the Christ of God.

*To whom do we
go, Lord?*

His life, His love, and His actions all exhibited the undeniable. He was more than some mere prophet revisited, some prophet of old come back to life. When He was with them, they could only have a glimpse of revelation, but even that glimpse was enough to seal them in the truth and make them hunger after more. Even though they could not fully understand, they studied Him; then did what He did.

*You are the
Christ, the Son
of God.*

After Jesus' resurrection, it came time for them, however, to walk, preach, and live as He did to their own generation. Walking in His steps became their standard. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, who had tabernacled Himself in the flesh of mankind, they exhibited the living Christ to a lost world.

People by the thousands "saw" who He, the Messiah, was through them. Thousands were able to believe Jesus was the Christ through the likes of fishermen, tax collectors, lawyers, and common citizens, as they lived His life before them.

Peter Understood He Had Taken the Cup of Betrothal

In Acts 3:6 NIV, after a crippled man had asked for some money, Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Peter was given authority in the affairs of God on this earth as part of the covenant into which he had entered. He did what Jesus did because he became a study of who Jesus was and allowed the character of Jesus to flow through him.

Just as the bride of old did, he willingly chose to eliminate his own life to take on the life of the Christ with whom he had covenanted. He could give what Jesus gave because he had what Jesus had.

Many Have "Seen" Jesus Among Them

For centuries now, the light of the gospel has been presented to the lost through the presentation of that same life in Christ to those who will listen. For generations, people have said Jesus is the Christ because the veiled bride, the true follower of Christ, has lived the life of her Bridegroom in the midst of them.

They could accept the Christ of God in spirit as that Spirit was presented to them by God through the lives of those who were dead to themselves.

It's Now Our Turn to Walk as Jesus Did

As Jesus asked the disciples then, as the Spirit of God has asked through the centuries, He is asking each of us today, "Who do you say that I (Jesus) am?" More to the point, "Who are you saying that I am?" Who are you exhibiting as Jesus to your neighbor, the broken, the poor, and the lost by the life you live in their midst?

*Do people
"see"
Jesus when
you are in
their midst?*

*Who are you
saying that
Jesus is?*

Do people see the traits of your Master and Lord in you because you have studied and prayed to become like Him? Have you spent enough time with your Father in Heaven to have Him impart Himself to you to the extent that it oozes from every pore of your existence? Is your love so apparent for the One to whom you have given your life, the One who owns you, that others crave to know more about Him?

How many people in your life have had a difficult time resisting Jesus as their Lord because your presentation of Him has been so clear? When was the last time someone begged you to show him/her how to receive Jesus? If you need more room, please use the margin.

We Must Become a Study of our Master and Spend Time with Him to be Able to Walk in His Steps

*How can
you tell
others who
Jesus is, if
you do not
know Him
and how He
would act if
He were
here in the
form of man
today?*

The only way to truly emulate someone is to experience, firsthand, who he is, how he feels, and what he does. In addition to setting an example for us, Jesus Himself walked like us, so we could know He fully understands our needs because He experienced our feelings, weaknesses, and temptations Himself. He knows us, not only because He has made us, but also because He has been like us. In the same manner, we can only learn the true heart of God by spending time with Him and by being submissive to His ways and walking in them.

The Bride Needed to Know What Her Groom Would Do in Every Situation

After the glow of the agreement wore off and the realization of the promises for the future and the anticipation of the treasures were now hers became somewhat quieted, the traditional bride began to place herself in her husband's shoes (sandals.) The responsibilities she had accepted became a reality. In her own way, she would ask herself or her counsel how her new husband would respond in a given situation.

*Have you
determined
to act like
Jesus in
every
situation?*

How would he desire his household to be run? What were his desires for the treatment of his family, friends, and neighbors? What were his tastes in food, clothing, and living accommodations? She placed herself in his circumstances, that she might know what pleased him.

Then She Had to Deny Herself

She was in covenant. It was for life and held her accountable to her betrothal agreement. There was no backing out. More than likely, her deep love did not allow her to even think of refusing to modify or completely deny herself of her own desires in order to take on her husband's desires, that he might be pleased.

In the process of this study and commitment, however, she would soon painfully realize who she was not. She was not him. Asking what he would do in any given situation made her confront her own ways; and in seeing them, allowed her to see what needed to be modified, so that her ways became like his.

*We are not
Him!*

The task of true death to personal traits, desires, and habits - which was not easy, except to the highly motivated - became her daily reason for living until her groom's return. Her only goal was to fully understand him and live with his heart desires in mind.

At the juncture of realizing the fulfillment of her commitment meant the death of all of her desires, how do you suppose she had the strength to continue on?

What would motivate you to continue on?

*What does
motivate you
to follow the
Lord?*

*Is it really
love for
Him?*

*Or is it just
because it is
good for
you?*

Taking into consideration the hazards of breaking covenant, at this point, would you submit to the agreement from a proper heart motive or because of the legal consequences that would be in play if you violated the covenant? Discuss!

What is really motivating you to continue on now?

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

My child,
are you going to do what I tell you to do?
Are you going to live before people
as the finest example of mankind did –
in total obedience to His God and Lord?
If not, what is your relationship with Me all about?
Why do you come to tell Me how much you love Me –
that you will serve Me –
and then function according to the dictates of your fleshly desires?
Why do you tell Me that you have made Me your priority
and then allow your own will to be the god you serve?
The world lies,
but they have never said that they could be trusted.
Their father is the father of lies.
They break their commitments,
but they always have and always will be like that.
But you... You are Mine.
You represent Me.
You have taken My Name as your God.
You have proclaimed aloud that you are Mine
through My Son, Jesus,
and still, you go about breaking all of the commitments you make,
even to Me.
It is now time to repent.
Turn from your ways
and become a student of the ways of My Son.
Be known to others as He would be known.
Walk in His integrity, no matter what the cost may be to you.
Your continual choosing of His ways over your ways
will bring the fragrant oil of the Holy Spirit
to those who need to savor it.
That oil will be with you, because it will be needed
to heal the wounds you encounter through your obedience.
If you say that you follow My Son,
you will acquire the scars that He did.
Those scars will be the testimony of your commitment to Me.
The desires and compassions of Jesus
will be given only to those who have walked and conducted
themselves as He did.
Through the denial of who you are,
I will make you who He is to others.
Those who are lost will again see who Jesus
is because you will be in their midst as My waiting bride.
Turn away from your ways to My ways, now.
Deny yourself of all that is not like Jesus.
Come to Me to be changed
and We will walk together with one heart.

*I can't count
the number
of years that
I lied to the
Lord.*

*Repentance is
the answer!*

*Your full
commitment
will expose
you for who
you really are,
if you allow the
Holy Spirit to
do so.*

To fully embrace the concept of the Lordship of Jesus will expose our every sin and every area in which we are unlike Jesus. We will also be confronted on every side to conform to the world's way of facing each situation. Resisting the world will mean pressure and persecution.

What safer place is there than to function in the probable actions of Jesus Christ? What better way to show our commitment? It is a form of high praise. What a gift it is to acquire first-hand knowledge of understanding His ways, so that our ways might be eliminated. It is God's way to refine us, while we wait for the return of Jesus.

Agreement

Father,

I choose to walk and conduct myself in the same manner in which Jesus did while He was on this earth. I choose to study His ways and come to You, so You can impart Yourself to me and I may become like Him before people, all so they may be saved and You may be glorified.

I choose to ask the questions, "What would you do, Jesus?" and "What would Your desires be?" in any given situation. By Your power and strength, I choose to carry them out, no matter what the cost or consequences to me.

I do this, knowing that the suffering and denials that I encounter will help to conform me into His image. One day all my decisions will be in conformity to His Word through Your continued wisdom and wise counsel.

As I wait and anticipate Jesus' return for me, I desire that You use me in any way You wish. I surrender fully to You and choose Your will for my life, not mine, realizing I can follow through with my heart's desire only through Your strength.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

The Understanding

From Our Father's Heart

You, My people, have destroyed My Name
in the eyes of the world.

Your powerless prayers, selfish lives,
self-serving gospel, and your disloyalty
have made you weak and powerless to represent Me.

My love for you has allowed trials in your life
to change you, so that you might become like My Son,
Jesus Christ.

I want you to be endued with His power.

I want to be able to trust you with My presence.

Why do you resist suffering and the denial of your desires?

Why do you seek your own comfort,
while others go without knowing Me?

How did your eyes become focused on your own needs,
instead of on My desires?

You have denied My purposes and ways,
and have lost intimacy with Me in doing so.

Repent.

Turn now, and We will walk together in full accord.

Isaiah 30:18 The Living Bible "Yet the Lord still waits for you to come to him, so he can show you his love; he will conquer you to bless you, just as he said. For the Lord is faithful to his promises..."

Rev 3:19 Amp "Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]."

A Better Understanding of God's Ways of Changing Us Will Help Us When We Are Weary

God is not as concerned about what we are doing for Him as He is about who we are becoming. Most of us take the Word of God and loosely interpret it as a guideline on how we should function. We take selective chapters, verses, or sentences that fit our needs or conform to our beliefs. We even minimize, or completely eliminate, some verses from our life's study, if they particularly offend our desired way of living.

There is no way we can shortcut or circumvent God's ways of dealing with us to eliminate our sin nature so that His presence

*If we
understand
the ways in
which God is
going to
refine us,
we will not
give up or
give in when
we are
weary.*

might be with us to accomplish any given task. He will have His way. He is our covenant keeper.

II Sam 14:14 Amp "...God does not take away life, but devises means so that he who is banished may not be an utter outcast from Him."

Amos 3:3 NIV "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"

God's Idea of Walking Together with Him is Very Different from Ours

Eph 4:12-13 Amp "His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church),

13 [That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him."

His purpose for walking with us is to perfect the character of Christ in us, so that we will be like His Son in our hearts.

Moses Understood and Submitted to God's Plan

Moses said that God had better equip him (change him.) He understood only God's power would allow him to make it.

Exodus 33:12 Amp "Moses said to the Lord, See, You say to me, Bring up this people, but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You said, I know you by name and you have also found favor in My sight."

Only a deep, intimate knowledge of God and His ways would do.

Exodus 33:13 Amp "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You [progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with You, perceiving and recognizing and understanding more strongly and clearly] and that I may find favor in Your sight. And [Lord, do] consider that this nation is Your people."

God came to Moses because of his submissive heart.

Exodus 33:14 Amp "And the Lord said, My Presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

Moses once more knew he needed to rely completely on God if he was going to succeed. He wasn't foolish enough to go it alone in his own strength and wisdom.

Exodus 33:15 Amp "And Moses said to the Lord, If Your Presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here!"

Only God's hand-in-hand presence and the fullness of His power would make the task successful.

Exodus 33:16 Amp "For by what shall it be known that I and Your people have found favor in Your sight? Is it not in Your going with us so that we are distinguished, I and Your people, from all the other people upon the face of the earth?"

Moses could only see and function from the other side of the cross of Christ. Paul, however, understood the same message and knew God's way was for him to have God's presence with him in all he did.

God brought His man for that hour to the point of full submission through the circumstances and trials that were allowed in his life in order to refine, mold, and make him totally sold out to God.

II Cor 12:7 Amp "And to keep me from being puffed up and too much elated by the exceeding greatness (preeminence) of these revelations, there was given me a thorn (a splinter) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to rack and buffet and harass me, to keep me from being excessively exalted."

II Cor 6:4-10 Amp "But we commend ourselves in every way as [true] servants of God: through great endurance, in tribulation and suffering, in hardships and privations, in sore straits and calamities.

5) In beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless watching, hunger;

6) By innocence and purity, knowledge and spiritual insight, longsuffering and patience, kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in unfeigned love;

7) By [speaking] the word of truth, in the power of God, with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand [to attack] and for the left hand [to defend];

*He knew
that people
couldn't tell
the
difference
unless
God's
presence
was with
him.*

*Great
credentials!*

8) *Amid honor and dishonor; in defaming and evil report and in praise and good report. [We are branded] as deceivers (impostors), and [yet vindicated as] truthful and honest.*

9) *[We are treated] as unknown and ignored [by the world], and [yet we are] well-known and recognized [by God and His people]; as dying, and yet here we are alive; as chastened by suffering and [yet] not killed;*

10) *As grieved and mourning, yet [we are] always rejoicing; as poor [ourselves, yet] bestowing riches on many; as having nothing, and [yet in reality] possessing all things."*

Because of God's Refinements, the Old, Prideful Paul (Saul)
Became the Trustworthy Paul, Whom the Lord Could Fully Use

Phil 3:10-11 Amp "[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]

11 That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body]."

Most people
are
determined
not to be
passionate
about
anything,
unless it
benefits
them.

You're going
to have to
get your
course set
on gaining
the heart of
Christ and
submitting to
the mind of
Christ.

A breakdown of the above verses reveals the way to a
heart that God can use.

1. "My determined purpose"

Jesus had a single purpose. Paul had a single purpose. Any person that was truly used by God was, first and foremost, sold out to God. God moves on behalf of one who is determined to be in line with His causes. Most of us aren't willing to pay the price; and therefore, never receive the joy of knowing the powerful hand of God in our lives.

What is your determined purpose in life? Really, for what do you get up every day and pine?

Do you think your purpose in your life pleases God? Do you believe the pursuit of that purpose could possibly be why there is an emptiness deep down somewhere that you have not been able to fill? What do you think would help you?

Paul's Determined Purpose!

2. "That I may know Him"

Jesus came for many reasons, one of which was to show us how to act on behalf of the Father in a world that is dying. The only way one can act like or emulate someone is to study and embrace the life, loves, and true purposes of that individual.

Big! Big!

Remember the bride of old? She set her mind to really know the one to whom she was betrothed. In the same way, the beginning of a true alignment with God's purposes, so we can represent Him, is to become a study of the One who walked perfectly on this earth. To know Jesus and His motives allows us to know God and His plans. Anything else is empty and futile, with no real life, no real fulfillment.

It's a process.

The pursuit of Jesus usually begins for our good and pleasure. He meets our needs, brings us to salvation, and makes us feel good every time we go to Him. That's good for us. There comes a time, however, when we understand the Father's plan more clearly.

*We move in
the direction of
love.*

He shows us this relationship is not only about us and our needs. He brings us to an increasing level of maturity. As we begin to understand His character better, we understand and move with His heart more often. As this action, response, action, response relationship continues, we gain more of His heart, and love more and more as He loves. We also begin to identify with His heart so closely that it becomes our heart.

*The closer we
get, the more
we admire His
ways.*

The closer we get we actually fall in love with His ways and move from admiration of Him to a love for Him. Getting to know Him and His ways leads to increasing love for Him, because we are changed more and more from being in His presence. Once we know Him, we act in a way that pleases Him because of the love for Him that has been placed in our hearts.

A second reason for knowing Jesus is in the realization of the great privilege we have been given - to personally and intimately

*This is
only the
King of
Kings Who
has invited
us to get
to know
Him!*

know the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Ruler of all things. It is easy to become passionate about something so wonderful. The enemy of our hearts would love to put out the fire of our zeal and dumb us down.

As in any relationship, it is paramount we never forget what has been done for us and given to us. What more need be said, other than to comment on the astounding foolishness of not maintaining our zeal and proclaiming the wonders of God with passion.

Do you really know Jesus?

Why can you say what you said?

*It's all
because of
the cross
and the
astounding
wealth that
happened
there.*

3. *"That I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection which it exerts over believers"*

Paul, unlike us, never forgot that all he was, did, and became were possible only because of Christ's resurrection power, made available to and flowing through him because he belonged to God. When he believed who Christ was, he had access to all of it.

To not fully understand what his covenant held for him was unthinkable. How could he function properly if he had no idea of the extent of the covenants, gifts, promises, commands, God-like purposes, desires, power, and astounding love he owned because of Jesus? How can we?

What kind of spiritual wealth do you really walk in?

Own this!

Note: Unless you realize the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to raise you and me from our dead, compassion-free lives, we will become frustrated religious fools, striving to become something we will never be. The change of our

heritage was a spiritual thing. What it takes to make us like Jesus is also spiritual, only accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

Watch How That Happens

4. *“And that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness”*

We don't like to hear it; but it is, nonetheless, true. To become like Christ, it will cost you everything you desire in the flesh. To finally renounce everything that hinders you from becoming like Him, you will experience the death of those things one-by-one. The trials that come allow us to choose the sufferings of Christ in order to deny those hindrances any place in our lives.

Let's talk about two kinds of suffering - suffering for Christ, and suffering with Christ.

To care only about what Jesus cares about means you willingly die to what you value. (Did you really hear that with your heart?) God's trials and purging in our lives bring about this heart in us - His heart with all of its characteristics, passions, and zeal. It is the only way to be transformed into His likeness.

Paul knew it and accepted it fully. It then became a lifelong joy. He joined God in killing his “flesh” man to become like Jesus. His joining with God against everything that denied Christ in his life, instead of fighting God over those issues (sin,) allowed the Lord to flow unhindered through him.

Because he did not cling to fleshly desires, he could take on the desires of his Lord. He felt the pain of those who would be separated from his Father for eternity. He understood the desperate needs of those around him. He had compassion on those who were in desperate need. After putting aside his flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit, he could take on the heart of Jesus that his heavenly Father willingly offered while they were in communion.

Note: Study Paul's life and see how God was able to mightily use a very ordinary man, who had few communicative skills and little physical prowess in person, to do extraordinary things and express supernatural wonders that ring from centuries past into today's world - as alive with the power of God as when they were first penned.

Remember the covenants that required your signature? Remember the heart of the bride of old? She was motivated by the love of her groom as she learned of him, and not because of the stipulations of her contract.

*We must die
to what we
value and
live for what
Jesus
values.*

*Paul joined
God in killing
everything that
denied Christ
in his life.*

Note: Later in this study you will understand the spirit of suffering. Apply these pages to that portion of the study.

*It's time to
really assess
why we are
doing what we
are doing.*

Could it be that the best interests of Jesus have not been the motivation for your coming to salvation? Could that heart motive be the reason that your walk with Him is less than fulfilling, and not really anointed?

What do you think you should do about it?

Paul knew he was dead in his heart. He knew only God could lift him out from under the weight of dead religion and a works-oriented, fruitless lifestyle.

*Jesus
never
owned His
life, it
belonged
to His
Father.*

5. *“That if possible I may attain to the spiritual and moral resurrection that lifts me out from among the dead even while in the body”*

*Paul had
grown to
no longer
own his
life.*

Nobody can kill a dead man. Nobody took Jesus’ life; He willingly gave it away. Nobody took Paul’s life. Through his suffering (willing denial of self motives,) he found the freedom Jesus possessed. He was free from the holds and fears that any man could put on him. The love Jesus exhibited to him and through him overcame any and all other reasons for living.

The perfect love and life of Christ flowed through him, so the most horrible sin to him would have been disobedience to his Father God, not anything that was done to him in the flesh. He walked in heavenly places, above the death and decay of the world, while still in the body. So can we.

Do you really desire to have your life be in perfect alignment with the intensions of your Father God? Elaborate!

Do you really want that, or is the way you have been seeing your association with God working well enough for you, giving you

total peace with God and freedom from fear? How do you think it's working for God?

Do you care if God is able to use you fully? Do you want to be part of His heart for your generation? Does it matter to you at all if your existence is counted as a positive component in God's eternal plan? Elaborate!

Get honest with yourself and with God. Really take the time to wait on God to reveal your heart to you. Journal your findings for future reference and comparison while He works in you.

*Getting
honest with
God.*

So... God has determined to conquer you, so He can bless you with the life of His Son in you and flowing through you.

*What a
concept!*

Jesus joyously existed for the good of His Father and of others. To say you are following Him, you must have the same heart motives. You can no longer have even the slightest notion to resemble who you are at present or who you used to be, and still say you are a true follower of Christ.

Prayers and thoughts

THE TURNING

Do you hear it?

Do you hear the call to remove all that stops My life
from totally eliminating your life of sin?

You have called yourself by My Name for some time.

Now I desire you to look, act, and truly be like Me from your heart.

Submit to Me and I will change you.

I John 2:6 Amp "Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself."

I Peter 2:19-21 Amp "For one is regarded favorably (is approved, acceptable, and thankworthy) if, as in the sight of God, he endures the pain of unjust suffering."

20 [After all] what kind of glory [is there in it] if, when you do wrong and are punished for it, you take it patiently? But if you bear patiently with suffering [which results] when you do right and that is undeserved, it is acceptable and pleasing to God.

21 For even to this you were called [it is inseparable from your vocation]. For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you [His personal] example, so that you should follow in His footsteps."

For how much of your life have you attempted to be good before the Lord in your own strength? So far, how much of your walk with Him has been about you and your needs? Explain!

How have you fared?

Mr. Baxter

Tony walked around the newly completed house for one final inspection. As he turned the corner on the north end of the building, he saw Mr. Baxter's new Lexus pull up into the driveway. An intense hatred for this man who had been his boss for twenty years swelled in his heart.

"Twenty years of my sweat bought that car," he said to himself.

The last straw and the determining factor that caused him to finally submit his resignation was Mr. Baxter's audacity in building this stupid house. "I want it built first-class," Baxter said in his usual, condescending tone. "It's important to me that it be well-built, so build it any size you want and spend what you think is necessary to get the job done right." To aggravate Baxter and knowing that he wouldn't see the house until it was finished, Tony selected a small, very minimal house plan with few amenities and built it on the cheapest lot he could find.

Because of his already hectic schedule and his work overload, Tony was furious he was asked to do this additional task. "Today is the day. Today, I'm going to tell him it's all over. I can't stand him anymore!"

As he neared the car, Tony remembered all the subtle ways he had used the construction project to vent his anger for the times over the years he was expected to work long hours for nothing; or how, when he did get a raise in pay, it hardly met his increased living expenses.

"I can't even buy my own house," he thought. "And even if I could, I wouldn't have the time for it."

Although this house looked beautiful to the untrained eye, Tony made sure the people for whom he had built it would one day look at Baxter with disdain because of the trouble they were having with it. The use of inferior products wherever they could be hidden, and marginal contractors, hired solely for their low bids, insured premature deterioration and guaranteed aging. Although everything looked in order, plaster cracks, leaks, and a myriad of other problems would eventually be the plight of whoever lived there because of corners that were cut to defy Baxter. That didn't matter to Tony, however. He would be gone, and it would be Baxter's problem. That simple thought gave Tony the quiet satisfaction of personal revenge.

By the time Tony reached the car, Mr. Baxter had gotten out and was looking at one of the discount shrubs near the driveway. It was already showing signs of wilting.

"Is everything completed to your satisfaction?" Mr. Baxter spoke, just as Tony was about to tell him of his decision to quit, now that the project was over.

"Yes, sir," was Tony's immediate, somewhat off-balance response. Tony resisted his almost overpowering need to vent all of the built-up hatred he felt for this man, who was always in control.

"So, it's finished first-class," Mr. Baxter continued, before Tony could again say anything.

"Yes, sir, it is," Tony assured him. Knowing the truth about how shabbily the house was really built brought a smile to his face. Mr. Baxter, misinterpreting the smile, smiled back.

"Well, then," Mr. Baxter began, "it's yours. Thank you for all of the loyal service you've given me over the years."

Mr. Baxter handed Tony the keys to his new house, patted him on the back and drove away, leaving Tony speechless, staring open mouthed at the retreating car.

Note: Stop now and really ponder this situation. What is your immediate comment on the story?

Oops!

Now think the story through and bring it to some possible conclusions, relating it to our relationship with the Lord. Picture Tony living in the small house, knowing its poor quality and knowing that he had the freedom to make it a magnificent home. Think of him talking to his wife in weaker moments when she possibly wants to talk to Mr. Baxter about the horrible house he gave them. What is Tony going to say to Mr. Baxter should he find out about all of the trouble the house is causing?

If you were Tony, would you desire to face your sin one day? Yes or no. Why?

Have you ever been mad at the Lord for allowing you to go through some difficult times?

Do you see a parallel attitude there somewhere?

It Was All for Tony

What astounding foolishness on Tony's part. Think of it. The house he was building was really for his benefit. All along, his master's plans were to provide a safe, comfortable haven for Tony and his wife and family - people for whom Mr. Baxter truly cared.

Mr. Baxter, his master, gave Tony the freedom to build anything he wanted, any way he desired with no limitations. Tony, however, in his blindness and foolishness, was unable to see past his own needs and selfish desires in order to understand the true purpose for all he was doing. His hardships were, in essence, for his own good.

*God is
allowing you
to build your
life any way
that you
desire.*

How Foolish We Are

Herein lies one of the most wonderful truths of our association with God because of Jesus. God's part of our covenant is to make sure we do not remain unlike Jesus because it is so good for our well-being now and for eternity. He is continually reminding us we have sold our old life to Him. (Actually, He bought it from us. The price was the blood of Jesus.)

If we attempt to hold on to our lives, striving to maintain any semblance of control over them, we will lose their real value. If we voluntarily lose our lives, willingly taking the posture of Jesus by giving everything away to God, we gain more than we could ever believe possible. When we choose to make these fleeting moments in time that we call our lifetime all about the glory of the Lord, He shows us He has far more for us than if we had been concerned only for ourselves.

*He places His
life in us when
we come to
Jesus; then
He adds and
adds Himself
each time we
surrender.*

It works like this: If we really do give everything away, He draws so close to us that our nature is superseded by His nature; and consequently, we care less and less about our own needs the more we come to Him. (Supersede – to force out of use as inferior, to take the place, room, or position of.) Our surrender causes the Lord to develop in us the character of Christ - a nature that is deeply in love with the Father and wanting only His desires - in place of our selfish, carnal character. The freedom achieved through our submission is the really good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God lovingly brings us out of the horrors of our fleshly nature.

God, our Father, is at all times showing us that intimate fellowship with Him is the position for which each of us has been created. We are made to function hand-in-hand with our Father in Heaven. The guidelines on how to function that way have been made available to us in His Word. His constant urgings to be like Christ, to lay our lives down, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to make God first in our lives are love messages to the bridal

*How do you
really feel
about an
invitation to
get intimate
with the God
of the
universe?*

heart of Jesus. He also promises to do everything to initiate and accomplish those changes.

True intimacy is our privilege. If we look to our own needs and place our Lord somewhere behind them, our precious, loving Father promises to bring His priorities back in order in our lives. He has committed to do so. We have committed to need Him to do it.

What are you feeling now?

Why do you think we are failing to live in the freedom ordained for us?

Haggai 1:2-14 Amp "Thus says the Lord of hosts: This people say, The time is not yet come that the Lord's house should be rebuilt [although Cyrus had ordered it done eighteen years before].

3 Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house [of the Lord] lies in ruins?

5 Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways and set your mind on what has come to you.

6 You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.

7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways (your previous and present conduct) and how you have fared.

8 Go up to the hill country and bring lumber and rebuild [My] house, and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified, says the Lord [by accepting it as done for My glory and by displaying My glory in it].

9 You looked for much [harvest], and behold, it came to little; and even when you brought that home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of My house, which lies waste while you yourselves run each man to his own house [eager to build and adorn it].

10 Therefore the heavens above you [for your sake] withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its produce.

11 And I have called for a drought upon the land and the hill country, upon the grain, the fresh wine, the oil, upon what the ground brings forth, upon men and cattle, and upon all the [wearisome] toil of [men's] hands.

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people [who had returned from captivity], listened to and obeyed the voice of the Lord their God [not vaguely or partly, but completely, according to] the words of Haggai the prophet, since the Lord their God had sent him, and the people [reverently] feared and [worshipfully] turned to the Lord.

13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people saying, I am with you, says the Lord.

14 And the Lord aroused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, so that they came and labored on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God..."

*Nothing's
really
working
because our
priorities are
wrong.*

But We Don't Get It

Few of us realize the magnitude of harm we are doing to the representation of Jesus to others by our inferior Christlikeness. Our false spirituality and hardened hearts not only harm us, but also those who are brought in our path.

God has asked us to build the temple, our bodies, for His full presence; and we spend most of our time avoiding the true cost of the building process. The reason we are supposed to breathe is for the Lord to bring His very breath to others through us.

Do you have anything to say to Jesus at this time? If He were standing in front of you discussing your life, what would be the gist of the conversation - on His part, on your part? Journal your communication elsewhere if needed. It's something that would be very important to have available in the future.

*Did you ever
think that even
though you
were doing
the typical
Christian stuff,
you might
really be doing
harm to the
work of the
Lord because
you weren't
representing
Jesus
properly?*

The World Misses Jesus in Us

Hebrews 12:12-13 The Living Bible "So take a new grip with your tired hands, stand firm on your shaky legs,

13 and mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet so that those who follow you, though weak and lame, will not fall and hurt themselves, but become strong."

The plan of God is that we be removed from the world, trained in the ways of Christ through trials and subsequent total submission; and then return to those who don't know Jesus with our wealth. Our lives should be exhibiting Him to them in order to bring them out of darkness, all for God's praise and His glory.

*It's time to
step back
and take a
real good
look,
isn't it?*

Our pursuit of comfort and the selfish fulfillment of our own needs override the plans of God for our lives. Most of the time, it doesn't even register in our minds how far we've fallen. It's time to step back from everything and take a strong look at what the Lord really requires of us and what we committed to long ago.

Hosea 13:6 NIV "When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me."

*This is
where most
of us really
are.*

So... Here's where most of us are standing at present. We are beginning to realize God is calling us to a deeper walk with Him. He is wooing our hearts to become holy vessels of service and Christ's love for the times in which we live. We have looked around and found that most of those who say they are following Jesus are really trying to make God follow their own plans. What has become painfully obvious is that we realize we are included in that lot of poor, empty souls.

Do you believe Father God is mad at you at this time, or is He delighted that you see what needs to change in you?

Those who choose to hear and see what the Lord is doing are becoming more and more aware that the times in which we live could very well be the end of the end times. Most of what is needed for Jesus to return has been Biblically fulfilled. Almost everything is in place, so it could happen at the next twinkling of an eye. Even if we are mistaken about the urgency of the times, the calling to holiness is very real and becoming increasingly clear.

What is so disarming is that with the heralding we are hearing, we are also painfully aware we are not prepared for whatever is planned on God's calendar. We are very much like the betrothed bride who one day came to the painful realization of who

she was not. She was not like her groom. Our “business-as-usual” Christianity has a stench about it that reminds us of the rottenness of the world of which we are supposed to have come out, but we seem helpless to do anything about it.

How clear is the call to holiness in your life? Are you really aware of the heralding that is ringing in the ears of those who have ears to hear it? Do you really care if the world has a clear picture of Jesus through your life?

If your answer is no, you really are on dangerous ground. You need the Lord to change your heart to even want His will and His way in your life.

Get real with God. Ask Him to give you a heart of repentance. Don’t give up until you get the proper heart attitude with God. It may take a while, so don’t become discouraged.

Remember, this is no surprise to the Lord. He knew of this day and is very pleased with you if you come to Him honestly. If you don’t, you can be assured the Lord will devise means in your life to get you to repent of your hardened heart.

God will keep His end of the covenant He has entered into with you, and yours, too, because it is humanly impossible for us to do so. (Refer to the section on covenant later in this study to understand why.)

Prayers and thoughts

Let's Look at Some Reasons Why We May Be Hindered
from Selling Out Completely to God

In our pride, we believe we are well fed because God has given us morsels of His presence. The cost of becoming like Christ appears to be far in the distance, for somebody else, or too high a price to pay. Little do we know the overwhelming benefits of walking in intimacy with our God and the comparative loss involved in not doing so.

*The view is
incredible from
your knees at
the foot of the
cross.*

We will never be able to draw close to God unless we deal with the sin in our lives. All sin must be dealt with, so it can be forgiven by God. Everything starts when we once again kneel at the foot of the cross. It is a reserved position for anyone who desires to go deeper with God. It is the mandatory position for the remnant bride in preparation for the return of Jesus.

Only from the cross can we see clearly the plan of God for our lives and the price we need to pay for the honor of presenting His life to those who are dying in their sin. It is, in essence, the same situation that Jesus faced. He had to die, so others could live. We must die to our old nature, so His nature can be seen in us - all so others might see Jesus through us and embrace life.

Psalms 32:5 Amp "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord [continually unfolding the past till all is told] - then You [instantly] forgave me the guilt and iniquity of my sin. . ."

*Repentance
is fun!*

*It's sort of
like being
bathed in
clean water
and getting
"squeaky"
clean.*

Do you believe an attitude of repentance indicates condemnation? Why or why not?

Are you seeing that the knowledge of our need for repentance is the first step to healing? I am not talking about our personal healing, but the healing needed in our relationship with our Lord. Why or why not?

Repentance Brings Freedom

Don't confuse God's intended life of continual repentance, the continual washing of God's forgiveness, and the freedom it leads to on a daily basis with a position of continually dwelling on your sins and subsequent feelings of worthlessness. The first brings a joyous life, while the second denies your full acceptance by God through the shed blood of Jesus. The denial of that atonement brings depression and fear.

*Did you
really hear
this?*

Note: Remember, repentance is not scary. In fact, once you realize the freedoms that an attitude of repentance brings, it becomes a pleasant continual process, bringing continual washing and cleansing. Paul stated that he always remained in right standing before God and man. He lived a life of repentance, continually being on guard for any offense that would stand in the way of his freedom with his Lord or those around him.

*Living a life of
repentance
brings
freedom from
any form of
condemnation.*

Acts 24:16 Amp "Therefore I always exercise and discipline myself [mortifying my body, deadening my carnal affections, bodily appetites, and worldly desires, endeavoring in all respects] to have a clear (unshaken, blameless) conscience, void of offense toward God and men."

I love to be free from any hindrance in my relationship with my Lord. I also hate any distance between fellow believers and me. It is absolutely necessary to attempt to make all wrongs right. If the other party cannot forgive, or cannot see the need to reconcile, the Lord will cover that. Make sure all is in order between you and everyone as best as you can. Liberty is a wonderful experience.

Do you really believe this? Explain!

Our Words Have Lost Their Meaning Through Loose Usage, but God's Haven't

Read God's Word through His eyes. He means what He says. When He talks about salvation through the blood of His Son, He means it. When He says we should devote ourselves to Him as our life's purpose, He means it.

*Determine
this very
moment to
walk only in
truth.*

When He says that if we call ourselves Christians, we should walk in this world as Jesus did - full of passion, limitless love, and spiritual power, always, in whatever circumstances - He means

it. No matter how often we might choose to misinterpret or realign the Word of God to prove we can somehow remain comfortable, at ease, and self-serving; God has said He will do all in His power to bring us to repentance, so we might become like Jesus so the world can see Him in us - and He means it!

Note: Before you move on to the next lesson, allow the Lord to examine your heart in any area we have discussed. Wait on Him to reveal any hidden agendas, false notions, and harbored sins even if it takes days. Get everything right with Him. It is foundational for any further study of His Word and His ways.

Write down any areas you think are not completely dealt with, even though they have been submitted to the Lord. This will allow you to reference this section to see if any of these are in the way, as you continue walking with the Lord, submitting to His will in what He shows you. It will also allow you to watch the power of the Lord at work in your heart. You will be surprised at how much your honest heart pleases Him.

Make sure you've been able to sign all the agreements we've covered. If you cannot do so, something is still wrong in your commitment to God. To go any further in this study would be playing religious head games. You will gain nothing and possibly deeply offend your God in the process. Do whatever it takes to get things right. Forgive everyone. Mend fences. Fix every relationship you can. Accept your Lord's love for you.

You are valuable.
Remember you are intensely loved by God.

Be blessed as you go on to the different lessons in this Personal Study.

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

May I tell you one of the wonders of Our relationship?
I am always with you!
I understand that you have heard that saying so often
that it has lost its real meaning,
so please listen with an open heart.
The work of the cross accomplished many wonderful things.
Some are so wonderful
that your mind cannot comprehend what they are,
so I am not going to share them with you until you are with Me.
One completed work that you can understand, however,
is the fact that I have become near to you once again
because of what Jesus did.
Spiritual law separated us before the cross.
That law has been fulfilled in Christ
and now We have free access to one another.
That means that nothing can separate us again.
This fact makes the difference
between you being limited to your miniscule, human limitations
and having full access to My boundless, spiritual nature.
I now reside in you.
You have been made alive in your inner being
by My Holy Spirit.
I bring My world to your world through you.
If you ever really comprehend what that means,
you would never again
choose to dabble in the limitations of your world.
You would become a study of the cross
to find out what has been provided for you
and why I have provided it.
You would seek real wisdom and flee from listening
to your old, selfish nature, which limits your perspective.
You would rejoice in Our relationship as I flowed through you
with wonders that have limitless, spiritual impact
on everything and everyone with whom you come in contact.
You would be free in a world that continually attempts
to place bondages on you.
You would be able to rise above every limitation
because of the freedom that I have given you.
I am with you, in you, and for you.
Come to Me and allow Me to show you
how wonderful that really is!

*Can you hear
the joy
resounding
through this
message?*

*Wow!
God is
really for
us!*

*I am delighted
when I am
strengthened
with power and
might by the
power of the
Holy Spirit
in my
"inner being."*

Ephesians 3:16-19 Amp "May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality].

17) May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love,

18) That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it];

19) [That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!"

This spiritual stuff often gets confusing and far beyond my comprehension, if I try to figure it all out with my pea brain. My mind gets so cluttered I almost become immobilized with it all. That is why my mind is not the place to discern spiritual things. That is also why most of the body of Christ gets bogged down with contentions, judgments, and disagreements. We are trying to grasp the spiritual with our carnal minds. It doesn't work.

Because of our acceptance of the work of the cross, we have become spiritual. Our bodies are dying daily, but our spirits have been made alive. Our inner man – the eternal, spiritual person we really have become - comprehends, accepts, and thrives on things of the Spirit. It has been made alive through Christ and will continue with Him throughout eternity. That is where we should allow ourselves to be guided daily by the Holy Spirit within us, not in our thinking and reasoning abilities.

At times, I am almost paralyzed by my inabilities. I look at those around me and sometimes become hamstrung with who I am not, in comparison to who they appear to be because of their worldly presence and achievements. To my mind and by the world's standards, I am a failure. In those times, I realize my incapability is exactly what drive me to God's capabilities. He is my power. He is my dwelling place, my real life - not what I see and feel.

The Beginning
(At Least as Far as We Are Told)

This is important to know, so we can understand how privileged
we really are. It is time to become grateful!

Long before mankind ever came upon the scene, God was busy at work unfolding His plans and His purposes. In the Bible, we are told of two creations, the angelic creation and the mankind creation (Adam and Eve.)

We are told very little about the angelic creation. We do know there was a great rebellion and one third of the angels were separated from God for eternity. Some were cast down to this earth where they are used in the refining process of mankind, functioning as demons; others are chained in utter darkness until God's determined time. They had no chance to repent and come back to God as far as we know.

The second creation - mankind - committed the same rebellion. In fact, that same rebellion was stimulated in Adam and Eve by the same fallen angel leader. He had committed rebellion in the timeless past and it got him kicked out of fellowship with God. This time, however, even though the same sin of rebellion was initiated by him and committed by the mankind creation, God chose to make a way for all of mankind to be reconciled to Himself.

God pursues mankind to this day to bring as many as will come back to Him. Most of us call this the mercy of God, His "salvation plan." It came through Jesus Christ.

II Sam. 14:14 NIV "God ... devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him."

Why don't you pause for a while to find gratefulness in your heart for your loving heavenly Father? Write down what your inner man wants to express to Him. Mark these two pages, so you can keep a running account of what the Holy Spirit shows you. Come back here when you grow weary or discouraged.

*Same guy,
same old trick.*

*Only this time
God really
fooled Him.*

*His foul deed
set in motion
his permanent
defeat.*

The Covenant - a Prelude to Jesus

“The Covenant”

Our present-day Bible is divided into two testaments or covenants – the old and new covenants. Each apply to man’s relationship with God. Throughout the Old Testament, or old covenant, God would make agreements (or covenants) with people who had a heart for Him. These agreements would be entered into to fulfill some purpose God had in mind.

*This will
show you
the “why”
of the
cross.*

Most of these agreements would be broken due to man’s inability to keep them. When one covenant failed, God would find another honest heart to agree with and function through. During these times, God would also have man make covenants with one another, when it would fulfill intermediate steps in His plan in posturing all of creation for the arrival of Jesus. These agreements combined - those with God and man and those man to man - would further the cause of God until the proper appointed time, when He would make an unbreakable agreement with Himself (Jesus.)

Enter Jesus

Have you ever wondered why Jesus had to be born of a woman? Most of us would say so He could be part of mankind to experience all we go through. That’s correct, but only to a point.

This is so cool!!!

Have you ever wondered why the seed that allowed Him to become man was planted by God through the Holy Spirit in woman instead of being planted by man (Joseph)? The common answer would be because He had to have God’s nature to claim to be the Son of God. That, too, is absolutely true, but it’s only part of the answer.

Have you ever wondered how these two factors, Jesus being born of mankind (woman) and fathered by God, completed God’s unbreakable agreement with mankind? We basically understand the “God being man” part, but does the phrase “man in God” ever cross your mind when you observe Jesus?

Have you settled in your heart that this godly agreement is all that’s needed for your assurance of eternal association with God, if you’ve fully surrendered to the personal Lordship it has created for you? It should, and here’s why.

Anatomy of a Covenant

There are Two Types of Covenants with God

One is conditional. To receive God's promised blessing, first we must either do something or avoid doing something. If we don't do our part, God has no obligation to fulfill his part.

You need to own this.

The other type of covenant is unconditional. In these covenants, God promises to do something for us and doesn't require anything in return. For example, His love for us is unconditional. There's nothing we can do to earn it, and there's nothing we can do to lose it. It's always there. It's unconditional.

In a generic sense, a covenant is an agreement or contract. In the Bible, covenant is far more than a simple agreement. It takes on an elevated meaning, especially when God is one of the participants. It's a legal document enforceable by His laws.

Major Covenants in Biblical History

1. Covenant with Adam and Eve

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve could eat anything they desired except the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden, known as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As they obeyed these instructions, they were allowed to live in the garden with God. If they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would forfeit living in His presence and lose their personal relationship with Him. This covenant with them was conditional, they fell short, and we all know how that turned out!

2. Covenant with Noah

God sent a flood to destroy the earth and everyone in it except Noah and his family. He instructed them to build an ark so they would be safe when it happened. Afterwards, God promised to never again destroy the earth with a flood. This covenant is unconditional.

3. Covenant with Abraham

Moving forward several centuries, we come to Abraham. God calls Abraham to go to a new place and enter a new relationship with Him. God promises He will grow Abraham into a great nation. Through him, God will bless all nations. This is another unconditional covenant. As Abraham demonstrates his faithfulness to God, He continues to expand the scope of His promises to Abraham.

4. Covenant through Moses

God establishes His laws through Moses. If people obey God's Law, He will bless them. If they don't follow God's rules, He will withhold blessings. This is a conditional covenant, one in which the people repeatedly fell short in over the centuries.

5. Covenant with David

God's covenant with David is that his descendants will sit on the throne forever, and for twenty generations this happens. Although King David's physical line ended, Jesus was a direct descendant, so the lineage continues. Jesus arises as the ultimate King Who will rule forever, an unconditional covenant promise.

6. Covenant through Jesus

This is the final and eternal covenant. Jesus, as covenant maker, fulfills the Old Testament laws and covenants. Anyone who believes in Jesus, follows Him, and trusts in Him will receive the promises of this ultimate covenant to end all covenants. The outcome is living with Him forever. Once accepted, it's an unconditional covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus. God is present through Jesus on both sides of the covenant to ensure its iron-clad guarantees.

Covenants Made Man to Man

According to the law of times past, a covenant document was an inescapable contract, which contained stated elements and rituals that were designed to accomplish specific goals for the mutual benefit of the covenant parties.

*The terms had to be
agreed upon!*

Even though covenants are meant to be life contracts, most covenants made man-to-man are conditional, meaning both parties had obligations to fulfill if the covenant was to remain intact. There were major consequences for either party if the terms and conditions of the covenant were broken.

When covenant was cut, the terms established became law for the covenant parties. Once agreed upon, these terms were enforceable unto death if either covenant maker violated the covenant in any way. The terms and conditions also benefited specified future generations. These generations were equally responsible to keep the covenant terms. As beneficiaries, they were held accountable for the initial covenant terms and subject to the consequences if they broke those terms.

We are going to first study the laws and characteristics of covenants made between two parties and show that God

established them to be a “type” of the eternal, unbreakable covenant He made with Jesus.

Covenants were binding agreements on the parties involved and also on all future generations represented by those participating in the covenant – in other words, all of the unborn seed in the loins of the covenant makers.

To break covenant would mean, in most cases, death to the violating party. Depending on the terms of the covenant agreement, that death sentence, or whatever consequence was agreed upon, would apply to every generation stipulated in the agreement.

*Binding unto death
if violated*

If, for example, the covenant agreement stated that all the terms of the covenant applied to the person who initially made covenant and the four generations that followed, each of those succeeding generations was bound by the covenant as if they had made it themselves. They would be recipients of all of the benefits, but if they violated the covenant, they would also receive whatever consequences were part of the agreement.

This was an unbreakable, life-involving commitment that was enforced by the law of the land. It was no small thing to enter into covenant with someone and of great consequence to anyone who took the terms lightly.

Whenever a covenant was entered into, there were many elements that needed to be fulfilled and many formal, significant actions taken before it was binding on both parties. First and foremost, both parties had to have a desire to enter into covenant and then had to agree to its terms. It would be foolish to commit to something this binding and not like the terms and consequences to which you were committing.

For example, one reason for two parties to enter into covenant would be for the sake of protection and survival. If one person had extreme wealth, but no one to protect his money, it would behoove him to enter into covenant with someone who had a vast army of warriors, but no money to feed and equip them. The money of one party would be used for the equipping of the other’s army. That person’s army would always be available to protect the other’s money.

*The two became
one.*

*The closest we
have today is
the marriage
covenant, and it
is so diluted
that it is
unrecognizable
as a covenant.*

It is important to note at this point that each party became legally “one” as far as covenant law was concerned. The man with the army could go to the bank and withdraw whatever he needed for his troops as if he was the other party. *He would go in the other party’s “name”* and legally take whatever he needed without asking permission of the other party, if he chose to do so. Because of covenant, all the money was his as much as it was the property of the original owner. The bank recognizes him not as himself, but as

the person with whom he is in covenant. He came in the name of His covenant partner.

(Notice our prayers to God. We come to Him in Jesus' Name, not our own. This has become a ritual as we say it, but God recognizes our coming as if Jesus was coming with requests, praises, and petitions.)

It just gets
"gooder."

*They owned the
wealth of the
other!*

In the same manner, the wealthy man could command the troops of his covenant partner whenever needed them because of the terms of the covenant. He was free to do anything with them that was necessary to protect his money. (Please ponder these situations as they are presented and begin to see how crucial it is to know of this authority when you are learning about our covenant with God because of Jesus. Also observe what God means when He says the marriage covenant is a picture of the mystery of Jesus and His church.)

Each party mutually "owned" the "wealth" of the other in accordance with the terms stated in the covenant agreement. (Every future generation represented at the covenant commencement had the same rights if either party died, but only if the first party died. The covenant automatically passed down to the specific generations stated. The one making covenant had to die in order to have the next generations receive the benefits of the covenant terms. Think through what is being said and begin to understand the need for the cross of Jesus Christ as He was making covenant for us with the Father!)

*There had to
be a death of
the covenant
maker, so that
the terms and
privileges of
the covenant
could be
passed on to
the others
mentioned in
the original
covenant
agreement.*

Upon entering covenant, there were formal steps taken to assure its validity and formalize its terms. Whenever the terms were agreed upon, it was done in front of witnesses, usually at a banquet or supper of some sort. At that meal, the terms, conditions, and reasons for the covenant were stated and usually sealed by drinking a cup of wine. (Remember the cup of betrothal earlier in this study and the cup Jesus presented at the Last Supper. Jesus' cup was the cup of the new covenant!)

Blood was shed!

Most covenants were blood covenants, meaning blood would be shed in one form or another to seal the agreement. In covenants person-to-person, a cut on the wrist or across the chest would be made and then the parties would hold the cuts together while stating and agreeing on the terms. After this ritual, usually black pitch or dark coloring would be placed in the wound, so the wound would remain visible for the life of the covenant makers.

In the case of the parties who made the above agreement, if robbers should ever confront the wealthy man, all he had to do was show his scar to them. Whoever was foolish enough to pursue foul play was automatically confronting the man with the armies. His

covenant partner was committed to avenge any confrontation unto his own death, if need be.

Remember, everyone present - either physically or represented as future generations - would not be able to “walk” in the covenant while the original covenant makers lived. As soon as they died, the next in line and everyone in succeeding generations included in the original covenant automatically inherited and became obligated to the covenant, with all of its power and promises, as if they had made it themselves. (Everyone who eventually comes to Christ was “in” Christ when He made covenant just as any unborn generational seed was in the covenant makers when they covenanted one to another.)

*Jesus had to
die, so that we
could inherit
His life!!*

*Are you
excited yet?*

The Eternal Covenant

Jesus had to be 100% God to have the integrity to be able to make an unbreakable covenant with His Father. Therefore, He had to be “Fathered” by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus!

He had to be 100% man to be able to represent all of mankind (man and woman) when the covenant in heaven was made. Therefore, He had to be “born of a woman.”

*100% God
and 100%
man*

Contemplate on that last statement. If that concept was not powerful enough for you, get ready to be really blessed.

*He could
take our
place and
make
covenant for
us as God.*

When Jesus and His Father entered into the everlasting covenant, He and His Father stood there for Themselves – God with God and also God with all the spiritually unborn seed that were in Jesus (you and me.) That means Jesus was not only our representation on the cross; but we, according to the terms of covenant, were with Him as He and the Father agreed that “all was finished.” Jesus took the blood He shed - not the blood of goats and cattle as in the passing covenant, but His very own blood - to the mercy seat in heaven and placed it there to satisfy all the requirements for fallen man to be reconciled with His Father.

In the place of His tomb, after He had been raised from the dead - when Jesus would not allow Mary to touch Him - He was saying that He had not yet gone to the Father with His redemptive blood. To have been touched in any way before that happened would have defiled the blood offering and nullified the cross.

His death assured us that all the promises He made with His Father God would be “legally” fulfilled. Every one of us who has been, or will anytime in the future be, “born of Him” (Jesus) inherits those promises because he/she was “in” Him as part of His unborn spiritual seed. That applies even now and any time in the future before He comes for His own.

To assure that all the covenant promises are as fresh as the day they were made, Jesus now is alive as the mediator of the covenant promises. He makes sure, as it were, that we inherit the promises He and His Father made.

Do you really understand the implications of you being “in Jesus” when He and His Father sealed the covenant for eternity?

What an Astounding Arrangement!

The Bible states that in the heavenlies, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day to the Lord. To God, Jesus died only two days ago, so to speak. That blood is fresh.

Why did God the Father spend hundreds of generations, the death of His Son, over two thousand years since the resurrection of Jesus, and who knows how many more years in the future to bring rebellious, fallen mankind back into fellowship with Himself? Being God, He could have willed it into being. He also could have found more convenient, quicker ways to accomplish the forgiveness of man.

Why do you think He did it?

Why did He even provide forgiveness for us? He didn't do it for the angelic creation. Why us?

If we observe all that has been accomplished through Jesus as “about us” and that God simply “loved us enough to do all of that” as the only reason, we will become self-centered recipients of an

astounding gift, with a heart that craves that the Giver continue to bestow more gifts on us because we somehow must deserve it. "If He did all this, we must be the center of all of His plans."

Oops! That is how most of us really feel - that we're the only object of God's ideas, God's devotion, and God's plans.

Where Then, Do We Put This?

Eph. 3:9-12 NIV "... this grace was given to me; to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

10) His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

11) according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12) In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

The above verses had as much impact on my understanding of the plans of God as any other single segment in the Bible. It was almost like a Damascus Road experience. Saul's encounter with the Lord stopped him in his tracks and changed the direction of his life forever. These verses have done the same for me and will do likewise for you, if you will allow the Holy Spirit to reveal them to you.

As precious as you are to God, all of this is not only about you. It is also about the eternal plans of God and their impact on heavenly beings.

When the angelic beings fell, they were given no mercy. They were cast from the presence of God, experiencing firsthand His boundless power and authority.

At present, some of those who remain with Him can only lie prostrate before Him crying "Holy, Holy, Holy," because He is so magnificent. Others, especially those who were cast from His presence, to this day understand His power and authority. To them, He is undeniably "Almighty God."

Enter puny mankind! Limited to functioning within the five senses, frail in comparison to even the lowest order of angel, incredibly ignorant concerning spiritual things, and so on and so on - you get the picture...

Since the cross, when the veil before the Holy of Holies was ripped in two, puny mankind - who previous to this time was truly on the outside looking in - has the kind of access to God the angelic creation will never have. We can now come directly into the

This will change the positioning of your thoughts, actions, and motivations forever if you fully get this.

It will give you an understanding of how very important it is for you to flow with the plans of God and embrace your reason for breathing.

*We now have
complete
access to
Father God.*

presence of God anytime we desire to go there and are accepted as if Jesus Himself entered. (Stop and ponder that, and then ask yourself why in the world we don't spend the majority of our time in His presence. That's how limited and puny our thinking is! Of course, the Lord did say His thoughts and ours are two different things, and this example certainly proves it. We settle for so little, and it must grieve the heart of God how often we miss what He's made available.)

Because of the covenant Jesus established, we go into the presence of God in His Name, not our own. God accepts us just as He would accept Jesus because we were "in" Jesus when covenant was made. After Jesus died, we were the full recipients of His kind of access to the Father.

To the angels, God providing this access for us was only one of the many facets of God they had never seen. Each time He flows His wondrous privileges toward us, they see other facets about Him in which they are not allowed to participate.

This is probably a great revelation to some of you. I know that it was to me. Maybe it's time to get a little more excited about what has been provided for us! Here's that verse again.

Eph. 3:9-12 NIV "... this grace was given to me; to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

10) His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

11) according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12) In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

What are you thinking now?

How has your understanding about your covenant place in Christ changed?

As you read the account of the Last Supper, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and His promises to us through covenant eyes, how has your understanding changed? (This could take a while.)

Let's Talk About Some Perceptions as to Who We Are in Christ

*What kind of
heart do
you think
you have?*

*How far from
a mature
heart do you
think you
are?*

We observe three separate heart positions functioning in the church body today, all called "Christianity." There is the infant heart, the growing heart, and the mature heart - one that symbolizes the bridal heart, or more simply, the kind of heart Jesus has. You will need to know and understand these three distinctive heart positions, so you can function properly with the Lord's help as you encounter them – either in yourself or others.

The Infant Heart

The infant heart beats only for itself. All the things God does center around their needs in some way. The salvation process was for them alone. It was put in effect by God specifically for them, to make them safe after they die.

The Bible is simply a book of promises they can call upon to relieve their hurts in time of need. God is perceived as this wonderful benefactor, who is waiting for their next need to occur, so He can help them through it; and prayer is solely a channel by which they can make their needs known.

*Everything is
about them.*

In essence, everything God has done, is doing, and will do hinges upon the perception that mankind is at the center of it all; and they have somehow tapped into this incredible opportunity. So, God is all about them and for them alone. There is no need to go any further; it is enough, and it is very good. Sadly, a lot of today's church functions in this religious arena.

God has also been brought down to their size, perceived as functioning for them and in service to them. To be with most infant hearts is a roller-coaster of highs and lows, happy and sad, good days and bad days, all of which are determined by how they perceive their prayers are being answered, or how much of an "attack" they might be under.

*God exists to
serve their
needs.*

Very much like infants in diapers who are not capable of understanding that the world around them is not about them, these spiritual infants cry when they have need, demand when these needs are not met; and are only truly satisfied when they are comfortable in all areas, without giving the slightest thought to the importance of anything going on around them. Everything they can do to make themselves comfortable is done without question. What they own is all theirs. God has some rights to their money, but never more than 10%. The importance of anything else or the needs of anyone else mean nothing when there is personal need to be addressed.

The bottom-line thinking of this kind of heart is that God has put Himself in a position to serve its needs only. Preaching topics

on this kind of life include phrases like “holding God to His promises” or “We’re King’s kids” or “God wants you happy and blessed.” All of this is about those who have been saved for their good and their good alone.

This kind of heart is forever wanting to know about God, which seems wonderful on the surface. It is usually an enthusiastic “attender” at all church functions. It is continually in Bible studies and fellowship meetings.

On the surface, this activity looks impressive and makes the believer appear to be growing; but because the basic motive is self-preservation and personal safety and security, there is little fruit other than “pre-digested food,” manna that someone else has received and the infant heart tries to devour as fresh food. Just as “junk food” will not sustain a good quality of life, other people’s revelation of God will produce weak, immature spiritual infants, if the hearer does not dig in for himself in order to know God – for His reasons.

*Some infant
hearts never
grow up*

This kind of “devotion” is a warped use of all that Jesus has done on the cross. Most of the slanted doctrines, such as the name-it-and-claim-it studies come from this false mentality. This mindset deteriorates into the foolish notion that God is in the business of serving us, rather than us serving Him. It culminates in sluggish, lazy Christians who cannot be stirred from self-centeredness, even when their friends and neighbors are on their way to hell.

*Association
with the
immature
heart that
refuses to
grow up will
eventually
bring spiritual
complacency
to you.*

How close to this kind of heart do you function? What areas in your life need to grow away from this pattern? (If you have things that are out of order, rejoice that you’ve finally found them! Now is the time to surrender to the Lord.)

The Lord points these sins out because He intends to change you if you choose to cooperate. He’s always ready when you are, and He’ll even give you a push to get you started!

The Growing Heart

This second kind of heart, the growing heart, is the heart that is open to learning more about the truth of the Gospel in its pure form. It is in the process of understanding that diapers are not standard apparel for the Christian and there might be more to the walk with the Lord than having one's needs met.

People on their way to hell are given some notice, and this heart is beginning to question if Jesus really cares about the unsaved as much as He cares about them. This heart cherishes the things of God somewhere hidden under traditions, man-made doctrines, fears, wounds, and confusions. It has bought into the promises of the unscriptural, cold church, however, and is not free to move in a direction of holiness, because it does not - as of yet - believe the promise that holiness is available to it. It is thought to be for someone else.

In some of the sporadic moments of "pressing in," the growing heart experiences taste buds for more of God. Seasons of searching, alternating with seasons of relative complacency, make the growing heart the "unhappy wanderer" of Christianity.

It sees the possibility of more to the life in Christ but finds it difficult to grasp. Often, it longs to sell out completely but can't because of the hold the world, personal fears, and material possessions still have on it.

The pressures of the world keep this heart at bay. Continually unsatisfied with where it is at present, but fearful to move to the deeper things of God because it would cost a price that is presently too high to pay, this heart is continually in a state of borderline happiness.

To go where it knows it needs to go with God might mean sacrifice, ridicule from friends who don't feel the same way; and in general, stepping into an uncomfortable zone of the unknown world of absolute trust in God. Of the three kinds of hearts, this is truly the one to be pitied. The growing heart can see the truth but doesn't desire to change. Maybe the cost is too great. Maybe it seems impossible or unnecessary to obtain the kind of life God offers. The growing heart sometimes chooses to remain in a state of Christian mediocrity.

List the elements of this kind of heart that are in you. What would it take to have you sell out completely?

*Although fully
loved and
accepted by
God, this heart is
to be pitied if it
never grows up.*

*Unfortunately,
this is where
most of today's
church desires
to be.*

The Visitor

Perry and his wife of twenty years were relaxing after a hard day in the comfort of their spacious den. They decided they had had enough of the day's events and they simply wanted to stretch out, hoping no one would bother them for once. Monica had her fill of meetings, driving their two children, Dale and Ashley, back and forth to private school, plus the myriad of other incidentals that made for a very busy day.

Even her Thursday morning Bible study seemed to take too much of her time, which was at a premium these days. That worried her a bit, for she usually looked forward to getting together with her friends to discuss the Word; so she pushed her negative feelings aside, attributing them to overload.

Getting up from his favorite maroon leather chair and pushing aside the matching ottoman as he walked toward the theater system to retrieve the remote, Perry took a moment to notice the beautiful hues cascading from the lake as the setting sun performed its daily gift for him. He was often doubly blessed as he got the privilege of seeing the colors change as they were mirrored in the backyard pool located between the house and the lake. He loved his Lord for prospering him so abundantly.

As he watched the final rays of the sun hide behind the stand of trees on the other side of the lake, which left behind it a warm glow of evening peace, he gave a quiet thank you to Jesus. There was nothing Perry could think of that he needed. He was truly blessed.

"Do you need anything?" he asked in Monica's direction, as he picked up the remote and headed for his chair. In his mind, it would hopefully be the last time he had to get up - except to go to bed, of course.

"No sweetie," she responded, without looking up from the home decorating magazine she had purchased a couple of days ago and hadn't had time to read. "I'm fine," she said quietly, almost as an afterthought. She turned the page, her thoughts already engrossed in the challenge of redecorating the sunroom. It had been almost three years since she had given it any attention, so it was way past the time for its makeover. Several lawn parties with the neighbors was sufficient reason for change.

Surfing through the channels on the wide screen TV, Perry found a movie listing that caught his attention. Rated PG-13, he felt it would be safe enough to watch. "Probably just some swearing or some kissy-face," he thought to himself as he settled a little deeper into the overstuffed chair.

For about an hour, the two reveled in the quiet of the evening. The only interruptions to Perry were Monica's requests for his thoughts concerning a decorating scheme she had found on one of the pages of the magazine. He voiced a half-hearted response, not really seeing what she had shown him. Picking up on this, Monica decided not to interrupt him anymore; his interests were obviously in other places.

"Is that the doorbell?" Perry queried, looking at his watch as he got up. "It's 10:30 at night. Who would be here at this hour?" he thought again, as he crossed through the cathedral-ceilinged living room and expansive foyer to the front door. Before opening the door, Perry flipped on the outside front light switch and glanced through the narrow window beside it.

Whoever was there was standing so close to the door it was impossible to see anything but the back of his coat. Without giving a thought to the oddity of someone wearing a wool sport coat in the middle of July, Perry opened the door to greet his guest.

"Hello, Perry," the figure, who looked very much like a vagrant, said quietly, almost knocking the startled man to the floor with the power and love emitting from the friendly voice.

Perry had to hang on to the door. "Master," he gasped. No, it couldn't be. His knees were weak, and he was about to fall. Perry gripped the door tighter. "Master," he said again to the smiling face of the man standing on the front porch. "How could this be?" he thought to himself.

Perry's mind raced. He could feel his heart pumping fast to the point of fear it would burst. Cold chills were traveling up and down his back and to his shoes so fast he could no longer tell what was a chill or simply part of his body shaking.

"I can't be seeing this," he thought, his shirt now wringing wet with perspiration. Perry's face was feeling as if all of the blood had left it; and his hands were clammy, almost slippery, against the doorknob. The man at the door took Perry's hand and held it gently. A peace began to fill his entire being instantly. Strength enough to stand flowed into his body.

"Who is it, dear?" Perry heard his wife's voice as she crossed the living room floor. "Who..." Perry heard a thud, the sound of a body landing on thick carpet. Forcing himself to look away from the most loving eyes he had ever seen, Perry turned in the direction of the living room. Monica had fallen just next to the grand piano. She lay there motionless.

In reaction to what he saw near the piano, Perry forgot his guest and moved toward Monica to see if she was OK. On his way to help her, he turned toward the kitchen for some water. Everything was simultaneously in slow motion and high speed. Returning to the living room, Perry stopped short, spilling some of the water on the Italian marble foyer floor. Jesus had situated Himself in a sitting position near Monica. He took hold of her right hand with both of His and presented her before His Father in prayer. He looked up and smiled at Perry.

About then, Monica began to stir a bit. She opened her eyes, met the eyes of her Savior, and immediately fainted again. Jesus laughed quietly and touched her head, bringing her to consciousness. Not knowing what else to do, Perry knelt down, never taking his eyes off the Man who was comforting his astounded, mesmerized wife. It didn't even bother him that his knees were soaked from the spilled water. He stayed there for a moment, holding the glass almost sideways as he stared at the unbelievable scene in front of him - Monica, the love of his life, was being comforted by the Savior of the world in his living room. It was too much to comprehend. With his mind overloaded, he felt himself starting to faint. Everything went dark.

Perry had no way to justify or explain anything that was happening. He was sitting at the breakfast room table with his wife and Jesus, the Risen Christ. Was he dreaming? Had he gone nuts?

Slowly, he moved his arm under the table so it wouldn't be noticeable when he pinched himself. It hurt. He wasn't dreaming. The going nuts part was yet to be determined. Jesus was sitting there, right in front of him, in his outdated, threadbare suit and dirty, scuffed work boots, talking to Monica. Somehow, they were given the power and ability to be in His presence. The Bible verses where Jesus prepared a fire and ate fish with the apostles came to Perry's mind. "They talked with the Master at that time," he thought. "It must be possible." Then he immediately wondered, "How did I get from the foyer to the table?"

Jesus looked away from Monica long enough to include Perry in His conversation. "I would like to spend a few days with you," Jesus told them. "I won't be a bother. Just go on with your normal routine; I simply desire to be with you." Looking at Perry and then back to Monica, who had withdrawn her hand from His, he continued, "I've come to bless you."

This turn of events hit Perry and Monica like a fast-moving train barreling straight toward them. It was as if they had been working in the middle of the tracks and didn't have time to do anything else before the impact except jump.

Jesus spending time with them! What were Dale and Ashley doing? What was on their schedules that would offend Him? Who would stop by to embarrass them? All of a sudden, the movie that was still playing in the den was too loud. Words about God damning something, said by one of the actors, now resonated throughout the house as if they were shouted through a bullhorn. Perry looked at Jesus immediately. He was expressionless, almost as if He hadn't heard them.

Perry noticed His Master's hands. The scars he expected, located in His wrists just above the heel of each hand, healed from what must have been vicious wounds. What Perry didn't expect were the calluses, the grime, and the dust. These were the hands of someone acquainted with hard work. The muscular arms, the sun-darkened face, the cropped, unkempt hair - all brought the reality of a first-century man to Perry's mind. His clothes - covered with dust as if He had come from some desert country. Perry mused that he would not normally let someone in his house who looked like this man. Monica would certainly never have allowed Him to sit on her white living room carpet.

Jesus listened quietly as Monica expressed her surprise and gratitude, savoring the glass of water He had been given as a connoisseur would savor a fine wine. This Man was gracious and strong; but so gentle, so quiet, yet consuming every element of the room. This Man was Jesus.

As the evening wore on, Monica began to run out of expressions of love and thankfulness. She became agitated and increasingly nervous. Jesus did nothing to make her feel uncomfortable. In fact, His every move, every statement were reassuring and full of love. Finally, when the Master asked if He could use the guest room and retired for the evening, she broke down into uncontrollable fits of crying.

"Why would He do this to us? I don't think I can handle having Him watch my every move for the next few days. Perry, do you know what that means? It means our friends will think we've gone crazy. We're going to have to act differently. It scares me. Where do we take Him? What does He eat? Does He eat? I'm so...."

She continued on through the night even after Perry went to bed. He heard her toss and turn for hours. He must have been awake much of the night asking himself the same questions, for he knew each time she got up to pace the room at the foot of their bed.

The next morning, Jesus accompanied Perry to the law firm. He had showered and cleaned up somewhat but refused Perry's Armani suit when offered. The Master chose to wear the dust-covered suit and work boots everywhere He went. Once, when

Perry asked himself the question of why that should be, Jesus responded to his thoughts by saying He was wearing His work clothes, just as He did before He was crucified. He said that more than Perry could ever imagine was being accomplished with that outfit. It was perfect for the job at hand.

It was true. After the first day, Monica and the kids - who incidentally were not told that their houseguest was the Savior of the world - left to visit her mother across the state. The pressure and fear simply became too much for her to bear. Monica found herself embarrassed to be seen with Jesus. Some of her friends took her aside to warn her of the dangers of allowing "that kind of person" to stay with them. Some even demanded He leave "for the good of the neighborhood."

Perry found after a while he too wished their visitor would leave. All Jesus did was serve, help, and be a good friend to everyone, in every situation; but it just got tiring being on guard all the time. Introductions became disconcerting. People at work laughed or got angry that a "man like this" would hang around all day.

Club officials wouldn't let Perry in, if he insisted that his friend come along. Perry's golfing partners, some of whom were part of his Bible study, expressed their relief at the decision and rushed to make the next tee time. Even the board members of the foundation that Perry and a few of his friends had set up to help the poor did not allow Jesus to sit in on their meeting. He sat in the hall, while decisions about donations and money grants to ministries in the community were made. Jesus smiled when Perry remarked on the way home in the car that they had disbursed almost five hundred thousand dollars to the needy that night.

The ride back to Perry's house on the way home from church Sunday morning was quiet. Jesus sat in the front seat, His head down most of the way. Perry fought the desire to ask Him why He had to make everything so difficult. He felt very uncomfortable having Jesus sitting next to him during Pastor's sermon on God's promises, and our ability as Christians to request our covenant rights from Him. Even the people who normally stopped for lunch at Figaro's Deli after church asked Perry not to come today. It caused him to want to ask Jesus a lot of questions.

Jesus broke the silence. "Perry, why don't you pull into that park over there? Let's talk, OK?"

Perry pulled the shiny, new Lexus into the park and stopped near the play area. They both got out of the car and walked to a grassy area next to the swing set. Jesus squatted down and picked up a few blades of grass and smelled them, savoring the aroma with obvious delight. Moving to the swing set and resting Himself

against one of the swings, as if he were ready to use it, Jesus asked, "Perry, do you know how serious I want you to be about My Father's plans?"

The question caught Perry by surprise. Before he could respond, Jesus continued in answer to His own question. His voice was soft and full of love. "I want My Father's plans and desires to be the only reason you breathe. There should be no other purpose for getting up each morning except to do the will of My Father every moment, every day." Perry could only stand there speechless.

Jesus took one swing on the play set, then got off and stood in front of Perry for a moment as He looked into his eyes and smiled. "Let's take a walk over here," Jesus said, putting His arm around Perry's shoulder as they headed in the direction of a vacant baseball diamond.

"Can you imagine how it grieves Our hearts to see you waste any of the resources We give you?" He began as they walked. "I'm not only talking about money, but that is a big issue with Us and completely misunderstood by My church."

Jesus stooped down to observe a tiny hill swarming with industrious ants. Remaining in a squatting position while looking up at Perry, He continued. "Let me ask you a question. When you gave the money from your foundation to those ministries, it was a free gift, wasn't it?"

Perry nodded, and said, "It was, but we do hold them accountable to make sure they're good stewards of what has been given to them. After all, it is your money."

*Who holds you
accountable?*

"Exactly," Jesus said with a smile. Standing up and walking to the outfield fence, Jesus turned around and faced Perry again. "Perry, who holds you accountable for the stewardship of the time, money, and other resources I give you? Who determines how much you are allowed to keep for yourself or do with as you please?"

Perry was somewhat taken aback by the very direct inquiry into his accountability. No one had ever done that to him since he was a child; and frankly, he didn't like it. His mind raced to remember the vast amounts of money he had given to the work of God over the years. He wanted to tell Jesus he had given probably more to the work of God than most of the rest of his church combined. He spent countless hours on church committees and volunteer groups. What more could he do?

As he was about to mouth his thoughts, Jesus spoke again. "You think I'm talking about money, but I'm not! I'm really after your heart and the heart of those around you!"

After several moments, Jesus again started walking along the fence line, touching the fence periodically. He picked up a blade of grass and put it in His mouth, which He removed as He talked. Perry followed, walking next to Him, really intrigued as to what Jesus might say next.

“Perry, time is really short. Dark, refining times are coming, and there is much to be done.” Jesus paused expressing His broken heart. “But my church is asleep and completely unaware of the perils ahead!”

Jesus observed two young men passing a football near them. As the ball was overthrown, Jesus jogged over to pick it up and threw it back to them. Perry noticed that neither thanked or even acknowledged Him for the effort.

Undaunted, Jesus continued. “So much is going to happen very soon to shake your life and destroy all of the things you and those around you rely on to be in control. Unless you change your priorities, you will walk around overcome with fear like those in the world. Just like your friends, you are not prepared.”

Jesus gave Perry time to absorb the words He had just spoken before He began again. “Look around you! Look at those you are following, and then look at those who are following you. Whether you like it or not, you are becoming like those you are following, and there are people who have patterned their lives by your example, especially Monica and your children. As a husband, you are called to create an atmosphere in your marriage and your family, so they desire the deep things of My life. It’s the same with those you hang around with. How are you doing with that?”

Jesus paused for a moment then began again. “My Word says you should be holy, as I am holy. Only I can do that in you, but you can surrender fully to me to get it done. That thought is almost unheard of in your world.”

Jesus smiled! “Here’s My plan. It’s the same as it’s always been, but in this season of your lives, it’s time to embrace it with every fiber of your being. I want you to sell out completely to me. Whether you call it ‘Bridal heart preparation, or whatever rally cry is popular now, they all mean the same. I call it Lordship! That means death to you, and fully alive to me to bring glory to My Father. I want you to be wholly devoted to me and teach those in your circle of influence to do the same before it’s too late and My plans unfold. I’ll show you how in our times together.”

Much more was said Spirit to spirit, but it was time for Jesus to go. Jesus looked into Perry’s eyes and cupped his face with His hands. “Please understand I’m not angry with you. I am, however, deeply concerned for you. You are not wealthy in My eyes at

present because you haven't chosen to really need Me and fully sell out to me. I desire that you become extremely prosperous by living the life patterns I've established for you. Get rid of anything that stops you from the intimacy I desire and begin to move in faith as you once did. I want you to arrive in heaven with many crowns to lay at My feet. I don't want you to be empty-handed. It would grieve My heart. Don't let that happen, OK?"

With those words, Jesus kissed Perry on the cheek and hugged him. "Please tell Monica I love her very much. I do understand how she feels, and I would love to talk with her anytime she wishes. Determine to help her walk toward Me with all of her heart. Tell her what I told you, and that she will do fine as you recommit your lives together because I'm going to help by the power of My Holy Spirit."

Jesus smiled again, looked deep into Perry's eyes before turning toward the open field. Perry knew he was not to follow, so he just watched. After a few steps, Jesus turned around with a broad smile on His face. "I really enjoyed being with you these days. You are very valuable to Father and Me. We have a lot to accomplish through you. Let's have fun, OK?"

Perry waved in unconscious reaction. He watched His Lord until he could no longer see Him because of the trees near the golf course. Then he drove home knowing he would never be the same.

Story Bible Verses

9) *I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens,*

10) *for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.*

11) *I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.*

12) *If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.*

Psalm 50: 9-12 NIV

1) *My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.*

2) *Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.*

3) *If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"*

4) have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

James 2:1-4 NIV

13) Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

14) Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

15) Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

16) As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

17) Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

5:1) Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you.

2) Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

3) Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

4) Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

5) You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

6) You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

James 4:13-5:6 NIV

17) You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

18) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Revelation 3:17,18 NIV

"But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out.] "

Hebrews 11:6 Amp

"... However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:8b NIV

How did that story make you feel?

Of the two kinds of hearts explained so far, what kind of heart did Perry have – infant or growing? Why?

What kind of heart do you think Perry's wife had? Why?

Would you have felt under scrutiny spending your day with Jesus or would you have been able to totally relax with Him going everywhere you planned to go?

Jesus talked to Perry about His concerns on how he spent his time and money. What would He have discussed with you? What is out of order in your daily life?

What areas of your life would you be embarrassed to have Jesus be a part of?

What requests would you ask Jesus if you had the kind of chance Perry had?

Would you enjoy the kind of experience Perry had? Why or why not?

Prayers and thoughts

The Mature Heart

The mature heart is a wonder to behold. This is the passionate heart of Jesus. It is also the bridal heart, prepared and waiting for Christ, the one that will overcome and even prosper during the perilous times ahead. As Jesus is one with the Father, the mature or bridal heart beats in unison with Them both.

I want this heart!

This heart sees only the Father's will as important, only the Father's plans as worth addressing throughout life. The world, the cold church, and all else in the physical realm hold no audience with this heart. There is no purpose but God's purpose, no plan but God's plan, no future but God's future. This heart is untouchable in its alliance with God. It is in total freedom in its chosen "slavery" to only the Father's will.

This heart has put aside most of its elementary sins against God, those choices of the flesh that have carried over into the Christian walk, the choices of doing good things vs. going deeper and deeper with the Lord. It has set aside fleshly temptations and ponders over the things that concern Jesus. Improper spiritual choices, such as moving ahead on anything without waiting for everything to develop properly in the spiritual realm, cause this heart to understand its dishonor of God and bring it to repentance for its disobedience.

Phil. 3:10b-11 Amp "...and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]

11 That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body]."

*This should
be the
normal
Christian
heart.*

*It is
available to
anyone who
is willing to
pay the price
to receive it.*

Because this dedicated heart is growing in the character of Christ as a priority, functioning in the world holds no promise for it. Its only desire is to be in fellowship with its source for beating - Father God, its "Abba."

No price is too high to pay to remain in intimate fellowship. Even moving on assigned and directed missions is done only because it pleases the Father. As soon as the task is completed, this heart only wants to move back to the posture of intimacy.

Any outward expression of this heart to the world comes directly from the throne room. It does nothing of itself, but only the Father's will. It is the heart that will come out of the refiner's fire and beat steadily in unison with the heart of Jesus as the bride of Christ. This kind of heart should be your goal.

How much do you long for this kind of freedom and devotion? What kind of price are you willing to pay for this kind of heart?

Before you go any deeper into this study, take the time to ponder what you have learned. Don't minimize any opportunity to go to God when He calls you. Wait on Him to give you His heart. Review your journal notes and add the Lord's words to you as you do.

*You are
valuable!*

Remember you are very valuable to God. He's done all that He's done, so you can know Him in a richer way. As you see who you are not, allow Him to reveal how He sees you and who He desires to make you. This is a love relationship. You are greatly loved.

Living Out Christ's Love

Previous sections gave us the reasons why we should be passionate about our relationship with our Lord and what has been provided for us. Fully understood, what God has done for mankind is the most wonderful action ever taken for the sake of another. We were helpless and without hope. Instead of leaving us in our misery, mercy is extended to any one of us who chooses to accept it.

By accepting the extended hand of God, we enter into a relationship unparalleled since the Garden of Eden. As wonderful as it is to have a knowledge of what has been provided for us, we find ourselves unable to love as Jesus loved and follow the Father's will as our only desire.

Seeing what we are to become is a far cry from becoming what God has shown us we can be. Because He makes it clear in His Word who He desires us to be, most of us attempt to become better in our own strength, striving to please Him and struggling to eliminate the sins that so easily entangle us. (Heb. 12:1)

How often do you attempt to take matters into your own hands, when God doesn't move fast enough for you? (Would you like another sheet of paper?)

What would you like to tell the Lord now?

God is calling for the mature bridal heart to be accepted by each of His children. He is bringing to those who will hear a desire to sell out completely, so the passionate life of Jesus can function through us, exhibiting His character to a dead and dying world.

Is this you?

Experience has shown us that any attempt to become like Jesus through knowledge, personal determination, and purposeful human strength ends in dismal failure. It is impossible to achieve spiritual maturity through physical means. We are told not to attempt to complete in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit.

Time To Walk In What the Word Says

In this section, we are going to examine some of the ways Father God has established to complete the work of Overcoming Life in us, allowing us to attain a submissive bridal heart, which is prepared for the coming of our Lord. Although we are fleshly participants, we must remember this is a spiritual work being accomplished in us by the Lord Himself. He is the one transforming us. We are the ones required to submit to that work. Even our ability to submit, however, is accomplished by His power, the power out-flowing from Christ's resurrection.

What God is basically doing in each of us is eliminating the power of our flesh and replacing it with the life and character of Jesus. Once we understand it is God's plan to basically eliminate us and all that does not serve Him, so Jesus can live His life through us, we find new motivation for all we do - if we choose to comply with the will of God. Our prayers take on a repentant tone. Our desires begin to change. Our hearts start to become submissive.

*The following pages are designed to develop taste buds for the Lord to accomplish His work in us by allowing us to revisit our motives for living the way we do in our relationships with God and with others - all the while leading us to develop a passionate life, which is devoted to the Lord. We will also see how our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with others, when entered into properly, are designed to make the changes in us that are required to attain a mature bridal heart.

Do not minimize the importance God places on our relationship with Him and with those He has provided in our lives, even those who hate us and those who are difficult for us to love. Do not underestimate the monumental work that these relationships will do in us as we submit to the anointed power instilled in them by the Lord.

*All
relationships
are very
important to
God.*

**Very
important to
note.*

*Read this
paragraph
as many
times as you
need to do
so, until you
own it.*

Our Interaction with God

Because of what Jesus has done, our relationship with God has been restored back to what it was before Adam and Eve sinned. We once again have unrestricted access to Him. How and why we use that access determines our real motives for that relationship.

Own this

God has provided specific ways to allow us to be changed into the image of our Lord. He has provided the vertical relationship with Him (prayer,) and the horizontal relationship with others (those in the world, church fellowship, marriage, and family.)

and this!

All of these relationships are designed to allow us to see who we are not, who we are to become; and the necessity of having any change in us implemented through His power. They are also catalysts to bring about needed changes in us as they drive us to repentance - as we see our sin and our total bankruptcy and inability to act like Jesus to people when they sin against us.

Prayer (Our Vertical Relationship)

Our vertical relationship with God is the first part of the complete relationship Jesus has provided for us at Calvary.

What do you think is the purpose of prayer?

In general, what do you desire to accomplish through prayer?

How do you think God views prayer?

What do you believe God would like to accomplish through your prayers?

Prayer Changes the One Who Prays

This vertical relationship with God (prayer - communication with God, worship, waiting on God, reading His Word, petitioning, interceding, etc.) allows us to get to know Him. By presenting ourselves to Him in prayer, we begin to understand who He is - His majesty, sovereignty, and all the magnificent attributes that make Him the only God. This knowledge also establishes our position as someone who is in submission, a posture very much needed if we are to grow in our relationship with Him.

Through continued fellowship, we also gain insight into His nature, as He imparts Himself to us when we seek Him. With that knowledge, confirmed by the Word, we also have insight into His plans of the past, present and future. Eventually we are shown our specific participation in those plans.

*Communion with
God is His
design for us to
receive mature
growth.*

Every means God uses to allow us to communicate with Him, i.e. His Word, praying, waiting on Him, provides for and comforts us as He adopts us as His own. As our fellowship with Him allows us to get to know Him, He enjoys His intended purpose of fellowshiping with us and imparting Himself to us, His creation of future priests and kings. When we allow Him and His Word to change our very nature as promised, it equips us for all of His work that's ahead.

*He imparts
Himself to us.*

I John 1:3b Amp "And [this] fellowship that we have [which is a distinguishing mark of Christians] is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (the Messiah)."

Do you really believe in your heart that the Creator God truly desires to have fellowship with you, whom He has created? Explain!

Do you believe that fellowship has been restored to the intimacy that Adam and Eve had? Explain!

Our relationship with God is dynamic in nature, constantly changing as He imparts more of Himself each time we are with Him!

From Our Father's Heart

Compare your petitions to Me
with those who have gone before you!
Include those who were passionate to bring glory to Jesus
on their way to the arena
that was filled with waiting lions and jeering crowds.
Examine your heart and your needs
to see if your requests have value in the light of eternity.
How much of what you request from Me
is for the well-being of others?
How much is for your comfort,
rather than for your desire to go deeper with Me
no matter what the cost?
Is there ever a time that you come to Me
wanting nothing for yourself?
Have you ever had only My plans in mind
and seek Me to implement them in My power?
Have you ever sought Me for the power
to defend My reputation and the reputation of Jesus?
Have you ever wept for how most of the church offends Me
with their weak religion
and carnal presentation of My cherished Word?
Have you ever waited in My presence
until you knew for sure what the desires of My heart were?
Do you think that maybe it's time for you to grow up?
I do!

We Have Access to God

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4: 16 NIV

*Look at the
incredible
provisions that
are designed
for our benefit!*

Access to the inner chambers of God has been provided for us by the work of Jesus on the cross. His death and subsequent resurrection opened the door of communication for us. We now have unlimited audience with God whenever we have any kind of need, question, or just a desire to spend time with Him. It is one of the covenant commitments God made with Jesus for us. In God's eyes, we have exchanged our old carnal life for a new spiritual life that's accepted by Him forever. The covenant cannot be broken.

In prayer, there is a connection between what God does and what you are to do. Prayer (communication with God) is the vehicle Father God has established for us to navigate from the physical realm to the spiritual realm and back again to accomplish His will from heaven to earth through us.

*Prayer is the
communication
with God that
makes clear His
will and His
plans.*

*It is the vehicle
used by God to
guide, direct
and encourage
the one who
prays.*

*It is also the
vehicle used to
make our
personal
requests known
to our Father in
heaven.*

Through this communication and because of the work of Jesus, God brings Himself, His plans, and His very being into His established tabernacles – us. Within the communication, we present our requests for all that is necessary for us to become who we need to be. Our Father also communicates His will to us. It is true communication between the Creator and His creation, with Father God all the while fine tuning our encounters with Him through the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrews 1:3 Amp, the writer states of Jesus, “... and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature ”

Because of the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit in each of us who are born again, the very nature of God has walked among the people of the world since the resurrection of Jesus. In us, to us, and through us, God once again communicates His perfect will to mankind through mankind renewed.

I John 4:15 Amp “Anyone who confesses (acknowledges, owns) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides (lives, makes His home) in him and he [abides, lives, makes his home] in God.”

Col. 2:9-10 Amp “For in Him the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead) continues to dwell in bodily form [giving complete expression of the divine nature].

10) And you are in Him, made full and having come to fullness of life [in Christ you too are filled with the Godhead – Father,

Son and Holy Spirit – and reach full spiritual stature]. And He is the Head of all rule and authority [of every angelic principality and power].”

II Pet. 1:3-4 Amp “For His divine power has bestowed upon us all things that [are requisite and suited] to life and godliness, through the [full, personal] knowledge of Him Who called us by and to His own glory and excellence (virtue).

4) By means of these He has bestowed on us His precious and exceedingly great promises, so that through them you may escape [by flight] from the moral decay (rottenness and corruption) that is in the world because of covetousness (lust and greed), and become sharers (partakers) of the divine nature.”

Note: You really need to have the above verses deep within your spirit. Allow the Lord to reveal this truth to you.

Do you believe in your heart that you have unlimited access to God? Explain!

Do you have that same liberty when there is sin in your life?

Is your access to God ever not covered by the work of the cross? Amplify!

What kind of posture does “approach with confidence” mean?

Matt. 6:9-13 NIV "This is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

Matt. 16:19 Amp "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven."

Here's what Merry and I want you to do: find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. Allow the focus to shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace. (We are in no way encouraging you to let your mind become blank. That is an occult method and can lead to voices, thoughts, and experiences you don't want to entertain. Just be mindful of the Lord as you wait to hear from Him. What He shares always lines up with Scripture.)

The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer ignorant. They're full of formulas, programs, and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. You are dealing with your Father, and He knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply.

Remember also that we are going to the Father "in Jesus' Name" because of the covenant that's been established for us. He is receiving us with the same delight as if Jesus came to Him.

*Wait on God
to provide
these and all
of the other
answers you
need from
Him.*

How do you approach God - totally accepted, as an unclean outsider, or somewhere in between? Why?

How does God want you to approach Him?

As you participate with the Lord to fulfill His plans on this earth, you can be confident that the fullness of His covenant promises with Jesus are at work in you and for you to accomplish any task that's given.

I Thess. 2:13 Amp "...but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely upon it]."

Hebrews 4:12 Amp "For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart."

II Tim. 3:16-17 Amp "Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action),

17) So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work."

So, God is sending us out as representatives, the same as when He sent Jesus. When we realize He never sends us ill-equipped, when we see He's in the business of making sure His representation is strong, we can have peace that what was proclaimed to be accomplished in us will be done. He equipped Jesus with everything He needed. Now Jesus, who is God, sends us.

Have you ever thought of prayer as being God's way of establishing His will here on earth through you? (Think that through until it's part of you!)

Jas. 4:2-3 Amp "... You do not have, because you do not ask. [Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives..."

I John 3:22 Amp "And we receive from Him whatever we ask, because we [watchfully] obey His orders [observe His suggestions and injunctions, follow His plan for us] and [habitually] practice what is pleasing to Him."

*Jesus spent a lot
of time
communicating
with His Father.*

*Do you think that
it's a good idea
for us to do the
same?*

I John 5:14-15 Amp "And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to and hears us. And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him."

The Ultimate Form of Worship

Just as few of us see our emulating Christ as the highest form of praise, few of us see prayer as the ultimate form of worship it really is. Our limited church experience has allowed us to classify worship as singing the quieter songs as a congregation, possibly bowing our heads in reverence, or raising our hands in an attitude of submission as we feel a warm presence.

*Getting
"caught up"
does not mean
that we are
giving true
honor to God!*

Christian music has categorized its presentations into praise music and worship music. Praise music could mean anything from up tempo songs with lyrics that notice God in any form whatsoever to heavy rock with loud, screaming vocals accompanied by an indistinguishable wall of sound that begs to close down the senses. (I have often wondered how the Lord would feel if He were sitting in the first row of most heavy rock "praise" concerts. The picture of a holy God being presented with screaming electronics as an accepted offering gives me pause, to say the least.)

*Think of what
prayer really
is.*

Worship music is usually slower and quieter with words that honor the Lord and give time for the listeners to focus their attention on Him. These ways of praising and worshiping God are the accepted forms of expression evident in today's church.

*Think of how it
could be an
expression of
the highest
honor we are
able to give
our loving
God.*

Think of what true prayer is, however. In prayer, as we approach the Lord, we are expressing an understanding of His office as God. We are saying we understand and fully submit to His sovereignty, His power, and His position as the ruler of all that exists.

As we lower ourselves in our own eyes, making requests or offering heart petitions of love, we are stating He is God, and we are not. To do so moves us from our normal position of rebellious independence to one of humble submission. It honors Him, whereas our fleshly offerings cannot do so.

*Worship is a
lifestyle of
communicating
with our Father,
not just an
activity entered
into so we can
experience the
"warm fuzzies."*

It might be noted here that the Bible records Jesus as stealing away for prayer often. He taught those around Him to pray – they already knew how to sing to the Lord in psalms and hymns. He even stated clearly the importance of doing nothing in our own

strength and showed us the importance of submitting to His Father's strength at all times. I am convinced He was showing us how best to honor His Father by looking to Him for all things. That's called worship! It's a lifestyle, not just one more activity in which we can be involved that happens to incorporate music!

Prayers and Thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

Make sure that you remain diligent
while you are waiting for Me to move on your behalf.
Your time of waiting is also
a time of learning to be obedient in other areas of your life.
Complete those things that I have told you to do.
Clean up all of the relationships that have been neglected.
Become a study of Jesus.
Learn about My heart.
Bring your house to order, so that new assignments can be
completed when I give them to you.
Few understand the importance of waiting on Me.
I am not only completing patience,
diligence, and obedience in you;
I am orchestrating many things concerning your life.
As soon as everything is in order, you need to be ready to move.
There will be work to be done.
Prepare while you can.
When I call you, I will expect immediate responses.
A work of completed patience will bring new faith in Me.
Soon you will walk in it.

*Psalm 51:10 Amp "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and
renew a right, persevering and steadfast spirit within me."*

*Psalm 106:12-15 Amp "Then [Israel] believed His words
[trusting in, relying on them]; they sang His praise.*

*13) But they hastily forgot His works; they did not [earnestly]
wait for His plans [to develop] regarding them.*

*14) But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted
and tried to restrain God [with their insistent desires] in the desert.*

*15) And He gave them their request, but sent leanness to
their souls..."*

The picture of Peter shackled to two soldiers and snoring up a storm while waiting for the Lord to move on His behalf is probably one of the most descriptive, mature heart positions of trusting in God ever presented. It is a delightful portrayal of absolute trust in a faithful Father God. It can also, however, evoke the wrong picture of what waiting for the Lord to move on our behalf is really all about. Yes, waiting on God most certainly accomplishes quiet, peaceful, steadfast patience in those who are waiting; but much more than that takes place.

Waiting on God is never a time of sleeping the days away. In fact, it is the opposite of inactivity. Although the primary focus is always seeking the Lord diligently and repenting of revealed sins - especially those of faithlessness and control - many "clean-up" tasks are accomplished during these times.

Waiting is a time of both heart and physical preparation. It is a time of bringing proper order back to your spiritual and physical house. To wait on God is a settling in with the Lord, cleaning your ears so you can once again hear Him properly, cleaning your house so you can move when He tells you to move; and sharpening your tools so you have what is needed for the important tasks ahead. Waiting for the Father to impart what is on His heart for your life also imparts His life to you in the process.

*Waiting on
God can be a
very active,
productive
time.*

God imparts Himself to you when you simply sit in His presence. It is a time to commune with the Lord in silence, sitting quietly and peacefully with no agenda on your part except to be there with Him, which allows Him to minister His life to your inner being. Nothing is more important to the Lord. Nothing is more important to you. It is amazing what changes can occur as we are seemingly “doing nothing!”

Our Posture in Prayer

The effective attitude of true prayer is a study in extremes. On the one hand, every fiber of the Word of God invites each of us who are born again to approach the Master of all things with an absolute confidence because of the work of Calvary. We have been formed to bask in the presence of the Living God without measure or time limit. We are invited to “wait” with Him. It is our heritage.

Interestingly enough, the only way to receive that kind of access is to have a humble heart, the heart of Jesus. He and the Father came together with the same heart purpose, accomplishing the Father’s will, which left Jesus’ own will down the street someplace. Actually, He had given up His will before He even took on the character of man. It was not part of His nature to exercise His own will.

Just as our posture in prayer with the Father is one of humility and submission, so should our posture be when praying for others. Jesus came as a servant with love in His heart, influencing the world, and influencing His Father because of His heart. That same attitude should be ours if we are to be a true representative influence in the flow of the Father’s Kingdom. The love of Jesus will be manifested on this earth in our lives and in the lives of those for whom we pray as God honors our petitions to Him.

Our Horizontal Relationship with Others

God has placed us in a world that is actually out to kill us, so to speak. As Christians, we are oil floating on top of water and if we are true to our calling, we’ll never mix in because the spirit and flesh cannot function together. God has also called us to overcome that world. Our time spent with others and our responses to them

*Oil and
water don’t
and can
never mix.*

allow us to seek the Father so we can be changed in order to reflect Christ properly.

Working Out Our Salvation

Phil. 2:12b-13 Amp "...work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).

13 [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight."

Once we have given Jesus Lordship over our lives, it is the Father's intent to refine, mold, and develop that salvation in us to the fullest extent. If we are going to tell others about Jesus, we will have to be changed so we can represent Him properly. Our words alone will usually not be enough for others to see their need of Jesus. In fact, if our lives do not mirror Him, our words will more than likely be cast aside, and rightfully so. The world can spot a phony and they won't listen to one.

Relationships with others are designed to show us how much we've learned or have not learned in responding as Jesus would.

Our vertical relationship with God allows us to know Him and know His plans for us. We also go to Him for answers to our needs and the ability to make permanent, spiritual changes so that His plans, which include us, can be accomplished.

Our horizontal relationships are our training ground so we can bring the character of Jesus to the world. To show us our need for the character of Christ to be alive and well in us, God establishes divine relationships and initiates continual "setups" for us, so we become more like Jesus. He is the one who has created the institutions in which we function, e.g. marriage, family, and church fellowships; and our participation in these institutions teaches us to function in love as Jesus would if we keep our hearts open to the Lord.

Have you ever wondered why some people are in your life? Why do you think they are there?

From Our Father's Heart

Have you ever carried the weight of other people's sins?
Have you ever labored for them so intensely
that you thought you would break under pressure?
Have you ever longed that they get right with Me
for their good, for My reasons?
Did the loss of someone's fellowship ever make you mourn
and desire to do something, anything, to restore it?
Was the feeling of emptiness so intense
that you were consumed with finding ways
to bring yourself together with that person once again?
If you see broken relationships with Me and with each other -
which are caused by sin - as the horror that they really are,
you are beginning to understand relationships as I see them
and the reasons for which I have established them.
When someone sins against you, your heart should break,
not necessarily for the offense,
but for the broken relationships -
the relationship with Me and with you.
You must intercede that the fellowships be restored,
that he or she makes things right,
for his or her good and for My glory.
If you have sinned against another brother or sister,
you must drop everything and run to repentance.
I will not allow you to rest until that is done.
If you have hardened your heart and do not crave restoration,
I will begin My process of breaking your rebellion until you do.
You will eventually wonder why your praise is empty,
your eyes are dry,
your prayers are cold; and your life is out of order.
Nothing you do will satisfy you
until you move in the direction of healing.
It is because your "inner being"
knows that something is out of order.
It is My doing, so that you desire restoration.
Don't think that I do not notice violated fellowships;
they are key to My will going forth on your land.
They are important to Me.
I would not allow the broken relationship with My creation to
remain; why would I not require the same from you?
If you see that things are out of order in someone's life,
pray for that person.
If you have been offended,
take the steps necessary to reestablish communion.
If you have offended, don't rest until the offense is gone.
I will wait.

*Make every
relationship
right to the
best of your
ability!*

Two Institutions

Notice that God plans relationships with others as both blessings and refiner's fires.

God has designed two main institutions in which He allows us to participate. One is marriage; the other is fellowshiping with other believers. These institutions are God-ordained and used by Him to destroy our selfish attitudes and fleshly desires, so the Spirit of the Lord that resides in us can come forth and overcome the world in and around us. (The family unit is also a training ground, but we will confine our study to these two areas and trust you will apply what you learn to family relationships.)

Unlike the eternal **unconditional** covenant Jesus made for us, marriage and the organized church involve **conditional** covenants, meaning that if we abide in Him and keep our promises to one another, He will act on our behalf with all that He is as God.

If we don't keep the commitments we've made to each other, don't call upon Him as a counsel in every situation for guidance and direction, and decide to trust in our own wisdom, understanding, and desires, God will allow us to function in our folly until we turn back to Him. Because of His love, He will also continually do what it takes to bring us to repentance. That would normally mean a refiner's fire of some sort to help us recognize our folly, repent, and walk again in His ways.

God uses our relationships with others to expose who we really are.

Both marriage and the church are designed by God to teach us to be like Jesus through the conflicts that occur and the subsequent forgiveness that must take place. This process builds Christ-like love in us as we submit to His heart as conflicts occur.

He also brings relationships our way to practice being like Jesus.

The Fellowship or Church Covenant

How we deal with relationships shows our progress in becoming more like Jesus.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus took time to address the sins of seven churches. They were warnings to seven churches of that day, but His concerns could apply to any modern fellowship. In these revelations, Jesus takes time to praise each church for its merits or admonishes it for its faults. He also says to those who can hear, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Today, the Holy Spirit is Christ's presence here on earth. He is forever guiding and convicting to keep Jesus' followers on the right path. He pays attention to our fellowships and waits to see who will repent so He can empower them with His presence. Each of us must hear what the Holy Spirit is saying in this day regarding His warnings to prepare.

The church of Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7) had "abandoned the love it had at first," (Revelation 2:4, ESV). They lost their first love for Christ, which in turn affected the love they had for others.

The church of Smyrna was warned it was about to face persecution (Rev. 2:8-11.) Jesus encouraged them to be faithful unto death and He would give them the crown of life.

The church of Pergamum (Rev.2:12-17) was told to repent (Rev 2:16.) It had become involved with a cult called the Nicolaitans, who taught that since their bodies were evil, only what they did with their spirit counted. This led to sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. Jesus said those who overcame such temptations would receive "hidden manna" and a "white stone," symbols of special blessings.

The church of Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29) had a false prophetess who was leading people astray. Jesus promised to give Himself (the morning star) to those who resisted her evil ways (Rev. 2:20.)

The church of Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6) had the reputation of being dead, or asleep. Jesus told them to wake up and repent (Rev.3:2.) Those who did would receive white garments, have their name listed in the book of life, and be proclaimed before God the Father.

The church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) endured patiently. Jesus pledged to stand with them in future trials, granting special honors in heaven, the New Jerusalem. (Rev.3:10)

The church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) had lukewarm faith (Rev. 3:16.) Its members had grown complacent because of their riches. To those who returned to their former zeal, Jesus vowed to share His ruling authority.

Even though John wrote these warnings nearly 2,000 years ago, they still apply to Christian churches today. Many modern Christian churches have wandered from biblical truth. Others have grown lukewarm, their members just going through the motions with no passion for God. Increasingly popular are "progressive" churches in the United States that base their theology more on current culture than on solid doctrine found in the Bible.

These revelations warn today's drifting churches that discipline, emptiness, lack of intimacy, and little power to overcome will visit those who do not repent. They speak as warnings to every Christian follower of Jesus today. They are a gauge of the heart positions of today's believers.

Even though the Nicolaitans are no longer in existence, millions of Christians are being tempted by pornography on the internet. The false prophetess of Thyatira has been replaced by TV preachers who minimize the importance of repentance and

acceptance of Jesus for salvation. Countless believers have turned from their love for Jesus to idolizing their bank accounts, possessions, and personal prowess.

These and many other deviations from God's Word serve as a dire observation that many in the church have become the proverbial frog in boiling water. Hopefully they will be jolted back into God's reality before they reach the boiling point. We err gravely if we think the Holy Spirit is having difficulty penetrating an unrepentant heart either in the church or in the world. The truth is He is never lacking in anything. It's the church, breaking its covenant with God and with each other and then wondering where He is. God knows how to get our attention and, just as important, when to get our attention. (Makes you want to pray..... and repent, doesn't it?)

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste (its strength, its quality), how can its saltiness be restored? It is not good for anything any longer but to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men." Matt. 5:13

The church of Jesus Christ consists of marriages and, subsequently, families; and a significant number of families in the church seem helpless to overcome the onslaught of the world and its insidious attacks to weaken their family relationships. Could it be that one of the first things we should check is whether or not our covenant with God and each other is intact? God cannot fully bless us when we violate the covenants we've made with Him and others.

Note: In our society, being blessed by God is far different than what the Lord intended for His church. We associate blessings from God as financial provision, freedoms, and comforts of some sort. True blessing and success in the Lord reaches far beyond material things.

So many families are clueless regarding their spiritual state and the atrophy they function in each day. Without knowing it, they are preparing themselves for destruction when the soon-coming darkness overtakes their self-serving world.

They have truly lost the saltiness of a fervent love of Jesus and the desire to function in His ways over their ways. The world is minimizing them and trampling their beliefs underfoot, making their influence in the world unrecognizable as they remain powerless to do anything about it. Interesting thought—salt still looks like salt even when it's lost its effectiveness. Time to get our salt back. Just like real salt, it's a preservative and necessary for life!

From Our Father's Heart

*Obedience to My desires brings My presence
in what I call you to do.
Delighting to be obedient brings My heart.
I value the difference between compliance out of duty
and an excitement to see My will go forth.
One accomplishes much;
the other is why Jesus spent His life.
It's time for you to reexamine why you do what you are doing.
My goal is that We walk together with the same heart.
What is your purpose for waking and working?
Why do you call upon Me in prayer?
Turn aside from the elementary teachings of your youth.
Long for My heart.
Spend enough time with Me to know it.
Crave to own it!"*

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right,
persevering and steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

-the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim
my praise. Isaiah 43:21

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos
3:3 KJV

As said so many times before, God is always after our
hearts. So many of us walk in compliance rather than
obedience, thinking we are pleasing God. The Sadducees and
the Pharisees became arrogant because of their self-
righteousness. They fulfilled the law but lost the heart of God.

In the same way, most of us do the right things, but miss
God's heart while doing them. It's time to grow up for the good
of our God and the reputation of Jesus.

Both institutions—the church body and the family unit—
build the character of Christ in us as we deny our own needs and
live for the needs of our mate or our brother or sister believer. The
combined situations and people we encounter in the church, in
marriage, in our families, and in the world create the refining fires
that are needed for us to determine to seek God as our only source
and overcome the world through the character of Jesus Christ that
is formed in us.

Have you ever thought of that person who really boils your
potatoes either in your fellowship or maybe even in your marriage
since the glow of the honeymoon has worn off, as a wonderful,
merciful provision of God being used to make you more like Jesus?

Our interaction with fellow believers – marriages and fellowships - is a command of God. He said we should not forsake fellowshiping with others. And He calls us to marry if it is in order. We take those calls lightly, but God sees the pressure of refinement through those relationships as very important for our growth.

2 Samuel 14:14b NIV “But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.”

Matthew 5:23,24 NIV “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24) leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

Galatians 4:19 NIV “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...”

If you are pursuing the bridal heart, there is no place for self-service in any relationship in which you engage.

How do you feel about that?

Are you willing to ask the Lord to have you care more for others than you care for yourself in any and every situation?

Even those who hate you?

List a few of the people you need to forgive or with whom you need to make things right if you haven't already done so.

Don't necessarily go to them now but be obedient when the Lord directs you to move. It will be great, maybe not fun, but great for your relationship with the Lord.

Christ being formed in you or in someone else is far more than the initial salvation event. It is a continual working out of forsaking our old nature and walking in His new nature, which we received upon establishing a relationship with Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18 Amp.)

If you read the book of Philippians, you will see Paul labored hard for that. Christ died for that.

Have you ever realized that the members of your fellowship are there so Christ can be formed in them and in you? Did you know your lack of Christlikeness is a refiner's fire to them as theirs is to you? Write down your heart comment.

True fellowship requires something from everyone - tolerance, compassion, time, forgiveness, and continual monitoring. It is not easy, so many interactions fall by the wayside. What is usually never noticed is the broken heart of God when these relationships perish.

Relationships and friendships are no accident. God brings people together for His reasons. He requires us to maintain associations for His good and for our growth.

It is easy to throw someone away because of an offense. Children who do not know any better do that all the time. It requires maturity to pursue love in the midst of and through offenses. It is difficult to go the distance all the way to restoration. Most people are not willing to pay the price; and therefore, never really grow to God's kind of maturity.

I firmly believe most of us in the church are not trusted to function in many of the gifts of the Spirit, because we cannot be trusted with the relationships God brings our way. Few of us are willing to humble ourselves enough to do what it takes to love others as Jesus loved us.

Laying our lives down for the sake of another is the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. Most of us get off the cross when the going gets tough. We are grateful for the persistence of Jesus, but not humble enough to honor His heart.

One more reminder: If we belong to a fellowship and are under the covenant with God, we are also in covenant with one another. That's rarely talked about, probably because we've broken

*Make every
relationship
right to the
best of your
ability!*

the covenant with each other so often that discarding our commitment is far easier than fulfilling it.

John 3:17 “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”

When the Word talks about brothers and sisters, it's not referring to the unsaved or the mission field. It's talking about fellow believers.

Acts 4:32-35 *“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.”*

That's pure covenant stuff and the absolute heart of God. Help us, Lord! These verses pertain to much more than material possessions when read through the eyes of covenant and not interpreted through the rose-colored glasses of us deserving success and blessing. We break covenant every day and wonder why most of our fellowships don't bask in the presence of God and are powerless to overcome the world. Repentance is an operative word here.

How David's Life and His Men Reflect How the Men of Any Fellowship Should Function in Both the Church and the Family Fortress

One of the most outstanding aspects of David's life was the caliber of men God gave him. Knowing the battles he was about to encounter, God gave David mighty men of valor, well-trained in their respective roles and trustworthy unto death. As you read the accounts of their feats, there is no question about their prowess. As David's life unfolds, what also becomes strikingly clear is these mighty men were devoted to him and he was devoted to them. Combined with the presence of the Lord that was upon them, this arrangement was unbeatable. It was a three-way covenant relationship.

Today, that kind of brotherhood seems non-existent, except in motorcycle or street gangs. It is glaringly absent in the church. In a time when having your back covered could make the difference between the life or death of you and your family, I challenge you to find that kind of camaraderie—someone you

know who's there for you, even unto death. If you can find him (other than Jesus Himself, of course) you are truly blessed.

In the Word, Jesus uses the term “brother” or “brethren” as a premier example of a close bond. These terms were used at a time when family and covenant bond really meant something, unlike today's fractured world.

But Father God is Calling His People

I am convinced God is raising up holy alliances of men, joined in the brotherhood of Christ and called to accomplish mighty feats for the Lord just as in David's time. These men—washed in the blood of Jesus, refined by the fires of adversity, broken under the weight of extreme challenges, and rebuilt by the Holy Spirit until they are trustworthy before God and trustworthy toward others—are on the threshold of joining with one another to accomplish God-given tasks.

You can be part of this wonderful alliance if you choose to glorify God and truly rebuild your church fellowship and your family fortress. Together with others of the same heart, you can tear down spiritual strongholds and overcome insurmountable challenges through the power of the Holy Spirit. Available to God and committed to one another, you can walk above the spirit of the world as an unbeatable force of holy, mighty men on a mission for our Lord, to see their fellowships continually blessed with the presence of God, their families wholeheartedly loving and serving the Lord and each other, and their communities prospering in the love of Christ.

Are you submitting to God's training to be a brother or sister of consequence in your fellowship? If you choose to be involved and committed, there is no limit to what the Lord can accomplish through your willingness to follow Him full sway wherever He leads you—whether at home, within your fellowship or beyond its walls.

Most important: Get to know your Bridegroom, Jesus! It makes everything else so much clearer and simpler!

Take time with the Holy Spirit to really comprehend how the church of Jesus Christ, the marriage covenant, and the family fortress are ordained to bring life to a dying world. List the ways in which you can be a vital part of God's plan as you find ways to function well in these powerful institutions ordained by God to overcome the world.

Rebuilding the Marriage Covenant

Marriage is the most misunderstood institution ever established by God. Both the world and most of the church are clueless as to the reasons God joins two people together as man and wife.

Eph. 5:21-32 Amp "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

22 Wives, be subject (be submissive and adapt yourselves) to your own husbands as [a service] to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, Himself the Savior of [His] body.

24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

26 So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word,

27 That He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such things [that she might be holy and faultless].

28 Even so husbands should love their wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

29 For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and carefully protects and cherishes it, as Christ does the church,

30 Because we are members (parts) of His body.

31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

32 This mystery is very great, but I speak concerning [the relation of] Christ and the church."

Gen. 2:23,24 Amp "Then Adam said, This [creature] is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of a man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall become united and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

In verse 23 of Ephesians 5, the Lord says that marriage is related to Christ and the church. The message that permeates that relationship is one of crucifixion. Christ died for us; we are to lay our lives down for Him and for others, so He is glorified. Marriage is no different.

Let's study God's ideal heart attitude in a marriage. It would be good to observe here that there are no exceptions when we are in a relationship with Jesus. He calls us all to a walk of the cross in every relationship in which we are involved. He did it, so why would He allow us to enter any relationship for selfish, self-serving motives?

For more
information
on a
husband's
role in
marriage
see our
book
The Father
Factor

Why do most people marry?

Is that attitude in sync with the life attitude of Jesus?

What is the reason most divorces occur?

The answer to the last question is selfishness. No matter how it is masked, it always boils down to the sin of selfishness. The husband or wife is not being pleased by the other, so he/she acts in a manner that causes separation to occur, or he/she walks away and finds another futile relationship in order to be pleased or satisfied.

Few people equate marriage with being one of God's refining fires and His most precious presentation of His love to the world. Few enter into a marriage for the best interests of the other person. Instead, they enter into marriage for their own pleasure, so they never really learn to love as Jesus loves. (Now don't go find someone who is repulsive to you and ask that person to marry you just so you can be super-spiritual. Listen to the God-heart of what is being said.)

Let's Deal with Some Preliminaries

Because of the work of the cross of Jesus Christ, both men and women are equal in every way in God's eyes. Neither is "more loved" or more "powerful." In marriage, and also in the church, there is a God-ordained office that a man has. It is an office of protection or covering. Many people have misinterpreted that function as "authority," and have destroyed their marriages and even misused it within the church.

This office is one of absolute service and protection (akin to a shepherd and his covering over his sheep,) designed for the well-being of others. In the case of marriage, the man's office is meant for the well-being of his wife.

Because of his office, a man will answer to the Lord for how well he fulfilled his role of providing fertile soil for his mate to grow

in Christ. Did he live the life of Jesus in her midst, so she could see Jesus in all of his actions and dealings with her?

In the ideal marriage, both parties - as equals - should enter the commitment “for the best interests of the other,” not for their own gain or their own needs, whatever they might be. As wonderful as a mutual attraction can be, both parties are called to a commitment to serve the other - for God’s best interests for their spouse - before they ever enter into the marriage covenant with each other.

Beauty fades, circumstances change, difficult life situations happen. Honest, godly commitment to serve the other person, no matter what ensues, weathers and overcomes the storms and trials. In other words, both parties are called to die to themselves, their own rights, and all of their own needs; and determine to live for the best interests of the other.

In the beginning of this study, you learned of the bride of old who understood her position and requirements while she was waiting for the one to whom she was betrothed. She waited for her master, as we wait for ours. She prepared her heart, so he would be pleased when he came. We do the same for Jesus.

The kind of crucifixion of her flesh that occurred in training is no different than what is expected of us as we wait. Likewise, the marriage covenant is not exempt from the same living-for-the-good-of-the-other attitude we have determined to be important while waiting.

Do you believe God would ask us to always lay our lives down for the good of others and then allow us to enter into a marriage agreement for the good of our own interests? Why or why not?

*Jesus came to
serve -
especially
under difficult
circumstances*

*Now He asks
us to do the
same.*

*It develops His
character in
us.*

Eph. 5:21-31 Amp “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).”

So many members of the body of Christ enter into marriage for their own good. They attempt to wait for the perfect partner, meaning the one that really rings their bell. That is opposite of the intent God has for marriage. He calls us to enter into marriage for the best interests of the other person.

Please don’t misunderstand. This is not a morbid, “woe is me” kind of torment invented by our Father to make us miserable. In fact, when fully understood, this is the epitome of a holy life that

exhibits the pattern for the world to follow and reveals the nature of Jesus to them. When Christ-like service is at the center of all you do, especially in your marriage, the only real happiness comes when you are serving, not when you are being served.

The mature bridal heart demands that we serve others before we serve ourselves. Subjecting ourselves to another is the way of our Lord. He came to serve; so must we, especially the one Jesus has chosen as our life partner.

When selecting a mate, pray for the one that the Lord intends for you. Pray, however, that He provides you with the person that you will be willing to serve, through His power, for the rest of your life; not one that fulfills all of your desires. Jesus is the One who is to fulfill those desires. That is how a person can be completely fulfilled whether married or not.

As you pray, whether you are a man or a woman, pray for the heart of God and your ability to submit yourself to the needs of the one He provides for you. When that person enters your life, pray for each other and commit your way to serve the other, even if the other at some time refuses to do so. You must gain the heart position of Jesus; so that your union is for the other's best interests, not your own.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

26 So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word,

27 That He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such things [that she might be holy and faultless].

28 Even so husbands should love their wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

29 For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and carefully protects and cherishes it, as Christ does the church,

30 Because we are members (parts) of His body.

31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

The Ideal Scenario

Husbands, there is no other reason for you to marry other than to lay your life down for your wife as Christ did for the church. (Read verse 31 again) You are given the mandate to provide an atmosphere of freedom for your wife to become all she can be in Christ. By your love and service, your wife is to see Jesus. Because of how you act, she is to crave Jesus. By your example, she is to learn to love to follow Jesus.

- 22 *Wives, be subject (be submissive and adapt yourselves) to your own husbands as [a service] to the Lord.*
- 23 *For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, Himself the Savior of [His] body.*
- 24 *As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.*

Wives, you are to submit to your husbands as you would to Christ.

How is that really supposed to work? Before reading on, how do you perceive what the Lord had in mind?

The Ideal Situation

Partners in marriage are to enter into the marriage covenant as equals in every way, devoted to serving the other's best interests before their own. In the order of God, the man is the covering over the woman as the weaker vessel. (That does not imply less than, lower than, nor less intelligent than.) Remember, every person ever given breath is of equal quality in God's eyes. Jesus considered everyone important enough to die for them.

Because of the office of the covering, (that does not mean better than, more important than, smarter than; and especially, more approved than. It is designated to maintain the order of God that was established in the Garden of Eden.) Man - with the woman considered a full equal - will answer to God for the well-being of the gift God has given him.

Here's How That Submission Thing Works God's Way

Absolute freedom!!

As stated before, a man and woman enter into marriage as equals for the best interests of the other, devoted to serving the other. The weight of their lives is equal in every way in God's eyes.

Should there be a disagreement in any decision at any time, the man - because of his office and only because of his office - has the responsibility to determine what decision should be made to bring forth peace. He must lay down his own desire before the Lord and find the decision that's in the best interests of his wife. This is the crucified life.

He is to take on the same heart that Jesus has, giving up all his rights for the good of his wife, and find the answer that's best for her. As the answer is presented, the wife submits to that answer, knowing her husband has the same heart toward her that Jesus has.

Eph.5:33 This mystery is very great, but I speak concerning [the relation of] Christ and the church."

Marriage is one of the ways the church and the world will see a real-life example of Jesus in action.

Do you really see how Jesus is formed in you because of the relationships He brings into your life? Explain!

What kinds of heart changes do you need to have the Lord make in you so you can love others?

Is it time to study your marriage in the light of what has been presented here?

What kind of heart changes do you have to make to better represent Jesus to your mate, to the church, to the world?

The Eroded Family Fortress

If you understand all that's been said, you now know that there's no stronger or more powerful, world-impacting influence in God's plan than a husband and wife who are joined in a Christ-like marriage, overseeing a healthy family. In these most difficult times, it's quite possible that having a strong family will make the difference in life and death situations. You can be sure the enemy

of God knows this and will do anything to stop you from becoming who you're called to be, especially in these end times.

God designed the family unit to overcome the ways of the world and prepare future generations to do so as well. Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the family unit is an example of the covenant relationship between Christ and His church. It's God's unmatched plan for a strong, spiritually healthy society. It's the answer for today's challenges. It's the foundation for the waiting bride to prepare to meet her Bridegroom.

As the world grows darker and men and women who don't know Jesus seek out answers for their lives that are out of sync with God, it makes you wonder how many of them are reeling from fathers and mothers who had little or no ability to parent them spiritually. Unbelievers are looking to human wisdom as to why horrific things are occurring with our youth, or why marriages are dissolved on a whim, or why our cities are festering with hate and crime. They have no real answers.

In God's economy, however, the answer is very simple. Satan understands what an incredible detriment a strong family—headed by a man who seeks the Lord—is to his kingdom. He does everything in his power to destroy it. Generations upon generations have been blinded to the importance and power of a God-honoring father, a spiritually devoted mother, and a Christ-centered family. This erosion has brought our world to the point that one of God's most important institutions – the family - is often guided and controlled by peer groups, so called experts trained in the ways of the world, and governments that make life decisions for us without the wisdom and love of God.

For a more in-depth study on the role of fathers and husbands, refer to our free book [The Father Factor](#)

“Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²²and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” Matt 10:21-22

The verse above not only pertains to the world, but also the Christian family that has broken covenant with God. His spiritual blessings must be withheld when husband and wife have violated their part of their covenant with one another. They may even petition God for help with their marriage or their wayward, unsaved children, and He may show mercy at times without things being resolved, but their violation of the covenant promises they agreed to must be addressed so they can truly prosper in the Lord and become who He lovingly intends them to be – a mirror of Jesus. God will do what it takes to bring us into wholeness in Christ.

You've Made a Conditional Covenant Before God

At your wedding ceremony, you fulfilled all the requirements of covenant. It was a conditional covenant, meaning God promises

to bless your every moment, if you fulfill your commitments or covenants with Him and with your mate.

Whether you know it or not, you made a forever agreement with Him that included blessings on your union, including the power for you to show the world how the relationship between Christ and His church should look. You also made promises to provide fertile ground for your children to become all they can be in Christ. They were “in” you at the time of your covenant agreement. As husband and wife, you committed to serve each other before you serve yourself and do everything for the best interests of your spouse. This is powerful covenant stuff!

*You have made a
covenant with God!*

Here's What You Did!

You discussed and agreed upon all the terms of your marriage. In your vows, you gave each other all that you are and all you have. You exchanged names and agreed to conduct life's business in the name of the other. The two of you became one flesh. You exchanged rings as a symbol of your covenant with each other. To seal your covenant, you had a covenant meal celebrating your covenant agreement. (Remember the attributes of covenant.)

Now You Are at War!

In a season when it's paramount that the family be a fortress of life and safety, most families are fighting for their rights, freedoms, and safety in the world's system. They are relying on their own wisdom, their bank accounts, or the laws of the land to protect them. These are all whimsical paper tigers absolutely incapable of overcoming the power of an enemy set on destroying them and their witness of Jesus and the power of the cross.

Most families who find themselves powerless resort to some sort of counseling. Although counseling is important in some cases, it does not change people's hearts. Knowledge will never replace intimacy with God for wisdom and power. Only hearts that have been changed through repentance and time spent with the Lord can overcome the onslaught of the enemy and his plans.

It's Time for Biblical Marriage Rebuilding Strategies!

It's time to take stock in your life and the health of your family. How is your family doing? As parents, are you leading those God has given you to a place of spiritual power, the kind of power that overcomes the world and its pressures? Do you have a strong relationship with your heavenly Father and does your guidance come from Him?

Men, have you determined in your heart that as a steward of your wife and children, you will do what's necessary by the power

of the Holy Spirit to make sure they have real answers for their lives and are equipped to represent Christ to a world that's out of answers? If not, what do you plan to say to the Lord when you stand before Him to give an account for those He's given you to steward?

As leaders of those under your stewardship, are you preparing yourself for that encounter with God? Does your heart long for such intimacy that only His personal invitation into His throne room - where He anoints you in preparation for the times and seasons ahead - will satisfy you? If not, why not?

You have been born spiritually because of the work of Jesus. You have been invited into an intimate relationship with your Father in heaven. You have been called and selected to walk with Him throughout your days in continual communion. He has become your Father in the truest sense of the word.

He is also your Almighty God. Meeting with Him on a regular basis will change you. Any encounter you are privileged to have will destroy all those things that hinder you from walking in His truths. It will change how you think, how you act, and you will know why you have been given breath. You will have answers for yourself and for those around you.

As a watchman looking past what we have been told to believe and observing what is really on the horizon, I'm convinced nothing but the keeping power of God will suffice in the near future. Nothing but clear directions and God-ordained paths will be safe places to travel.

Those paths only come from having moment by moment encounters with a loving, direction-giving Father. He is waiting to meet with you long and often. Maybe it's time to make such encounters the priority of your life - for your sake and for those around you.

Do You Want to Become the Powerful Family Fortress Your Father in Heaven Intends You to Be?

If you do, just start asking yourself some elementary questions like the ones below. You may find you have unknowingly lived in a pale version of the kind of marriage God planned for you. If that's true, you'll have little power to overcome the darkness that will cover the land before the return of Jesus Christ if you don't repent of those habits and actions that violate your covenant with God.

Let's readdress your marriage in light of covenant. You may think you answered some of these questions earlier, but considering the gravity of the world situation, the war against your family, and the need to restore your family as a fortress, please

prayerfully and enthusiastically address the following questions as if you were standing before the Lord.

Is your marriage and your family a vibrant testimony of the relationship between Christ and His church? If your answer is no, why not? List the reasons you believe you're in violation of your covenant.

Husbands, are you loving your wife as Christ loves the church? What changes do you need to make?

Do you and your family flow in the spiritual weapons provided for you in Christ? Why not?

Are your children a spiritual legacy for you to hold before God? If you answered no, what's the reason they aren't?

Hint: It could very well be the sin in your life. Don't be afraid to confess your sins before God as the Holy Spirit reveals them to you. He already knows what you're going to say!

Do you and your family present a living hope to others in a world out of answers? If not, what are you going to do about it?

Almost Done

As spouses and parents, answer the following questions together. Repent to each other for your part in any violations of your marriage covenant. This exercise is more about discussion and honest dialog than filling in the blanks, although writing down notes for the future may be a great idea.

Please understand, the Lord is immensely pleased at your effort to make sure your ways are His ways. Once you have the heart of repentance, these beginning steps may actually become enjoyable as you see the hand of God in a renewed way upon your relationship.

Who are you in your marriage for? You, your mate, your children, the Lord?

Do you seek the Lord first in all you do as a family?

Have you taught your children to do the same?

Is each member of your family more important in your eyes than you?

Whose rights, comforts, and needs do you pursue as your priority?

Is everyone in your family safe to fail without scorn or rejection?

Are their failures safe with you? Are your failures safe with them?

Are you an advocate and nurturer to everyone or a disciplinarian?

Where do you go when you see your family's inadequacies and helplessness to overcome in life? How do you respond? Do you respond?

Have you committed spiritual adultery by having heart longings for anyone other than your mate? (See James 4)

As a father, when was the last time you simply affirmed your children by blessing them? If you're not used to doing that, give it a try. It may be awkward at first, but you'll all learn to treasure it in time. Give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to lead you.

Once you turn from your own ways and ideas regarding how you typically function in your relationship with others—especially those in your family, you step into God's amazing power to war on your behalf. You free the Lord to impart His favor and wisdom to you, so you can stand in the gap for your family and help them learn how to lead godly lives as they turn their hearts toward Him.

God can change your self-serving heart into a heart wholly devoted to Him. It enables Him to release His power in you, so you can overcome the world and its challenges. Would you like to become the man God would like you to be? It's never too late!

Note: for further study of the attitudes that are needed in today's marriages, refer to the "Horizontal application to the modern marriage" section at the end of each of the following Characteristics of Christ beginning on the following page 252

Dear Father,

I choose to be willing to do whatever it takes to allow the Word of God to work in my heart as I learn to function in our marriage. I choose to forgive any wrong done to me, any real or perceived injustice, any hurt from neglect, or any time I have felt alone or abandoned by my mate.

I choose to open my heart completely to You, Lord, to learn whatever You desire to teach me. From this day forward, by Your power, through Your Holy Spirit, I lay down all pre-conceived notions I may have had about marriage concerning rights, positions, duties, roles, and attitudes. I release my mate to do the same. I also release my mate from any control I may have taken over him/her in any way.

Father, I choose this day to release You to place forgiveness in my heart and replace any wronged feelings with Your holy love. I choose to serve my mate and get in line with Your Word as to my responsibility in our marriage.

I choose to turn from all resentments, unforgiveness, anger, and hatred toward and surrender to Your perfect will for us.

I lay down my own agenda, secret heart plans, personal motives, and selfish expectations in regard to our marriage. I choose to search Your heart and submit to Your will. If I am holding anything against, I now confess all sin, and come to You to release me from attitudes that may hinder me from being open to Your perfect will. I choose to commit our marriage completely to You.

Signed _____ Date _____

Preparing to Flow in the Bridal Heart of God as You Overcome the World

As mentioned previously, we need to become a study of Jesus to fully understand how we are to display the character of Jesus and live His passionate, overcoming life. As Paul determined to know Him as his priority, so must we adopt that same purpose.

When Jesus was teaching His Sermon on the Mount, He established some definite characteristics as patterns for His life and ours. These were imprinted in the minds of those who heard what He was saying, so they would recognize what He was doing when He lived them out before them.

The Much Sought-After Characteristics of Christ section is a study of some of the character traits each of us will need, so we can display the life of Jesus to a dying world in our fellowships, our marriages, and our families. These traits were given to us by Jesus Himself in the form of “beatitudes.” He called us blessed if we function in them.

*The book,
The Seven Spirits of God,
by
Ron Auch
is a must read.*

These beatitudes are patterns for life and epitomize the life of our Lord. They are patterns of His very nature, given so we can understand them and agree to have them implemented in our hearts as we submit to Father God. We can then display them before the world and each other as a true representation of Jesus.

As we learn that one of the most important reasons the Lord has chosen for us to remain on this earth is to reach others, we find that we need “more of Jesus” apparent in us to do so. How foolish of us, then, to lift up our doctrines, beliefs, and our church fellowships in an attempt to effect any real change in the lives of those who don’t know Jesus as Lord.

As Jesus Himself walked among His people, we find He displayed the traits presented in the Sermon on the Mount and many others as an example of how all of us, who call ourselves His followers, should live each and every day. Although they do not give us an all-inclusive picture of the Lord’s holy, completed character; they do, however, show us His heart and give each of us direction and reliable guidelines as we proceed on our way in learning to function like Jesus.

In 1 John 2:6 we are told, “Whoever says he abides in Him ought ... to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself.”

The Much Sought-After Characteristics of Christ
Needed to Overcome the World and its Ways
Every Day

(The Beatitudes)

Note: We would like to thank Pastor Ron Auch Sr., author of the book, The Seven Spirits of God, for allowing us to use some of his ideas and wisdom in understanding these characteristics of Christ as they pertain to the beatitudes.

As authors of these pages, we have taken the liberty of labeling certain traits with descriptive names to amplify their meaning more clearly by using today's language and calling them a "spirit." The word "spirit" is not meant to portray an invisible dominance of some sort, as much as it is intended to mean "to take on or emulate the character of another." As we learn of and emulate the character of Jesus, we will walk in the "spirit" of Jesus, as led by the Holy Spirit.

Also, in your study of these character traits, you will notice they tend to overlap in some ways, especially when explaining the gentle, merciful character traits of Jesus. I am convinced the Lord chooses to emphatically amplify these certain characteristics of His Son to us because they are so vitally important.

Please restrain yourself from minimizing the importance of the over-all trait because one or two aspects sound familiar. When you have completed this section, you will see the interweaving flow and complementary interaction amongst all of them, which creates an overview of some of the wonder of our Lord.

*Make sure that
you refer to
this section
often as you
interact with
others.*

Note: It is imperative to remember that none of these character traits can be implemented by us. We cannot change one portion of our character. We may change the way we act for a time, but lasting change can only come through communion with God and allowing Him to change our inner being.

After describing the main characteristics of each trait, we will apply those same characteristics to our position in prayer (our vertical association with God,) and in our dealings with others (our horizontal association with others) in today's modern marriage and also as you live out Christ's love during every interaction with others.

In today's murky, inconsistent world, each of us will be pressured to personally conform to its demands in our marriages, family relationships, and churches. Taking on the character of Jesus will be of paramount importance if we really desire to glorify Him with our lives and overcome the darkness as He did.

A Spirit of Advocacy
(Those who are poor in spirit)

Matt. 5:3 NIV "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matt 5:3 Amp "Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous - with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!"

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

*Definition of endure: To remain firm under anguish or misfortune, without yielding, with the hope of others being lifted up.

*We are to be
advocates one
for another, in
support of
Father God,
and for the
reputation of
Jesus.*

Jesus - who was intensely wealthy in the spiritual realm - was poor in spirit, and functioned as our Advocate, rating His own safety and comfort insignificant for our sake. In the beginning of this study, we included the definition of "advocate" as a basis for the theme that runs throughout these pages. To clarify what it means to be "poor in spirit," it will do us well to revisit what an "advocate" is.

The dictionary definition of "advocate" is "one that pleads the cause of another." Our mission is to be advocates for one another, maintaining a cause for each other in prayer at a minimum, and with our very lives as Jesus did, if necessary, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The New International Dictionary of the Bible defines "advocate" as "counselor, comforter, supporter, backer, helper." It says, "The Holy Spirit is the advocate of the Father with us, therefore our Comforter (KJV, John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; RSV, NIV translate, "Counselor").

As applied to the Holy Spirit, the Greek word is so rich in meaning that adequate translation by any one English word is impossible. The KJV "Comforter" is as satisfactory as any, if it is taken in the fullest sense of one who not only consoles but also strengthens, helps, and counsels, with such authority as a legal advocate has for his client."

Jesus functioned with an advocate heart in two ways -
toward His Father and toward us.
We are to do the same.

Jesus had a passion to empty Himself and live a life devoted to others. He would never lift Himself up or hold Himself in higher esteem than anyone else – even the lowliest leper. Even though He was God, He held everyone in His heart as more important than Himself; especially those who laughed at, tortured, and crucified Him. He could not be wounded by their sin; He could only see their desperate need.

In the true spirit of advocacy, Jesus also desires to see His Father put “first” and is constantly looking to have Him glorified. His delight is in having Father God as the object of esteem in the hearts of those He loves. All of His mortal life, and now all of His kingly life, undergirds and points to the Father. There is no “one-sidedness,” however, as all of the Godhead - in unity of spirit, being one - point to each other’s wealth.

As the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus, who functions as our advocate, delights to see us accepted and perfected. He would gladly go to the cross again and again, if He had to, so we could prosper and be complete in His Father’s love; and so His Father would continually have the pleasure of our company. (Praise God that everything was finished once and for all at Calvary!)

With Jesus as our example, and with the Father’s love flowing through us, we are to walk as advocates for our Lord, each other as believers, and then on behalf of those who have need. Our adoption into the family of God, our sonship, gives each of us the heritage and ability to do so through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Characteristics of an Advocate

Those walking as advocates delight in seeing others become all they can be in Christ. Seeing any less motivates them to respond for the good of those individuals, even at a loss to themselves.

When someone comes against the advocate heart, there is a godly desire to have the offender eventually walk in all of the wealth of the Lord, for the sake of the Lord. To respond in any form of retaliation would be unthinkable. Advocates will love deeper than any argument. In fact, any accusation or injustice only causes them to desire that the other is forgiven and restored before the Father, never from a position of loftiness, but from the heart of lowliness.

Recognizing their acceptance with God, their heritage, their rights, and their privileges (which come via the work on the cross,)

*Are you ever
an honest
advocate for
anyone?*

*Jesus
came to earth
with the
intention
of
dying for us.*

It was His goal.

*His heart of
love denied the
pain because
of the
expectation of
pleasing
someone He
loved. Even if
that someone
hated Him.*

but esteeming others more significantly than themselves or their own needs, people walking with the heart of an advocate are wonderfully free. Jealousy, loss of reputation, perceptions of others, fear, and pride have no hold on them.

They are the leaders who serve, the advocates of their accusers, the servants of those who wrong them; and the comforters of those who are against them. Because they are confident and comfortable in their position with God, there is no negative response when falsely accused, no need to be right when wronged; and no desire to be lifted up in any way.

As John the Baptist desired to decrease so that Jesus could increase, those living for the good of others ardently choose that others increase in their walk with the Lord. They are motivated to do something, anything, so it might happen.

*How we live
represents to
others how
powerful the
work of the cross
is.*

Any desire to see “more of Jesus” in someone else is the spirit of advocacy in action as it thrives and pours itself out to address the need. It is the catalyst to any form of outreach – the desire that the lost or hurting be brought back into fellowship with the Father, for His sake as well as for the sake of the individual. The rally cry, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” transcends the corridors of time, and exists as if fresh from the lips of Jesus in the hearts of those who are poor in spirit, thriving in the spirit of advocacy.

In the same way, advocate hearts are the defenders of Jesus and all that He has done with His Father. We are to be advocates of the Godhead in defense of what they have done for all mankind, putting our lives on the line as their representative work.

Own this!!!

We are called to deny ourselves and all we hold dear in this world, and through our lives defend the life of Jesus. Our purposeful insignificance brings significance to the Lord. (Read the previous line over as many times as it takes to get it into your “knower.”)

Vertical Application of an Advocate Spirit

Those poor in spirit only desire to have “Abba Father” glorified. They are very comfortable in their acceptance whenever in God’s presence. Because it pleases the Father, the proper posture in prayer is always as a defender of His perfect will, and also for the good of others.

Praise to Him is their ultimate fulfillment. Living a life that praises the Lord and longing to be in praise because it is a natural flow of lifting Him to His rightful position is their only purpose for existing. This is always from a posture of their own lowliness and

complete acceptance. The desires of the Father are paramount; their own desires are deemed insignificant.

Horizontal Application of an Advocate Spirit

Fellowship with others provides the means for us to see when we are not functioning as their advocates. Instead of their “undone-ness” motivating us to be advocates for them before the Father so they might prosper, we tend to judge them, condemn them; and then eventually separate ourselves from them when it becomes uncomfortable.

Wrong!!!

An advocate is blind in his heart to the imperfections of those he encounters, other than to bear the weight of those imperfections before the Father on behalf of any given person. He strives to see others become all they can be in Christ, either through prayer or by responding to their need.

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

Ideally, marriage partners are brought together because the Father desires to trust them with each other. His spirit of advocacy would hold no offenses, discard all wrongs, and esteem the spouse and his or her needs as most important.

Each would be safe in the care of the other and have fertile soil in which to grow, as they are both safe in the Father’s Spirit and His love flowing through their spouse. They would be the best representative of each other no matter where they go or with whom they come in contact.

Poor in spirit, any imperfection in the other would only motivate the mate to strive, so the other would be healed. They would gladly bear any consequence inflicted because of that imperfection. The honest, mature heart - one pumping with the nourishment of the spirit of advocacy - knows the Father has chosen him/her as the single member of His spiritual family who could be trusted with the future wellness of his/her spouse. Any action done to elevate self rather than the spouse would hinder the desire of the Father for the spouse to be made whole, and also would not be the proper representation of the Father to him or her.

Application for Living Out Christ’s Love

Everyone to whom you are told to present Jesus is very special to Father God. He is looking for those individuals to know who His Son Jesus is, so they might embrace the love He has displayed for them on the cross.

*Your actions
are far more
important
than your
words.*

You are being called to exemplify that love. Your actions toward others - your church members, your mate, your children, those who have harmed you - will speak much more clearly than any words you might say about the One you say you serve.

If you approach everyone as one who has all the answers, or as one approaching a "poor sinner," the Father will never be able to trust you with their hearts. Any prayers you say for people, any actions you take, must originate from the heart of an advocate – one who is there on behalf of other people. They will see Jesus in your caring more for them and their needs than you care for yourself.

My Father,

*You will need
to come back
to this section
on the
characteristics
of Jesus often,
as the Lord
teaches you
lessons from
your
interaction
with others.*

As I wait for the return of my Lord, and study who He is, I recognize that one of His characteristics is that He is poor in spirit. He willingly emptied Himself of all of His desires for the sake of His Father and others. He gave Himself away for the good of all.

I recognize that the sin of desiring to be lifted up and deemed significant is very evident in my life. I also need to be "right" and get my way in most situations. Forgive me and change me. I am helpless to change myself. I choose to no longer remain foolish and without the power needed to become like my Advocate and Lord because of my sin.

I fully understand that my selfishness must decrease, so Your wealth might increase in me. I choose to empty myself for the sake of others.

Holy Spirit, please take full control over this area of my life, so I will become more like my Lord Jesus. I pray He will be pleased with my representation of Him when He returns.

Thank you,

Signed _____ Date _____

Questions about an Advocate Spirit
(Someone who is poor in spirit)

In your own words, what is an advocate?

Does being insignificant in your own eyes mean you are worth nothing to God? Why?

How can you better practice this spirit in prayer?

Name anyone you have harmed because you have strived to remain loftier than that person.

Is there anything you can do about it? Will you do it?

Mark the last occasion in which you did not function as an advocate toward your mate, another church member, or someone who does not know the love of Jesus. (We may all need several more pages.)

What steps do you know you need to take to start functioning as an advocate toward others on behalf of the Lord?

How will this knowledge help you when you are living out Christ's love to someone else?

A Spirit of Compassionate Insight
(Those who mourn)

Matt 5:4 NIV "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."

Matt.5:4 Amp "Blessed and enviably happy [with a happiness produced by the experience of God's favor and especially conditioned by the revelation of His matchless grace] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!"

*He cared
deeply and
moved with
His heart.*

A spirit of compassionate insight (mourning) is the spirit that "drove" Jesus from His kingly station in the heavens down to earth to take on the form of one of His own created beings. He placed Himself "in the shoes" of each one of us both in this life and for eternity.

Feeling our present and future pain of separation from the Father, there was nothing He could do *but* spend His life for us. His focus was on our loss. He cared about what would happen to us if He didn't intervene on our behalf.

*God
is bigger
than our lives.*

*We
must decrease
so that
His character
is what people
see.*

Having no separation between His heart and the heart of His Father, He also took as His own the loss that the Father had because of the sin of mankind, which caused separation. Father longed for all those He loved to cherish His glory for their well-being. Because the Father felt that way, so did Jesus - not in an elementary form of human caring, but with all of the compassions of the Father. When He moved in compassion, our needs and pains were taken on by Him as His own.

*The
only way
that people will
see
Jesus in us
is for us
to be
consumed
by
the
Spirit of
Compassionate
Insight*

A spirit of compassionate insight "owns" the pain of another. Because of its nature, functioning in this spirit causes one to move on behalf of another.

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" I John 3:17 NIV

A person walking in a spirit of compassion takes on the needs of others as if they were his own. There is no separation between a person's needs and his desires for those needs to be met in someone else's life. It is the spirit of God giving His kind of compassion for another.

Jesus was the epitome of God's compassion (mourning) for those among whom He walked. The Father's heart pumped out loud before the worst sinners and vagrants. He experienced what the Father felt for them. In contrast, and in compassion for the heart of His Father, Jesus had little tolerance for the pompous, arrogant heart that wouldn't serve the Father.

The Heart of Jesus

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

Mt.14:14 NIV "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick."

Mt.15:32 NIV "Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.'"

Mt.20:34 NIV "Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."

Mk.1:41 NIV "Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!'"

Mk.6:30,31 NIV "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

31) Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"

Mk.8:2,3 NIV "I have compassion for these people... some of them have come a long distance."

Lk.15:20 NIV "So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him..."

God Labels His Compassion as Part of His Character

2 Cor.1:3 NIV "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort..."

Jas 5:11 NIV "... The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

It's Our Turn

Phil.2:1-2 NIV "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

2) then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

Col.3:12 NIV "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion..."

Characteristics of a Spirit of Compassionate Insight

A compassionate spirit only desires insights into the heart of God. It craves deeper intimacy with God to learn His heart as its only goal. It is a defender of the disadvantaged and the underdog. The compassionate heart takes on their burdens as if they were its own, just as Jesus does.

2 Cor. 12:15 Amp "But I will most gladly spend [myself] and be utterly spent for your souls..."

Gal. 4:19 NIV "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you..."

Sensitivity toward the heart of God is the inward desire of the compassionate heart. This heart cannot be satisfied until God's heart is satisfied upon the completion of all things. It drives a person to whatever end will satisfy Father God's heart and allow others to see Him. Those with a compassionate spirit unconditionally surrender all control of their lives to the Lordship of Jesus and joyfully embrace a life of self-denial.

Vertical Application of a Compassionate Spirit

What are Your desires, Lord?

Those blessed to have compassionate insight enter the prayer closet on behalf of others and for the purposes of God. For others, they mourn because of the need being presented. More than simply "lifting up" someone, compassion drives them to remain "under" the need until something changes. It is their weight. Nothing but the solution will satisfy them.

When in prayer, all other needs are set aside to learn of Father God's desires. This heart waits until there is a sureness of His will. Upon knowing what His desires are, there is only one goal; it is for that purpose to be accomplished.

A wonderful example of the kind of compassion we are to have is the burdensome prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus was arrested. He was so moved that it's said He sweat

drops of blood. Obviously, He was deeply involved in what the Father was doing at that moment. Driven to only fulfill the Father's plans and carrying the weight of our sins, compassion deeper than any of us could experience was manifested on our behalf.

Horizontal Application of a Compassionate Spirit

Compassion, which is stimulated by the spirit of mourning ever-present in the heart of Father God, is the conduit of the flow of power to heal infirmities and touch hearts. If it does not function in each of us, nothing eternal can be accomplished; only fleshly results will materialize. No wonder most of the church is powerless in so many situations.

Those who share the spirit of compassion with the Lord will not "weary in well-doing," and will work unflaggingly until the last soul has been brought into the Kingdom of God. As Paul said, *"I am again as if in birth pains until Christ is formed in you..."*

*We are
finished only
when God is
finished.*

When the last soul has been brought in, when all of the intended work of the Father is finished, the compassion of the Father and those who have been made like Him will be satisfied. Only then will the compassionate be comforted and cease from laboring towards that end (mourning.)

The motivation of godly compassion is also to "cover" the sins of another, so the person won't be exposed for who he/she really is. The mature heart of compassion finds no satisfaction in someone else hurting. In fact, it moves in the same Spirit of Father God for the hurting. It must see that sin covered even if it causes harm to the compassionate one. The person of compassion suffers on behalf of the hurting party and will enter into great loss (like Jesus) until the other person is in a place of safety, whether physically or spiritually.

Short Story

During most harvest seasons, Justus would normally have little time to take this kind of leisurely stroll to town. He had decided, however, that he owed it to himself to enjoy some precious moments in the warm sun that had hidden itself behind the foreboding clouds and the accompanying rain that had been present for the last several weeks. He had been fortunate to harvest his crop before the early rain had come. This had been a good year for him, not like the several years past when there was barely enough to feed his family due to falling crop prices and the droughts that had plagued the area.

His walk into town was a special blessing as he thought of how fortunate he was because of his father's inheritance. He wasn't rich, by any means; but he did have the liberty of not having to worry whether each year's crop would produce for him. (As evidenced in the lives of his neighbors, much hardship resulted from an insufficient harvest.) This freedom, plus the joy of the day, and the thoughts of his family and friends made his stroll quite enjoyable.

The joy of the day was diminished somewhat as the path he was on took him past the gates of his nearest neighbor. Set away from the path about forty feet, he saw the piece of paper hanging on the gate that signified trouble. Well acquainted with the unpleasant custom of posting your debts on the outermost part of your property, which signified your hardship, and in some instances revealed to others the embarrassment of improper stewardship of money, he turned off the path and walked toward the gate with a sense of apprehension.

Approaching the gate, his worst fears were confirmed. Abraham was in trouble. His crops had been washed away in the last torrent of rain, and he was about to lose everything because of the bills he owed. The thought of his friend's misfortune broke Justus' heart.

Part of the custom of posting your bills on the front gate was a practice known as "the double." This meant that everyone who saw the posting had several choices they could make. A person could pass by and ignore the need; or he could fold the paper from bottom to top - in essence "doubling" it - meaning he would take on the debt as if it were his own and pay it for the other person.

*What would you
do if you had the
means?*

Justus felt the pain and anguish that must have transpired in his long-time friend over the last months. He folded the paper and sealed it with his signet ring.

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

The truest and most satisfying application of the compassionate spirit is fulfilled when serving your mate. Most people do not understand that, in the truest sense of the word, (because the two of you are “one,”) you are ministering from yourself, through God, to yourself, as you carry the burdens of the other.

All of the unity displayed in the Godhead and portrayed by Jesus to the church is exhibited in the marriage covenant. Any selfishness actually harms the one that is being selfish, because his/her foolishness hinders the flow of God’s grace to the marriage.

Few realize the dynamic of living a life of godly compassion toward the other in marriage. Studying the needs of one’s mate for the sake of serving him/her pleases the heart of God and displays the character of Christ to the world.

Application for Living Out Christ’s Love

People instinctively know when someone really cares for them or when that person is simply going through the motions regarding compassion. They also see true compassion at work when someone is sincerely concerned for their needs. Jesus is only exhibited when honest caring is the motivation behind any action done in His Name.

When praying for someone, it is imperative you find the heart of compassion in your private prayer closet before you represent Jesus to that person by committing to pray for his/her needs. Any action you may take once people correctly detect any hypocrisy in you is automatically nullified and of no effect in representing Jesus.

My Father,

I realize my preoccupation with my own needs limits my insight into the needs of others. I find I rarely carry the needs of others enough to present them honestly to You. I have little of Your kind of compassion for others. I never mourn for them. Please forgive me. Place in me your heart of compassion. Birth in me a heart of caring, first of all for Your desires; and then for the needs of others. I know it is one of the character traits of Jesus in which I should be functioning to show the world His love. Help me. Thank You.

Signed _____ Date _____

Questions About a Spirit of Compassionate Insight

What is a spirit of compassion?

Have you ever had it for anyone - for God's reasons?

When have you seen it displayed in the church?

Where do you need to start to acquire a spirit of compassion?

Do you really desire to care for others, or is your own selfishness too strong at this point to even pursue it?

So, what are you going to do?

How can Jesus be represented if you always serve yourself?

Is a "prune face" considered formal wear when acquiring a spirit of godly compassion? Why?

What is the utmost joy to the compassionate heart?

A Spirit of Meekness
(Humble Obedience to the Word of God)

Mt. 5:5 NIV "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Mt.5:5 Amp "Blessed (happy, blithesome, joyous, spiritually prosperous - with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the meek (the mild, patient, long-suffering), for they shall inherit the earth!"

James 4:7-10 Amp "So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.

8) Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

9) [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].

10) Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant]."

One dictionary definition for the word "meek" is that of enduring injury with patience and without resentment, being humble or gentle. It stresses a mildness or patient disposition, which is not easily stirred to anger.

"Humble" – reflecting, expressing, or offered in a spirit of deference or submission; having or showing a consciousness of one's defect; not proud; not self-assertive.

"Obey" – to carry out the instructions or orders of; to be guided by; comply with. Obedient – submissive to the restraint or command of authority.

I Sam. 15:22,23a Amp "Samuel said, Has the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23) For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry...

Ps. 37:9 Amp "For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait and hope and look for the Lord [in the end] will inherit the earth."

Ps. 37:11 Amp "But the meek [in the end] shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Ps. 37:29 Amp "[Then] the [consistently] righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever."

For this study, it is increasingly clear that as the Lord was speaking, He was describing those who had a heart need to be obedient to the Word and plans of the Lord. Throughout the study of the Word of God, rebellion, disobedience, and self-service were the traits that described those who would not be part of anything the Lord was doing. Their fate was separation from God.

In contrast, humble submission, loving obedience, and above all else, an ardent desire to serve the Lord alone describe the character traits of those destined for eternal fellowship with God. Therefore, it is our opinion that when the Lord was describing meekness, He was describing those who embraced the trait of *humble obedience* - to do only the will of God in all things - as those who could be trusted to inherit the earth.

The Obedient Servant

The man sat in the darkness, his legs aching from pacing a seemingly endless number of days in the cold six-by-six-foot cell. "According to my calculations," he thought to himself, "either today or tomorrow should be my last day in this stinking place."

As he remembered why he had been given thirty days of solitary confinement, Dicky, "the Mask," Sullivan could feel the same intense hatred rise up within him that he had sensed at the time of the fight which had put him in "the hole."

"This time I'm going to finish the job," he swore to himself. "If it's the last thing I do, I'll kill him for what he did to me." The satisfying comfort of the thoughts of how he would make his latest enemy suffer, and the plotting of the ways in which he would get away with it again became his companions as they had many times this last month. Throughout the night - another hellish, endless night - he pondered his revenge. His anger festered with every moment, ending only as he fell into a fitful sleep.

"OK, Mask, time's up." The loud voice and the rattling of the keys against the cell door startled the sleeping man. "Have you learned anything yet?" the guard continued, as the burst of light that momentarily blinded Mask flooded the small cell.

"Is that you, Jensen?" Mask began, shielding his eyes from the unfamiliar brightness. "Of all people to see after thirty days, it had to be you, huh?"

Mask hated Jensen. He really hated everyone, but he hated Jensen more than the rest of them. Jensen represented everything Mask had despised all his life. Jensen was a Christian. Every time the tall, rugged-looking guard came near, Mask could feel the hair on the back of his neck stand up. Jensen never really did anything to Mask to make him hate him so - in fact, of all the guards he was the most fair - but that didn't matter, just being around him made his skin crawl.

"Are you going to preach at me again?" Mask started, spitting the words with disdain at the smiling guard, who stepped out of the narrow cell opening to allow room for him to pass. "You going to tell me again how I should give my life to this Jesus of yours, and be obedient to Him like you always are?"

Mask could feel the hatred rising up from within. "Well, I ain't gonna be obedient to no one - not you, not to the rules at this dump of a prison; and especially not to that Jesus of yours. Nobody ain't ever gonna tell me what to do - never," he continued. "You can keep me locked up in that stinkin' hole forever, but you won't get me to break. I ain't never gonna listen to no one but me," he cursed, as he walked down the corridor just in front of the smiling Jensen.

About twenty feet from the security door that led to the washrooms, Jensen stopped and told the cuffed man in front of him to stop also. Mask turned around to give the guard, who was signaling to another security guard on the other side of the door that everything was all right, another piece of his mind.

Before he could say anything, however, Jensen started speaking to him. "You know," he began, "I've seen a lot of men come through this prison, some real tough customers; but I haven't seen very many as stupid as you."

Mask was too startled by the statement that came from the normally courteous-no-matter-what guard to respond immediately. In fact, something inside of him told him to listen to what the man had to say.

Jensen continued. "You guys are all the same. You think you're so smart and tough, but you don't know how ignorant and foolish you really are." The rage Mask was beginning to feel because of the words spoken began to show visibly on his face. "Oh, stop it," Jensen continued, "all you really know how to do is get mad. Isn't it about time you found some answers for your life? Just listen for a minute; then you can go and do whatever it is you've been pondering all these days."

Mask just stood there. In all of the years he had been in prison, no one had ever had the guts to talk like this to him before, especially a guard. He was almost fascinated at the thought of what might come next.

"You keep spouting off about how tough you are, and that you won't ever serve anybody. Well, I have to tell you something, my friend. You are one of the most obedient servants that has ever come through this place." Mask began to form some words with his mouth when Jensen cut him off. "Just shut up and listen to some wisdom for a change. I'm going to tell you some truth. You can do with it whatever you want after I'm done; but it would be one of the wisest things you've ever done if you listen real close. Now, here comes truth, whether you like it or not."

Jensen paused a split second to see that Mask was listening, then continued. "Truth is, everybody serves somebody; and you are one of the most foolish puppets of Satan I have ever met. You don't even know how much he is laughing at you for serving him as faithfully as you do. He's a loser, and he has no hope; and he laughs at anyone he can convince to be a loser as well. His rebellion got him thrown out of heaven and now he wants fools like you to be separated from God, too.

"You are one of his best pupils, a 'big time rebel,' and look at where it's gotten you. It makes him laugh even more because he knows that after you have been obedient to him all of your life - a loser like him - it will be too late for you to help yourself. You'll have been too busy serving him through anger, hate, and revenge to find out what the truth really is."

Jensen stopped for a moment, then continued unchallenged by the quieted man. "The fact is, there are only two masters of all people; and everyone, I mean everyone, is obedient to one or the other. They can serve God, through Jesus Christ, or they can serve Satan. The ones who are obedient to Jesus win forever, and those who serve Satan lose forever. I don't know if you've looked at your life lately; but it would seem to me if this is the best your master can do for you, I'd think seriously about changing your allegiance."

Jensen gently took the man's arm, indicating he was finished, and it was time to go. Mask walked submissively ahead of the guard.

"Oh, one more thing," Jensen began again, while the two of them walked toward the door, one looking ahead, the other looking down at the floor. "The next time you start believing you're in charge of your own life, and vow never to be obedient to or serve anyone, stop for a moment and listen quietly. The sound you'll be hearing will be the laughter from the one that's conned you into being the big fool you really are.

"He's laughing because he knows that in your rebellion and in your choice not to serve God, you're continuing to be one of his most obedient servants. He's got you and you don't even know it. That makes you a real fool."

The guard on the other side opened the door and Jensen transferred Mask to him. As the door closed, Jensen watched the two men through the small vertical window. Mask, who hadn't uttered a word the whole time, just kept walking with his head down. To Jensen, it looked as if the man's shoulders drooped slightly, and his steps were absent of the defiant gait normally exhibited for the benefit of those watching. It seemed as though Mask was thinking seriously about what had been said.

As Jensen retreated from the door to return to his station, he prayed to his Lord and Master that Mask would find his proper Master. He also said a prayer of gratefulness that he himself might become more obedient out of an ever-deepening love for Jesus.

Characteristics of a Spirit of Humble Obedience

To function in the Biblical definition of meekness requires as much strength of character as any other trait. The heart of humble obedience has determined long ago that the world and all of its influences rate a distant last place in comparison with the Word of God. Obedience in all things associated with God and His Word is the only desire of the truly meek.

The humbly obedient, or meek, understand that all the economies of God are based on obedience to His Word. They are on a continual quest to willingly place themselves in full submission to God and His Word.

True obedience is simply the heart desire to do what God desires you to do. Meekness is the deep willingness to obey. Only true courage allows obedience to prevail.

A meek person under obedience to the Lord, although looked at by the world as weak, is the most courageous of all people. He will stand, empowered by the presence and unseen

power of the Lord, when all others capitulate to the dictates of any given situation rather than the Word of God.

God's strength comes to those who are obedient. Jesus is our example of obedience. He did nothing on His own but did only what His Father told Him to do, no matter what anyone else thought of His actions.

Pride or rebellion (the lifting up of one's self and personal desires) causes disobedience. It's the Burger King Syndrome - "Have it your way." Only repentance of our worldliness (the suffering and eventual death of our worldly desires) will bring true heart obedience or meekness.

Note: There is a vast difference between obedience and compliance. They look the same on the outside, but once again God looks on the heart. Obedience is willful submission to the Lord. Compliance is merely following the rules, rules which some people would quickly toss aside if they weren't required to follow them, due to the rebellion and control in their hearts.

Pride (self-importance)
or
loss of humility (submission to God,)
which leads to disobedience,
is
the root
of every sin
or evil.

A Spirit of Obedience (Meekness)

1 John 4:17-18 NIV "Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

18) There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."

Jesus walked in perfect love, perfect obedience. Doing only the Father's will, no outside force, fear, or pressure could sway Him from that single, most important mission. His learned obedience set Him free from any common effect of His actions. Because all of His actions and causes were His Father's, whom He trusted completely, any potential harm that could come to Him because of them fell pale beside His ardent desire to obey.

So often in our walk with the Lord, our own desires and causes are the real motivation for what we do. We give lip service

to good-sounding spiritual tasks; but the bottom line is still simple - selfish desires that will preserve our lives.

What is not understood during these times is that in our disobedience to the Lord, we have stepped into the realm of rebellion and are, in fact, obeying Satan. There are only two masters that can be served throughout the Bible. We can choose either God, our Father, or Satan, the father of lies. If we are serving one of them, we cannot and will not be serving the other. Our “harmless” sin of disobedience in any form is causing untold damage to our future ability to follow the Lord, because we have “elected” to again submit ourselves to the realm from which we have been freed by the blood of Jesus.

Suffering or Death to Our Own Desires Leads to Obedience

Heb.5:8 Amp “Although He was a Son, He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered.”

Little is taught about the functions of the spirit realm because little is known. Our daily Christian walk is mostly devoted to attempting, in our own strength, to remove those things in our lives, which hinder our becoming like Jesus. We do it through our limited understanding of how things function in the spiritual realm and rely upon how things work in the physical world. We say we are walking in the Spirit, but little more than fleshly results, derived from working in our own strength, are the “fruit” of our efforts.

Paul asks how we can complete in the flesh what has begun in the Spirit (Gal. 3:3.) We have all read it many times and never get it, because we know so little about God's spiritual ways.

In the spiritual realm, there is cause and effect, just as there is in the physical realm. We can understand that principle in our world, because we can see or feel most of the results of our actions as they play out. (If we do this, then that happens.)

In the spiritual realm, however, the results of our actions, good or bad, do not always have an immediate or visible presence, which causes us to be deceived about the effects of our actions. The result of our spiritual disobedience may be masked through circumstances or explained away by natural means. We may never really comprehend the specific impact of our disobedience. Therefore, we continue being disobedient because we see no apparent consequences resulting from our actions, even assuming what we've been doing is actually OK.

A perfect example of this is our inability to obey because we will not submit ourselves to the tool God has provided so obedience

*As a parent,
have you ever
wondered if
your
disobedience
and rebellion
have violated
the covering
over your
children?*

*Have you ever
wondered why
they are in
rebellion?*

can be formed in us - *the denial of self, or suffering.* (Read Romans 6:16-22.)

*This could
change
your
spiritual
life!*

We would rather “pray away” the tool God wants to use, and remain comfortable and unchanged, deluded in thinking the Lord would not allow us to experience hardship because He loves us. In reality, it is because He loves us that the hardship comes. When we are finally forced to deny ourselves, we can begin to know God, how He works; and start submitting to Him and the changes He desires to make in us.

It is foreign to our thinking that if we embrace the concept of giving up something we desire, then obedience will be formed in us because of it. That doesn’t compute in our minds. Nevertheless, it is truth. However, because we can’t, or won’t get it, our lives remain shallow, unproductive, and totally ineffective in presenting God’s ways to the world through how we act.

Acts 21:12 NIV When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” ¹⁴ When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”

Paul’s suffering caused him to see how valueless it was to hold on to his mortal life and comfort. It caused him to sell out completely, which meant the death of his rights and comforts. He died to his need to survive. He laid down His life so the Gospel of Jesus Christ would go forth.

Because of his growth, obedience was formed in him. He could do nothing but obey. God had given him the power to deny himself, so change could be accomplished in him.

Vertical Application of a Humbly Obedient (Meek) Spirit

Approaching God in true meekness is a joy beyond description. When doing so, there can be no possible hindrances to the warmest fellowship. All is in order.

The humbly obedient heart desires only for the will of the Lord to prevail in all circumstances and it functions daily by submitting to the directions of the Holy Spirit. Any possible sin has been covered through repentance by the blood of Jesus.

Fellowship entered into by the meek one in order that he can do the will of God is complementary to the attitude of Father

God, who desires what is best for His child. It is a perfect marriage of desires and is fulfilling beyond imagination.

Horizontal Application of a Humbly Obedient (Meek) Spirit

Those who are humbly obedient to the Word of God (the meek) are the true, most valiant warriors in the work of the Lord. They can be trusted with the things and purposes of God, because they have the same mind and heart as He does.

A person walking in this manner is distinguished in the world and in most church fellowships as somewhat unusual. He cannot be moved by the circumstances that move most individuals. He will not normally go along with the crowd.

What may seem like some form of rebellion, however, is quite the opposite. Being obedient to the Father in Heaven, he has only His best interests at heart. Programs, false motivations, dynamic coercion, and religious activities that replace fellowship with God as the catalyst for doing things cause the humbly obedient to appear to be non-conforming. They rarely attend these kinds of events.

The truth of the matter is that in their perfect conforming to the Word, they become non-conformists to foolish religion. They will humbly remove themselves from any resemblance of disobedience to God as they see it.

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

The marriage of two humbly obedient (meek) people is the flagship marriage for the body of Christ. Conforming only to the Word of God, both parties understand their position of submissiveness to the needs of the other and strive to serve the other.

The husband, obedient before his Father, crucifies his flesh in order to provide fertile soil for his bride to prosper. The bride, understanding her marriage is the picture of the relationship of Jesus with the church, provides service to her husband, so he can function in the will of the Lord. It is a union of two who combat anything that resembles a violation of the Word of God, joined in heart for the purposes of God and - knowing the heart motive of the other to be pure - for each other's best interests.

Application for Living Out Christ's Love

To those in the world, or to someone struggling with the life of Christianity, anyone who is immovable in his/her convictions - especially if that person is pure in motive and righteous before God - is a shining star. They would probably be considered the closest

picture to what Jesus looks like. The concept of strength under obedient submission, combined with the other traits of the character of Christ, brings the Bible definition of who Jesus is to life in an everyday world.

*You don't
need to be
perfect, but
you do
represent
someone
Who loves
perfectly.*

A person who presents an immovable strength of conviction (which is founded on eternal truth and substantiated by a life of love and service) is magnetic and worth investigating to someone who needs foundational answers. The humbly obedient (meek) individual shows others Jesus.

Note of caution: If the desire for obedience to the Word of God is not tempered by the other attributes of Jesus, it can easily become religious in nature and void of the heart of God. As an example, take a look at the Pharisees or modern-day crusaders who shake their fist at the sinner, instead of hating the sin and loving the sinner as God does.

Questions About a Spirit of Obedience (Meekness)

Name someone you know who is absolutely obedient to the Word of God.

What strikes you most about that person?

Do you want to be with him/her? Why or why not?

What areas is the Holy Spirit bringing to mind that need to be brought into obedience?

My Father,

I now realize I have spent most of my life attempting to maintain my own comfort. I also now know because that has been my main focus, I haven't been able to grow in humble obedience to You. Please forgive me. I have been obedient to Satan, rather than to You. He's been the one to whom I've listened. I turn from that sin now and submit to Your Lordship over my life.

I ask You to build in me the desire to no longer own my comfort zones and I release them to you. I now choose to embrace the crucified/resurrected life. Please give me the ability to deny myself. I realize that in doing so, I again submit myself to Your authority in this area of my life; and with it, to Your power which allows it to be accomplished in me.

I also realize that in submitting to You, I give up my right to remain who I am. Those habits or traits, which make me who I am, must go if You are to have Your way in me.

Accomplish obedience in me. Bring me to the place where I can say as Jesus said, "Not my will, but Your will be done" in all things, and have it be the truth. Bring me to the point where You can trust me with whatever You consider important. Forgive me, Father, and change me.

Thank You,

Signed _____ Date _____

Now, Doesn't That Feel Good?

Prayers and thoughts

A Spirit of Righteousness

Mt.5:6 NIV "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Mt.5:6 Amp "Blessed and fortunate and happy and spiritually prosperous (in that state in which the born-again child of God enjoys His favor and salvation) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (uprightness and right standing with God), for they shall be completely satisfied!"

Jesus Had the Heart to See Everyone the Way His Father Saw Them

*In Christ, we
have been made
righteous and
are being made
holy.*

*We can now see
the need to
submit to the
Lord, so that we
can act as He
would in our
world.*

As we, those who are as if brides waiting for Christ, choose to allow God to "build" the character of Jesus in us, we find that the spirit of righteousness is essential for proper construction. It's foundational to the rest of the work the Lord will be doing in us. To see others as God does allows Him to move our hearts toward the rest of the things that please Him on our journey of becoming completely like Jesus.

The Word says if we say we abide in Him (Jesus,) then we are to conduct ourselves as He did. Simply coming to Christ imparts His righteousness to us; and we, therefore, should act righteously in our world, treating others as He would.

To consciously begin to treat others the way Jesus would is the necessary, beginning step in following the ways of our Lord and walking in His steps. Remember this can be accomplished only through the Holy Spirit, who gives you the power to allow Jesus to live His life through you. Jesus will honor this effort and bless it with Himself (His character, His presence) in order to truly change you. What may start out as an exercise with possibly less than pure heart motives can become real heart change when blessed by God and anointed through the Holy Spirit.

The righteous heart has the ability and desire to see one's neighbor as God sees him. It desires to think of everyone in the way we would want people to think of our own sons and daughters.

To have immoral thoughts about anyone is seeing him as Satan sees him. Anyone filled with a spirit of righteousness has the mind of Christ and brings every thought captive to Christ. Jesus stood in the courtyard with the naked woman caught in adultery and saw her as His Father did. His compassion for her far outweighed any fleshly desires. He had no thoughts but His Father's thoughts.

Jesus was persecuted because He treated people as His Father did. His righteousness made the unrighteousness of those around Him all the more glaring.

Jesus endured people's reactions to His righteousness in order to see the light of life ignited in others. Righteousness never retaliates when it is wronged. Returning good for evil is a spirit of righteousness in action - the Spirit of Jesus. We must endure any harm or accusation thrust upon us for being righteous, so others may see Jesus in us and be drawn to the Father.

We are to go so far as to respond to their evil by doing more good to them and for them, without any hope of notice for our actions. Through this discipline, we defer our immediate gratification in hopes of nurturing their eternal gratification, that of knowing the Father.

We nurture our ability to reveal Jesus by the right treatment of those around us. Righteousness treats everyone as Jesus would, for their good.

People will be reached by our righteous living in their midst. We are an extension of His plan to draw all people to Himself. If we are not holy (righteous) in their midst, no one will see God.

Righteousness (a heart that desires holiness) means to be set apart. Any ungodly person can return evil for evil, or good for good. Only a godly person can return good for evil.

Righteousness is a spirit of God. It is a quality of God. It can only develop as we submit to God. Righteousness is a heart desire, not just deeds done in the spirit of religion or only for external appearances.

Only in prayer can we develop the character of God. If we are being mistreated, we must take that person to God; first, to see him as God sees him, and then to deny ourselves the right to retaliate.

The Lord wants us to hunger and thirst, so others are treated right. If the world is becoming worse, it is because we are living less righteously than Jesus would have lived before them. When we return evil for evil, even for right-sounding causes, the sin of those we oppose will always increase. In the end, evil will win because in fighting this way, we are using the world's approach.

Praying for those who oppose the things of God is returning good for evil. We are to rejoice when we are persecuted, because it gives us an opportunity to show them Jesus through our godly responses to their persecution. A spirit of righteousness is simply desiring to act as Jesus would toward everyone, to be like Jesus in every situation we face.

*Confidence in
God is how
little you
respond when
falsely
accused.
Ron Auch*

*That is a spirit
of
righteousness
toward God in
action.*

Righteousness
is
the outward expression
of our inward
godliness.

A Spirit of Righteousness

1 John 4:17-18 NIV "...Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

*18 There is no fear in love. But perfect *(righteous) love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."*

*Note: (righteous) is an editorial comment, not part of the Scripture.

When we function in the perfect love (true bridal love) of Jesus through a spirit of righteousness, our only desire will be to see each person with whom we come in contact blessed by God. Our only hope will be that others see Jesus simply because it will be good for them.

Remember foolish Tony? If he had seen Mr. Baxter through the eyes of righteousness, his only desire would have been to build the best house possible for him. Because he could not see past his hate and anger, his whole family lost out and he himself missed a true blessing. It is impossible to love people unless we can see them as our Lord sees them through a spirit of righteousness.

*We need to
pursue God
to learn to
see others
and love
them as He
does.*

Most of us go through this walk with our God void of any of the fullness that was intended for us. Our days are filled with seemingly meaningless - but at the time urgent - tasks that fill our time until we are caught in an endless circle of lifeless days. There is reason for this: it is because we do not love others as God does. Listen to what His Word says.

John 15: 9-14 NIV "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

10) If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

11) I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

12) My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

13) Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

14) *You are my friends if you do what I command.*"

The Father saw Jesus through His kind of love and His joy was complete. Jesus saw us through His and His Father's kind of love, and His joy was complete. He told us of His Father's ways, so our joy may be complete. He has us in mind in all He does.

We see others through our imperfect, selfish kind of love and wonder why we have little or no joy. It doesn't take much reasoning to figure out the simplicity of God's equation.

It goes like this: Choose to love others with God's motives for loving someone, and then there will be great joy in every area of your life. If you choose not to love with God's kind of love, joy will not be found in you, at least not complete joy.

*Simple,
huh?*

A spirit of righteousness sees others as God sees them. Someone functioning in a spirit of righteousness is always seeing and loving others as God does. Our Lord looked at everyone with one purpose in mind: He wanted them to be with Him for eternity. It didn't matter who they were, or what they had done, especially to Him. He could only see them in love.

In His heart, because He was righteous, it was impossible not to love. He even loved others deeply on His way to the cross, because He knew some of those who were crucifying Him would be with Him in heaven because of what He was about to do for them.

His righteous heart could not see their sin, only their need. While He hung there bleeding, He still was aware of the needs of those around Him. Looking left and right, He dealt with each person in His Father's love and willing acceptance, if they chose to accept them.

*If I repent of
who I am
not, He will
make me
who He is.*

Looking to His mother, He could see her with spiritual eyes even then, and sensing her sorrow and loss, made provision for her needs. Looking to the mocking crowd in His righteous, bridal love, He could only ache for their need of forgiveness and cry out on their behalf. Even now, in righteousness, He is praying for you and me, still looking past Himself to us. How can we not follow Him?

I am often in awe when I think of how Jesus could function righteously in all circumstances. It astounds me to think part of His covenant promise and provision for us is to do likewise. It seems so remote, and at times even hopeless, as I see my sin. In those times, the only hope I do have is His Word, and I can rely on that. He told me if I repent of who I am not, He will make me who He is.

In Jesus' righteousness, you are freed from any fear of what others may do to you or think of you. Your only desire is to see

them as God sees them, so you can fill their needs. You have the opportunity to be able to show someone how Jesus would function, that they might come to Him - even if it means persecution to you - by observing your actions and responses.

When I was young, probably just old enough to remember, I recall a specific instance when my father came home after what was probably a very hard day. I remember my mother looking concerned while she tended to his needs. While she got warm water for his feet and made him some soup, he was telling her about his day. I don't remember all that was said, but the gist of what my dad did for us that day lets me understand Jesus a little better.

My dad was working on the construction of what was then called the Treasure Island buildings. That morning, because of the extremely cold weather, which made working conditions very hazardous with its accompanying ice and snow, the foreman sent most of the workers home. He did say those who wanted to stay could do so, although he did not recommend it. Most everyone went home. A very few stayed despite the dangers to themselves. My dad was obviously one of them.

While Mom and Dad talked, I remember going over to the window and looking at the raging storm that had developed sometime during the day. Later, possibly the next day, I recall my dad asking my mother if there would be enough at the end of the week. I'm sure he was questioning as to whether there was enough money to pay for the needed food or whatever else four kids required. As I reflect back, Mom and Dad were probably going through some very hard times; however, we kids never knew it.

He may never know how much his actions impacted me, after seeing how cold and worn out he was that day. He stayed, working in the cold for my sisters and brother and me, when he would have been more than justified to have gone home. I don't know if he knew the Lord during that time; but his cold and weary day, and his simple love toward us was the spirit of righteousness in action that even now - many years later - impacts my life.

King David,
despite his very visible failures,
maintained a thirst,
a hunt,
and an obsessive quest
for the presence
of the One who made him.

A spirit of righteousness in action would be, for example, dropping off some food on the doorstep of a needy family and leaving before they could find out who left it, having the heart that you would never be found out. In the event you were found out, it would be unthinkable that the glory for the gift would be removed from Jesus and placed on you.

It would be like actually trying to find a way to bless someone who has seriously hurt you, free from even the slightest desire for retaliation. You see that person as clearly as God sees him, understanding his need to hurt you only exposes a need for the love of Jesus. You understand God allowed you to receive the brunt of this person's sin, because He could trust you to respond to it as Jesus would. In righteousness, you become partners with Jesus in intercession and action for the other person. You love as He and the Father love.

*What fun to
destroy the
bondages
that the
world places
on us!*

Vertical Application of a Spirit of Righteousness

The righteous heart is always concerned for the best interests of everyone he takes to prayer. He only cares for the need of the one for whom he prays. The needs of Father God also mean more to the righteous heart than his own. Pleasing God and longing to see accomplished His desire that none should perish are foremost in every approach in prayer. Prayer is a loving interaction between a caring child and an adoring Father, each looking out for the other's best interests.

Horizontal Application of a Spirit of Righteousness

Jesus determined in His heart to leave heaven because it was good for those who were far from Him in heart. A righteous spirit longs for everyone to know God and for Father God to be blessed because of it. This heart knows the relationship with Jesus is the best situation anyone could ever have, even its enemies, and longs that all enter into it.

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

The righteous heart is a “covering” heart, always looking out for the best interests of others. In a marriage situation, where selfishness tends to flourish, this heart functions in the opposite direction. It serves, even to its own detriment if necessary.

*Conflict dies
when it
encounters a
righteous
heart.*

At times, a person functioning in righteousness may be seen as having no backbone; however, that is not the case. Laying personal needs down for the needs of the other, overcoming conflict through prayer rather than bringing harm to the relationship - even with words, meeting the other’s needs at the expense of your own needs is the heart of Jesus, alive and functioning well.

Note: A righteous heart in action usually boils the potatoes of someone who wants conflict. It also exposes the sin of control and manipulation because that person thrives on being right at all costs. When a righteous heart will not fight or succumb to challenges against it, the other party has nowhere to go. When there is no fight, the fighter has no hold over the other person.

Special note:

If you are in an abusive situation, it may be wise to separate yourself from that situation for your protection and exhibit the character of Christ from a place of safety.

Matthew 26:53,54 NIV “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

54) But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

Luke 9:23-25 Amp “And He said to all, If any person wills to come after Me, let him deny himself [disown himself, forget, lose sight of himself and his own interests, refuse and give up himself] and take up his cross daily and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also].

24) For whoever would preserve his life and save it will lose and destroy it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he will preserve and save it [from the penalty of eternal death].

25) For what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and ruins or forfeits (loses) himself?”

Application for Living Out Christ’s Love

Being an advocate in prayer for someone brings absolute freedom to you and to that person. You are free because you desire only the Father’s will to be done in his/her life. You can then place no holds or restrictions on him/her. Even if you are rejected, your righteous heart understands that to be a sin or offense for you to hold before the Father. Your recourse is then to plead for mercy on behalf of that person.

Questions About a Spirit of Righteousness

Do you know any truly righteous people? Who?

Have you ever functioned in a spirit of righteousness?
Why or why not?

What are you going to ask the Lord to change?

My Father,

As I wait for the return of my Lord and study who He is, I realize how little I resemble Him in character and action. I understand His desire would be for me to see everyone He puts in my life the same way He does. Instead of simply seeing those who hurt and use me as in need of my love through Jesus, I so often have a desire for retaliation of some sort. In my heart of hearts, I really desire to gain something from every relationship or I leave it, instead of giving myself away as Jesus would.

This day, my Lord, I want to turn from my ways and begin to live my life as You would. I'm sorry for the time and energy I've wasted. I'm sorry for the sin of my unrighteous behavior and all its effects. I'm sorry for the many people You've sent my way, who have left without having had the opportunity to see You, because I have been too selfish and foolish. Please forgive me.

Change me and make me like You. Allow me to be obedient to Your command to love as You love, to see as You see, to live as You live. I choose to walk in Your ways; show me how.

Thank You,

Signed _____ Date _____

A Spirit of Mercy

Mt.5:7 NIV "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Mt.5:7 Amp "Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous - with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!"

*How blessed
we are that
God is
merciful!*

A heart of mercy always wants to forgive, even when forgiveness is not asked for, nor deserved.

Mercy is our means to salvation. Without it, none of us would have the possibility of spending eternity with God. It was mercy that initiated Father God's sending His Son (Himself) for us.

To continue to receive mercy, we must give mercy. A heart of mercy will never focus on itself. As soon as it desires something for itself, it will lose the ability to be merciful.

*God's
judgment is
the precise
separation
of good from
evil.*

The merciful heart always esteems others more valuable than itself. Those with mercy understand bankruptcy and place themselves at the center of the need. Mercy drove Jesus to the cross.

Neglecting mercy cuts off the lifeline with God, because He always operates where mercy is demonstrated.

God's judgment, the separation of good from evil, is always an act of mercy. In His mercy, God reveals our sin for the single purpose of providing freedom for us.

Truth with mercy always brings life. Truth without mercy brings bondage, death, and a religious spirit. The heart of mercy always desires to treat others as God would treat them.

The kind of prayer that pleases God when praying for others, especially an enemy, is: *"Father, flood them with the same mercy You've given me."*

1 John 4:17-18 NIV "...Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

18) There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."

When we function in the perfect love (a true bridal love) of Jesus through the spirit of mercy, our thoughts will never be on ourselves. The fear of any loss to us is eliminated by our desire to make sure others, even those who hate us, are treated the way God would treat them - the way He has treated us.

Jesus is mercy. His leaving heaven, His walking among men, His dying for those who hated Him, and His pleading for mercy for those who were in the process of killing Him, all show the epitome of mercy. The whole purpose of His life was the expression of mercy toward those that deserved none – including us.

Most of us look at those who lived during Jesus' time and somehow detach ourselves from them, as if we would not have functioned as they did toward Jesus. Only after it is revealed to us that we, too, could have been in the jeering crowd, or one of the thieves, or possibly have even driven the nails in His hands, do we see our need for the same mercy that they needed.

We need to understand that we need mercy, so that we treat others with mercy.

When we hate, are we not murderers? When we esteem others less than ourselves, are we not thieves? When Jesus is not the Lord of everything in our lives, do we not crucify Him again? To walk as He did, we must understand our own need for mercy, or we will continue to treat others like the world does, not like Jesus did.

Some Random Thoughts on a Spirit of Mercy

The modern-day church seems to be merciless. However harsh that statement may sound, it nevertheless is true when our actions are compared to the way Jesus told us to live. We tend to reject sinners and figuratively shoot those who are wounded.

The result is we have need of, and are experiencing, the judgments of God on our lives because of His great mercy toward us; and we don't even know it. We've become proud that we've been saved, rather than continually thankful for our salvation.

In doing so, our attitude toward those who have not accepted Jesus is far different than His. We see them from a lofty perspective, our being above needing His mercy, and somehow better than they are; whereas, He has only the heart of mercy towards everyone.

Remember we previously talked about a shepherd who is stationed as a watchman over his sheep: One watchman lost his perspective when he enjoyed killing wolves more than he enjoyed protecting sheep.

On the Other hand, the merciful watchman has positioned himself to protect those that cannot protect themselves. He is

showing mercy. Even if he should have to kill a wolf, his heart position is one of mercy toward the sheep.

Even though they look the same, they are different. One is simply a murderer. The true motives of his heart may be masked by the task he is asked to perform - in this case, protecting sheep - but his joy is really fulfilled in the killing of wolves.

He is merciless, without any love, even for the sheep he is hired to protect. His job is only the covering for him to satisfy his murderous heart. Both watchmen look as if they are performing the same task, but the position of their respective heart motives separates them. There is no common ground for the two of them.

In the same way, we as Christians cannot say we're following in the steps of Jesus simply because we're doing the "good" things we think He might do. If our purpose for doing all we do is not one of showing those who have not found the Lord who He really is; then, we have no common ground with Him.

*You can be doing
many good things
and still have
murder in your
heart.*

In our religious activities, in all our associations, in every act of kindness, if we don't have the desire that the recipients of our actions see Jesus in us that they might be saved; then our heart is no better than the shepherd who enjoys killing wolves. From a heavenly perspective, we really are like murderers. A person with a murderous heart cares little if anyone lives or dies, unless he somehow benefits from either prospect. We are merciless. Jesus, in contrast, willingly gave His own life, so everyone would have the possibility of truly living. His heart was, and still is, full of mercy.

As our Lord prepares us for His coming, He is showing all of us how little we truly represent Him, even though we call ourselves by His Name and pretend to care as He does. He will not truly be joined with anyone who does not have the same heart attitudes that He does in every area.

In the book of Amos, it talks of two not being able to walk together unless they are agreed. How can we expect Jesus to overlook the filth of the world's attitudes that are still in us, when He died so they might be eliminated? We are, in fact, saying His suffering and death are of no consequence, if we refuse to allow lofty attitudes to be removed from our lives.

It's time we all acknowledge our need of God's mercy. It's also time we understand He is showing us our need; so we, in turn, will function in His mercy towards everyone, as He has. He is being merciful at this very moment as we see who we are not.

To withhold mercy would, once again, show a wrong heart motive - one of consuming God's mercy while showing none. It is one of the most selfish of acts, most unlike the One whom we say

we represent and for whom we are waiting, so He might take us with Him because we are supposedly like Him.

The merciless heart is very much like that of the foolish virgins in Matthew 25. They came, not for the good of the master who was to arrive, but for their own good. They are also the ones pounding on the door after it had been closed and locked. Quite a sobering thought!

Vertical Application of a Spirit of Mercy

The merciless heart whines before God, challenges God, and complains before Him because its life is out of order. In contrast, the heart filled with mercy finds wonder in every moment of prayer. The interaction between Father God and a merciful heart is mercy meeting mercy. It is true “heart to Heart” communion.

The merciful person presents to God the sins they have seen on behalf of the sinner they hold before Him, desiring mercy to be given. He then intercedes on behalf of those who have no understanding of their need.

Horizontal Application of a Spirit of Mercy

A merciful heart challenges and even offends the worldly spirit. It is totally at odds with the self-serving, get-ahead attitude of those who need to excel above the ways of others, especially in the church.

Knowing its own need for mercy, it truly comprehends the inabilities of others to function any better than they do. It understands that everyone, whether they know the Lord or not, is doing the very best he/she can. This knowledge drives the merciful one to prayer for individuals the same way it drove Jesus to the cross for them.

*Remember
that
everyone is
really doing
the best
they can.*

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

Mercy for your mate is the heart that will sustain any marriage. Continual longing for your mate to receive mercy from the Lord, an awareness of your own need for mercy, and the willingness to give mercy are unbeatable combinations and astounding instruments for building a marriage God's way.

Once you eliminate mercy from your heart toward your mate, you ring a death knell for your marriage. You kill the marriage. Most people functioning in the spirit of control have little mercy toward the incapability's of those to whom they are bonded. Their

marriage is one-sided. The marriage becomes two people independently functioning in the same house, longing for things to be different, but usually on their own terms.

Application for Living Out Christ's Love

The person for whom you are praying has a right to the same mercy from God that you receive, no matter who he is or how badly he functions. An understanding that he is doing the best he can compels you to have mercy on him rather than judgment on his actions.

Your decision to commit to a person in prayer is an act of mercy. God's desire to refine you through that commitment is an act of mercy to you. Sometimes, you will need God desperately during that commitment to deal with the issues involved. When you do, He will impart Himself to you and eliminate something in you that cannot love as Jesus loves. That is the ultimate act of mercy!

Questions about a Spirit of Mercy

Is there anyone in your life to whom you are not extending mercy? Who and why not?

What are you going to do about it?

Why would you possibly think he or she does not have the same right to mercy that you have been given by God?

Remember you will not receive mercy until you give mercy. However, that's not the proper motivation for doing it. What do you think about that?

My Father,

It is evident, as I examine my heart that I am without real, Christ-like mercy for those around me. Most of my thoughts and actions are self-motivated and void of true love and compassion.

I ask You to forgive me. I see who and what I really am and I'm helpless to change myself. I realize I don't even desire to change.

I want to go on serving myself, thinking only of myself. Please help me. Give me the heart of my Lord Jesus. As I am being changed, show me how to show mercy towards everyone, for I know I cannot exhibit Jesus without it.

Thank you for extending Your mercy to me,

Signed _____ Date _____

From Our Father's Heart

Purity has a purpose.
The pure in heart will be able to understand My heart.
You will be able to gain insight
into Who I am and why I do what I do.
As you remove all of the clutter that darkens your reasoning
process, you will be able to move closer to Me.
We will move in concert.
I will be able to trust you with more of My plans,
for you will desire to implement them with honest motives.
Come to Me today to be cleansed from everything
that the world has to offer.
Come to gain My heart in everything you do.
If you see with My heart,
you will see Me and your world much differently.

A Spirit of Purity

Mt.5:8 NIV "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Mt.5:8 Amp "Blessed (happy, enviably fortunate, and spiritually prosperous - possessing the happiness produced by the experience of God's favor and especially conditioned by the revelation of His grace, regardless of their outward conditions) are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

The pure in heart love to wait on God to see situations change.

I John 4:17-18 NIV "...Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

*18 There is no fear in love. But perfect *(pure) love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."*

**Note: (pure) is an editorial comment, not part of the Scripture.*

When we function in perfect love (true bridal love) through a spirit of purity, it is impossible to fear anyone or anything. The pure in heart always see every person and situation as God would see them.

Unpleasant circumstances are simply opportunities to wait for God to be Lord over that situation. The pure heart always trusts that the Lord knows best, regardless of how things appear; and it is not moved by anything but the will of God.

The Lord Jesus Functioned in a Spirit of Purity – So Must We

To Jesus, everyone and all things were pure. As He walked through this world and saw everything through His Father's eyes, even the vilest action or the filthiest motive could not cause Him to remove Himself from His Father's plan - the salvation of souls.

The Oneness He and His Father shared left no room for worldly ways to interfere with His purpose for being on earth in the first place. Because we do not determine to see everything from God's eternal perspective, our hearts will remain impure and our lives will remain unusable for the purposes of God. Only as we become a study of His motives and commit to trust Him at all times will He be able to fully use us.

When Purity is at Work

I think of Jesus as He was ministering to the woman caught in adultery, or as Mary was wiping His feet. His knowledge of their past only allowed Him to have more compassion on them, rather than lust after them.

If His Spirit had not been pure, there may have been the temptation to use them for His own satisfaction in some way. For that matter, anyone who had been helped by Jesus was potential material for a great portfolio in furthering His ministry. Instead, He continually lowered Himself, and allowed the Father's work to be accomplished.

A young child who is learning to speak may use words or phrases, in his innocence, that he will never say after he knows their proper usage. While he is in training, however, he sees only the purity of learning to speak. Even though the child may inadvertently use an incorrect or inappropriate word during the time of learning, his heart has no knowledge of the error. There is no wrong done.

The early Christians, when taken to the arena, had some real choices to make. Although it looked as if they were totally under the control of the government, their hearts were controlled only by whatever they allowed as an influence.

As with all of us to this present day, God was, in that time, mostly concerned that He be the only influence on their hearts. If He was Lord of their hearts, they could see His workings no matter how horrible things looked in their natural surroundings.

Those who were pure in heart understood that even their death was something that was in line with the plan of God. They may not have understood all the reasons, but through their pure love they "saw" God in the midst of the violence.

Characteristics of a Spirit of Purity

The person who is pure in heart sees God in every encounter and every situation, because he has a pure heart for God. He also continually sees others as God sees them. The pure heart knows God does everything out of love and understands that anything done in the flesh is opposed to God and embraces God's desire to remove it.

*Pleasing
God is the
highest
calling to the
pure in
heart.*

The pure heart willingly trades his legal rights for the higher calling of submission, repentance, and forgiveness; and will do whatever God asks, no matter what the cost, simply because God is pleased. The pure in heart no longer listens to any dictates of the flesh, so God is able to use him in any way He chooses. He is subject to God's higher laws and obeys only what God has determined to be true. He sees God's truths.

Although the pure in heart obeys the laws of the land, there really is no need to make laws for this heart to follow. A person functioning in a spirit of purity always functions with integrity regardless of any external law. The impure heart will desire self-glorification. It sees no value in God's judgments, because it is in love with the old sin nature. It does not understand that mercy is available through Jesus Christ, so it gives no mercy.

Even as a Christian, the impure in heart has no understanding of the mercy he has been given, so he holds the same offenses toward others that he perceives are being held against him. He cannot give what he does not own.

Vertical Application of a Pure Heart

A pure heart is in complete union with the heart of God and therefore comes to God for God's reasons, and to facilitate only God's desires. There are no personal agendas, no hidden motives, and no quiet longings for independence of any kind.

Prayer is never a laundry list of needs, but a quiet waiting to hear the desires of the Lord and a zeal to implement whatever is required. A person functioning with a pure heart never second guesses or questions anything the Lord does. He is completely satisfied with all things, knowing his very personal Lord is in control.

Horizontal Application of a Pure Heart

The lusts of the flesh have no hold over the person with a pure heart. Pornography is seen as an offense against God. Sin causes offense to the person with a pure heart, but only because it offends God.

Anyone functioning with a pure heart delights when others see things as God sees them. Witnessing about Jesus is not so much an action, but a life function done out of love for the Lord - so that Jesus delights when someone embraces Him and because salvation is the best situation in which anyone could ever find himself.

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

In a present-day marriage situation, only the pure in heart can see God's plan. In difficult circumstances, the pure in heart sees the other's undoneness as an opportunity to pray for that person's needs. He/she "sees" God at every opportunity by laying down his/her own need to be fulfilled.

The impure heart will always look to the other to have its own needs met. When that does not happen, the heart becomes critical, hateful, and eventually "murders" any love, or potential love. The pure heart will always see the other person as God sees him/her, finding only the good; while the impure heart will eventually look outside of the relationship to be fulfilled.

God is in the business of creating pure hearts and marriage is one tool He uses to do so. It is a representation of Christ and His relationship to us. Only as we become a study of His motives and commit to trust Him at all times will He be able to fully use us as a testimony to each other and to the world because of the visible appearance of God's ways in our marriage relationships.

*How does
God see that
person?*

If we look to be served by our mate, then all we have to look forward to is what is humanly possible in our lives. If we look to serve our mate, we can look forward to what the power of God will bring into our lives.

Application for Living Out Christ's Love

The pure heart will only desire to see God's plan fulfilled in the life of the person for whom you commit to pray. Your attitude towards that person must be pure and free from any other desire except God's desire for him/her.

Questions About a Spirit of Purity

What is a spirit of purity as God sees it?

How can you function in it?

How would someone pure in heart treat another who spitefully misuses him/her?

What if that person continues to do so and never repents of his/her actions?

Dear Father,

I admit to You that I have done little or nothing from a pure heart. Please forgive me. Give me the ability to see things as You see them. Place in me the ability to see others as You see them.

I am sorry for how I have represented You in the past because of my clouded vision and faulty perspective of Your desires. Change my heart, Lord. Renew a right spirit in me.

Signed _____ Date _____

A Spirit of Completeness
(Peacemakers)

Mt.5:9 NIV "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

Mt.5:9 Amp "Blessed (enjoying enviable happiness, spiritually prosperous - with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the makers and maintainers of peace, for they shall be called the sons of God!"

A Spirit of Completeness

To function in all of the characteristics of Jesus

To have only the desire to emulate Jesus

To continually allow the character of God
to be in control of every aspect of our lives

To be at total peace in full surrender

To be a peacemaker, as God is a peacemaker

To allow no fleshly desires to remain

To reflect Jesus to everyone

To be the image of God to the world

To hate evil and love only God

To desire to see God's image restored in all people

To desire that only God be glorified in all things

*It's all very
simple to do,
if we practice
a life of
allowing God
to do it in us.*

1 John 4:17-18 "...Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in the world we are like him.

18) There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."

Jesus walked in the fullness of the Spirit of His Father in heaven. There is no dissension, disagreement, or lack of unity in Their association, ever. Because the Spirit of Jesus was complete, (identical to His Father's and exactly the way His Father planned for creation to be from the beginning,) He was able to show us the relationship available to us through His death and resurrection.

He was our example of the freedom we can have through complete submission to God's authority, mercy, and grace. He had to die, so that spiritual life would be available to all of us. We also die, (agree to the death of the old sin nature,) so God's spiritual life can be ours. It is the completion of God's plan for created man on this earth.

Jesus walked with His Father in total unity of Spirit. It is the way Adam and Eve were intended to walk, and the way that's intended for all who have entered into covenant with our Father.

In Christ Jesus, the creation circle is completed. Rebellious, fallen man has been redeemed from the curse through the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord. Peace was brought back into the relationship between God and man. In the process, Jesus demonstrated the kind of life God's created man was privy to before his fall - a life that was complete in every way God intended it to be.

Full of intimate interaction, perfect obedience, and wondrous love, Jesus and the Father lived completely for each other. There were no distractions for either of Them in Their love for each other. Jesus looked to His Father for all things, and Father God poured Himself completely into His Child.

John 8:28b Amp "... I do nothing of Myself (of My own accord or on My own authority), but I say [exactly] what My Father has taught Me."

In reality, the Adam (flesh, human) nature was crucified in the spirit long before Calvary. The old nature of man was destroyed by Jesus through the Holy Spirit while He lived on this earth, even though He was flesh and blood. His spirit was complete through the power of the Holy Spirit. In return for that total submission, and very much as planned, God's image poured through Him and then to everyone.

Heb. 5:8 NIV "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...."

We are busy focusing on each and every sin, when God is desiring for us to repent of our whole lives. Most of us walk day after day in bondage without knowing it. We have fallen into Satan's trap of remaining hopeless, helpless, and perceiving ourselves still bound by our old sin nature. God has provided a way through Jesus Christ to literally put on His completed nature, to be like Him.

Rom. 13:14 NIV "...clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

To do so, we must not simply confess our sins, but repent of (turn from, and no longer live in) our old life and all of its independent, rebellious, and ignorant ways. We must completely deny any resemblance to who we once were and accept who He is in us.

We are destined to associate with everyone with whom we come in contact just as Jesus did. We are also privileged to associate with our Father God as Jesus did, through what He did on the cross.

We are to live our lives exactly as Jesus did because we are completely at peace with God. We have been empowered to do so through the completed work of God in each of us.

To choose to remain in the fallen state of man, while claiming to be in Christ, is a lie. It is a lie to which most of us have become accustomed, because we are attempting to do for God what He has already done for us - destroy the old sin nature.

In our own struggle to be good, we are, without knowing it, remaining alive to fight another day; when God is asking us to stay dead, and let His completed work through Jesus have its way in us. It is still that independent nature demanding its own way, to have some part even in its own death. We are attempting to have our own input and assist the work of the cross. *It is pride in its purest and oldest form.*

It is Time to Accept a Spirit of Completeness

As stated in the beginning of this course, and as stated throughout God's Word, the real issue is the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives. As long as any part of our old nature is allowed to remain alive - even the part that is helping us to die, (or really, trying to help God complete His work in us,) - we will remain spiritually incomplete.

*It's not just
our sin;
it's our lives
that are out
of order,
if we are not
fully
surrendered
to the life of
Christ.*

*The
Lordship of
Jesus
means total
death to our
old nature.*

*Then the
pressures
and policies
of the world
and its ways
are no
longer a
factor in how
we act or
what we do.*

It will only be as we assume our intended role of having no right to our own nature within us, that the fullness of the Nature of God, of Jesus, can work in us the spirit of completeness that is ours. His Lordship means our total death and total peace.

Our total death means His completed life can flow through us. It's the way God has always meant it to be. It's the way it will be for those who will surrender to be with Him, for Him, and of Him forever.

Vertical Application of a Completed Spirit

Approaching God with a heart that desires to be in order, for His honor, pleases Him. A peacemaker's heart desires that all mankind be reconciled, so the Lord's plans can function smoothly.

One functioning in the completed Spirit of Christ has full unity with God. There is no heart separation, no maverick desire, and no hidden agenda. Even petitions have been formed in unison with the Father and are presented with absolute confidence, because they are derived from the same heart and have the same goals.

How do you approach God?

What areas are not complete in you?

Horizontal Application of a Completed Spirit

Paul's desire to become all things to all people, so that all could come to Christ, flows in total unity with the Father's desire that none should perish. He could really be at peace with everyone, because he was finally at peace deep in his heart with God.

A completed spirit desires peace between everyone and God through Jesus, and peace among fellow believers. This is not a wimpy, milquetoast desire, but a powerful attitude that contends continuously for the honor of God. It is a war fought in the spiritual realm with powerful spiritual weapons.

How do you perceive others when they war in front of you or against you?

What do you do when this happens?

Are your actions the same as the actions Jesus would take? Why?

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

The peacemakers, those who function with a spirit of completeness, have the best interests of their mates in mind at all times and at all costs to them. Their highest joy is to provide fertile soil in which their mates can grow in the things of God, for His honor and their mate's benefit. Perfect unity - between God and the peacemaker, God and the peacemaker's mate, and the peacemaker and his/her mate - is at the very heart of all the peacemaker does, simply because it's the heavenly order that pleases God.

How do you approach the sins of your mate?

Why do you suppose the Lord allows you to witness the spiritual incompleteness of your mate?

What is out of order in your actions at present in dealing with your mate?

Phil. 1:20-21 Amp ".....now as always heretofore, Christ (the Messiah) will be magnified and get glory and praise in this body of mine and be boldly exalted in my person, whether through (by) life or through (by) death.

21) For me to live is Christ [His life in me], and to die is gain [the gain of the glory of eternity]."

Application of a Peacemaker for Living Out Christ's Love

Any contending views, any doctrinal differences or sinful actions on the part of the person for whom you are praying have little impact on the heart that only desires peace for and with that person. There is no place for arguments of any kind, no room for contention, because as you pray with a heart of completion (that of a peacemaker,) your opinions, your rights, and your needs have no audience in your relationship with the person for whom you pray. Your complete trust in the Father's hand allows you to remove any fleshly desire from your relationship.

My Father,

It is very clear to me how far I am from the life You've planned for me, the life that glorifies You completely. It's also very clear to me that I'm still trying to eliminate the sin in my life; instead of surrendering to the work of Your Son and allowing that completed work to have its way in me.

I repent. I not only repent of my sins, but I repent of my life. The life that would not serve You at all is still trying to serve You - only partially and blind to Your ways.

I'm sorry I want my own way and I surrender to the death You require in me, so that Your life has complete dominion over me. Fulfill Your promised death and resurrection in me. I surrender fully to Your Lordship now.

Thank You,

Signed _____ Date _____

From Our Father's Heart

My children,
for a long time now,
I have called you to be like My Son, Jesus –
to be complete in Me –
but some of you have refused to listen.
You have chosen to remain in your sinful nature,
denying My power to change you.
You have a form of godliness,
but you do not let Me complete the work
that is necessary for you to show the world My Son, Jesus.
Soon,
the Holy Spirit will be moving in a direction
that is new to those who haven't chosen My ways.
He will execute My bold judgments
to make your rebellion bend to My ways,
instead of allowing you to continue in your ways.
There will no more be the kind of grace from Me
that has let you be less than I have determined for your life.
The kind of grace that I will send
will overpower your hardened heart.
I advise you to buy gold from Me that has been refined,
before I refine My gold in the fire of judgment
designed to change you.
Come to Me now. I am waiting.
Now is the time.
This season was My final call - My bridal call.
Do not turn from Me again,
or My eyes of judgment will turn toward your life,
for your good,
and the glory of My Son, Jesus.

Rev. 3:10-13 Amp "Because you have guarded and kept My word of patient endurance [have held fast the lesson of My patience with the expectant endurance that I give you], I also will keep you [safe] from the hour of trial (testing) which is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell upon the earth.

11) I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one may rob you and deprive you of your crown.

12) He who overcomes (is victorious), I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God; he shall never be put out of it or go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name.

13) He who can hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches)."

One day those who are in the world and those Christians who have not chosen to submit to God's hand now will be immobilized with fear and out of answers. Will you understand the order and desires of God when things change so radically that you do not recognize your world? Will you not only be able to rise above the din that is so prevalent, but be able to prosper because you have taken on the life of Christ?

How are you going to get there from where you are at present?

Prayers and thoughts

A Spirit of Suffering

Mt.5:10 NIV "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Mt.5:10 Amp "Blessed and happy and enviably fortunate and spiritually prosperous (in the state in which the born-again child of God enjoys and finds satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of his outward conditions) are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (for being and doing right), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!"

A Spirit of Suffering

To willingly subject yourself to hardship or loss for the sake of others

To suffer any hardship rather than renounce Christ

To endure costly tribulations,
so others can see Christ revealed through you

To go through anything, or become whatever is necessary,
so others will see God - just as Jesus did

To joyfully embrace a life of self-denial

To deny all that you are,
so you and others might see all that Jesus is

To unconditionally surrender
all control in your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ

To accept affliction or poverty in your life,
if it's God's way to touch people through you

To take on the heart of God concerning the lost or needy

Jesus crucified is the suffering God.

*Easy to do when
your heart
is in
perfect alignment
with the
heart of
your "ABBA"*

A Spirit of Suffering

1 John 4:17-18 NIV "...Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

18) There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."

A spirit of suffering epitomizes the ability to love as our Lord loved. As Pilate was interrogating Jesus and attempted to use the normal fear tactics against Him, he soon realized they wouldn't work. The perfect love in which Jesus functioned - love that included the desire to deny Himself of His own comforts, even to His death - was foreign to the Roman mind.

In their opinion, the only thing that could be taken from Jesus was His life. In perfect love - love free from the fear of anything Pilate or anyone else could do to Him - Jesus overcame. He knew that He and His Father were in perfect accord. Any power Pilate had was given him by His Father, so even the threat of death meant nothing to Him. He was totally free from any threats or holds of mankind.

In fact, since Jesus embodied the spirit of suffering, which meant He purposefully was there to give up His life, Pilate was only fulfilling Jesus' and His Father's desires by allowing for Him to be crucified. While functioning in perfect love through the spirit of suffering, nobody could rob Jesus of anything. He had already given everything away, even His life.

Today, Our Task is Little Different Than That of Jesus

Of course, we are not the Savior of the world, nor are we the Son of God or anything like that; but we are supposed to walk in the steps of Jesus. He showed us the way we would be able to walk in this world - by His power. In covenant with Him, we have taken on His Name. We have chosen to represent Him above anyone else, and we have been given the commission to do so.

As ambassadors of His Kingdom, our task is to present to a lost world the elements of an abundant, truthful way to live. There is no room for a compromise of that mandate, if we truly desire to be in accord with His wishes. As we exhibit more of His character, the world will see more of Him.

Preaching alone won't do it. There is more preaching in this land, a land that has forgotten God, than in any other land in all of history. More churches with more programs are not the answer.

“Good” programs and “righteous” meetings are counterfeited throughout the world, leading many who are confused or rebellious to a fate of eternal damnation. The only way to reach people and allow them to make the proper choices - God’s choices for them - is to allow our lives to be the preaching and the programs for others to follow.

The life of Jesus stands alone, far higher than any other life; and it cannot be counterfeited when empowered by His Spirit. Anyone who attempts to do so, without the true Spirit of God, will eventually be exposed for his spiritual bankruptcy.

It is sad to say, but that is what is happening today. Those who have chosen not to fully take on the suffering character of Christ are being exposed by their inability to properly represent Him as things get darker. Powerless by God’s standards, we are attempting to devise our own means to fulfill our commitments to God; rather than taking on the life of Jesus without measure, as is our heritage through His death and resurrection. The former is hollow religion; the latter is His representative life to others.

The continual denial of our own ways, (our putting them to death,) allows His continual resurrected life to flow through us to the world. A spirit of suffering (the willingness to deny our own ways through His power,) opens the door for God to work His ways in us, so we might properly represent Him as the waiting bride of Christ.

What do you see as the answer to the poor presentation of today’s church to the world?

From Our Father's Heart

I notice that at times you have a heavy heart.
I also notice that because you are My minister,
people consider your countenance to be a lack of faith.
It is expected by some that you must always remain joyful and
happy or there is something wrong with your walk.
You must not allow their immaturity concerning My Word
to bring you to a point of questioning
what I am doing in you during these times.
You, My ministers, are those whom I can trust.
I often place My burden for others and for this world
on you to hold them before Me.
It is My work being accomplished.
It is My birthing process.
During these times, you will feel some of the burden that I feel.
If you do not understand what is happening,
you will have a tendency to compare yourself
with those who are always happy
and think that there is something wrong with you.
That is not the case, so be encouraged.
Sometimes the burden will come unexpectedly and surprise you.
Do not be alarmed, and do not be confused.
You are at work for My kingdom.
Bring these unspoken burdens before Me,
even if you have little idea of what they are.
I know.
I have given them to you.
When My desire has been accomplished, the burden will be lifted.
During the time that you are carrying it for Me,
the weight of it might be very heavy.
It is not your lack of faith in Me; it is My great faith in you.
You are trustworthy.
Release everything to Me and I will support you
while you are at work.
I am with you.
I am proud of you.
Be encouraged; I love to trust you.

*We need to be
concerned for
souls with
Jesus.*

*Gal. 4:19 NIV "My dear children, for whom I am again in the
pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you..."*

As important as it is to suffer *for* Christ through the laying down of your own will so that the will of your Father can be accomplished, it is equally important that there are times when you are called upon to suffer *with* Christ. Few people in the church are willing to take on the burdens that Christ feels toward those who are not saved, or toward those who made a commitment, but are living far from Jesus. To care about what Jesus deems important, to hurt as He hurts for the lost, to be burdened with the things for which He is interceding is more than most of us delight in doing.

Not everyone accepts a suffering spirit when it is given. Some reject it because it is too difficult to carry. You simply do not fit in. It is for those of you who have felt the burden of God and carry it with Him on behalf of another.

Until you understand that some of what you feel is God working with you for the sake of others, you will believe there is something wrong with you. You need to know the Lord is asking you to suffer with Him in that specific area, to carry the weight He is feeling for a specific situation. It will be an intense time and you may need to be alone with Him. There will be a myriad of people in the church who will be delighted to give their opinion, confirming you have gone nuts. Don't listen to them. They cannot see and they do not understand intercession.

Other than in the movies, have you ever seen someone at war of any kind giggling while they fought? Of course not! They were intense until the battle was over. There is a vast difference between walking in fear and walking in an acute awareness of the danger but standing to overcome in the Lord's strength.

If you constantly have no joy in the Lord, that is one thing. That's not of God. You need to get in the Word and understand who you are in Christ and what you have been promised because of what He has done for you. There is joy in your salvation.

If, however, you understand your heritage, but find yourself weighty at times, you may be an intercessor in the service of the Lord at that very moment. That sudden feeling something's not right might be the Lord wanting you to lift something up on His behalf. No one will understand. Do not try to explain it. Just go to work with a spirit of gratefulness and peace in your heart. You sometimes can't listen to others when you are at work for your Daddy!

If you are a watchman, an intercessor, a prayer warrior, or in other services for the Lord, you are not to walk around prune-faced and morose as the Sadducees did to prove to others how spiritual they were. Walk in joy.

However, when in battle, don't pretend everything is perfect. Fight the fight. The world is getting darker. Those of you who are

able to see may be called upon often. It would be wise to avoid those who will not understand your situation during those times.

Are you a continual prune face with a wrinkled thumb when you are going through a trial? Why? (Take as much time and as many pieces of paper as needed)

What Suffering Does

Previous to this, all that has been written in this section has dealt with what a spirit of suffering *is*. Equally important would be for us to understand the impact of what a spirit of suffering *does*.

The underlying spirit in all that Jesus did, and the essence of all of the teachings of all of the books of the New Testament, have their foundation in the spirit of suffering.

Heb. 5:8 NIV "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...."

Jesus Even Learned Through Suffering

Often, the message conveyed in Heb.5:8 drops to the ground before it impacts our lives. The plan of Satan is to see that we never really receive the truth this Scripture imparts. If he can stop us from receiving, he can nullify our effectiveness, or completely destroy our relationship with the Lord because of our misunderstanding of His ways. Here's a real key:

Through suffering (denial,)
obedience
is
learned (Heb.5:8.)
Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom. 6:16,)
and
righteousness leads to holiness (Rom 6:19,)
which results
in
eternal life (Rom. 6:22.)

Most of us spend our lives avoiding suffering of any kind. Our comfort is of primary importance to us. Most of us also wonder why we have little power to obey God. The role that suffering plays

never enters our rose-colored picture unless we allow the Holy Spirit to break through the fog that hinders our understanding. How can we progress, if we do not recognize the first step to holiness?

In our ignorance, we attempt to obey, always asking for God to help us do so; but we never hear the message that is woven throughout His Word. To be able to obey, we must actively pursue the denial of our own comforts - no matter what form it takes. Any discomfort comes against the flesh and self, and if embraced for reasons of becoming like Christ, produces obedience.

What does it mean to suffer *for* Christ?

What does it mean to suffer *with* Christ?

The Spirit of Suffering - First Century A.D.

A light layer of frost had formed on the stone ceiling. Michael sat quietly in prayer, holding someone's small child, trying to comfort the crying toddler from the pangs of hunger and ward off the cold ocean breezes that blew through the cracks in the frigid cell wall. People, many of them good friends, began to stir from their slumber and move out from pockets of people that had formed in an attempt to keep from freezing during the cold, fall night. Greetings of love and encouragement were heard everywhere as the new morning brought the reality of the day and its evils to each person, replacing the numbness of fitful sleep.

*This story
brings things
into
perspective.*

A young boy kicked aside a large rat with his swollen, bare foot in an attempt to again protect his small, sleeping sister from its sharp teeth. Michael smiled at the boy, remembering the promise the child had made to his parents to watch out for "little sister" if they went to be with Jesus first.

Thoughts of praise flowed from his heart as he saw the mercy of God even in the hungry rats that infested the crowded chamber. They gave the young boy a reason to be brave for his small sister; and by watching out for them, the time passed more quickly while waiting to be called into the arena.

Others, too, once fearful, were somehow calmed into acceptance of their fate by facing the smaller fear of the rats. It was

as if their precious Lord had tempered their emotions by these unusual vessels of service. "Thank you, Lord," Michael said out loud, thinking of the goodness of his God and seeing His loving hand on His people even in times like these.

"We're really blessed, aren't we?" Epaphras spoke almost in a whisper. Still lying on his side and using his hands for a pillow, the man looked away from the same event Michael had witnessed and spoke again. "Not only do we have the privilege to die for our Lord, but we have the additional blessing of knowing when we will see Him face to face. Just think," he continued, raising himself up and positioning himself next to Michael, both men having their backs against a large stone support pillar near the center of the vast chamber, "in about four hours, we will be with Jesus. It's almost too exciting to bear."

The two men sat silently for a moment, reflecting on the magnitude of the statement. Waves of peace and joy filled both their souls as the witness of that assurance was made real to them by the Holy Spirit.

"My only hope," Epaphras continued, "is that I can tell at least one more person about our Lord before my time on this earth is over."

"You!" The sound of the guard's loud voice broke the quiet of the morning and cut short the words from Epaphras' mouth. Everyone looked in the direction of the guard and the small man he had pointed at when he spoke. "And you," he continued, grabbing a second man by the back of his garment and throwing him next to the first, "stand over here while I get some more."

The red-haired guard, known for his great cruelty especially with the women, swaggered deeper into the cell. "I need some special workers," he continued sadistically. "Some of you . . ." he emphasized his words by pulling men roughly to their feet and throwing them one-by-one to the other guard who pushed them with the "chosen" who had obediently lined themselves at the barred entrance.

"Some of you will have the privilege of seeing first-hand what is in store for the rest of you by cleaning up from yesterday. You are even going to have the greater honor of working all morning with me personally supervising you," he spat in mock humor, looking at his fellow guard who responded with a grin, knowing all too well what his superior meant.

About fifteen men and several of the younger women, who would be used as "entertainment" for the guards, had been selected before the man came near Michael and Epaphras. "You! Drop that kid and get over there!" the guard spewed at Michael, pulling the

child from him and throwing it to the stone floor with a bone-cracking thud.

Judging by the force with which the small frame had hit the floor, and seeing no movement, Michael knew that what only moments ago had breathed the moist, dank air of this earth had already taken its first breath of heavenly atmosphere. The guard paused for a moment to look at the motionless frame, blood now flowing freely from its head, soaking the filthy straw that was strewn about the floor.

“One less piece of lion bait,” he said jokingly, looking at the other guards who gave half-hearted, obedient laughter. “And you, slave,” he said, pulling Epaphras to his feet, “you’re used to doing slop work. Get over there with the rest. “

“Wait a minute!” he yelled as if some new thought for special torment had come to him. “Cassius,” he started again, “make sure this big slave stays near me this morning. I’ve got some special tasks for him to do.”

Epaphras was pushed by the guards into Michael, who had lined up near the entrance with the others. “So that’s who the Lord wants me to talk to about Him,” Epaphras whispered as they were led down the dark corridor to the arena floor. “Pray that I make proper use of this opportunity.”

Just as he completed his statement, one of the rear guards grabbed the back of his garment and pulled him from the ranks, slamming him face-first into the corridor wall. “Wait here,” the guard ordered as the others were kept moving toward their destination.

For the three years since Michael and his beloved Selena had given themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, both knew that more than likely their portion would be as it had unfolded in the last few days. Even though persecution and hardship became their lot to prepare them for these present events, their love for their Lord and for each other made each day’s peril easier to bear.

God’s grace and mercy continually flowed to and from them as they worked side by side, fearlessly telling all whom they encountered about their Savior and His provision for their eternal happiness. Even the loss of their home, which they had to flee in the middle of the night, and the death of their infant daughter, Julia, who was not strong enough to endure the nomadic life that was theirs, could not quench their zeal for the lost souls who needed to hear.

Recently, as they were hiding in the orchards of the local magistrate, the soldiers had found them because of a “tip” from one of the gardeners whom Michael had shared Jesus with to no avail.

"But it was all worth it," Michael said to himself as he entered the arena floor. "Even when they took my Selena yesterday, Lord," he said in quiet prayer, remembering the radiance on her face as they lined them at the cell entrance to be given to the lions. "Even then I knew she had everything she needed because she had You."

Joy filled his heart as he thought of the bliss his best friend on this earth must be enjoying at that very moment in the presence of her Lord. The morning sun warmed Michael's face, and at the same time, made his eyes squint before they adjusted to the contrast from dark corridor to stark brightness. Michael raised his hand to his forehead and shielded his eyes for a moment, while they adjusted to the light.

The movement of the guards herding yesterday's lions, which had been left on the arena floor overnight to "clean up," caught his attention. Now docile and too full to be aggressive, they moved to their pens as they were told. New lions, hungry because they hadn't eaten in several days, would be chosen for today's events.

Michael and the others were given the horrendous task of picking up the remains - some of them would be pieces of loved ones - and loading them on the carts provided. "Forgive them, Jesus," he said softly as the remains of men, women, and children lay before him.

It was clear that some met death very quickly, while others seemed to have suffered, even possibly remaining alive, long after the boisterous, jubilant crowds had gone to their homes. His thoughts went back to his good friend, Stephen, who saw the Lord before the first stone reached its mark.

"Please don't let me dishonor You today, my Lord," he said, as he mechanically put some bloody, torn clothing into one of the carts. As he walked to the next mound of once-living human beings, his heart seemed to stop for a moment. In the tangled, unrecognizable heap was a piece of the bright-colored scarf that he knew belonged to his beloved Selena.

For a few, brief moments he hesitated, immobilized by the gravity of the situation. Suddenly, with sharp pains across his back and the cursing voices of the guards goading him to do what only months before would have been unthinkable, he bent down under increasingly forceful, almost demon-inspired, blows.

As he began loading the precious remains onto the cart, he began to weep openly. His mind raced, remembering the cheers of the blood-thirsty crowd, the satanic guards, the beyond belief screams of pain from those who had gone before and now this; his tears flowed freely.

"I forgive them, Lord," he whispered, knowing that to do anything other than forgive would dishonor his Lord. As he forgave from the depth of his heart, a new strength, a power not his own, came upon him. Suddenly, he felt compassion, even love, for all those caught in the trap of such horrendous evil. Moments passed. Standing erect and turning toward the startled guard who was in mid-swing, about to strike another blow, Michael smiled at him and said, quietly, "And I forgive you, too!"

The guard, too startled to complete his intended task, dropped his arm to his side. For some time, the two men - one who was condemned to die but was truly alive; and the other who would remain alive, but in fact was already dead - looked into each other's eyes. Finally, the guard defiantly braced his shoulders, cursed Michael and all those who "embraced such a stupid, weak religion," and turned and walked toward the arena wall, mumbling as he went.

By the time the workers had completed their task and had marched back to the cell, the enthusiastic spectators were already filtering in, hoping to get a good seat for the day's festivities. The fiendish frivolity in the arena was in sharp contrast to the quiet joy and radiant beauty of the humble party of believers, who waited in the dank recesses below the stadium seating. Knowing they were moments away from seeing their Lord, each began to encourage the other with verbal blessings and words of praise to the Lord.

When the time came for them to be marched to the arena floor, loud songs of adoration were all that each could hear, even amidst satanic cheers of anticipation by the spectators. Michael and all who were with him *did* honor their Lord that day. The example of love and forgiveness that Jesus showed was the example each presented to those who didn't have eyes to see.

It didn't matter that no one understood. They did what their Lord had asked them to do and had done Himself. Their heart attitude was of utmost importance. The rest was in the hands of their heavenly Father.

The Spirit of Suffering? - 21st Century A.D.

"Who was that at the door, dear?" Serena inquired of Mike, as she adjusted her left earring while walking toward him from the bedroom. "Mike, who was that?" she asked again, somewhat puzzled at her husband's slow response as he robotically closed the back door. Mike remained silent for what seemed like many moments, staring out the window of the door, his eyes following the lone, stoop-shouldered figure as he walked down the driveway.

"Huh? Oh, that was Terry from down the street," Mike responded somewhat dazedly as if waking from deep thought. "He ..." Mike stopped for a moment to reflect and fully comprehend what had just happened before he continued. "He just about ripped my face off because Julie left her bike in his driveway."

Mike became more animated, gaining momentum and becoming agitated as he related what had just occurred. "Man!" he continued, "who does he think he is? I mean, it's just a kid's bike."

Serena turned toward the bedroom to finish putting on her make-up. "Well, he probably didn't really mean to be so upset. He and Kathy have been having some problems in their marriage. They probably had a fight or something and he vented his anger on you," Serena commented, dismissing the situation. "Come on, we're going to be late for church. It's music night and I want to get a front row seat."

Mike followed her into the bedroom and sat down on the bed, still deep in thought about the recent confrontation. "It really was weird," he began, replaying the event in his mind as he spoke. "I mean . . .," he hesitated and stopped for a moment, holding his hand in the air in mid-gesture. "I answered the door all bright and cheery and out of nowhere he unloads on me. He didn't even give me a chance to say 'hi.' Wham! He just lets me have it!"

Mike got up from the bed, unbuttoning his shirt as he walked toward the closet. "Funny thing though . . ." he began again, stopping at the door, and silently hanging his shirt on the doorknob. "After he unloaded on me about the bike . . ." Mike turned toward Serena, who looked up from her mirror, still holding her eyeliner pencil, waiting for Mike to complete his sentence.

"After he finished yelling at me about my responsibility and how inconsiderate it was to leave the bike behind his car, he just stopped and looked at me. I mean . . ." Mike continued as he took a fresh shirt from the hanger, "for a couple of moments we just looked at each other. I was too dumbfounded to say anything and he didn't have any more to say, so we just looked at each other. That's when it got weird."

"What do you mean, weird?" Serena inquired, this time not looking up from the mirror.

"Well, we stood there and then . . ." Mike walked back over to the dressing table to look at Serena. "Then he started to cry." Mike held out his hands to indicate wonder and helplessness. "He just began to cry, dropped the bike, and then walked away. All I could do was watch him."

Mike and Serena continued dressing in silence. Both were thinking about the recent event and neither could think of anything more to say. Finally, Serena broke the silence. "Come on, we're late," she said, taking one last look in the mirror and removing a small amount of lipstick from the corner of her mouth with her little fingernail.

"You know," Mike started, as he followed Serena out the door, closing the door behind him. "I've been thinking about the hurt they must be going through because of their problems. Maybe we should tell our evangelism team at the church to pay them a visit. They could tell them about programs that might help them through this hard time. Let's just hope they visit with him before he comes in my face again. I don't want to be a bad witness with what I might do."

Serena gave Mike a warm smile. She was proud of how much he had grown in the Lord and that he would care so much, especially about someone who had just offended him so deeply for no good reason.

What do you see as the main difference between the two stories?

How did the people of the first story get the kind of power they exhibited?

Vertical Application of a Spirit of Suffering

A suffering spirit comes upon someone who desires the will of the Lord, craves the heart of God, and moves as He directs. It willingly takes on the causes and cares of the Lord, carrying them as Jesus would until the heart of God is satisfied.

Horizontal Application of a Spirit of Suffering

The disobedience of others to the Word and to the desires of God make a suffering heart dive into the prayer closet, because he sees how the sin offends God and cares deeply for the offender. This heart desires reconciliation between any sinner and God. As Jesus was driven to the cross, offenses drive this heart to prayer.

Horizontal Application in Modern Marriage

A suffering heart is an interceding mate. It is also a mate who honors God's desire that he/she serve his/her mate as Jesus would. This heart lives to see the other enjoy the best possible standing before God, because it pleases Him, even to the point of a desire to see the other far surpass his/her own position with God. Any disorder is quickly worked to a godly conclusion to avoid possible footholds for sin that would grieve the Lord in any way.

*Paul said:
"... I am
again in the
pains of
childbirth
until Christ is
formed in
you..."*

Application for Living Out Christ's Love

Caring deeply for someone brings the presence of God into that situation. Laying down your own time and moving toward the needs of others, instead of avoiding them or passing them off because of the inconvenience that would occur by getting involved, thrills the heart of God.

*We
should no longer
seek
presents
from God.*

*We
should do all that is within our power
to
seek
the presence
of God.*

My Father,

The longer I attempt to draw close to You, the more I realize how little I resemble You. I am acutely aware You are asking me to lay my life down in every circumstance, so others might see Your Son in me. As I understand a spirit of suffering, I again see my inability to do what You are asking me to do without Your power in me to do it. I need Your help.

Lord, I choose to live in a spirit of joyful suffering. I know it will mean I must be willing to no longer own the comforts in my life with which I have become so familiar, so that I can allow Your life to flow through me. I really don't know how to do that. Please do it in me. In Philippians, Paul desires to "... so share Your sufferings as to be continually transformed into Your likeness... ." Please do that in me. Help me to desire only Your ways, so I may become like You. I submit to Your hand of change.

Thank You,

Signed _____ Date _____

Prayers and thoughts

From Our Father's Heart

Choose Jesus!

In everything that you do, choose Jesus!

When temptation comes your way, choose Jesus!

When fear attempts to overpower you, choose Jesus!

Whisper it quietly, say it out loud, express it from your heart;
choose Jesus and watch the enemy flee.

Planted thoughts, wandering motives, and rampant temptations
have no power over your choice to surrender to Jesus
and all of His completed work in your life.

Choosing Him brings His resurrected life to you in full force to
overcome.

Cease from striving.

Call out to Jesus and invoke His covenant promises.

Choose Jesus over and over again
until your choice becomes an expression of praise
and a statement of rock-solid commitment.

Choose Jesus!

He is Lord over all!

Summary

In completing this portion of The Overcoming Life Study, you have just begun your journey. In the coming days and years, you will face many challenges that will bring to the forefront how you are doing in your walk with the Lord, especially when times become perilous.

For the rest of your life, use these pages and your journal notes, so you can remember and practice what you have learned while you were in this study whenever these challenges arise. Add the pages with new teachings and insights provided for you on our website, www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com. Continually update your working knowledge as you are led to closer intimacy with the Lord.

During times of challenge, it is vital to understand the Lord is at work in your heart. Each "visit" with one of these challenges is causing you to go deeper with God. He is very much concerned with you becoming more like Jesus and has covenanted to take you there until you go home to Him. Use what you have learned to help you fulfill the Father's plan for your life.

As Merry and I have stated several times during these pages, the only way any real change will be completed in you is to make communication and communion with your Father God a priority in your life. Your access to Him is the main reason Jesus lived and died and lives again. Use your privilege wisely. You are welcome into the throne room of the living God. It is where you will find the secrets of Overcoming Life as you quietly commune with Him.

If you are serious about allowing the Lord to be formed in you, now is the time to implement some of the lessons you have

*Now seek
intimacy with
God.*

*Make your
time with
Him your
priority.*

*He loves
you and is
waiting to
impart
Himself to
you.*

learned. Put feet on what you've studied. Lay your life down for others, particularly in prayer.

Start this day to live your life in Christ passionately for the good of others and for the glory of God. May the Lord continually bless you as you run hard after Him and bless others for Him. You are valuable! We love you!

Jim and Merry Corbett

Now that you have completed the text on The Overcoming Life, your proper response is to do what is necessary to continue your quest to honorably represent the passionate life of Jesus to your world by living your life passionately for Him. Part of that process involves finding information that flows with the heart of your Lord. Visit our Web site, www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com

Start by telling others about what you have learned and the resources that are available to them through us. Help start someone else on their journey to the kind of life that honors Jesus by giving them a copy of A White Stone and telling that person of His love.

If you desire to contact either Jim or Merry Corbett, you can e-mail them at jim@awhitestone.com.

Free Resources to Help You in Your Journey toward a Wholly Devoted Life

The Bible is the most important physical resource available. We encourage you to always make it the first place you turn and your source of truth in all things.

With a desire to use every form of communication we can to share what the Lord has put on our hearts, we offer the following to help you on your spiritual journey in becoming wholly devoted to God and gaining a bridal heart towards Jesus!

The Times and Seasons Lifeline

Three Blog options and a support radio station at your fingertips. All are available 6 days a week for you to be built up, challenged, exhorted, and encouraged in the Lord.

Praydio.com

A 24/7 Online Praying Radio Community, designed to keep you growing in the Lord through prayer, interviews, exhortations, and music. Our programming will build up, strengthen, and reinforce your inner being, and always point you to God's point of view.

MASH United (Men After the Saviors Heart)

A men's heart revival support system. The whole family will benefit as husbands and fathers dig into resources that will help guide them in understanding their offices as husbands and fathers, so they can nurture their families into wholeness in Christ.

Books and Life Application. Studies – They're free

Our novel, **A White Stone** is today's headlines with answers. Its sequel, **The Elect**, presents an exciting story about the faithfulness of God. **The Father Factor** provides a guide to addressing whatever challenges your family may be facing. **The Overcoming Life** guidebook can be used on a continual basis to help you learn how to wholly devote your life to Christ. **Manna Moments** is the perfect nightstand companion to draw you to meaningful moments with your Father in heaven. Check out our books page to see all books available in printed copy or pdf!

Podcasts - topics that apply to our daily walk with the Lord

Community Resource Directory

This points you to others in the body of Christ who offer resources that may be of help in your current area of need.

The above resources are designed to be used continually; please do so! They're powerful assists you can use on your amazing adventure Father God is calling you to experience as you seek to be one with God's heart in these closing times and seasons. Share them with anyone who is seeking wholeness in the Lord with you.

www.thefaithresourcecommunity.com
jim@awhitestone.com