

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND WHOLENESS

**A BASIC COURSE
ADAPTABLE FOR NEW AND
GROWING CHRISTIANS**



BUILDING ON A PROPER FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

I have tried to put together material that would be of real help to new believers, as well as those who are seeking faith, and also to many who, like myself have felt that there were real gaps left for many years in their own search for a correct and practical understanding of our faith.

I have also included teaching to help those seeking personal wholeness, as part of this basic course. The first five years of my Christian experience were a wonderful change from the emptiness and depression I had known, prior to becoming a Christian on 23 July 1969, but since then I have been through some long, dark tunnels, which has knocked every bit of glibness about other people's problems out of me – thank God! Yet despite my own battles, I have often seen tremendous encouragements when ministering to the barriers and bondages of others: there is much in the following pages designed to set the captives free. I remain convinced, however, that most problems in the Christian life are a result of failing to know, understand and apply a basic knowledge of God's word, so the key part of this book is teaching on the foundation doctrines of the Christian faith, found in Hebrews 6:1 & 2.

The material is designed to be used either by an individual, or by someone who is discipling another person or group. I have tried to write comprehensive articles that make understanding easier and hopefully, applicable to "everyday life."

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At the time of writing (September 2016), traditionally accepted Bible truths are being speedily eroded in favour of a multi-faith and politically correct approach to life. Such a change will inevitably lead to real conflict, opposition and varying levels of persecution in Europe, as is already the case in other parts of the world. It is estimated that 80% of all Christians world-wide, are already experiencing suffering and persecution, in many cases severely.

Teaching new Christians Bible truths, whilst 'being real' about the battles (and the rewards available ahead) are two reasons why this manual has been written.

Rod Wood

PROLOGUE: IN THE BEGINNING GOD(GEN.1.1.)

The Bible does not seek to explain the existence of God, but speaks from it. The Bible simply takes as its starting point – “In the beginning, God.....” there is a point beyond which we cannot go with our finite minds, it is either God plus nothing equals everything, or nothing plus nothing equals everything! Science states that matter can neither be created nor destroyed, so we have to begin with a Creator or nothing. Are there however, ways in which we can know that God exists? I suggest there are three pointers:

1. Behind the Creation there has to be a Creator: This is the argument in Romans 1:19-20 – the invisible God can be clearly seen in what he has made, i.e. behind the intricate watch – let alone the human body – there has to be a watchmaker, and behind the atom, the roaring seas, and stars has to be a creator who is awesome in power, detail and diversity etc. A scientist once said, “to believe in evolution is to believe that a whirlwind entered a junk yard, and left behind a Rolls Royce!”
2. The inner hunger within us for love and meaning etc: which we know cannot be met by anything material. We may have everything we want, and yet be crying out inside to be loved and appreciated by someone else. It’s our contention that God alone can fill that invisible, yet aching void in our hearts, in a permanent, unconditional and eternal way, one which nothing or no-one else can, as many of us have realised in our more insightful moments or when faced with the loss of or lack of a loved one.
3. Being faithful to what we already know: We may have an excuse for not knowing Jesus, if no one has told us, but no excuse for not recognising that there has to be a God, as explained in point one. Cornelius acted on what he knew – see Acts Chapter 10 – and God showed him more. God has no time for “armchair critics,” but assures us in the Bible that, as we search wholeheartedly for Him He will be found by us (Heb.11:6; Matt.7:7-8; Jer.29:13); we therefore cannot know all the answers before we begin our journey but will be further taught and directed by God, as we put into practice that which He has already shown us.

FOR INDEPTH STUDY: EVIDENCE FOR TRUTH SERIES BY DR E.K.VICTOR PEARCE.

(www.evidencefortruth.co.uk)

ALSO: CREATION SCIENCE EVANGELISM BY DR. KENT HOVIND.

QUESTIONS: What do you make of the statements below?

- (I) Behind the creation there has to be a creator.
- (II) “God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

A PROPER FOUNDATION

Read Hebrews 6:1-3

If you were going to build a house you wouldn't start by working upwards, but going downwards. In fact the greater the building to be supported, the deeper and stronger the foundations would have to be. Some people appear to manage life well, until some crisis strikes and they "fall apart." Christians too are not immune and many really struggle under pressure or temptation, simply because of a lack of a proper biblical understanding of basic truths – or unapplied truths! For example, a failure to know and experience God's unconditional love personally, may result in that person seeking reassurance from a wrong source. Note what is said in verse 3. Sometimes we want to build on up, but the inspector will hold this up. God may well hold us back until he is satisfied that we are ready to move on. "God permitting this we will do."

Now read Matthew 7:24-27. Note that you build properly when the weather is good, not when the storm is upon you. In some countries the bible is banned and Christians are seriously persecuted, and many have died for their beliefs. Yet the point of the passage is to show that our faith must issue in practical obedience to God's word based on the finished work of Jesus Christ, otherwise we are building on sand. We show our faith by our willingness to carry out what God says to us, although we must never forget that service flows out of a love relationship with God, and not the other way around.

CONSIDER: What opportunities to build upon the rock do you now have which you may not always have? e.g. freedom to study the bible, list others.

WRITE OUT ideas on how to make the most of your current opportunities e.g. planning to set aside a regular daily time for reading the bible. Write out and memorise James 2:17.

A FOUNDATION COURSE IS DESIGNED TO GIVE THE CHRISTIAN A PROPER BASE FROM WHICH THEY CAN MOVE ON INTO DEEPER ISSUES.



YOU MATTER TO GOD

Every person on the face of this earth came into this world with three basic needs: the need for security; for significance and for self-worth. Since God has made us for himself, it follows that these needs can only be properly and adequately met in him, through a personal relationship with our heavenly father.

SECURITY: Each of us needs to know that we are loved and accepted as we are, (warts and all!) Romans 5:8 states “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus loved us enough to die for us when we were at rock bottom, when we didn’t care about him or want to know him; he forgave those who crucified him even though they didn’t ask to be forgiven first (Luke 23:34). God loves us, not when we have achieved 5%, 50% or even 99% in doing what he wants, but when we’re still at 0%! Christ’s undying love for us is the basis of our security – although he loves us too much to let us stay as we are, and of course for any gift to be of any value, it has to be willingly received.

SIGNIFICANCE: Each of us needs to know that we matter; that we can contribute to life in a positive way and God has so equipped us as to do at least one thing well. “Now to each one the manifestation of the spirit is given for the common good” (I Cor.12:7). Also, it can be seen that by looking at Rom.12:3-8 we again all have our place and function within the church (the body of Christ). It may be a very quiet “behind the scenes” ministry, such as the ministry of “helps” or serving others, which may include such simple things as tea making and baby-sitting etc. so that others can be freed for other areas of ministry – or one may be much more in the public eye – but what matters is that each of us is functioning as God wants.

SELF-WORTH: Very often we want to copy others, and this can be due to a feeling of personal worthlessness – so we want to wear someone else’s clothes, yet God knew what he was doing when he made us. PSALM 139 especially v13-16, shows the individual care and knowledge God had of us, even before birth: and who are we to hate what God has made – and loves? Very often the problems and difficulties we have been through provide the basis for the most effective help for others (II Cor. 1:3-11 especially v4).

Now imagine a situation where a child is made to either feel unwanted by the parents, or led to believe that he or she will only be accepted if their school work etc. is outstanding. Such a child may well grow up to believe in later life, that he or she has to earn love and approval or merit it by personal striving and struggling, and any achievements which are less than perfect, result in feelings of rejection, insignificance or worthlessness. Others too in later life, through a broken marriage, redundancies and so on, begin to think and feel in a similar way about themselves, and so it is of vital importance to come against these lies about ourselves with the truth of God’s word, that he loves us as we are Rom.5:8, and that we do make a difference, having at least one basic gift that God has given us to serve him with I Cor.12:7 and that we are unique and precious in our individuality Psalm 139:13-16.

Many people today have been made aware of how their relationship (or lack of it) with God as Father, has ‘been coloured’ by their relationship with their earthly father. However, some people’s problems have arisen, more as a result of difficulties over their relationship with their mother. It is therefore comforting to know that God is able to meet the love deficit of both mother and father, since “God made man in his image, male and female created he them” (Gen.1:27). The feminine characteristics of care and nurture, lacking in some people’s lives, through a lack of bonding in the first two years of life – as well as at other times – can be fully met by God, as well as all of our

fatherly needs (Ps. 27:10; Is. 66:especially 11-13).

To base our thoughts about ourselves on the word of God is to build on the rock Matt 7:24-27, whereas to base them on what others think is to build on sand. If another human being or even a job or hobby has first place in our lives, what is left if that person leaves or dies or your health breaks down, except a vacuum inside that God alone can fill and which was always meant for him anyway! Inviting Christ into your life and accepting what he thinks about you is the only foundation of true security, significance and self-worth.



We either get our basic needs for security, significance and self-worth met in God, or else we will look to someone, such as a marriage partner, or something such as a football team or personal achievements to meet these basic needs - the latter is described as relying on “broken cisterns” (Jer. 2:13).

A screwed up, dirty, trodden on £10 note is no less valuable than a crisp new £10 note. Whatever our experience of life, our VALUE TO GOD hasn't changed!

OUR TRIUNE GOD – (THREE YET ONE) – PART 1

At a recent talk it was said. “Don't try to explain the triune nature of God (the trinity), demonstrate it!” Certainly the concept of a God who is holy and way above us, but who also comes alongside and walks with us, as well as being an indwelling reality, meets three different areas of need as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (II Cor.13:14). If you add the biblical concept of OMNIPRESENCE – God is all-present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12), we get something of the picture of the vastness of God, who holds the whole of His creation in His hands. A hint of this can be found in Daniel 5:23, which refers to a pagan, idol worshipping King, Belshazzaar. Daniel said to him, “The God who holds in His hands your life, and all your ways.” Now apply that to the entire creation – all that is seen and unseen - ALL is in the hands of our OMNIPOTENT (all powerful), OMNISCIENT (all knowing), OMNIPRESENT (all present) God, and we see that God has never been limited to one time and place, and that He can be in heaven and on earth, for example at the same time. Chuck Missler says that science is now aware of not three, but ten dimensions, most of which are invisible, but can be deduced and realised by Scientists. Many former Muslims describe a dream, in which a man in white who identified Himself as Jesus, appears to them, the point being that experience sometimes has to precede explanation and understanding. Some people say that a man with a life changing experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument, the evidence would be seen in his life (see Galatians 5:22-23). Now apply this to the triune God (Trinity). A good place to start the journey of faith is to pray, “God if you're real, please make yourself known to me.” Understanding will follow. Whilst our knowledge of God's triune being may be hopelessly limited, I do find illustrations and pointers, helpful, as well as the clear biblical statements that follow.

OUR TRIUNE GOD – (THREE YET ONE) – PART 2

When we speak of Jesus as the SON OF GOD we are talking of a RELATIONSHIP – not age. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are eternal and co-equal. It has been said that the Father enjoyed the Son, so much, that He wanted to bring others – you and I (adopted children) into His family.

JESUS – Fully human AND Fully God

GOD

He is worshipped – Matt. 2:2
He was called God – John 20:28
He is prayed to – Acts 7:59
He is sinless – Heb.4:15
He knows all things – John 21:17
He gives eternal life – John 10:28
Fullness of deity – Col. 2:9

MAN

He worshipped the Father – John 17
He was called man – Mark 15:39
He prayed to the Father – John 17
He was tempted – Matt. 4:1
He grew in wisdom – Luke 2:52
He died – Rom.5:8
Body of flesh and bones – Luke 24:39

In coming to this earth we can see in Jesus, what God is really like.

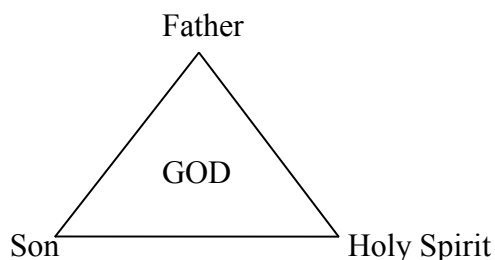
THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – third member of the trinity-Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit – Matt. 28:19. Acts 13:2). A person not a power, you cannot grieve an “it” (Eph. 4:30).

THE GODHEAD - THREE YET ONE – “ONE” can have two biblical meanings: a single person or more than one, as in one heart and mind.

AT CONVERSION – God's spirit comes to join with our spirit, meaning there is a new life source within us (Rom.8:9-11). If at this stage the concept of “three persons yet one God” confuses you, the following illustration may help:

Light can be reflected into three primary colours – blue, yellow and red. A rainbow appears in seven colours, yet it is one. Consider also: “bunch of grapes.”

Equilateral Triangle – Each angle and side is the same as the others, and yet they are different and together form one triangle.



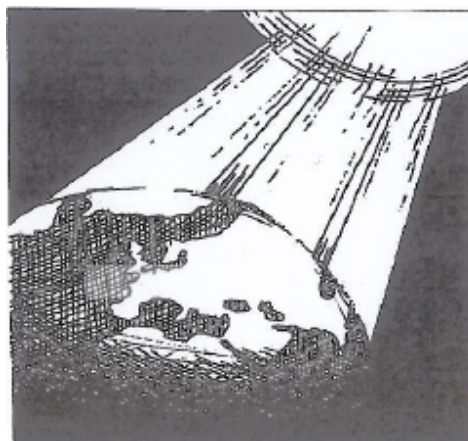
PLURALITY CAN CO-EXIST WITH UNITY -
GEN.2.24

STEAM WATER AND ICE are three different “expressions” of the same material.

Truth is relational, God is a relational being (Selwyn Hughes) and is love, without us. As three divine beings the Godhead has three centres of consciousness – three persons in one (personalities). Jesus had to overcome Satan in both the spiritual and physical realm.

A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION

Heb.1:3 describes Jesus as “the radiance of God's glory.” The sun and its rays are inseparable, yet the rays are projected onto the earth – a projected dimension in human flesh that we could relate to. A similar analogy could be used of the Holy Spirit. Remember too the implications here of God's omnipresence (Ps.139:7-12). In a bodily sense, only when Jesus had left this earth was the Holy Spirit able to come (John 16:7-8).



In the first line of the bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word used is “Gods” plural – “elohim” – yet “created” is singular, “Bara” in the Hebrew language. (D.Prince)

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS:

1. WITH US to convict us of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8).
2. IN US to produce Christlikeness (John 14:17; Rom. 8:29).
3. UPON US to clothe with supernatural power (Acts 2:3-4) – this can be renewed and increased (Acts 4:31).

ETERNAL – John 14:16; Heb.9:14; WITH US FOREVER – Heb.9:14; OMNIPRESENT – Ps.139:7-8; WHERE CAN I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT; OMNISCIENT – 1 Cor.2:10-11; John 14:26; KNOWS, TEACHES ALL THINGS. BAPTISM in the name (singular) of FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT – Matt.28:19. WORDS IN COMMON – LIED TO GOD – Acts 5:4; HOLY SPIRIT Acts 5:3. TEMPLES OF: GOD; HOLY SPIRIT – 1 Cor 3:16 & 6:19. CREATOR – GEN.1:2; Ps. 104:30. BORN OF GOD – John 6:33. yet BORN OF THE SPIRIT – John 3:5; GIVES ETERNAL LIFE John 6:33; INDWELLS God's children – Eph.2:22; I John 3:24; 4:13; Rom.8:11; I Cor.3:16. CAN BE BLASPHEMED – Matt.12:31; INTERCEDES FOR US – Rom.8:26-27.

The so-called doctrine of the trinity is simply our attempt to best explain, within our own finite language and understanding; the truth revealed in the bible about God, is as far as we can go.

KNOWING FATHER'S LOVE FOR US

We were created by God for a love relationship with him. God the Father wants us in his wonderful, universal family of love, through our responding to the finished work of his Son, Jesus Christ. The story of the prodigal son illustrates that - as with God's salvation:

- (1) God loves us, apart from anything we can ever do for him: The prodigal wanted to earn privileges – “make me as one of your hired servants,” but was restored to full sonship by the graciousness of the Father. God's love and salvation, are free and inseparable (Rom.5:6-8; I John 4:19) and have to be an unearned gift.
- (2) The elder brother (v28-30), was just as far away from the heart of the Father, as the prodigal ever was: This is shown in his complete lack of love for his Father – he has slaved many years – a legalistic approach (Gal.3:1-5) and his complete lack of compassion for his brother, as well as any recognition of his own helplessness and hopelessness, apart from God, (Matt.5:3; John 15:5), making him judgemental. Note also the experiences of Saul/Paul cf. Acts 9:5; Phil.3:6.
BOTH LEGALISM (ELDER BROTHER), AND LICENCE (PRODIGAL), MISS ENTERING INTO THE LOVE OF THE FATHER (GAL.5 1 & 13).
The prodigal had an empty stomach but the elder brother had an empty heart.
- (3) God the Father wants us to experience his ongoing love – his embrace. Our picture of Fatherhood (and sometimes, Motherhood), may have been distorted by our experiences with our earthly parents – e.g. “God's love has to be earned,” or “God is distant and disinterested in me, and cannot be relied on to keep his word,” are clearly “parental hangovers” and not a true picture of our Father God.
- (4) Our priority must be a love relationship with our heavenly Father (through Christ) – develop intimacy with God. (cf. Matt.7:21-23; I Cor.8:3). Some have sought God for what they could get out of him (Luke 15:12), rather than as a response of love. IF WE DON'T KNOW WE ARE LOVED BY GOD, UNCONDITIONALLY, WE WILL TRY TO EARN IT, AND THEREBY, MISS IT, OR WE WILL SEEK SUBSTITUTES FOR GOD'S LOVE, (i.e. Seeking that love and approval from other sources).
- (5) Relying on God's Ongoing Love for us – (I John 4:16) - Many of us have no difficulty believing that Jesus loved us enough to die for us, but because of our failures and shortcomings, struggle to believe in His ongoing and continuous love for us. Whilst we must take repentance seriously, believing in God's unfailing love towards us (Jer.31-3; Rom.5:6-11), is basic and critical to a sound, stable and healthy walk with God.

THE LOVE WALK:

Once we know we are loved by God, we are expected to “pass on” that love to others as a lifestyle, as the following scriptures make clear: Matt. 22:37-40; I John 3:23; Rom.13:8-10; I John 4:7-21; I Cor. 13:1-3.

MINISTRY:

Sometimes we may need to identify emotional wounds, rejections, traumas, losses etc. which may act as blockages to our experiencing God's love and the freedom of His Holy Spirit. God wants to replace our inner emptiness and pain, with His life and love.

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO.1

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

To understand the need for repentance, we must firstly appreciate where man's relationship with God went wrong; only then can we recognise the steps that must be taken to restore our relationship with God.

1. God created mankind to love, enjoy and obey him: he didn't force himself on Adam and Eve, as love requires freedom of choice, (John 10:10; Joshua 24:15).
2. Man chose independence from God. Consider the following definition, "Sin is the desire to live without reference to God." Stealing, murder, adultery etc. are the consequences of this attitude/independence. This results in our falling short of God's standards and moral purity, and there is no way back by our own efforts, (Isaiah 53:6; Rom.3:23; Rom.7:19).
3. God took the initiative to restore the relationship. Sin had to be punished and dealt with, before we could come back into a love relationship with God. Since we were unable to save ourselves, God sent his only son Jesus to pay the price for our sins by dying in our place on a cross at Calvary, thereby removing the barrier of sin between God and man (II Cor.5:19).
4. Our response – to be spiritually alive, by accepting Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, and welcoming his spirit into our lives. Only then are our sins and failures dealt with, and we are empowered to live a new life – (God pleasing). The Christian life isn't just forgiveness, it's change, which means repentance.
5. Dead works
Some of the Jewish Christians were tempted to go back to the then/now obsolete, Old Testament rituals as a way of being right with God rather than relying on the finished work of Jesus on the cross.
Question: Why was this wrong?

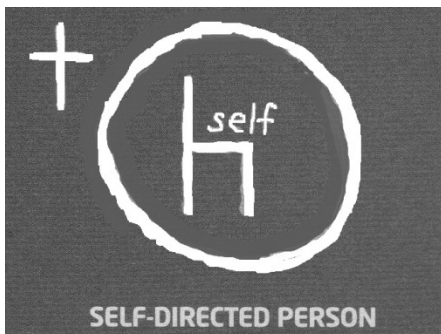
Repentance is "An inner change of mind, resulting in an outward turning around" – Rom.12:2. This is well illustrated in the story of the prodigal son.

READ LUKE 15:11-32 Note his repentance and full restoration verse 18 – the decision to turn around his life; verse 20 – the action "he arose and went." Facing up to and acting on our own sins and failures may spare us from being judged by God (see I Cor 11:31).

REPENTANCE OR REMORSE? Some people are sorry for the mess they are in, but not for the sin itself. Notice how, once the Jews were delivered from their oppressors (Judges Ch.3 & 4) they went back to their previous evil ways.

NEED FULFILLER OR LORD? Read Acts 2:36-39. Some people come to faith in Christ to get their problems solved. On the day of Pentecost Peter presented Jesus as our rightful Lord, not as someone who wanted to simply meet our needs - but note the wonderful consequences of putting our faith into Christ (see Matt. 6:33), but the heart of it is unconditional acceptance of Jesus as Lord of all.

READ DANIEL 3:17-18 – What do these verses teach about Shadrach and his companions' attitude to (a) the problems they faced and (b) the conditions on which they would maintain their worship and loyalty to God?



CONSIDER Is Jesus someone you and I are prepared to follow unconditionally, as Lord of all I have and am? If not yet, will you bring this to God in prayer?

Question: Explain with an example, the difference between repentance and remorse.

.....

THE TORMENT OF THE UNPARDONABLE SIN OR **(AM I REALLY FORGIVEN?)**

A good number of Christians are so tormented by this thought, that they fear they cannot receive God's forgiveness – or FORGIVE THEMSELVES!

The fact that they/we are so concerned about some real or imagined failure, is evidence itself that the unpardonable sin has not been committed, as the Holy Spirit, the one who convicts is obviously at work in the person's life, seeking to bring a person to a place of repentance. Such an individual wouldn't therefore be under conviction, or even care if this was the case (John 16:8). The Pharisees referred to in Matt.12:22-28, were so wilfully blind as to attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. This becomes more evident when they later sought to cover up the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection, even bribing the guards etc. (Matt.27:62-66; 28:11-15). This was therefore not an honest mistake. Persistently denying what we know to be true will lead us into total deception (II Thess. 2:9-12).

The Jews referred to in the letter to the Hebrews, were tempted to return to Judaism, turning their backs on Jesus and the NEW COVENANT. This was not some individual failure, or even struggling with some besetting sin, but an actual rejection of the finished work of Jesus. On the other hand, Peter was restored and trusted by Jesus after he denied knowing Jesus, three times!! The woman who had had several husbands and partners was offered living water by Jesus (John 4:10-17). The Prodigal son could have, just as easily, be a returning, repentant Christian.

Check However - 1. Was Jesus invited into the centre of the person's life, or was Jesus left in the hallway? 2. Was repentance taken seriously? (Rom.6:1-2; Heb.6:1-2). 3. Check that there is no unconfessed sin that is causing torment or a lack of assurance, but remember, God is not mocked! (Acts 5:1-11).

Bitterness vs. Forgiveness

We need to forgive others so Satan cannot take advantage of us (2 Corinthians 2: 10, 11). We are commanded to get rid of all bitterness in our lives and forgive others as we have been forgiven (Ephesians 4:31, 32). Ask God to bring to your mind the people you need to forgive by praying the following prayer aloud:

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for the riches of Your kindness, forbearance, and patience toward me, knowing that Your kindness has led me to repentance. I confess that I have not shown that same kindness and patience towards those who have hurt or offended me. Instead, I have held on to my anger, bitterness, and resentment toward them. Please bring to my mind all the people I need to forgive in order that I may do so now. In Jesus' name. Amen. (See Romans 2:4.)

On a separate sheet of paper, list the names of people who come to your mind. At this point don't question whether you need to forgive them or not. If a name comes to mind, just write it down.

Often, we hold things against ourselves as well, punishing ourselves for wrong choices we've made in the past. Write "myself" at the bottom of your list if you need to forgive yourself. Forgiving yourself is accepting the truth that God has already forgiven you in Christ. If God forgives you, you can forgive yourself!

Also write down "thoughts against God" at the bottom of your list. Obviously, God has never done anything wrong so we don't have to forgive Him. Sometimes, however, we harbour angry thoughts against Him because He did not do what we wanted Him to do. Those feelings of anger or resentment against God can become a wall between us and Him so we must let them go.

Before you begin working through the process of forgiving those on your list, take a few minutes to review what forgiveness is and what it is not.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. People who want to forget all that was done to them will find they cannot do it. Don't put off forgiving those who have hurt you, hoping the pain will one day go away. Once you choose to forgive someone, then Christ can come and begin to heal you of your hurts. But the healing cannot begin until you first forgive.

Forgiveness is a choice, a decision of your will. Since God requires you to forgive, it is something you can do. Sometimes it is very hard to forgive someone because we naturally want revenge for the things we have suffered. Forgiveness seems to go against our sense of what is right and fair. So we hold on to our anger, punishing people over and over again in our minds for the pain they've caused us

But we are told by God never to take our own revenge (Romans 12: 19). Let God deal with the person. Let him or her off you· hook because as long as you refuse to forgive someone, you are still hooked to that person. You are still chained to your past, bound up in your bitterness. **By forgiving, you let the other person off your hook, but he or she is not off God's hook.** You must trust that God will deal with the person justly and fairly, something you simply cannot do.

"But you don't know how much this person hurt me!" you say. You're right. We don't, but Jesus does, and He tells you to forgive others for your sake. Until you let go of your anger and hatred, the

person is still hurting you. You can't turn back the clock and change the past, but you can be free from it. You can stop the pain, but there is only one way to do it-forgive from your heart.

Forgive others for your sake so you can be free from your past.

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. You are going to live with those consequences anyway whether you like it or not, so the only choice you have is whether you will do so in the bondage of bitterness or in the freedom of forgiveness. No one truly forgives without accepting and suffering the pain of another person's sin. That can seem unfair and you may wonder, "where is the justice?" The cross makes forgiveness legally and morally right. Jesus died, once for all our sins.

Jesus took the eternal consequences of sin upon Himself. God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). We, however, often suffer the temporary consequences of other people's sins. That is simply a harsh reality of life all of us have to face.

Do not wait for the other person to ask for your forgiveness. Remember, Jesus did not wait for those who were crucifying Him to apologise before He forgave them. Even while they mocked and jeered at Him, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Forgive from your heart. Allow God to bring to the surface the painful memories and acknowledge how you feel toward those who've hurt you. If your forgiveness doesn't touch the emotional core of your life, it will be incomplete. Too often we're afraid of the pain so we bury our emotions deep down inside us. Let God bring them to the surface so He can begin to heal those damaged emotions.

Forgiveness is choosing not to hold someone's sin against him or her any more. It is common for bitter people to bring up past issues with those who have hurt them. They want them to feel as bad as they do! But we must let go of the past and choose to reject any thought of revenge. This doesn't mean you continue to put up with the future sins of others. God does not tolerate sin and neither should you. Don't allow yourself to be continually abused by others. Take a stand against sin while continuing to exercise grace and forgiveness toward those who hurt you. If you need help setting scriptural boundaries to protect yourself from further abuse, talk to a trusted friend, counsellor, or pastor.

Don't wait until you feel like forgiving. You will never get there. Make the hard choice to forgive even if you don't feel like it. Once you choose to forgive, Satan will lose his power over you in that area and God will heal your damaged emotions. **Freedom is what you will gain right now, not necessarily an immediate change in feelings.**

Now you are ready to begin. Starting with the first person on your list, make the choice to forgive him or her for every painful memory that comes to your mind. Stay with that individual until you are sure you have dealt with all the remembered pain. Then work your way down the list in the same way.

As you begin forgiving people, God may bring to your mind painful memories you've totally forgotten. Let Him do this even if it hurts. God wants you to be free; forgiving those people is the only way. Don't try to excuse the offender's behaviour, even if it is someone you are really close to.

Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive." He is already helping you and will be with you all the way through the process. Don't say, "Lord, I want to forgive ... " because that bypasses the hard choice we have to make. Say, "Lord, I choose to forgive ... "

For every painful memory you have for each person on your list, pray aloud:

Lord, I choose to forgive (name the person) for (what they did or failed to do), which made me feel (share the painful feelings).

After you have forgiven each person for all the offences that came to your mind, and after you have honestly expressed how you felt, conclude this step by praying aloud:

Lord, I choose not to hold on to my resentment. I thank You for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I relinquish my right to seek revenge and ask you to heal my damaged emotions. I now ask You to bless (name the person). In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Optional Extra Renunciations

Receiving forgiveness, forgiving oneself

Lord, I do believe that You have forgiven me and cleansed me of those sins which I have confessed to You. Because of Your great love and grace - not because I deserve it - I choose no longer to condemn myself when You have forgiven me. I receive Your forgiveness."

Forgiving God

Lord, I release You from my unfulfilled expectations, the grudges I have held against You, and the secret anger and bitterness I have held against You. I choose to believe that You want to give me good things (Matthew 7:9-11). In Jesus name I pray. Amen

For those who have been betrayed by a parent and transferred that mistrust to their heavenly Father:

Lord, "I renounce the lie that you God are like my earthly Father/Mother/Parents in the ways they failed me. I announce the truth that God loves me with an everlasting love, and accepts me unconditionally in the beloved (Jesus Christ).

For those who think they are responsible for holding their dysfunctional families together and for being a parent's emotional support:

"Lord, I renounce the lie that I am responsible for being a saviour to the people around me or that I must always be responsible for others by being the strong one. Thank you, Lord, that it's all right for me to be honest about my own need. Thank you that when I am weak, You are strong within me" (see 2 Cor. 12:9, TLB)

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For those who have been constantly put down by the authority figures in their lives:

"Lord, I renounce the lie that I am unworthy and insignificant. I announce the truth that I am (name), your special child, Lord, and I am precious to You".

Or

"Lord, I renounce the lie that I am a helpless victim of my environment and heritage. I announce the truth that I am a new creation in Christ Jesus, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (see Phil. 4:13)

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THE MAKERS HANDBOOK – THE BIBLE

II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21

If you want to get the best out of any appliance you would be wise to read the maker's handbook. The bible tells us all we need to know in order to function in the way in which God designed us to function.

In the spiritual realm, words have great, creative power (Gen.1). If you respect a person, you will respect their words, no more, no less. All scripture is God breathed; the breath or spirit of God imparts life into his word.

We need God's spirit to:

1. Obey God's word – new birth and the spirit's power – knowing the truths of the bible is not enough, without his power to carry it out, Rom.7:18.
2. Understand/interpret God's word (I Cor.2:14) – e.g. two proverbs (both true in the right context). “Too many cooks spoil the broth” and “Many hands make light work.”

We need to keep a balance between the spirit of what's being said, and the literal word. Cf. Matt.4:4 & II Cor.3:6. LOGOS is the whole counsel of God, whereas RHEMA is God's word to you personally – a living discerning word, the real root of what God wants you to hear at the present time e.g. Heb.11:11.

Romans 10:17 – Our faith can grow as we read God's word (one man testified that his healing came as he daily immersed himself in the bible).

God's word is borne out by History, Science and Experience

1. History

From God's perspective he can see a time map of all history, past present and future; for example the birth place of Jesus was foretold in Micah 5:2 and Jesus' death by crucifixion in Psalm 22 (see also Tyre Ezek.26:12; and the walls of Jerusalem Matt 24:2, both literally fulfilled), going right to the end of history in the last chapters of Revelation; yet He has given us freedom of choice! Mark 10:22; II Peter 3:9. cf. Acts 1:8 & 8:1. SEE ALSO 'PROPHECY AND GOD'S VIEW OF HISTORY.

2. Science

The bible doesn't contradict logic, but rather transcends it. Just as the law of gravity is true, but is inadequate to explain space travel, so the supernatural transcends the natural order of things. Many, then revolutionary, scientific statements made in the bible e.g. the earth is a circle (literally Hebrew “sphere”) see Is.40:22; law of gravity Job 26:7, which scientifically are recent discoveries. Note also Jesus was tired John 4:6 – natural limitations, yet walked on water.

REVELATION: Cf. Gal.1:12 & 2:6-10. The bible was given by revelation, not discovery or deduction to the variously inspired writers, whose authority to write was established by those who concluded the Canon of Scripture. Note Jesus' attitude to the Old Testament Matt.5:18; Matt.19:4-6 and the apostolic authority of the New Testament writers. There are two comings of Christ (Is.61:2) and two covenants mentioned.

THE TWO COVENANTS

In the Old Testament we read that God brought the Jews into a Legal Covenant with himself. This was a single, complete system, which applied only to the Jews see Gal.3:23-25. Jesus fulfilled the law (Gal.5:14) and by his sacrificial death on the cross provided a new way – or Covenant – of relating to God, through faith in what *He had done*, G R A C E (God's riches at Christ's expense). Prior to the law being given to the Jews through Moses, God had already related personally to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with the promise of universal blessing to all who related to God, on the basis of faith in his promises (Gal.3:6-9).

Study: Read chapters daily in a general and relaxed way, with a focus on specific parts for careful study. Remember that chapter and verse numbers were inserted much later, and were not part of the original text. To get the correct context of any part of the word of God, you need to read the whole letter or Gospel etc. just as you would the whole of a letter, sent to you personally. Each of the 66 books in the bible were written for a specific purpose, so taking the time and trouble to understand the reason why each book was written will pay rich dividends, and is essential to a correct understanding of the whole counsel of God. Familiarise yourselves with bible commentaries, C.D's, books, notes etc.

3. Experience

Such passages as Gen.3; Rom.7:14-25 and Rom.5:1 have often been proven experientially, e.g. it is often the very thing we are told we cannot have or do (forbidden fruit) that we want (Gen.3), or when we set out to do God's will that we end up frustrated (Rom.7:14-25), or in coming to faith in Christ we experience his peace (Rom.5:1). If God's word truly lives in us, we can expect to see the "greater things" that Jesus promised his disciples (John 14:12).

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

1. The Spiritual Battle
2. The Analogy of Marriage



THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Before God created the human race, he created the angels, Job 1:6 & 38:7. It seems that Lucifer was a very beautiful angel who was in a privileged position, and who reflected something of God's glory to the other angels. His name means "light reflector." He sought to ascend to God's throne (N.B. pride is the most serious of all sins, because it denies our dependence on God and our submission to him). The following passages are too great to simply be describing fellow human beings, but rather show how anyone can be caught up in the pride of Satan, and his destruction, see Is.14:12-15 and Ezek. 28:11-19. It appears that a third of the angels were caught up in Lucifer's rebellion (Rev. 12:4). See something of their depraved work in Gen.6:1-3 and Jude 6. This conflict can be seen in such passages as Gen.3:15 and Eph.6:10-12. Note that hell was created for the fallen angels, but that sadly, some humans will be sent there (Matt.25:41). Towards the close of time as we know it, at the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released again for a short time (Rev.20:1-3). This passage shows that even when conditions for the human race are ideal – as in one sense it was with Adam and Eve – people will still want to live independently of God, rebellious towards him.

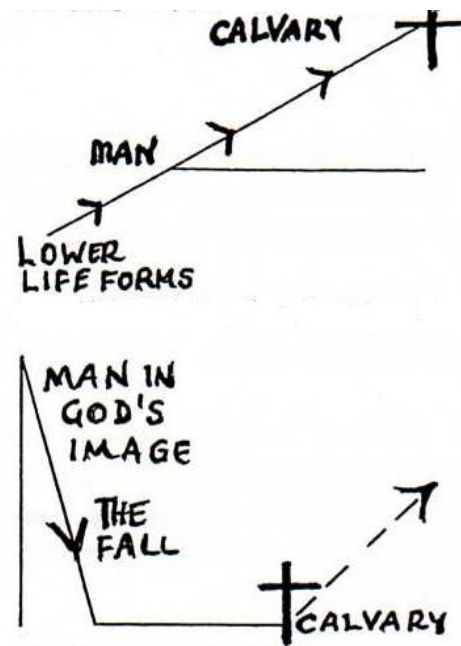
GENESIS AND REVELATION

The starting and finishing point of any matter tells us where we have come from and where we are going to. This is true of the bible. It is hardly surprising that these two books have been the most attacked (described as myths etc.). We learn more about Satan's nature, tactics and ultimate destruction in these books than in any other, and therefore has a vested interest in mocking these books! REVELATION was written to encourage and give hope in the face of persecution and all adversity etc. and to illustrate the absolute sovereignty of our God, that in the end we win!

GENESIS teaches creation, not evolution – although there can be evolution within a species, but not *between* species.

EVOLUTION teaches that man was evolving upwards – getting better – so the cross becomes nothing more than an evolutionary spur. Adolph Hitler's theology "Mein Kampf" i.e. my struggle - was based on the evolutionary theory, and teaches the "survival of the fittest." Compare this with Jesus' attitude to those in need in Matt.8:1-7 for example.

CREATION teaches that man had a high beginning. He was made in the image of God and that as a result of "the fall," the cross was God's solution to save us. If you were taking on a business, you would want to know whether it was improving or dying – and what its prospects and potential were – and whether you could do something significant to save it. This is the perspective that Genesis, Revelation and Calvary provides. God foresaw that Satan would seek to introduce his rebellion into the human race (Rev.13:8) and he planned accordingly (1 John 3:8). It is through the "seed of the woman"-Jesus-that Satan would be dealt with and destroyed, and the whole of God's created order be bought back under his Lordship (Eph.1:9-10). So God created the human race as that which he himself could enter into, to defeat Satan. NIESCHE (Hitler's theologian), said "I hate Christianity, it keeps weak people going."



THE ANALOGY OF MARRIAGE

"Marriage is God's best way of explaining himself" – Martin Luther-King.

READ Ephesians 5:25-33. See the analogy of marriage in Jeremiah 3:1-14; Ezekiel 16 and the parallels between God and his people Israel and Hosea and his wife Gomer (a prostitute) in Hosea chapters 1-3.

The bible begins and ends with a marriage. God created us to come into a love relationship with himself, through Jesus. In the Garden of Eden God gave Eve to Adam as a partner, and in Revelation Christ returns for his bride, the church. God set the Israelites apart as his own people (II Chron.9:8; Amos 3:2). Having brought them out of Egypt, Israel was given the opportunity to come into this covenant relationship with God, just like a marriage (Ex.19:3-8). God loves all people equally, but his plan was to start with the Jews, before bringing the Gentiles into a covenant relationship with himself, through Jesus Christ. It has been said that God the Father loved the Son, Jesus so much, that he wanted to have other sons (as large a family as possible) (1 John 1:3; Rev.7:9). Provided we understand the warfare aspect, explained previously, the analogy of a marriage and the simplicity of a love relationship, says it all. *What reason* does a man or woman have to have to explain their love for each other? God is love (1 John 4:16). In order to be a compatible bride, we need to understand the place of HOLINESS (Lev.11:44; II Cor.7:1).

The Reliability of our Bible Translations

In 1948 ancient scrolls of every old Testament book except Esther, were found in the caves of Qumran, 12 miles from Jerusalem. They were dated back by archaeologists to between the first Century BC and 250 BC. Prior to that the translators relied on hand written copies from the papyrus originals. Much, no doubt to the delight of the bible translators, there was no significant difference between the currently used manuscripts and the Dead Sea Scrolls – a difference of one

per cent! Do you spell it COLOUR or COLOR? This demonstrates the complete integrity of accuracy of those who had previously copied the scrolls and parchments, prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Our bibles have been copied from three principle manuscripts dating back to the fourth Century AD. The Codex Sinaiticus and Alexandrius, kept in the British Museum, and the Codex Vaticanus, kept in the Vatican Library. It is hoped from this article, the reader will have absolute confidence that today we hold in our hands the words that have been faithfully and accurately copied from the original manuscripts.

SEE THE FULL STORY 'DEAD SEA SCROLLS' by Peter Flint (DVD).



ARIEL VIEW OF
QUMRAN CAVES

<https://pixabay.com/en/dead-sea-scroll-bible-qumran-israel->

Just as we can go back to the Dead Sea Scrolls to show that complete accuracy and integrity had been maintained, leading up to the three scrolls, mentioned above, so we can approach this issue today from the opposite direction. With the entire New Testament having been completed within a generation (64-80AD) by eye witnesses, who were either part of Jesus original twelve disciples, direct associates of these, such as John Mark or in the case of Paul, affirmed by Peter and James (II Peter 3:15-16; Gal. 2:1-2,6-10), we know that with approx. 25,000 early manuscripts confirming the New Testament documents as we have them today, as our bible, it can be shown that no corruption had taken place, in that scholars have been able to recover the original texts, that comprise our modern day bibles. Some issues require local and background information to avoid misunderstanding, e.g. in Corinth (I Cor.14:33-35) it may well have been a then dividing curtain between men and women, resulting in some ladies calling to their husbands, through it. Another suggestion is that some rowdy lady converts from the nearby pagan temple which overlooked the city, were very loud and destructive and whose hair resembling the local prostitutes, needed bringing into Church order. This could just as easily applied to unruly men! (I Cor. 14:33-35). Ladies, Paul acknowledged, were to pray and prophesy in the church meetings, which isn't keeping silent! (I Cor. 11:5). Misunderstanding applied even then!!

THE NEW TESTAMENT – Every book and letter had to have been written by Jesus' immediate disciples or their direct associates. Paul's revelation was endorsed by Peter (Gal.2:6-10).

THE OLD TESTAMENT – Accepted in totality by Jesus – Matt. 5:17-18; John 5:46-47. Jesus' disciples had passed on His life and teachings to faithful men (II Tim.2:1-2).

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO. 2

FAITH TOWARDS GOD

STUDY 1: RELIGION OR FAITH?

Have you ever heard it said”Religion has been responsible for more wars and bloodshed, than anything else!”

So what is the difference between religion and faith? (Law and grace)?

READ: Luke 7:36-50; Matt.21:28-32; Luke 18:9-14.

The bible is split up into two major sections, the old and New Testament or covenant. Under the old covenant God’s people knew what was required, but couldn’t live up to those requirements (or laws). They were always failing or “falling short” of what they knew to be right, because they didn’t have the power or the *life* to live as God wanted them to live, but the *new covenant* depended, not on man trying to attain God’s standards by his own efforts, i.e. man reaching up to God, but on God reaching down to man! When God sent his only Son, Jesus to this earth to live and die in your place and mine, it was as though he was saying, “You don’t have to try to get up to where I am to be in a right relationship with me now, I’ve come down to where you are in the person of my son” (II Cor. 5:19). By repenting of the sinful, self centred life we have been living, and accepting God’s forgiveness, because the full cost of our sin has been paid for by Jesus’ death at Calvary in our place, and receiving God’s Holy Spirit as a new life source within us, we can begin to see our lives change progressively into what God wants us to be, but this change comes from a place of rest and acceptance. Just as a new born baby is as much a part of his family as a living, great grandparent of 100, and has nothing to prove to become part of the family, but has simply to be born into it, so it is with a new Christian – we’re accepted, and cannot *earn* acceptance – but we are expected to grow up and mature, to move progressively from babyhood to adulthood, taking responsibility and living a life that is a good advertisement etc. for Jesus Christ; but this growing up needs to be at God’s pace as he leads us on, one step at a time (Gal.5:25) just as any healthy person matures.

READ: Gal.3:1-14; Legalistic Christians!

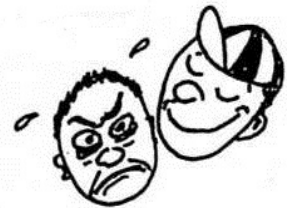
Why do you think Paul (the writer) was so frustrated and angry? v.1.

EXPLAIN the difference between working *for* acceptance and working *because* of acceptance – using a parent/child example - could this acceptance be abused and counter productive? Then apply this to our relationship with God see Rom. 2:4.

Many people hope that God will accept them if, as they see it, their good deeds outweigh the bad they have done, but this would make Jesus’ sacrificial death, pointless. There is also in such a belief a failure to appreciate the holiness of God, and how impossible it is to ever be “good enough.” Compare Rev. 1:17 and Rev. 6:15-17. We make the mistake of comparing ourselves with each other rather than by God’s standards and moral purity.

CONSIDER A young lady whose mother had died when she was an infant, was terminally ill after devoting herself to looking after her brothers and sisters, and said she had no time for spiritual matters. The hospital chaplain visited her and asked her what she was going to say to God? The young lady replied, “When I see God I will show him my hands.” The chaplain replied, “Oh my dear, you’re too late! God is already looking at another pair of hands and He only has eyes for those hands.” (ie, The nail pierced hands of Jesus).

Grace means something God does for me; law means something I do for God. We trust the



Lord to manifest his resurrection life in us, as we let go of our efforts to justify ourselves.

SUMMARY Christians can still wrongly trust in their own will power, emotions and intellect to live the Christian life, rather than relying on the power of God's spirit, leading and working within us. It is the difference between rowing and sailing. God must have our willing co-operation it is true, but the power to live rightly will always be his (Eph.1:19-20). Choices and effort are involved, such as getting up earlier for a devotional start to the day, but even then it is still a *response* to what God is saying, doing and empowering in our lives. He must have the initiative so that we can respond to the wind of his spirit as we hoist the sails. Let us now see this worked out in the following examples:

1. **THE DROWNING MAN** is an illustration used by the Chinese Christian, Watchman Nee. In China he witnessed a man close to drowning, struggling in the water and shouting for help. Finally his efforts to save himself ceased, and he began to go under the water. It was at that point that the nearby life guard who hadn't yet moved, dived in and rescued the drowning man. As the life guard later explained "As long as he was trying to save himself, I couldn't help him, he could have pulled us both under. It was only when he gave up all his efforts to save himself that I was able to help him." This is how it is with God, once we give up on our attempts to save ourselves by our own struggling and religious efforts, it is only then that we can *experience* the rescuing power of Jesus Christ, the divine saviour and life guard. We need to trust (have faith in) Jesus to be (a) our cleansing life (1John 1:8-9) and (b) our reigning life (Gal.2:20). There is a sense in which God wants to make us weaker in ourselves, not stronger, so that we rely on God and not on our own futile efforts to save ourselves. One of the reasons God gave us his law was to make us aware of our hopelessness, apart from him (Rom.5:20).
2. **ROWING/SAILING** – Rowing is hard work! Rather like doing God's work in our own strength. **IN SAILING** – There are things to do, but we are responding to the wind (of the spirit) – done in God's strength. **A TROLLEY BUS** had no power of its own. It relied on the POWER flowing through the overhead, electric wires, into the rods, enabling the bus to move. Likewise, we depend entirely on God's life and power – the Holy Spirit flowing into us to move forward, and live as God want us to live.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_Trolleybus_at_Three_Tuns.jpg

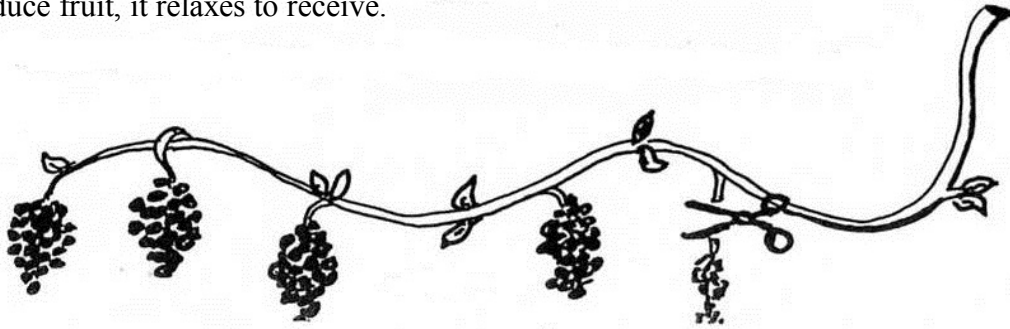


FOR THE NEXT EXAMPLE READ JOHN 15:1-5.

3. Notice especially v5. The sap or life of the main vine, Jesus, flows into the branch, (ourselves) and the result is that fruit is produced. See Gal.5:22-23. Fruit represents the good things of God, growing in our lives, not by struggling and striving:

(a) the branch being rightly related; in a position to receive from the main vine. What would happen if the branch were cut off from the vine with a knife?

(b) The branch depending on the vine for all its life and nourishment. The branch doesn't struggle to produce fruit, it relaxes to receive.



GOD

RELIGION

Man attempting to work his way
up to God by being good
(e.g. giving, helping others,
church involvement etc.)

FAITH

God (in Jesus) has come down
to where we are, recognising our
inability to save and change
ourselves.

GOOD WORKS ARE A RESPONSE TO GOD'S ACCEPTANCE OF US (EPH. 2:8-10) AND THE WORKING OF HIS INDWELLING SPIRIT, AND NOT A RESULT OF OUR OWN FUTILE EFFORTS TO CHANGE OURSELVES. It is a result of knowing that God's life and nature are already within us (see II Peter 1:3) and that He sees us in Christ (Gal.2:20). We can choose to act according to our new nature e.g. loving our enemies, because Jesus within us, loves them. We can let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, or remain in fear and panic! (see Mark 4:39-41).

HOW JESUS BECAME REAL TO ME

I began a search for happiness, having failed in personal relationships and having few friends; I often felt very depressed. I remember thinking, "There must be a reason why some people are happy and others are not." So I began trying to find meaning, purpose and happiness. I tried to lose myself in helping others, but although outwardly I appeared caring and happy, inwardly I was empty and deeply unhappy.

Although I believed in the existence of God, and had been attending a local church; I found going to church a dead Sunday ritual, that made no difference to my daily living. One evening after going to another church, I saw in a group of young people there, all I had been searching for. They had *that* quality of life, they were different! As I continued to meet with them, I began to understand what it was that made the difference. I had been looking for something external – I was trying to change myself on the OUTSIDE – they had found the key to be a change on the INSIDE. They had all invited Jesus Christ to come into their lives and change them from the inside out! (see Gal. 2:20). Shortly after this, one of the leaders asked me, "Rod what's stopping you giving your life to Jesus Christ?" "Why do I have to give my life to someone else?" I protested. "Why can't I go on helping others and keep hold of my own life?" I was directed by my friend to Matthew 7:21-23 ".....Lord did we not do great and wonderful things in your name?"then I will tell them "I never knew you, depart from me" "You see," explained my friend, "you could do all sorts of wonderful things, and yet not know God "I never knew you." I realised that God didn't want my money, my church attendance or my good works, he wanted ME. That evening I invited Christ to come into my life and to take control. For the first week after that I went through a lot of conflict, but then I remember for the first time in my life, a deep abiding peace coming into me, and a great sense of joy and purpose, which remained with me for literally years. After that I went through some very difficult and painful times, but the difference was that I now knew the reality and presence of God in my life, through those times.

I know God is real and that He came into my life on 23 July 1969, and began to produce the character of Christ within me. I could not have manufactured such a change. When I gave up trying to make myself into a good person, and invited Jesus instead to take over inside me, then my life changed dramatically for the better. His peace within was proof that I was justified before God, through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ (see Rom.5:1).

Soon after this, another of the leaders said to me, "It's great that you have given your life to Jesus Christ, Rod, but you need to develop your own personal relationship with Him." I then daily set aside a time for bible study and prayer, and this proved to be the means whereby His life within me was continually nourished, and I was able to daily grow stronger in him. Soon after this I heard a testimony from a missionary, who had got so engrossed in her work at the expense of her daily devotional time with God, that her relationship with God and the other missionaries soon started to break down, and she ended up having to leave the mission field. She told us, "God wants you for yourself, far more than anything you can ever do for him," I thank God for that missionary's honesty, and for such helpful advice. I have always sought to daily spend time with God first, so that any service flowed out of love for Him (see the order in Hebrews 13:15-16 and in Matt. 22:37-39).

DEVELOPING A GOOD DEVOTIONAL TIME WITH GOD

PURPOSE: *To grow in intimacy and relationship with God, becoming strong in spirit. Begin by reading MARK 14:1-9 – wasted on Jesus cf. MATT. 7:21-23.*

When we considered the picture of the vine and the branches (John 15:1-5), we saw it as a picture of relationship and dependence upon God for everything good in our lives. We need to co-operate with God in order to draw upon his life in this way.

READ MATT.26:31-46 AND 56b – What does this teach us about prayer?

If we didn't eat properly we would soon be weak and anaemic. If we don't make daily opportunities to receive our spiritual food from God, we would soon be weak and unhealthy spiritually. A daily devotional time with God emphasises the importance of a personal relationship with him. People's circumstances vary, but each of us needs to set aside quality time with God, not a hurried five minutes before falling into bed! To get you started, buy a copy of a good daily devotional aid, from your local book shop, unless you've already been using or been introduced to other devotional notes. This will give you a passage of scripture, some helpful thoughts and a prayer. Some Christians find the letters of "ACTS" a helpful outline for their daily prayer time.

'A' = ADORATION: Start by praising God for who he is and what he means to you.

'C' = CONFESSION: Bring to God areas of failure and weakness; ask God to forgive and help you; we must be willing to face up to these areas (I John 1:8-9).

'T' = THANKSGIVING: Develop a thankful heart, rather than a complaining one! Thank God for what you have and what he's done for you (Luke 17:11-19).

'S' = SUPPLICATION: Bring your requests to God. Be outward looking in your prayers, despite what problems you may be facing (Job 42:10).

THE MASTER'S APPROACH TO PRAYER – MATTHEW 6:5-15

The principles taught by Jesus in the so called "LORD'S PRAYER:

1. MOTIVES Remember we are seeking to build on our love relationship with God, rather than aiming to impress others with our supposed piety (v5).
2. WATCH YOUR WORDS! (Ecc.5:1-3; James 3:6). The motto of some seems to be (in preaching and prayer) why use 100 words when a 1,000 will do!! Some people, including this writer, see an endorsement here of set prayers – with their brevity of words – as well as an outline only for prayer.

THIS THEN IS HOW YOU SHOULD PRAY(V9) *"After this manner, pray ye"* KJV.
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN (v9) –

- (a) OUR – We are part of a great family – we have "family" everywhere (Rev.7:9).
- (b) FATHER – Stressing the Father/Child relationship we've been brought into.
- (c) IN HEAVEN – Far above all (Eph.1:21) - The place of all authority (Matt.28:18).
- (d) HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME – Balance the intimacy of Fatherhood with God's holiness – sin hating – and who calls us to be holy (I Thess.4:3; Heb.12:14) Our sin led to the terrible price Jesus had to pay to redeem us (Is. 53:5 & 6).

- (e) YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE –
We're to be focused on God's interests, before our own (Matt.6:33). God's kingdom – his ruling over every area of our lives, as Lord – should come in us, first.
- (f) ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN –
We look forward to a time when Jesus rules over planet Earth in the Millennium.
- (g) GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD –
NOW our priorities are right, we think about what we need to carry out God's will, which includes our daily food. Notice that we are to live, one day at a time (Matt.6:34), but this does not exclude wise forethought (Gen.41:28-36; Acts 11:27-30); the warning is against worry either about today or tomorrow (Matt.6:25-34).
- (h) AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS –
We can know absolute cleanness from all sin, but we must pass that forgiveness on to those who have wronged us
- (i) AS WE HAVE FORGIVEN THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US –
In one sense we set the standard by which we will be judged (James 2:13; Gal.6:1) if we fail to pass on the forgiveness we ourselves have received (Matt. 18:32-34).
- (j) AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US (RESCUE US) FROM THE EVIL ONE
If we are walking with God and are in His will, He will keep us from being tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13) and He will heed our cry to be delivered from the evil one. (I regularly cry to God for deliverance, when confronted with a situation beyond my strength). REMEMBER – The real battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness, under Satan (Eph. 6:12).

FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS is the only reiterated phrase in this prayer outline (v12,14, &15). Unforgiveness is probably the greatest barrier to answered prayer.

1. OTHER PRAYER ADVICE: PRAY FOR PEOPLE, NOT ABOUT THEM. e.g. Bless Fred Bloggs, help him with his work and marriage etc. NOT 'Please change my husband/wife, they are slowly driving me crazy.'
2. BE SPECIFIC – (Luke11:5-8 & Luke 18:41-43). What would you have me do for you? General prayers like, God bless all the missionaries” are too vague to possibly be answered; name the missionary organisation, the area of work and need etc. and what you specifically are asking God to do in that situation.
3. PRAY SCRIPTURE– Notice how Paul prayed for the COLOSSIANS (Ch.1:9-12). Find other biblical prayers (in Eph. Ch. 1 & 3, for example) and use them to pray for others. We can be misguided in prayer, manipulating others etc. when we pray for leaders and others, telling God and others what they and God should do!

You may also find one of the two following approaches helpful:

- (a) Have a set time of praise and worship, but as various needs come to mind, intersperse your praise with intercession (see Heb. 13:15-16).
- (b) Get as still and as quiet as possible – then speak out the name of Jesus to centre your thoughts, seeking to become conscious of the presence of God, and to what HE might want to impress on you (Ecc.5:1-2).

The above notes are guide lines only – it is a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP between yourself and God, but whilst a daily devotional aid is encouraged for bible reading, particularly for new Christians, it is important to soon learn to get your own spiritual food from the bible, by letting God

speak through his word to you personally, and not to constantly *rely on* the teaching and notes of others; this is part of maturing and growing up. Since we now depend upon God entirely as our source of new life, it should be obvious that this dependency on God is best expressed in prayer, and the most effective Christians are often those who spend the most time in prayer.

CHOOSE A TIME OF DAY TO SPEND ALONE WITH GOD AND TRY TO KEEP TO IT. If possible make this time the opening act of your day, but if demanding children or if being married to a non-Christian, make this impossible, then another time of day may be necessary. As you grow in the faith, try to read individual books in the bible straight through, in order to get everything written in its correct context.

KNOWING ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

When we studied the “You matter to God” sheet we saw the importance of knowing the unconditional love of God as the basis of our security. Since we could never earn God’s love or approval, or ever be good enough to merit it, the only way we could receive this love and approval was as something undeserved. This is the essence of grace (GOD’S RICHES AT CHRIST’S EXPENSE) and the basis on which we can know we have eternal life, now (I John 5:11-13).

In our passage (I Cor. 15:1-11) Paul states that we are saved (v2) not by anything we have done or could do, but by putting our trust in what Jesus has done for us – by his death, burial and resurrection. I put my faith in his:

1. DEATH - He died in my place to take the penalty I deserved for all my sin, past, present and future – I therefore need have no fears of facing judgement and condemnation (Rom.6:23; Rom.8:1; John 5:24).
2. BURIAL – His death was real and substantiated (John 19:30-42; Matt 27:62-66); the old life really has been put away – dead and buried.
3. RESURRECTION – Whereby I am justified i.e. declared right with God (Rom.4:25). Christ's resurrection proves the reality of life after death. His life is now universally available to all who would receive him (I Cor.15:45; John 1:12).

APPROPRIATING THIS: By being willing to turn away from a self-centred life to a Christ centred one by:

(a) REPENTANCE (Literally a change of mind) which means agreeing with God that we are sinful, wanting to turn from our sin, accepting his forgiveness and -

(b) PUT MY FAITH IN CHRIST by inviting him to come into my life, by his spirit, to live his life in and through me (Gal.2:20), it means I really am a new creature in Christ! (II Cor.5:17); the old has gone, the new has come. There is now a new life source WITHIN ME, which only can operate properly when I let go of all my efforts to justify myself (see Rom.4:4-5; Gal.3:1-5). It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19b-20). Dead men cannot raise themselves! but Christ’s life within us means that, as I let go of all my efforts to live the Christian life by my own will power, and instead put my trust in the same power that raised Christ from the dead, I will begin to know Jesus’ desires and ability, within me (Phil.2:12-13). Paul makes it clear that as we continue to take our stand on the finished work of Christ (I Cor.15:2) **WE ARE SAVED**. If it depended on anything I could do, then I would never know if I had done enough or even, repented enough – but the basis of an effective Christian life depends on ceasing from my efforts to justify myself, and rely on Christ’s cleansing and resurrection power, instead. Trying to do things for God, actually produces defeat (Romans 7) whereas resting in Christ’s finished work brings a changed life and victory (Gal.5:22-23). The three studies on faith (Foundation Doctrine number two) are designed to amplify and expand different aspects of faith, but we need here to understand God’s desire to produce a stable base within us, with the assurance of eternal life now, borne out by his peace within (Rom.5:1; Col.3:15).

A real and living faith will always produce a changed life of holiness (Rom.6:22) and progressive Christ-likeness (Rom.8:29). Christ’s life within us will produce a different way of speaking (Matt.12:34) and living (I John 4:16) and is evidence that we are not self-deceived. God requires our active co-operation and response to what he’s doing in our lives. Faith is always evidenced by

what we do (James 2:26). See the statements of assurance in 1 John 2:3; 3:14; 4:16; 5:11&13.

TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD – At an evangelism campaign, one tormented person came forward every night wanting assurance that God had forgiven and accepted him, but he had no peace. On the final night of the crusade he asked the Evangelist if he would continue to pray for him, once the campaign was over, the Evangelist said he would. After the man walked a little distance away, the Evangelist called after him, “Do you believe that I will go on praying for you?” The man turned around astonished, “Of course I do, because you said you would!” “Well” said the Evangelist, “You can take me at my word, but when Jesus said, “Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” you cannot take Jesus at His word.” The man saw the point at once, and recognised that God had forgiven and accepted him! The Evangelist was R.A. Torrey.

FOR FURTHER STUDY CONSIDERATION AND MEDITATION

ROM. 5:6-11(Accepted at our worst and most unacceptable).

TITUS 3:5 (Cleansed by Jesus' blood, renewed by his spirit).

ONGOING EVIDENCES OF SALVATION as we grow (I John)

We know that we have passed from death to life because

I John:

1. 2:3 – We obey God's commands.
2. 3:14; 4:7-9 – Love for others, here specified our brothers.
3. 4:13 – God's Spirit lives and is active in us.
4. 5:11-13 – He who has the Son (Jesus) has life (through repentance and faith)

THERE ARE TWO BOOKS MENTIONED IN REV. 20:12 AND 14 into which our names can be written:

1. Before we become a Christian – A record of all we have said thought and done.
2. The Lamb's (Jesus') book of life – All condemnation for past sins and failure, replaced with Jesus' righteousness. His good works accredited to us, instead.

THE NEED TO DEVELOP OUR FAITH

Many years ago in the American West, interviews were held in one town for a Stagecoach driver. Each applicant was asked, "How near to the edge of a sheer drop on a mountainous trail could you safely drive your Stagecoach?" Each driver boasted about the minimum space they could get away with, until they interviewed a driver who said, "Well I don't reckon it's how close I can get to the cliff edge, but rather, how far I can stay away from it!" He was given the job.

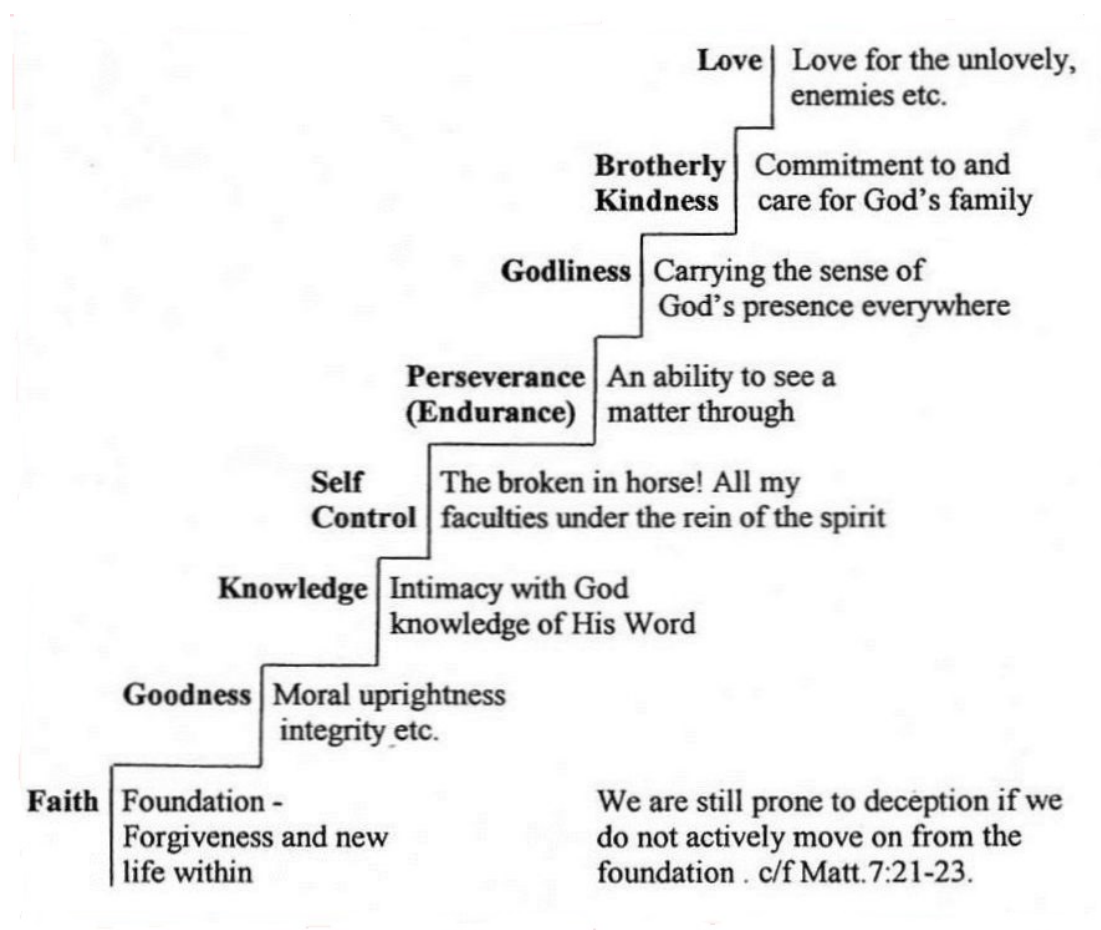
NOW READ II PETER 1:3-11

Some make a distinction between losing reward and losing salvation (I Cor. 3:14-15), others believe that certain conduct and attitudes prove that a person was never born again in the first place (I John 3:14-15), but why not concentrate on making your calling and election sure? The above passage lays the emphasis on such positive growth and development, rather than discussing how near we can get to the edge of the cliff before it becomes fatal!

SEVEN STEPS OF THE LADDER TO DIVINE LOVE

II Peter 1:5-7

We ascend to the launching pad of divine love from where we are taken into glory – and receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom (v11).



Love – See also the article: All about Relationships.

FORSAKING ALL I TRUST HIM

1. The emphasis is on character, rather than gifts. (Cf. Matt.7:15-16 & 22-23).
2. True faith will show itself in a changed life. (I John 2:5-6; James 2:14-17) otherwise it was dead or not true faith, in the first place – or has since died (II Tim.4:10 - Demas).

PLEASE NOTE:

What we believe is always shown in what we do. In the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, Jesus began by saying in almost every instance, “I know your works/deeds etc. not “I know your faith” or “your good intentions,” before going on to what else he wanted carried through. Let us make sure we carry through to completion, what God is asking of us.

A HEALTHY PLANT MAY DIE BECAUSE



1. It loses its source of nourishment (John 15:6). We can pull away from God (Rom.11:22; Luke 15:11-13).
2. Its roots are poisoned (Heb.12:15). Unforgiveness, bitterness etc. are poisons.
3. Shock, due to a great temperature change – equates to a human tragedy or trauma.
4. It is transplanted into the wrong soil of false doctrine (Gal.3:1-5; Jude:4-5).

REMEMBER - IF A PLANT OR ORGANISIM ISN'T GROWING – IT'S DYING!!

A KEY QUESTION- Can a genuinely born again Christian, ever remove himself from Christ, or has something so irreversible happened that even if he wanted to he could no more get out of Christ, than you or I could change our natural parents? – or could he be written off as a hypocrite? (Matt. 24:51; I John 3:9).

OUR RESPONSIBILITY- Jude:21 –“Keep yourselves in”

GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY – Jude: 24 – “Keep you from falling”

SALVATION HAS THREE ASPECTS:

1. I have been saved from the *penalty* of sin (Luke 23:42-43).
2. I am being saved from the *power* of sin (Rom.7:21-25; II Peter 1:8). (Do you think this is happening, if a person isn't going on with God? II Peter 1:9).
3. I will one day be saved from the *presence* of sin (I John 3:2-3; II Peter 1:11).

QUESTION Compare I Cor. 3:12-15 with Matt. 25:24-30. What made the difference between the two groups, in terms of salvation?

By concentrating on the following seven steps of the staircase of spiritual love we will be keeping the Stagecoach the maximum distance away from the cliff edge (II Peter 1:10b).

1. FOUNDATION OF FAITH (v5) - Gal.2:20; Trust Christ – instead of my own efforts for forgiveness of sin and a new life source inside.
2. GOODNESS (v5) – MORAL UPRIGHTNESS, INTEGRITY. A character that can be trusted with Christ's name and responsibilities etc.

3. KNOWLEDGE – (V6) – The dangers of unenlightened zeal – Rom 10:2. Intimacy with God and His Word – taking time with both.
4. SELF CONTROL – (v6) – The broken in horse! All our faculties (such as the tongue) under the rein and rule of the spirit. Consider the many ill-advised marriages that have been rushed into! (Prov.25:28).
5. PERSEVERANCE - (v6) – An ability to see a matter through – or for as long as God wants us involved. Prepare to work at it.
6. GODLINESS – (v7) – Carrying the sense of the presence of God, wherever we go. See also I Peter 3:1-2; II Kings 4:9.
7. BROTHERLY KINDNESS - (v7) – commitment to and care for God’s family. “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Make the same allowances for others as we wish for ourselves.
8. LOVE - (v7) – Unconditional love for the unlovely, enemies etc. such as shown to you and me at Calvary (Luke 23:34; Rom.5:6-8). A willingness to lay down our lives for one another.

The value of making Godly character our goal – without neglecting ministry (II Tim.1:6-7) – means that such a goal is achievable, whereas ministry partly depends on the willingness of others to receive from us (John 1:11) and therefore could leave us in a state of frustration. So Paul says, “Make love your aim, and earnestly desire spiritual gifts. We need to distinguish between a goal and a desire, such as “winning my community to Christ” or “having a model family,” which can easily be torpedoed by others. We need to remember that ministry flows out of relationship, and not the other way around.

Note the rewards of successfully pursuing a Christ-like character in II Peter 1:10-11.

V8 - FRUITFULNESS

V10 – ESTABLISHED, SECURE

V11 – A RICH WELCOME INTO GOD’S KINGDOM

NB – AS WE GROW IN OUR FAITH AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, THE SENSE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND HIS ANNOINTING ON OUR LIVES, MAY NEED TO BE PURSUED THROUGH INCREASED INTIMACY ETC. IT WILL NOT BE THERE, AUTOMATICALLY.



THE DIVINE EXCHANGE
MY INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

<i>JESUS TOOK MY....</i>	<i>AND OFFERS ME....</i>	
PUNISHMENT	REMISSION OF SINS	Eph.1:7. No evidence of it – or that it ever existed. Is.53:5.
SICKNESS	HEALING AND HEALTH	Matt.8:17. Is.53:4. I Peter 2:24 (past tense).
SIN	HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS	II Cor.5:21. 100% Righteous in Christ. We are credited with his goodness – all that was due to Jesus.
DEATH	HIS LIFE	1. Walking in God's health and strength – John 10:10; Rom 6:23; 1 Peter 2:24. 2. Freedom from the fear of death – Heb 2:15. 3. Living out our full lifespan (Ps 139:16) and completing the work God has for us – II Tim 4:6.
POVERTY	HIS ABUNDANCE	Christ's riches. Poverty= hunger, thirst, nakedness and want of all things. Abundance to be a channel of blessing to others – missions – build God's kingdom. II Cor.8:9.
MY SHAME	HIS GLORY	Shame = embarrassment, unworthiness. Jesus hung naked on the cross. cf. Gen.3:7 & Rom.8:18.
REJECTION	ACCEPTANCE BY GOD	Matt.27:46. The only occasion Jesus asked his Father a question and didn't refer to him as Father. We are accepted in the beloved.
THE CURSE	THE BLESSINGS	Gal 3:13; Deut.28:1-14. Ask for favour from God. Head not tail. Reproductiveness in all aspects. (Crown of thorns – Gen.3:17-18).

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE DIVINE EXCHANGE

II Cor.5:21; Mark 11:24; Eph.1:17-19a; II Peter 1:3-4; I Cor. 2:12

FOUR STAGES: REPENT, BELIEVE, CONFESS, ACT.

We need to get to know the Holy Spirit as the executor of the will of God. Our eyes need opening. Peter and Paul for example, were totally changed by the coming of the Holy Spirit – all their previous learning hadn't opened their eyes.

REPENTANCE is about how straight we walk – DECISION – stop doing wrong – a choice of the will, not emotion.

FAITH/BELIEVE: Faith is coming as we hear the word of God – Rom.10:17. The importance of hearing for ourselves – speak out God's word.

CONFESS: Rom.10:8-9; 10:10 & 17.

In the first reference: MOUTH > HEART.

In the second reference: HEART > MOUTH.

We learn by mouth e.g. our alphabet before we learn by heart. Speaking out God's word gets it into our heart.

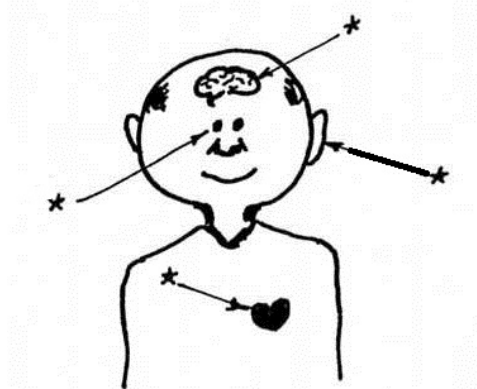
The importance of meditation. Stand on the promises of God until the Holy Spirit ignites it within us (Mark 11:24).

Heart educated by mouth; the heart overflows through our mouth. Jesus is the High Priest of our confession.

ACT OUT: Taking a new step of faith e.g. boy with leg caliper who bought a new pair of shoes. Act out what has been revealed.

HOW TO HEAR:

1. ATTEND: Undivided attention and aim; Prov 2:1-5; Matt 6:22.
2. INCLINE: Open to biblical truth and new revelation – teachable and humble.
3. KEEP BEFORE YOUR EYES: Keep your eyes on the word, not circumstances, e.g. medical report.
4. MIDST OF YOUR HEART: The importance of meditation (digest God's word).



WALKING IN HEALTH

(SEE ALSO IN THIS MANUAL “THE DIVINE EXCHANGE” AND “TENSION AND BALANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE”)

DIVINE HEALTH

Divine health has always been God’s ideal – See Ex.15:26; I Peter 2:24 (past tense) and James 5:14-16, which shows it is God’s will to make sick people well. This last reference shows that God’s will is WHOLENESS, and not simply healing, as does I Cor. 11:28-31. Yonggi Cho, the Pentecostal Pastor of the then largest Church in the world in South Korea was himself ill for ten years, but God transformed him and his church in that time, from being a “one man band,” into a body ministry in which everyone had their part to play; he regularly needed medicine in those ten years. Another leader in his church who was hospitalised, led others to Christ whilst he was there. Others in Yonggi Cho’s ministry have been supernaturally healed, without medicinal intervention.

For those who are sick I take my stand on the scripture, “He who asks always receives” (Matt.7:8). Jesus healed all who came to Him (Matt 8:16-17). God may supernaturally heal, or direct some other course of action e.g. repentance (1 Cor 11:28-31), forgiveness - it is medically recognised that about 80% of all physical problems, have an emotional base e.g. guilt, bitterness etc. - or God may direct some medical remedy (Is 38:21), or show a change necessary in lifestyle (e.g. relaxation), or in diet (1 Tim 5:23) or exercise. We may need discernment as to its root cause (Matt 17:18) – demonic. It could be that God wants to use someone with a specific healing ministry (1 Cor 12:9). Finally, recognise that we have to sometimes admit our lack of knowledge-mystery (Deut 29:29; Rom.11:33). Notice the different ways Jesus healed four blind people:

1. He spoke the word (Mark10:51-52).
2. He touched once (Matt.9:29-30).
3. He touched twice (Mark 8:23-26).
4. He used spit and earth and told him to go and wash in the pool (John 9:6-7).

Then notice the different ways God freed his disciples from prison:

1. By the use of an angel (supernatural) – Acts 5:17-24.
2. An earthquake (natural) Acts 16:25-28.
3. Litigation (normal processes) Acts 25:10-12.

Notice, not everyone was released from captivity (Matt 14:9-12). This is also true in healing, as explained above (Deut.29:29). See also the teaching on LOGOS and RHEMA in the article, “The Makers Handbook.”

All the foregoing shows is that there are spiritual and natural laws, and neglecting the latter is at the heart of many of our problems. You may fast and pray on top of a multi-storey building, but if you jump off it (ignoring natural laws), its likely to be fatal! In like manner you cannot claim divine health and treat your body like a dustbin! We ignore God’s health laws, which medical science is slowly catching upwith, at our peril. Few Jews died in the Black Plague in England, due it is believed to the biblical emphasis on hand washing and cleanliness (see the teaching on quarantine, taught then and practised today Lev.13:4-5), something not appreciated then, but which we take for granted today. Certain forbidden foods then, are known today to be very high in cholesterol (e.g. fat Lev.7:23). One of the first issues God dealt with in the Wilderness was what the Jews ate and drank. In the beginning Adam was given a vegetarian diet (Gen.1:29) – and this was infinitely

healthier and better than the rich food offered to Daniel (Dan.1:11-17) but after the flood certain meats were added to what could be eaten. It has been observed that the ideal diet in today's society should comprise mainly complex carbohydrates (vegetables, fruit and whole grains) and a small amount of meat. It is also recommended to seriously limit, all caffeine, sugar, white flour, salt, cheese and whole milk, the last two because of their high fat and cholesterol content, tobacco and alcohol. In 1937 a USA investigation found that in every country, without exception, where white sugar had been implemented into their nation's diet, there had been a dramatic rise in sugar diabetes, within 25 years, **See I Cor.6:12.**

HEALTHY EXERCISE: Walking was commonplace in biblical times and taken for granted, unlike out lifestyles today. Physical exercise improves energy levels, aids sleeping, promotes good health and well-being, relieves stress, reduces weight, improves efficiency and work levels.

GOOD EXERCISE stretches the capacity and work rate of the heart and lungs when carried out over a suitable, regular period, in a continuous exercise plan. It needs to be regular (three to five times a week) and be a way of life. This should thereby contribute towards greatly improved health. Jogging, fast walking, swimming and cycling are all excellent forms of exercise, subject to the caution below. One doctor has written that, if a person engaged in fast walking, five times a week for half an hour plus, he or she would not need any other special form of exercise. The other extreme is also true; overdoing or making a god of exercise may have the same effects as thrashing a new car – you may well pay for it later with worn out joints etc! Remember: Balance!

REGULAR RESTING: When the Israelites refused to give the land its Sabbath rests, but worked the ground intensively, God sent the Jewish people into exile in Babylon for 70 years, so that the land would enjoy its Sabbaths, for the equivalent time that the land had been deprived its rests, (II Chron.36:20-21; Lev. 26:43; Jer. 25:10). In much the same way, God may bring about a time of enforced rest, for those who constantly drive themselves. Under the New Covenant, it may be a specific day of rest, relaxation and worship, or periods of time, during the week (see Rom. 14:4-5).

BEFORE COMMENCING A NEW EXERCISE PROCEDURE, CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR, IF YOU ARE OVER 30 OR IF YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH CONCERNS.

Beware of telling others that the problem is their lack of faith, which may be an excuse for our lack of effectiveness as ministers of God's word. This may also put an additional crushing load of guilt, condemnation and despair onto others, Jesus's discernment was perfect - ours often may not be!

The object of this article is to help towards keeping our bodies, God's temple, in the best possible shape to serve him more effectively.

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Mark 4:35-41

When God wanted to take the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt, they had to go through the wilderness in order to enter Canaan. In the end, only two of those who set out from Egypt – Caleb and Joshua – actually entered Canaan, the remainder perished in the wilderness. When Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him as the very heavens opened to him, this was immediately followed by Jesus being tempted by Satan, in his own, 40 day, wilderness experience. Throughout scripture a principle runs: God gives us everything in PROMISE form, we then go through the PROBLEM, or wilderness stage, but if we hold onto the PROMISE and look to God in the wilderness stage, we come through into the PROVISION.

	<u>PROMISE</u>		<u>PROBLEM</u>		<u>PROVISION</u>
<u>ISRAEL</u>	EGYPT	➡	WILDERNESS	➡	CANAAN
<u>JESUS</u>	LUKE 3:21	➡	LUKE 4:1- 2	➡	LUKE 4:14
<u>DAVID</u>	ANNOINTED (I SAM.16:1&13)	➡	FLEES (I SAM. 21:10)	➡	BECOMES KING (II SAM. 5:3)
<u>ROMANS</u>	DEAD TO SIN (ROMANS 6)	➡	CONFLICT (ROMANS 7:14-25)	➡	LIBERTY (ROMANS 8)

God wants all His children to enter into His rest, to cease from all our anxious self-effort and trust in His promises (Heb 3:2, 4:11), so that we live and move in complete peace, see also Eph 1:18-19 & 2:6, Is 30:15, II Cor. 5:17.

The problem or wilderness stage is designed to make us look to God in our need and as we do so, God meets with us and we come through into his provision. A failure to look to God will leave us with an unfulfilled promise. Some perish in the wilderness, but others emerge victoriously into God's provision. A Christian sees that he is filled with God's love (Rom. 5:5) but then cannot understand having negative and hostile feelings towards certain people and as he cries out to God to manifest his love in him for people he finds himself unable to love, so God gives him the love (PROVISION) for that "impossible person."

It must be appreciated that many of God's dealings with us in the wilderness are designed to bring us to the end of ourselves – our reliance on our own willpower, intellect and strong emotions – and to throw us back on God and a dependence on his power alone to bring us through our crises and predicaments; this was Paul's experience in II Corinthians 1:8-10. To go into any situation arrogantly, for example when ministering to others, rather than in a spirit of humility and total dependence on God, is asking for failure and total ineffectiveness.



One other aspect needs mentioning. When Daniel sought God concerning the future of his people (Daniel 10:1-3), with a partial fast for 21 days, the angel made it clear that, although Daniel had been heard by God on the first day, resistance to the answer in the spiritual realm had delayed God's answer for the full 21 days. This shows the importance of "praying through" and persisting until we receive the assurance of answered prayer.

So we now come to our key passage (Mark 4:35-41). Jesus had already stated, “Let us go over to the other side” (v35). There was the PROMISE. The apparent life threatening storm was the PROBLEM and their looking to Jesus brought them through into the PROVISION, although they were wrong to panic (v40) – maybe Jesus wanted his disciples to meet the storm with faith, not fear, whilst he enjoyed some sleep! So often in life people cry out, “Don’t you care if we perish? (v38), “Why were you asleep in the boat ?” “Where were you when I most needed you, or when I went through that trauma as a child?” Sadly, many people close up to others, because of past painful and difficult relationships, but in the process of closing up to others, they also close themselves up so that God cannot “get through,” either. The real sadness is that God is especially close to us, when we are going through difficult and painful times, but we wrongly assume that he is indifferent and unwilling to help us in our times of trial; we misunderstand and misinterpret an apparent lack of divine intervention.

One of the reasons why we encounter problems and pressures, sometimes after some new work of God’s Spirit in our lives, is that hurts and bad experiences, that may have been pushed down inside us – some since childhood – are released, and brought to the surface. This could include suppressed anger, experience of abuse etc., which gradually seep or burst into our consciousness. We may feel we are going backwards, rather like our “wilderness or middle problem” stage, when God’s Spirit may be releasing us emotionally and cleansing his temple, our bodies and minds etc, (John 2:13-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). Different people have different approaches to the healing of, or transforming of negative emotions, but opening ourselves to the unconditional love of God, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and maybe one or two trusted Christian ministers or friends – bringing our problems into the light – are normally keys to the healing of our damaged emotions.

Let’s try to understand:

1. The storms of life cannot be avoided.
2. Jesus has already braved and overcome all your storms and mine.
3. How we can respond positively to all our storms.



1. WHY THE STORMS OF LIFE CANNOT BE AVOIDED

We live in an imperfect world, full of imperfect people, like you and me. We have all hurt others, and been hurt, ourselves. When Jesus entered the human arena, perfection came face to face with imperfection, and those who hated the light were determined to get rid of him (John 3:19-20). We are called to be terminators of evil and not to pass on our hurts etc. to others – the chain reaction of sin really did stop with Jesus at Calvary but many have ignored God’s provision for sin altogether and those of us who have not, are being perfected and still sadly, say and do things which cause hurt to others. Commenting on the life of Joseph, David Seamands writes, “It is not that God needs our tragedies, traumas or the sins of others, to work out his plans and purposes, but in this fallen and imperfect world these are just about all the materials he has to work with.” We cannot avoid the storms of life.

2. JESUS HAS ALREADY BRAVED AND OVERCOME OUR STORMS

In taking on our humanity here on earth, Jesus didn’t stay on some ivory throne way above us, but came down to where we are, experiencing every storm we could ever possibly face. Jesus hasn’t simply been identified with every sinner but also with every victim. For example, being born of a virgin – prior to Mary’s marriage to Joseph – he would understand the gossip and hurt, felt by anyone born out of wedlock. No one could possibly understand feelings of rejection, better – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” To the rape victim, he understood their humiliation by being deprived of his covering, whilst being pinned down (on a cross) and jeered at. He knows how

the victim of bullying feels – he was blind folded, whilst being struck with fists and asked to prophecy who hit him, and when darkness covered the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour he would have lost sight of his loved ones, such as his mother. To the person who cannot understand why God “stood back” and allowed the loss of a loved one – well, it happened to God’s own son at Calvary. Jesus knows what it feels like to be rejected, betrayed and abandoned by those closest to him – and now he’s in the boat of our lives, wanting to take us through our traumas and tragedies, to the other side. The bible does make it clear that it is through “much tribulation” that we enter the kingdom of God, and teaching that does not prepare new Christians for that, is really misleading such people (Acts 14:22). I once spoke to a lady who, following her initial commitment to Christ had turned away from God, as it had caused division and separation in her family, but Jesus taught that that was a distinct possible consequence of following him (Matt.10:34-35). On the basis of my conversation with her, it appeared that a lack of preparation and understanding of the issues of discipleship, was at the heart of her disillusionment.

3. HOW WE CAN RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ALL OUR STORMS

God has a definite goal for all his children and that is to make us like Jesus in character i.e. Christ-like (Rom. 8:29) and it is only when our goal is the same as God’s for us, that “All things work together for good, with those who love God” (Rom. 8:28). If our goal is anything else to be rich, famous or even a great preacher or evangelist, then we will experience frustration and anger with anyone who seems to stand in our way. God does have individual gifts and ministries for every Christian, but these will only be properly fulfilled by those whose emphasis and goal is on Christ-likeness. When our goal is biblical, God can use everything that has or will happen to us to make us more like Jesus by the way we respond to it, and that applies to all our pre-Christian experiences. God’s sovereignty over the “wind and waves” of our lives (Mark 10:29-30). I once was told of two ladies who had lost their fiances on the first World War’s battlefields, neither had married since; one had become a very caring person following her experience of loss, the other had become very bitter. The same experience had produced two, totally different responses and characters. Yet, we all constantly face the choice of how to respond and react to the storms of life and relationships etc. In the past I felt I had “been taken to the edge” spiritually, physically and emotionally, but God had used my past traumas and experiences to make me more able to help others in similar difficulties, you cannot be a Himalayan guide, unless you’ve first walked the Himalayas!

One of the best ways of understanding these truths is to appreciate how a pearl is formed. Some grit or sand gets into the oyster shell, some oysters respond to this irritant by producing a secretion over it, which when hardened becomes a pearl! The pearl is a symbol of suffering and the twelve gates in the heavenly Jerusalem are made of pearl (Rev. 21:21), but our response to our trials, tribulations and daily irritants will determine what is formed in us; we can respond with righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17) or with resentment, rebellion and independence.

Even when we have responded wrongly in the past, God can bring healing, release and transformation, restoring the years the locust has eaten (Joel 2:25). It is essential to forgive those who have hurt and wronged us, as God has already forgiven us everything, and expects us to pass that forgiveness on (Matt. 18:32-35). Then his healing presence can come into these emotional wounds and dispel them by releasing the emotional pus from them.



We cannot change the past, but we can reinterpret it. The death of Jesus would have been the blackest event in all history, were it not followed by his resurrection, which completely reinterpreted his death, and what may have appeared to have been the ashes of defeat in our own lives may, rightly interpreted, be the seed-bed of a far greater victory, later. Prior to the storm, Jesus had already said, “Let us go over to the other side.” He has seen beyond your storm to the safe arrival on the other side of the lake, so go bravely and confidently on.

LAW AND GRACE

THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW

The essential difference between the Old Testament and the New could be described as the difference between a map and a guide. Under the Old Testament or Covenant, God's laws were like a map, telling us how to get to where God wanted us to be, "keep my commandments and live" (Prov.4:4) i.e get to your destination by keeping the rules (laws). See the consequences of disobedience in Deut.28:15 and following. The aim of the Old Testament, however, was love for God and others (Matt.22:36-40), but was without the empowering of God's new life source. The problem was and is that no one could keep all the rules, because of their fallen ADAMIC nature (Rom. 7:21-25; Gal.3:10). The New Testament or Covenant can be likened to the journey that Abraham took - "To a land that I will show you" (Gen.12:1). Abraham needed God to show him, step by step – a walk of faith. Being led by the spirit (Gal.5:18); is likewise a journey, in which God shows us the next step of the journey of life, growing into God's character and purpose. The Old Testament laws were a single complete system, given only to Israel (John 1:17) and they had three purposes:

To tell us we were bad: If a law says that you must not drive over 30 miles an hour in a built up area, exceeding that shows up our selfishness, sinfulness and lack of love (I Tim.1:9-11).

To stop us getting worse: It acted like a school-master, keeping us in check (restraining) – Gal.3:23-25, until full liberty would come, under the New Covenant. Can you imagine a sports match in which there were no boundary or touch lines, and no referee? Laws prevent anarchy and chaos!

The law could never make bad people good! This demonstrates why the old you and I need to be born again, with a new life source within (John 3:3).

The New Covenant can be summed up in three words, faith hope and love (Col.1:5; I Cor.13:13). This is what the Old Testament laws were getting at and leading up to, Jesus perfectly fulfilling the law, enabling full liberty to come. The Holy Spirit's leading will never be contrary to God's word – the Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out God's word. The Spirit's leading may come through a new realisation from God's word, or a prompting or conviction within etc., but as guide He knows the way forward!

NEW TESTAMENT LEGALISM: - See Gal.3:1-14. Many truly born again Christians have sometimes substituted their own faith in the finished work of Jesus on their behalf, for a life of self effort, instead of outworking our faith in Jesus (Phil.2:12-13) – because we have already been put in a right relationship with God, through repentance and faith. Paul asked the Galatians, "After beginning with the Holy Spirit are you now trying to obtain your goal by human effort? "Being led by the Spirit" (Rom.8:9; 12-17), and carrying God's will out in His power, is completely opposite to having our own set of rules and regulations. Beware of the "I MUSTS" e.g. I Must read ten bible chapters a day and pray; I Must share my faith with a least two people a day; I Must overcome this fault by having a set of rules (do's and don't) etc. etc. where we feel guilty because we are trying to attain our goal by human effort and will-power, and not by the Holy Spirit's enabling and leading, from a place of rest and acceptance in God. "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THANKSGIVING

FROM PRISON TO PRAISE

GENESIS: 37 & 50:15-21

At the end of the 1960's a series of books by a U.S. army Chaplain, Merlin Carothers on the subject of praise, led to a tremendous amount of controversy and debate in the Christian world. The issue was, should we thank God IN all things or FOR things? Merlin advocated the latter.

When we consider the importance placed on praise and thanksgiving (Heb.13:15; Eph. 5:19-20) it is clear that this is something we need to cultivate, as well as any spontaneous expressions of gratitude and appreciation, we also need to appreciate the solemn warnings given about grumbling, fault finding and complaining (I Cor.10:9-10; Num.12). A thankful praising heart should exclude these lethal, negative attitudes. Praise and thanksgiving are an expression of gratitude, appreciation and confidence in God, but let's try to understand the theology behind the "Prison to Praise" approach. From a human perspective the greatest wrong and evil in all history has to be the murder of the Son of God, Jesus on a cross, yet from a divine perspective this was totally within the plan and purpose of God the Father (Is.53:10) and the means of our salvation. In exactly the same way, everything is under the sovereign hand of God (Prov. 16:4; Matt. 10:29-30) and for the Christian who loves God, lives with the knowledge that nothing can happen to him unless God sees that it can be used for the ultimate purpose of making him like his Son, Jesus (Rom.8:29). Even past failures and difficult experiences can be redeemed and transformed as we thank God for what we have been through. Our experiences will be drained of the poison of resentment, bitterness, fear, unforgiveness and a lack of confidence in the plans and purposes of God. We can never understand everything, but we can express our trust in the sovereignty and transforming power of our God. This confidence does not mean a lack of sensitivity to pain and suffering, either in ourselves or others; Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and yet his words and actions before and after this occasion showed who was in control, and that a greater purpose was at work, over and above the immediate problem (John 11:35). We cannot thank God for things that are wrong and sinful, but we can thank God and praise him for all that he can bring out of the most terrible evil and it IS there, if we will only begin to look for it! For example out of the first World War was born the determination to provide a land for the Jews, out of the second World War the Jews were made ready for the land – and the state of Israel was a reality again in 1948, just as God had determined (Ezek.37:14). Joseph was greatly distressed when he was sold by his brothers into slavery (Gen.42:21) yet saw the plan of God in all his sufferings in slavery and prison etc. in that amazing statement, years later in the words to his kidnapping brothers, "You intended this for evil, but God intended this for good and the saving of many lives" (Gen.50:20). WHERE DO YOU THINK HIS BITTERNESS AND UNFORGIVENESS WENT?

Study two other biblical examples and notice their attitudes and experiences in their "dungeons" etc. Jonah (Jonah 2:esp.9-10) and Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22-30).

Praise is an expression of confidence and trust in God, no matter what the circumstances – they may not change, but you and I will!

Here are some other suggestions for praise and thanksgiving:

1. ON AWAKING: Thank God for the routine things we can take for granted – sleep; food and clothing; your house, food to eat, the ability to see, hear, walk etc, employment – or your own home to care for – friends in Church and in our families etc. (Luke 17:15-19); be creative and develop this habit.

2. **PAINFUL EXPERIENCES**: Thank God that he allowed you to go through these, and try to list all the good that has come out of these experiences e.g. the loss of a loved one may have produced a new understanding of the pain and suffering of others, resulting in a new ability to help others, in this area (II Cor. 1:3-4). Ask, “How can my experiences make me more like Jesus?”

3. **DIFFICULT PEOPLE**: Learn to thank God for our different temperaments, gifts and contributions to life. A strong, tough leader for example, may sometimes appear insensitive, but is often able to keep going towards a goal, in a way in which an over sensitive person may not – but the latter will be more sensitive to the feelings of others. A confident speaker may get conversations going, but a quiet person may be a better listener! Learn therefore to accept people *as they are* and the best way to do that is to thank God FOR THEM. Notice that Jesus told us to pray for our enemies and not about them (Matt.5:44; 10:12).

4. Finally as Judah, which means, “Praise,” led the Israel armies into battle, so praising God is a key factor in victorious, spiritual warfare.

Discuss why God never removed Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (II Cor. 12:7-10), and the attitude Paul expressed in v10.

Learn and meditate on James 1:2-3. Face up to the need to repent of wrong attitudes, such as resentment, unforgiveness etc.

FINAL THOUGHT: I Thess.5:18; I Tim.6:6-8.

“The world’s concept of happiness is having what we want. God’s concept of happiness is wanting what we have – (being thankful).” Neil Anderson.



FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO.2

FAITH TOWARDS GOD

STUDY 2: THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS AND OUR SALVATION

THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION FROM GOD: Read Luke 24:13-35

Imagine yourself to be searching for a person you have been told about, but have never met. After numerous enquiries and years of searching you sit down in a frustrated heap, finally admitting defeat. Within a short space of time a stranger approaches you, and announces that he or she is the person you have been searching for.

The bible encourages us to SEEK GOD (Matt.7:7; Heb.11:6), but makes the place of God REVEALING himself to us and truths about him, his prerogative and initiative (Luke 10:22). As we put these two thoughts together, God sees our wholeheartedness in our search for truth, but then does what only he can do – to remove the veil (Rom.11:25-27). This was the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:30-32), but it is also true of the doctrines of the finished work of Jesus. Daily ask God to “open our eyes” to his finished work.

CHRIST’S FINISHED WORK AT CALVARY

Question: What did Jesus mean when he cried out “IT IS FINISHED?” (John 19:30). What are the implications and effects of that on you and me?

CHAIN REACTION

Imagine someone who unfairly criticises others, let’s assume it’s the father in a household. He’s very angry and comes home and “takes it out” on his wife, who then gets upset with the children. A chain reaction of anger and frustration has taken place: BOSS > DAD > MUM > CHILDREN > The story of the human race is similar. God created Adam and Eve to love and enjoy him, but they chose instead to live independently of God. Following the breaking down of this relationship with God, we soon are reading of the first recorded murder in human history, Cain killing Abel in a jealous rage, and by the time of the flood the whole earth was full of violence and immorality (Gen.6:11). We see this chain reaction going on between other groups and nations – “You hurt me, so I’ll hurt you!” This tendency towards self centredness and sin is a nature we are born with, inherited from Adam, and is sometimes referred to as the ADAMIC NATURE (see I Cor.15:22).

Question: What do you think it means to be IN Adam or IN Christ? The good news is that, 2,000 years ago, this chain reaction of sin was TERMINATED in the physical body of Jesus at Calvary, at the cost of his own life. He refused to PASS ON evil, or to retaliate in any way. When he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit came to give us new life, so that we could begin afresh (BORN AGAIN) and come into a new family (CHRIST’S). Being IN CHRIST means that we’re included with Jesus in his:

1. DEATH – See Gal. 2:20 and Rom. 6:11. Dead men do not need to fight against sin but rather, turn away from it. God’s Old Covenant laws couldn’t achieve this, but were designed to keep us in check until Christ came (see Gal.4:1-2). There is a difference between the sins we commit (the products) and ourselves as the producer (the factory). The crucial point for the Christian is to see that Christ’s death on the cross was my death.

2. BURIAL – See Rom.6:4. There is a full study on this, under the subject of water baptism. At this point, simply note that, being IN Christ includes the burial of our old self with him!

3. RESURRECTION – Anyone can talk about life after death, but if someone comes back from the dead, it shows that they knew what they were talking about! The amazing transformation in the lives of Jesus' disciples shows the reality of the resurrection (Luke 24:33-35; Acts 9:1-25), yet the inner change in the lives of millions, has left them (and myself) with no doubts about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus proves that he is whom he claimed to be (Rom.1:4) that he has overcome death, and is able to impart ETERNAL LIFE (Mark 10:30; John 3:15). Being IN Christ means that I was included in his resurrection (Rom.6:4-5).

4. ASCENDED – The Ascension was Jesus' coronation. When Jesus ascended and sat down at his Father's right hand, he took his rightful place as Lord of all (Acts 2:33-36; Eph.1:19-23). He has a glorified human body, so that the dust of the earth is in heaven forever, as our benefactor. The nail prints in Jesus' hands and feet are the only man-made thing in heaven (John 14:13-14). Being IN Christ means that we're seated with him in heavenly places (Eph.1:20; 2:6); it also means we're new creations (II Cor.5:17). This is true IN CHRIST and not in ourselves. IN CHRIST we receive everything that is true of Him by simple faith, and not by striving.

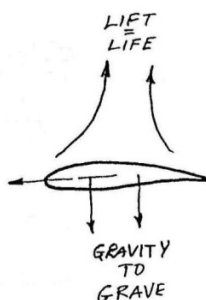
THE SENDING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is a direct result of Jesus leaving this earth (John 16:7). Jesus could only then be in one place at one time, whereas the Holy Spirit is now universally available (John 1:12; 3:8).

NOW READ ROMANS 8:1-4

Two laws are mentioned here, (called laws because the end result is always the same).

1. The law of sin and death – No matter how hard I try with my own strength, all my efforts to live as God wants me to live will end in frustration and failure, so God has provided another law
2. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus

The law of gravity – a downward pull – is overcome by the law of aerodynamics. The aircraft stays in the air because there is a power keeping the aircraft up that is stronger than the downward pull. So when we trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to live godly lives, rather than in our human efforts, we can begin to live victoriously, although God always requires our active cooperation and choice.



II CORINTHIANS 5:17 – ALL THINGS BECOME NEW i.e. THE OLD THINGS!
EVERYTHING FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION IS MADE NEW IMMEDIATELY WE BELIEVE (ED SILVOSO)

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO. 2 (CONTINUED)

FAITH TOWARDS GOD

STUDY 3: BY FAITH NOT SIGHT

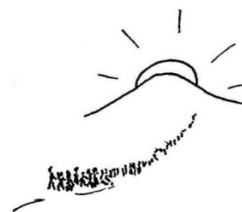
To move on effectively in the Christian life, we must first know God's peace and rest in our lives. The first part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is about Christ's finished work, which enables us to "SIT with him in the heavenly realms" (cf. Eph.1:20:2:6). This leads into the middle section of his letter which is about WALKING in the spirit, with the final part of the letter – STANDING our ground on the spiritual battlefield. *SIT > WALK > STAND*.

We're now looking at this second aspect of "WALKING." The Christian life is a journey. Out of sin, into holiness, out of darkness into light. This is a picture of the spiritual journey God wants all of us to take, and the pattern shown below.

EGYPT ➡ WILDERNESS ➡ CANAAN
Red Sea

BONDAGE ➡ CONFLICT ➡ CHRISTLIKENESS (ROM.8:29)
(Sin) (Victorious Christian Living)

SAVED	➡	BEING SAVED	➡	WILL BE SAVED
FROM <u>PENALTY</u>		FROM <u>POWER</u>		FROM <u>PRESENCE</u>
OF SIN		OF SIN		OF SIN
REF. (TITUS 3:5)		REF. (ROM.7:21-25)		REF. (I JOHN 3:2-3)



Jesus has paid the PENALTY for our sins; a process goes on in our lives of sanctification BEING SAVED; but whilst some do enter into victorious Christian living more quickly and fully than others, we will only be SAVED FULLY – with new bodies etc. from the PRESENCE of sin – when we see Jesus (I John 3:1-3). Until then we must remain vigilant.

NOW READ II CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:10 (Use the Living Bible if possible).

QUESTIONS: What were Paul's eyes set on and what was he looking forward to?
What does it mean to walk by faith, not sight?

LOOK AT THE DEFINITION OF FAITH IN HEBREWS 11:1.

In what follows there is a FORWARD LOOKING, as we shall see, A JOURNEY. Faith is based on the eternal, invisible truths of God's word, not on what our physical senses recognise and can see. Everything we can SEE will one day disintegrate or decay to dust and ashes.

QUESTION: How would you describe "LOVE" or "HATE," SCIENTIFICALLY?
"Five foot two, eyes of blue" or SOMETHING INVISIBLE that makes its presence felt by its expression? Or is it the MUSIC IN THE ORGAN something you can see and analyse or something INVISIBLE that is produced?
Now look at I CORINTHIANS 13:13 to understand the INVISIBLE QUALITIES of the ETERNAL.

THE SPIRITUAL AND THE SCIENTIFIC: When Isaac Newton's apple landed on his head he stated, "What goes up, must come down!" as he formulated the laws of gravity. Today rockets are launched into space that don't simply come back down. It's not that Isaac Newton was wrong, but rather that what he stated was INADEQUATE to explain the whole picture. The natural laws and the skills of Doctors etc. are God given, but there is a supernatural dimension that transcends the natural. Jesus for example, healed people when all human resources were exhausted (Luke 7:11-17). Jesus was fully human and got tired (John 4:6) – which was natural, yet was able to walk on the water (Matt. 14:25-30), which was supernatural. Whilst we must not make a false division between the natural and the spiritual, it is important to understand these two elements, for example, looking after our bodies, proper food, rest etc. yet open to the supernatural power of God in healing etc.

THE WORLD SAYS SEEING IS BELIEVING.
GOD SAYS BELIEVE AND YOU WILL SEE.

The story's told of a famous nineteenth century tightrope walker called Blondin, who performed on a rope across the Niagara Falls. One day he crossed the Falls on his rope, pushing a wheelbarrow. He asked one of the watching crowd, "Do you believe I could take you over the Falls in this wheelbarrow?" "Oh yes," replied the man. "Well, jump in the wheelbarrow, then," urged Blondin. The man refused. Did he really believe that Blondin could do this?

In a time of drought, a church called a prayer meeting to pray for rain, but only one little girl brought an umbrella to the prayer meeting!

NOW READ ROMANS 4:18–21 God promised Abraham and Sarah a child, after it was physically impossible to have one. (There was a time when Abraham and Sarah turned to their own devices to try to produce an heir, through Sarah's maidservant, Hagar, a practice that is still used in some parts of the world. The consequences were disastrous and is at the heart of the Arab/Israeli conflict today).

FAITH is based entirely on God's word. We see his creative power through the spoken word. God said, "Let there be light and there was light" Gen. 1:3. N.B. Our words can have great creative or destructive power. What do you understand by the statement, "Death or life lie in the power of the tongue" Prov. 18:21. Jesus said, "The words I speak to you are spirit and life" John 6:63. When we speak, breath comes out of our mouths as well. Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Ghost" John 20:22. On the cross, Jesus breathed his last.

WE NEED GOD'S SPIRIT AND WE NEED GOD'S WORD

"If we have God's word only, we'll dry up.

If we have God's spirit only, we'll blow up.

If we have God's spirit and word, we'll grow up".

FAITH IS NOT: Positive thinking, really trying and struggling to believe something. It's not stubbornness, logic or rational reasoning or presumption.

HINDRANCES TO FAITH: Doubt, unbelief, unforgiveness, bitterness, gossip, criticism.

NOW READ HEBREWS 11:1-16: Note how faith was shown by their actions, for example, Noah build an Ark although there was no sign of rain, let alone a flood! If you were upstairs in a house and someone came rushing up to say there was a serious fire downstairs, proof of whether you believed this person or not would be shown in whether you got up and out of the house, or whether you stayed in the upstairs room.

Look at and discuss James 2:17.

FAITH IS THE MEANS BY WHICH THE UNSEEN BECOMES REAL.

SUMMARY: SEATED YET MOVING ON

See Rom. 5:1: When we know that we are in a right relationship with God, through our faith in the finished work of Jesus on our behalf, then we will be in a position to move on. When a child knows acceptance he is in a place where he can develop healthily, taking responsibility etc. whereas without such a sense of security, there will be struggling and striving, without any peace. When we are resting in Christ's finished work we can move on effectively. The New Testament letters, such as Ephesians, start with who we are in Christ, before addressing our conduct, which is an outworking of right believing.

AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNION by Richard Walker

Lots of Christians find Communion a bit of a weird out-dated, ritual in the midst of an otherwise very modern and relevant faith. But when you understand what God intended Communion to be, it is not only a great privilege to participate in, but also rich in meaning, helping us to understand our nature, our salvation and the direction of human history.

So what is Communion?

Communion is God's family meal. True, a bit of bread and wine is not much of a "meal," but it is symbolic rather than nutritional. The God of the Bible is a relational God who loves to spend time with those he has created. There's no simpler or better way to share love and friendship than over food. So, let's think about that family meal idea for a moment. Family meals take place inside a home, and involve all its members. All the children resemble their parents in different but obvious ways, both in appearance and mannerisms. The food they eat together is the result of the labour dad and mum have done so that they can nourish and sustain their family and prepare them for a future that is full of hope and expectation. As they eat, they talk. They review the time since they last met, telling of their failures and their successes. They share their hopes and fears as they plan for the future, and as they do all that, they deepen their love for one another and their unity as a family.

In God's family meal of communion, the home is the church meeting. God is present with us, his children, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are all his adopted children and so whilst we don't resemble each other in appearance or mannerisms, our similarity is in our characters increasingly resembling that of Jesus our Lord. God feeds with food that symbolises his great work of redeeming us from sin, darkness and death, sustaining us in the everyday trials of life and preparing us for an awesome future together with him in a new united Heaven and Earth. As we meet, we review the time since we last met, telling of our failures and successes. We share our hopes and fears as we look to the future, and as we do all that, we deepen our love for one another and our unity as a family.

What is so significant about the Bread and the Wine?

The bread and the wine symbolise the whole story of the God and his people throughout history. They are memorial to the past, a celebration in the present and an anticipation of the future all rolled into one.

Firstly, they are a memorial, they symbolise our past and that of the crucifixion of our precious Lord Jesus; the bread speaks of his body offered up in obedience to death and separation from his Father, and the wine speaks of his blood poured out as he took the judgement of God upon himself for all our rebellion against him.

But we don't just remember what God did for us there, amazing as that is, we also remember that when we received Christ for the first time, we were crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) – our old way of life with all its rebellious attitudes towards God, was also put to death that we might be washed and cleansed of all our darkness and resurrected, transformed and glorified to stand before God, now and forever, in all purity.

Secondly, the bread and wine speak of celebration, of Christ's presence here and now with us for he did not stay dead, but was resurrected and ascended to intercede for us before our Father in Heaven, and by his Spirit, he pours out his eternal life upon us his people who have been resurrected to share that life with him. Just as all life (food, drink, information, oxygen etc.) comes to the body through the head, so all life in the church, which is Christ's body, comes through Christ who is its head.

And so the bread speaks of Jesus and his words being our sustenance, that he is our daily bread, the bread of eternal life, helping us grow and keeping us going along the long road of life and the wine

speaks of him being our victory and our joy and celebration so that we need not walk in fear, but in fullness of life.

But again, it doesn't stop there for just as Christ is our bread and wine, so he wants to turn us into bread and wine for the world to "eat" that by the way we live our lives in sacrificial service for God to others, we would nourish and sustain the communities in which God has placed us and bring them to understand something of the joy and victory of God at the cross so the world might know that there is a God who loves them.

Finally, whilst Christ is truly present now by his Spirit, he is also truly absent physically. For now, we eat and drink by faith, but one day, we will finally see Jesus and his Father face to face and so the bread and wine remind us to anticipate the future great wedding feast of God, when all darkness is finally swallowed up by light, when all tears are finally swallowed up by all joy, when our weak, temporary bodies are replaced with eternal, spiritual ones, in short when all death is finally swallowed up by life. On that day there will be a great uniting, Heaven and Earth will be physically united together as one. God and his people will be united as one family and Jesus will be united to his Bride the church and we will enjoy sweet fellowship in that new world, full of life and light. Our delight will be in him and his delight will be in us.

So what?

The next time you take communion, you can humbly rejoice in any/all of the following:



- That Jesus died for you and that all barriers that stood between you and God and between you and fellow believers have been done away with.
- That your old life is finished and that you do not need to listen to its demands or its temptations as it tries to drag or lure you away from God's purpose for your life.
- That God promises to sustain you every step of the way in life and that as you submit your way to him he will prosper you and make you a blessing to the people he has placed you amongst in this life.
- That you have a place in the new world once this life is over, where you will enjoy incredible unadulterated happiness with God and his people for ever and ever.

So, let nothing hinder you from joyfully coming to God's family meal table, even if you feel like you haven't been living the way you should. It is of course vital to confess our shortcomings honestly to God and where appropriate to others. It is also vital to offer forgiveness and reconciliation to those who have offended us, welcoming others as Christ has welcomed us. But never lose sight of the fact that no matter who we are, what background we have or what our current track record is, we can all rejoice that by God's gracious invitation alone, we are his dearly beloved children, we have a place at his family meal table and it would no longer be the same if we were not there.

ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

LEARNING TO LOVE

Jesus summarised the teaching of the Old Testament in the two commands: “Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbour and yourself.” In like manner the New Testament commands are summarised as faith active in love (I John 3:23).

GOD		Our relationship with each other mirrors our relationship
	FAITH	with God, for we cannot be filled with love for God and yet
		be filled with hatred for our brother (I John 4:19).
MAN		LOVE The Dead Sea is dead because it has no outlet.

There are different levels of relationship and it is unrealistic to think that we can have the same depth of relationship with everyone, for example: Jesus had an especially close relationship with Peter, James and John – they alone were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and at other intimate moments. Jesus still had a very close relationship with the 12 disciples with whom he spent three years of his life. Jesus had a more general relationship with the 120 – who were present in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus had a more general relationship still with the rest of the world, with many “one off” encounters.

In the same way we should have that “two or three” with whom we can share anything and everything, a group of house-group size with whom we can be fairly open, representing the 12, and a wider relationship with the whole church – but none of these relationships should make us introverted and exclusive, but rather like a healthy husband and wife should make us more responsive to others.

We are called to love God and all our fellow men, although its expression will vary.

1. God – when God has first place in our lives, His divine love within us will transform all other relationships.
2. Families – our families are mini-churches - a training ground for the wider family of God (I Tim.3:5). Read what Paul says about those who neglect provision for their families (I Tim.5:8) and Jesus’ statement of responsibility (Mark 7:11-13).
3. The Lost – (Evangelism) – We are called to love God and our fellow men. Jesus said “Go out and make disciples of all nations.....” (Matt. 28:21), this is our great commission. Develop a brief outline of sharing your faith – use the 'Knowing God personally' booklet. Also consider prayerfully and financially supporting a reputable evangelist or mission.
4. Brethren – fellow Christians. As we love one another, the world will see a description by our very lives of the sort of relationship they can be part of (see John 13:34-35).
5. Enemies (Matt.5:43-48) – “Love” is not based on what we can get back from others. When we maintain an attitude of love, even to our enemies, we represent the pure, unconditional love of God to others. N.B. This does not mean that love is “soft” or weak (see Matt. 18:15-17 & II Thess.3:10).
6. The poor – God shows special concern for the most needy and vulnerable, such as widows and orphans (Ex.22:22-27). Consider our attitude to the ‘poor half’ of the world, investments etc. and James 1:27. Today there is a new awareness of our responsibilities towards such people, locally nationally and internationally.
7. Ourselves – we are told to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matt.19:19). If we do not know we are loved and accepted by God, for example, we will not be able to reflect God’s love to others. (Rom. 5:8; I John 4:19).

We all have the same basic needs for:

1. Security- to know we are loved unconditionally – Rom.5:8; Jer.31:3.
2. Significance – we have all been equipped to do at least one thing well – we would leave a gap if we died tonight (I Cor.12:7).
3. Self Worth – an appreciation of my individuality and worthwhileness in God's sight.

Psalms 139:13-16 shows God's individual work in our creation. Coming to terms with the way God has made us, spirit, soul and body and not wanting to be someone else, is crucial to our sense of self-worth.

Fear of Rejection is probably the greatest barrier to loving others. The alternative is to be an island – to cut ourselves off and keep others at a "safe distance." Then we can't be hurt, but neither can we learn to love. We need to be willing to be vulnerable and to choose to love, irrespective of the reaction of others to us.

CONCLUDING TEACHING ON LOVE

Love has been defined by one person as: "To have the highest good of the other person at heart" and by someone else as, "The accurate estimation and supply of the other person's deepest needs".

Divine Love (Agape) by its very definition can only originate with God. Such love when received will touch our will, intellect and emotions.

Example: A baby cries in the middle of the night. The tired parents do not feel like getting up, but by a *choice of the will*, do so. Yet a deep feeling (emotion) still normally undergirds acts of the will, or one has sooner or later, a neglected, unwanted baby on their hands. The intellect is involved in knowing how best to show love to the needs of the crying baby. In the same way our love for God and for others should be firstly a choice, but sooner or later should involve our emotions and our intelligence (see Mark 1:41 & Rom,12:2).

Restoring lost love - A common problem in marriage is that one or both partners claims to have lost all love for the other. Revelation 2:4-5 shows how the Ephesians "lost love" could be restored by "doing the works that they did at first."

True life story to illustrate the above scripture: A minister who was on the verge of divorcing his wife because of a reported "complete loss of love" was urged to DO those works that he did when they were first married, and other things that would show love to his wife, be it washing up or bringing in a meaningful gift. At first he felt no different, but after several months he reported being "more in love with his wife than he had ever been." It is important to realise that as we choose to love, we still must look to God to pour His divine love into our hearts, and into our relationship.

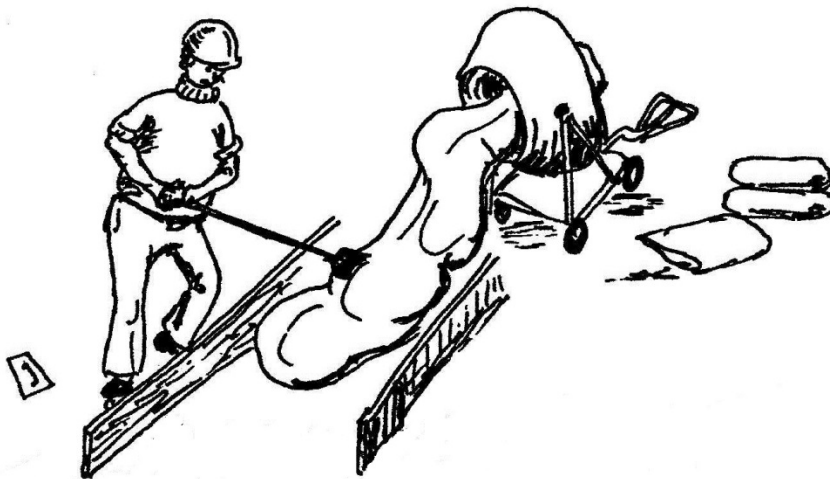
The truth about love

1. God loves us unconditionally – Rom.5:8
2. We are commanded to love – I John 3:23
3. We cannot love in our own strength – John 15:5
4. We can love with God's love – Rom.5:5
5. We love by faith – Mark 11:24
6. "Divine love does not draw back; it totally exposes itself at the cost of embarrassment and shame; the wounds in the flesh only exposes love, and provides a way for it to flow forth." (Derek Prince). To love means to be vulnerable, twenty four hours a day.

Just as we take our salvation by faith and not feelings, so we can claim God's love by faith for those we feel antagonistic about and move towards them on the basis of the faith that we have received God's love for them. As we reach out to others in this way, so God's love for them will them become real in our experience.

CO-OPERATING WITH GOD

Laying down boards: If you wanted to produce a concrete path you would first have to lay down the boards, between which you would pour the cement. Once the cement is hardened, you can take away the boards and the path is fixed, without any outside support. When we want our relationship with God to develop and grow, we lay down boards by setting time aside for him etc. Reaching out to others may involve something tangible like a gift or appreciative note etc. Such acts are simply boards, between which we invite God to pour the divine concrete of his love and grace. The transforming miracle working power is God's, the "loaves and fishes" or the boards are that which we offer to God, as a willing expression and vehicle of our co-operation.



SERVING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

JOHN 13:1-7

PHILIPPIANS 2:6,7

When Jesus took a towel and a basin of water and washed His disciples feet, he made the point that he came to serve rather than be served. In this attitude, act and statement, Jesus laid down a crucial principle of Christian discipleship, that he who would be first must be the willing servant of all, (Mk 9:35 Matt 20:28). For many years I was concerned about how my own ministry and individual gifting could be fully developed and realised, until I appreciated that servanthood involved asking how I could get underneath others, and give them a push up, rather than my focus being primarily on my own ministry and gifting. Competitiveness is a real problem that seems to “dog” so many ministries within the church today. Of course we should be concerned and diligent about discovering our God-given gifts and ministries (Rom 12:3-8), but all we do needs to be done looking to the wider good, rather than to our own self-centred progress! It is so easy to use that which God has given us to draw people to ourselves rather than to God. Jesus said, “Give and it shall be given to you” (Luke 6:37-38), which is usually applied to money, but the principal holds good in service, i.e, as I seek to further the ministry of others, serving them - so God will enable my own ministry (opportunities) to develop (see also Matt 6:33).

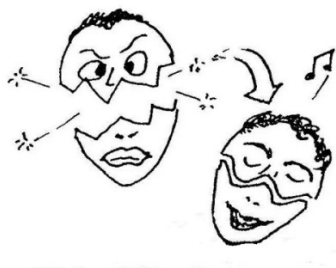
Now let's apply these principles as an introduction to our next subject of marriage relationships. Many have understood the biblical role of the husband to be very dominant, and to expect unquestioning obedience from his wife, yet Jesus who was co-equal with his heavenly father (Jn 10:33 Titus 2:13) submitted to Him and his earthly parents, and won an eternal victory over the powers of darkness, and all that the world could throw at him, not by bullying and intimidation, but by love. This doesn't mean that we “shirk” responsibility, or fail to confront others in truth and love, as when Jesus overturned the money changers tables in the temple (Jn 2:13-17). Now supposing a Christian husband asks himself, “How can I as a loving leader, enable my wife to reach her full God-given potential? How can I love, honour and cherish her?” And supposing his wife was to ask, “How can I enable my husband to reach his full potential, and respect him, as my loving leader?” We then have a marriage which is “other centred”, and where each is primarily concerned for the others’ position and development - we then have SERVANTHOOD! I believe that many wives would gladly encourage and trust their husbands, as loving leaders, if they really knew that they were loved by them, as Christ loved the Church (Eph 5:28). Try applying these principles to Church life and other relationships as well. Now let’s look at the issue of “courtship and marriage.”

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE MATTERS

Knowing your reasons for wanting to marry, and being clear and united in your expectations, can make a massive contribution towards its success, and help avoid much potential heartache.

1. What do you appreciate about your partner?
2. What differences are there between you that could or do cause conflicts?

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MARRIAGE

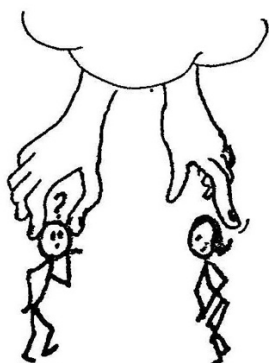


"It is not good that man should be alone – I will make a helper, fit for him"

The cut-outs in the illustration show how our differences are meant to produce oneness, in which we complement one another in our make-up and function. This doesn't mean that one partner is superior in any way – we have different roles, but we are equal in God's sight.

Whilst differences in our roles and individual make-up are meant to complement one another, there are other differences which if not talked through and resolved before marriage, are likely to cause serious problems later.

GOD MADE MAN FIRST



Wanting him to be secure in his singleness, before he could relate properly to someone else. We either MINISTER God's love to our partners, because we know we are secure, significant and worthwhile in God's sight – or we will try to MANIPULATE our partners to make us feel secure etc. Marriages with such emotionally dependent people, are often soon in trouble. Of the three needs stated in the "You Matter to God" sheet, the need most keenly felt by a lady is that of "security," whilst for a man it is normally "significance."

And God took a rib from man's side. Not from his head that his wife might be over him, or from his foot that she might be under him; but under his arm that he might protect her, and close to his heart that he might love her.

(Paraphrase from an unknown author).

RELATING ON THREE LEVELS



We are spirit soul and body. The lowest form of relationship is one in which there is physical attraction only. Once these desires have been met, people soon tire of each other. A better relationship involves SOUL AND BODY, where maybe mutual interests, or complementary personalities (see cut-out illustration) produce some very good marriages that do stand the test of time, but the finest and fullest marriage can only occur between two spiritually healthy Christians, as an unbeliever is spiritually dead and a back-slidden Christian will not be much healthier. Christians are not therefore to be mis-mated with unbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14).

Leaving Healthily (See Ex.20:12; Eph.6:1-3). Ideally, all marriages would have the parents blessings. Honouring parents includes respect for their God given position, experience of life etc., whilst never submitting to domination or control. We need to consider any ways we have been unhealthily bonded to our parents e.g. emotionally, financially, as well as any ways we showed disrespect or lack of appreciation.

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT AND SEX

God's divine order is a) LEAVE YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER – some problems can occur when one marriage partner is still dominated by or emotionally bound to one or both parents. A marriage firstly involves the breaking up of two families when the two marriage candidates LEAVE to form their own family, and b) AND BE UNITED TO HIS WIFE – working at the relationship, and c) AND THEY WILL BECOME ONE FLESH - sex is meant to be protected by the marriage covenant, representing the total self-giving and oneness of two people.

PRE-MARITAL AND EXTRA MARITAL SEX can produce serious problems within a marriage.

PRE-MARITAL SEX can produce great insecurity, especially in the woman – “I wonder if he would have married me if we hadn't” Where at all possible, asking God's AND each other's forgiveness, is the way to “wipe the slate clean” and to rebuild a stable relationship.

EXTRA MARITAL SEX - A married person who has had other partners, has been likened to someone tuning into RADIO ONE, whilst getting background interference from RADIO'S TWO, THREE, FOUR AND FIVE. Repenting of and renouncing past, “one flesh” relationships with other partners, is necessary to break these bondages, and to be able to give yourself completely to your marriage partner.

WAITING FOR GOD'S BEST

Whilst it is right to prayerfully and actively seek for the right partner, many problems occur when we a) doubt God's goodness and willingness to provide us with the right person, and b) when all we care about is “MY NEEDS” rather than God's plan and purpose for our lives, WHICH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT, ALL OUR NEEDS (Matthew 6:33). It must also be remembered that God expects us to work at our marriages and not to run away as soon as conflict arises. NOTE GOD'S VIEW OF MARRIAGE VOWS (Malachi 2:15-16). A Christian marriage is meant by God to be a picture of his relationship to his Church (Rev.21:2; Matt.25:1; Eph.5:25-26). As such he expects us to reflect his faithfulness and commitment to his covenant. However, even when we feel we have failed God badly, he wants to help us to start again – knowing his total cleansing and forgiveness (John 4:1-26).

PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD HUSBAND/WIFE RELATIONSHIPS

ATTACK THE PROBLEM, NOT THE PERSON

“Marriage doesn’t create problems, it reveals them.” - Ed Silvosa.

1) PUT GOD FIRST – THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST - Read Matt.10:34-39.



When we are able to draw on God’s resources and divine love, it should make us a better husband or wife (I John 4:19). Maintaining a quality devotional time with God, and praying etc. together daily, are crucial ingredients.

2) CONVEY UNIQUENESS AND SPECIALNESS TO YOUR PARTNER

If a husband wants his wife to treat him like a King, then he should first treat her like a Queen! Our partners need to know that, next to God, he or she is the most important person in our life. We need to build quality time for each other into our daily/weekly programmes. Getting too busy for each other because of work – or even church ministry – will deny the specialness of your partner. Have a day/evening weekly, kept just to be with each other. Affairs occur when an outsider shows to the neglected partner, the special attention and interest that they expected, or once received from their partner. The quality of the first year of a marriage often sets the tone for the rest of the marriage, which is why Jewish males were exempted from the army for the first year of marriage (Duet 24:5).

ACCEPTANCE: You are responsible for your own character and your partner’s needs (not visa versa!!)

3) LOVE LANGUAGES

Each of us expresses love in different ways:
The giving and receiving of:

- (a) TOUCH - non-verbal caressing and physical tenderness is to many recipients, the most appreciated expression of love.
- (b) WORDS – endearing words: “you’re wonderful, you look great” etc.
- (c) TIME – showing your partner that they’re worth the first place, and your undivided attention etc. walking, talking together.
- (d) PRESENTS - as tokens of care – surprises etc.
- (e) ACTS OF SERVICE - Carrying out practical tasks, e.g. around the house when your partner, for example may be very tired.

DISCUSS:

- (i) Which of the above love gifts does your partner most like to receive?
- (ii) Does your partner know which of the above love gifts you most enjoy?

4. UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SEXES

Generally:

- a) MEN SEE THINGS IN WIDER PERSPECTIVE, WOMEN ARE CONCERNED WITH DETAIL. Men are GOAL ORIENTED, women enjoy the process – e.g. shopping, most men just want to get the job done, ladies enjoy looking. Telephone: A lady will enjoy discussing details that often seem insignificant to a man, SEE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THIS ARTICLE. Different things will often matter to a man and woman, with the resultant potential for conflict, if not understood.

- b) A MAN IS MOST AFFECTED BY WHAT HE SEES e.g. SEXUALLY, WHEREAS A WOMAN IS MOST AFFECTED BY WHAT SHE HEARS - how you speak to her, throughout the day, for example.

5) NEVER TAKE EACH OTHER FOR GRANTED

Keep the same standards of care, consideration, appearance etc, as when you were courting – as well as continuing any patterns of surprise gifts, telephone calls etc. This maintenance of courtship standards will help to preserve the atmosphere of romance and “first love” (Revelation 2:4-5).

6) SHOW TRUST, OPENNESS AND HONESTY

As the man is meant to be the loving leader, he needs to be trusted with the family burdens. Likewise a wife is a HELP-MEET who should be trusted to share in the concerns of the husband. Hiding difficult problems through fear of misunderstanding, will create barriers, isolation and damage to the relationship. Learn to share everything with your partner, at the right time and place. Many marriages die through a progressive lack of communication. Make time daily, to talk through issues, concerns and hurts etc.

7) FOLLOW DIVINE ORDER IN RELATIONSHIPS

Let, help and encourage the man to be the loving leader – but he must never be a dominating tyrant. The right leadership will provide the correct climate for the wife to be joyfully submissive towards a husband, who only wants her highest good, and her complete fulfilment as a woman.

8) BE RESPONSIBLE IN MONEY MATTERS

A major cause of stress in marriage revolves around financial matters. It is important to draw up a family budget and to do all in your power to stay free of the use of credit. Romans 12.8 is seen by some as an endorsement of this principle. It is important to tithe; a minister friend once shared with me that he had never had to counsel anyone with financial problems who practised tithing.

REMEMBER – The other man’s grass may seem greener, but when you get there you soon find that it has to be mowed! That other man or woman may seem a better choice now, but two years “down the road,” tap washers and nappies will still need to be changed, as new responsibilities replace the old ones you may currently be tempted to run away from. (Based on comments from Rob Parsons and James Dobson).

In 1981, Dr Roger Sperrett won the Nobel Peace Prize in medicine and physiology, for his work on the difference between the way the brain functions, in a male and female. He discovered that, between the 16th and 26th week of gestation, two chemicals are released in the boy, that slows down the development of the right side of the brain. The left side of the brain – concerned with logic, and the right side – concerned with caring and detail, can help us to understand something of the God-given differences that can and do exist between the way men and women normally approach life – the difference between being GOAL ORIENTED – (LOGICAL APPROACH) and ENJOYING THE JOURNEY (CARE AND DETAIL APPROACH).

SINGLENES

Paul through whom God did so much for His kingdom, had a gift of singleness (I Cor 7:7). Jesus, John the Baptist, Miriam, Elijah, Elisha and Daniel were all unmarried. In heaven there will be no marriages (Matt 22:30) and in one sense, singles are reminders of this now. But what of the heartbreak, grief and loneliness of those who long to find a partner, but are still alone today? In many churches there are twice as many ladies as men, which compounds the problem (II Cor 6:14) so what can be said to those who are struggling with a longings, pressures and problems of those who are on this on their own?

1. INTIMACY

It is possible to enter into a love relationship with God, which is beyond any human relationships (Matt 22:37-38) and I have heard this testified to. Likewise in service for God, Derek Prince says that when one stream is blocked, water can flow into others, and singleness can provide a greater freedom in service, availability, prayer etc. With God's help we need to beware of resentment about our singleness, which will only poison the remainder of the river. Believing that God has and wants the best for us, that God is a good God, is crucial for a healthy, Godly character. – Matt 6:33; 19:12; Ps 84:11.

2. SELF ACCEPTANCE

There is a danger in looking for completeness in another person, rather than in God (Col 2:9-10). Before we can be happily married to another, we need to be happily married to ourselves! e.g., “You have got to make me feel secure, significant and worthwhile,” rather than finding this in God, first - we enter marriage in a spirit of mutual, other centred giving and serving - or we enter it as a manipulator, “trying to get,” rather than give, from a place of known acceptance in God. See “You matter to God” article.

3. REALITY

We have to ask, why are so many marriages falling apart, with just as many inside as outside the Church, ending in divorce or separation? There are just as many, trying to get out of the “fortified castle of marriage,” as those trying to get in! We are spirit, soul and body, and once any initial physical longings have been satisfied, the reality of building a complete and fulfilling relationship with the other person, may make us wish we had waited for God's choice, or stayed single! Love can wait to give, lust can't wait to get! After one life time we will stand before God, either having fulfilled His plan for our lives, or missed it because of a perceived, short term satisfaction. Even though if we have made a wrong and hasty decision, God's forgiveness is absolute (Isaiah 1:18) - (Leaving us as white as snow), and growth in character through difficult marital circumstances, may yet be a major transforming issue in our lives. After David's adultery with Bathsheba, Solomon was born to them and he was, part of the messianic line from which Christ came. God can transform any situation, but we may have to suffer the consequences of wrong decisions, such as increased family tensions etc.

4. LONELINESS

“God sets the solitary in communities,” (Ps 68:6), God said, “It is not good that man should be alone,” which is different from being married or single. Isolation is the issue here. Being a giving part of a healthy Church life-group etc, may be relieving busy parents by babysitting etc, may open the way to God's blessing on our own lives – (Ex 1:18-21). Those of us who are married should be very sensitive to the loneliness of singles, and show love in all appropriate ways. A recently married Pastor stated that, since he had got married, they had received many more invitations to homes, than before he got married! Why not before!!? Who will be alone, this Christmas?

5. BALANCE

God gave us bodies and emotions for a reason (I Cor 7:1-9). There are many cases of immorality amongst those who took vows of celibacy, who clearly should have been “open” to marriage. There are also those who believe they cannot re-marry after the breakup of a marriage, but believe they should be open to reconciliation, or stay away from potentially new, marital relationships. Some believe that a failure to provide food, clothing or marital love, (Ex 21:10), (let alone adultery) is covered in the New Testament too. However this is very serious consideration and dare not be taken lightly as an excuse for a change! Remember, God is not mocked! (Gal 6:7; Acts 5:1-6). Others believe that a marital breakdown means that a person is not free to re-marry – period! (Matt 19:8-9). We may have to live with the physical pressures of a single life, if singleness is neither our gift or choice, but just as countless martyrs have been given the grace to suffer victoriously, so it is equally the conviction of this writer that God's grace will keep us from falling, in such circumstances.

CHRISTENING, DEDICATION AND WATER BAPTISM

Many Churches are happy to dedicate babies and children to God at the request of the parents. Jesus welcomed and blest the children, but did not baptise them. Dedication is a way of thanking God for the gift of a child or children, and committing that child (children) to God, until they come to an age of accountability and understanding. It is our understanding of scripture that baptism by total immersion is not only correct (see explanation of burial of the old nature in the “Baptism in water,” article), but is only possible for someone who has first repented of their sin. The order is “Repent and be baptised.....” (Acts2:38).

The issue is very serious; I personally was christened and later confirmed, and yet I had no knowledge or understanding of a living relationship with God (Gal.2:20), neither was this addressed or understood. When I did later come to faith in Christ elsewhere, and eventually the issue of believers baptism was raised, I did not see why I should be denied the opportunity to be identified with Christ in water baptism, simply because that decision had been made for me, as a baby.

The Christian Life is not complicated – it’s simply.....

FAITH LIVED OUT IN LOVE, FROM A SPRINGBOARD OF HOPE.

COLOSSIANS 1:5

The Israelites were not fully delivered from the Egyptians, until the barrier of the Red Sea was faced and passed through. In like manner water baptism is a key factor (in conjunction with others), in obtaining and maintaining freedom from sin, and the oppression of Satan.

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO. 3

BAPTISM IN WATER

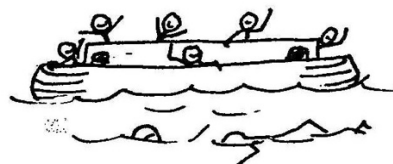
ROMANS 6:1-14; I PETER 3:18-22

If someone dies you do not leave the body lying around, you bury it. In our identification with Jesus – including his burial – we show our willingness for the putting away, or burial of our sinful self and life through the symbolism of water baptism (immersion).

The water is likened to a grave; as a believer goes under the water he is identifying himself with the burial of Jesus and as he come up out of the water he is identifying himself with the resurrection of Jesus – it is a way of saying “the old me is dead – crucified with Christ – I now want to live and walk in newness of life, as the new creature that I am.” In the days of the flood, (Genesis 6 & 7), everything under the water was accounted unrighteous and lost. The scriptural order has always been “repent and be baptised” (Acts 2:38) and therefore baptism can only be a personal decision and not one made for someone else (Acts 8:37).

Baptism does not mean that we cannot fail God, or that we have all the answers but it is a declaration of sincere intent and choice for God. Romans 6:1-11 which appears so “cut and dried” is followed by Romans 7:12-25 in which the writer clearly shows some of the conflict and wrestling of the Christian life before coming through into the spiritual promised land that is Romans Chapter 8.

Romans 6 – Romans 7 – Romans 8
(Promise – Problem – Provision)
Conflict



It is essential to be prepared for conflict prior to being baptised in water. After the Holy Spirit came on Jesus in a new way when he was baptised by John, Jesus was immediately led by the Holy Spirit into a major conflict with Satan in the wilderness. Read Matthew 3:13-4:11.

Many have fallen away after water baptism, possibly because they were not properly prepared for this new realm of spiritual conflict. Potentially, we are then a new force to be reckoned with (in Christ) and must expect greater opposition. We soon discover that we are in a real battle against spiritual not human opposition (Eph.6:12).

We are dead to sin, but like a man who had a limb amputated and thinks it is still part of him after the operation (phantom limb experience) so we have to “reckon ourselves dead to sin.....” Even when we feel very much alive to sin (The old *has* gone).

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO. 3 (CONTINUED)

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

ACTS CHAPTER 2

The Christian life is not only forgiveness ITS CHANGE and we need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in a much more effective way. In his own “Foundations Series,” Derek Prince lists some of the consequences of a spirit filled life, these include, Power to witness (Act 1:8); Exaltation and Glorification of Christ (Acts 2:33); Help in Prayer (Rom.8:26-27); Understanding the Bible; (John 16:13) Daily Guidance (Rom.8:14); Physical Health (I Cor.12:9); Divine Love (Rom.5:5); Liberty in the Church (II Cor.3:17); Active Participation (I Cor.12:7-31); Conviction of Sin (John 16:8); Supernatural Signs, Wonders and Gifts (Mark:16:15-18); A Personal, Permanent, Indwelling (John 14:16).

We receive the Holy Spirit at conversion (Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:9) but being Spirit filled is often a further experience following salvation – cf. Acts 8:5 & 12; and 14-17. Note that, although Jesus was conceived by the power of Holy Spirit, he clearly had a further anointing for service at the age of 30, following on from his water baptism (Matt.3:16). There is also a difference between being filled with the Holy Spirit and being in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:1 & 14). Someone has said “Before I was filled with the Holy Spirit I had the Holy Spirit in my life, after I was filled, the Holy Spirit had me!” The writer personally experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit, once he appreciated the need to make Jesus, Lord of every area of his life (surrender), although a gift of tongues was given later, along with other experiences of healings etc. Jesus was presented as Lord and not simply as Saviour, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36). The Holy Spirit can be in the house, but kept in the hallway whilst you attend to other matters, or in the centre of your home, a difference between knowing Jesus as Saviour only, or as Lord (see Daniel 3:18).

What really happened on the day of Pentecost?

1. God was glorified (v.11) – Love and worship came first, not service or evangelism. The ability to speak in a God-given language (tongues) can take us beyond the limitations of our human language. See the link between the heart and the mouth (Matt.12:34; Rom.10:10) to understand why our speech must be affected by our hearts being full of the Spirit.
2. Reversal of Babel (Gen.11:1-9). When man sought unity apart from God and independently of him. Instead of one language, there were now many, having the effect of scattering the people (dispersing). Here there is a drawing together of people from many different languages – in a common union in Christ (I Cor.12:27; Acts 2:1).
3. Love for one another (v42-47; John 15:17). Many believers have made much of the beginning of Acts Chapter two, but much less of the end of the chapter, which is part of the outworking of the Holy Spirit within us (see diagram in “All about relationships.”) The Dead Sea is dead, because it has no outlet! The salt content builds up, making it impossible for anything to live in it. God’s life flows into us (John 15:5) and is meant to flow out to others. So the early Church had a real commitment of love to each other. Our relationships with each other, mirrors our relationship with God (I John 4:20). “Everything in common” means that we are stewards, not owners of what we have.
4. Others became Christians:(v37-41, 47). When others see real life in us, many will want to know what it is that we have found! For our part we must be able to testify clearly (I Peter 3:15).

THE GIFT OF SPEAKING IN AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE

How do you know if this is from God? (See Matt.7:7-9).

Question: If a professing Christian appears gifted e.g. speaks in tongues, gifts of healings etc., but is devoid of fruit (Gal.5:22-23), what conclusions might you draw? (Rom. 11:29; Matt.7:15-20).

YOU CAN BE BAPTISED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit – Act 1:4-5.
2. God's desire to give to all – Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38-39; John 7:37-39. I find it helpful to encourage others to take a deep breath in, as one would 'receive' a drink, having made Jesus their/my Lord and asking Him to fill us.

RECEIVING THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

Two different views: Illustration – Stones/jar.

1. One extreme: God does not fill dirty cups – past or present occult involvement, bitterness and unforgiveness and an unrepentant attitude – real barriers to God's fullness.
2. Other extreme: Just ask – if we could fully change without the power of the Holy Spirit, then why would we need the fullness of the Holy Spirit anyway? One lady testified, "Before I was baptised in water, I could not give up smoking, once I had been baptised, I was able to stop smoking." Some Christians may have expected the lady to stop smoking before water baptism but some areas may not yield, until we move on. God knows our hearts. If we wait until we are perfect with anything, we may wait forever. God is a perfector, not a perfectionist.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: (Character) Gal.5:22-23.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT: (Ministry) I Cor.12:7-11.

TO BE FILLED: ASK, SEEK KNOCK Matt.7:7-8; Luke 11:13.

"Laying on of hands" is often used - Acts 8:14-17.

RECOMMENDED READING:

"Nine-O-Clock in the morning" and "The Holy Spirit and you" by Dennis & Rita Bennett.

THE DIFFERENCE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES CAN BE SEEN in the lives of Jesus' disciples. They had spent *three years* with Jesus when he was on earth, and yet they were full of fear, locked away in the Upper Room *until the Holy Spirit* came on them at Pentecost. After that, locked doors could not keep them in and from telling others about Jesus. Everything Jesus had told them had not been internalised, until the Spirit came.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS.....(a) WITH US – to convict of sin (John 14:17), (b) IN US – to produce Christ like character (John 14:17), (c) UPON US – to empower us for further service (Acts 4:31).

SPEAKING IN AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE – TONGUES

We receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit by faith, having surrendered our entire selves to Him, but people's experiences have varied greatly. Sooner or later however, the evidence of a further endowment from 'on high' should be apparent. The logic of receiving a new prayer language is that there is an overflow of the heart through the mouth (Matt.12:34b). There is a difference between a tongue that is used privately and devotionally, or with an interpretation (edification of self and the Church) and that given on the day of Pentecost, where the hearers could understand in their own language – a reversal of Babel (Gen.11:1-9). You have to open your mouth and begin to speak in tongues; the Holy Spirit will not do that through you. When I first spoke in tongues, I was just seeking to join in with someone else – and I was away!

TENSION AND BALANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In Philippians 2:12-13 we are told to: “Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” but how do we work out what God has worked into us?

One way of understanding this is to think of a string on a guitar. If the string is tensioned too tightly, it is likely to break, if it's too slack it will lack the necessary tension to play the correct note on it, but there is a healthy point of tension between these two extremes, which is neither too tense nor too slack.



I believe this principle can be applied to all aspects of the Christian life, for example, concerning daily prayer etc. One extreme would result in us going on too long and maybe ending up with a headache, and the other extreme would perhaps result in giving God little or no time each day because: “I just don't feel like it, today.” The Christian life is neither legalistic – living life by our will power – nor is it licentious – giving in to feelings of self-indulgence (see Gal.5:1 and v. 13). We all need to find that point of tension where we are nicely tuned up, but equally we need to know when to stop what we're doing. In this matter the peace of Christ is our umpire within (Col.3:15).

A nicely tuned or balanced Christian will know when to put down his bible and to enjoy some wholesome recreation, in order to keep himself at his best for God. He will seek to get adequate rest and nourishment for the same purpose – to glorify God (see Ephesians 5:29). There should be a healthy balance between work, exercise, recreation, growth in character, prayer, bible study and rest. It is recognised that in some situations, a believer may be deprived of some basic need for a while, for example a Christian parent whose sleep is constantly broken by a new born baby, but provided we are being responsible about all that lies within our power and choice, God will bring us through such times intact.

When planning your day it is important to first set aside “prime time” for God. For some this will be right at the start of the day, but for others in perhaps difficult family circumstances, such as a busy mother with an unbelieving husband, maybe a mid-morning time would be more suitable when she can be quiet and alone with God, but what matters is that each person “fences off” a suitable portion of the day, to draw their spiritual strength from God first, just enough to get nicely “tuned up,” then plan time for other important and necessary tasks, knowing when and where to stop and do something different. Sometimes a balance between say, an indoor and outdoor job (e.g. tidying the garden) will prove more efficient than a long session on just one activity or other. It is worth remembering here the balance between our relationship with God and our relationship with others. **SEE ILLUSTRATION IN “ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS”.**

One major cause of problems is a failure to find our correct area of ministry or gifting within the body of Christ. If we have not found our function within the Church, we will be like the sloppy guitar string we started by considering. On the other hand, if we are seeking to exercise a gifting or ministry which is not right for us – sometimes due to others wrong expectations of us – the strain and pressure of trying to be something we are not, will sooner or later prove detrimental in the form of excessive tension and general ineffectiveness.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD (Proverbs 1:7)

A further balance, which is seriously lacking today, is the balance between the fear of God (Matt.10:28) and our love for him. Fear means an awe and revering of, where we remember that God is **holy** as well as being our **heavenly Father**. This balance begins the Lord's prayer (Matt.6:9). It is an awareness of and respect for his presence, as opposed to an over familiarity and

contempt. NOW READ AND DISCUSS ACTS 5:1-11, and the effect it had on the Church – *and* those outside!

Fear includes living consciously and continuously in the awareness of the presence of God – i.e. He hears every word we utter, and sees everything we do, an awareness clearly lacking in Ananias and Sapphira. John Bevere talks of a road with ditches each side – as with our guitar string illustration (legalism and license). Love counter-balances legalism, and a holy fear counter-balances license. He would be among those who believe that a lack of fear of God, could lead to the loss of one's salvation (II Peter 2:17-22). The writer believes that no one can pluck us out of God's hand, (Jn 10:28), but that we can choose to permanently turn our backs on God – to walk away! Heb 6:4-6; Matt 13:21.

A SUMMARY OF FAITH AND WORKS

Compare Romans 3:21-5:11 with James 2:14-26.

LEGALISM – Saved by good works/avoid sin by keeping rules and regulations; doesn't work, see Gal.3:1-5 and Rom. 3:19-20,23; 7:21-25.

LICENSE – Saved without good works/free to abuse God's grace – see Rom.6:1-4; 15-16.

LIBERTY – Saved for good works/free not to sin. Correct! See Eph.2:10; Rom.8:3-4; 12-14; Gal. 5:13-18. PAUL (Romans) was writing for GENTILES, and seeking to defend them from Jewish Legalism. JAMES was writing for Jews, and seeking to defend them from GENTILE LICENTIOUSNESS.

We need both teachings to clarify the truth, and to arrive at a right balance.

BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:12-14 and Galatians 5:25

WHAT DOES HEBREWS 11:8 TEACH US ABOUT THE WALK OF FAITH?

We've just seen that a Christian walks a middle road between legalism and license. The middle path – a mid-point between two extremes - is the NARROW WAY, Matthew 7:13-14. The entrance though is through the NARROW GATE, which we have to pass through ALONE, and where we are stripped of everything we have and are – possessions, gifts, ministries, relationships etc. surrendering all to Jesus as Lord. God may well give much or even more back, the other side of the gate (the narrow way), but they are no longer ours, but HIS! - Mark 10:29-30: Luke 14:26-27. "Hate" for our parents here means, compared to our love for Jesus cf. Mark 7:9-13. No relationships must stand in the way of our following Jesus. See also the same use of the word 'sword' – Matt.10:34-36; 26:52-53 and Mark 7:9-13.

Being led by the Spirit involves

1. RIGHT VISION – We are meant to look forward to our goal, rather than looking back (Phil.3:13-14). There are times when past, unconfessed sin and occult involvements etc. will stop us moving forward and dealing with these hindrances, (past and present). This will almost certainly be necessary for us to move on (see "The Steps to Freedom in Christ" and other Counselling material). It is obvious though that one can only plough a straight furrow if you are looking where you are going (Luke 9:62). The Israelites had failed God terribly, but God made it clear through his prophets that he wanted them to forget their past failures (just as God had) and concentrate on the great the glorious future he wanted to give them (Is.54:4, 43:19).
2. A WALK – (Gal.5:25: Eph.4:1-2) – Comes out of our resting in the finished work of Jesus (Eph.1:19-21 & 2:6) – we are seated with Christ, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). We are included in Christ (Eph.1:13). To walk means "to order one's conduct" (Eph. Ch. 4 & 5). It is a life of obedience to the leading and initiative of God's Spirit, We rely on Him to live His life, in and through us (Gal.2:20) and to do in us, that which we cannot do ourselves e.g. "I cannot love that person as God wants me to, I will stop trying to and trust you to love that person through me" is meant to be a way of life, and not a "one off event." Note Jesus' pace when an angry mob was coming to take Him to a mock trial. Jesus was washing His disciples feet; you cannot run with a bowl of water. There's time to do everything God wants you to do, "no haste, no waste" in complete peace and trust in His sovereignty.
3. BEING LED – (Rom.8:14). The Holy Spirit is a guide not an Old Testament map. He knows the way, we don't. Who among us would have taken Jesus into the Wilderness after his experience at the Jordan? How many of us have planned out our spiritual route ahead, only to end up in a frustrated heap, a short while later? The Wilderness experience also shows the need to know God's word, to avoid deception. Much guidance is simply living by the principles of God's word.
4. DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO GOD'S LEADING – (John 10:5). We learn to recognise the voice of the shepherd, and initially we may make mistakes. The better we know God (intimacy) the better we will know his leading (Matt.3:16-4:1). Being led by the Spirit is an inner awareness rather than an outward pressure.
5. ONE STEP AT A TIME – (John 8:12). We cannot expect to move on with God until we obey what he's currently showing us to do. Once God has shown us something, he expects us to incorporate it into our lives (e.g. regular prayer, giving etc.) The knowledge of God's will may come through conviction or clear understanding from reading the bible, or an "inner knowing" (intuition) – including an uneasiness about a certain course of action.
6. RIGHT THINKING – (Rom.12:1-2). God doesn't over-ride our minds he transforms them,

DISCUSS JAMES 4:17 FROM BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT POINT OF VIEW – WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST – HIS HANDS AND FEET ON THIS EARTH.

One Chinese believer, when asked to take part in a gambling game with others, said that he hadn't brought his hands with him! – meaning that they were not available for a use that he believed was dishonouring to God (ref. “Normal Christian Life” – Nee).

Derek Prince defines the “laying on of hands” as “.....an act in which one person places his hands on the body of another person, for some definite spiritual purpose. Normally this act is accompanied either by prayer, or by prophetic utterance.” Properly understood, our hands should be a *visible expression of what is going on in the heart and mind of God*. This public, physically demonstrated proclamation by the church could well account for the “Laying on of Hands” being a foundation doctrine. Within the bible the hands were intended to be a visible means of communicating or transferring:

- 68

WARNINGS AND DANGERS:

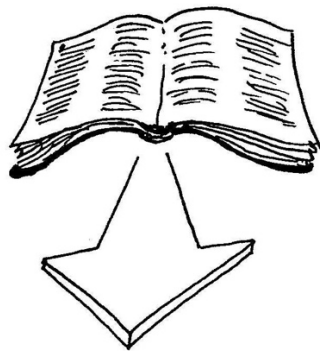
It is wise to check that the recipient is willing for you to “lay hands” on them and this is especially important with members of the opposite sex, as misunderstanding, or uneasiness within an emotionally damaged person’s mind can cause great problems. Where possible it’s a good policy for men to minister to men and women to women, although a suitable man and woman ministering together, can be an excellent and very effective combination (Aquila and Priscilla – Acts 18:26). Billy Graham will not travel in a car alone with a woman other than his wife or daughter and he has avoided the scandals that have beset many other ministers! “Avoid all appearances of evil” (I Thessalonians 5:22).

There is such a thing as the “Transference of Spirits” read Acts 19:13-16. See an example of the transference of sin – Lev.16:20-22.

TRANSFERANCE is not limited to the “Laying on of Hands” (see a *positive example* in I Samuel 19:18-24, and a negative one in Numbers 13:31-14:1), but physical contact normally magnifies the effect, and illustrates the AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY any servant of God has to ensure that he is a channel of blessing and not hindering, by harbouring unconfessed sin such as hostility towards others, or any form of impurity. The fact is that both good and bad things can pass from the one ministering to another, and is well known in the writer’s experience!

VULNERABLE AREAS: If there are areas of vulnerability in a minister, including fear, then he or she may be oppressed in those areas. This can be especially true if a person is tempted to minister “out of his depth.” On the other hand it is as we give we receive, without waiting until everything is perfect in our own lives, before ministering to others (Job 42:10; Luke 6:38). Ministering in pairs often has the effect of covering each other, and counteracting anything negative in one person.

*Be wise as to whom you **allow** to lay hands on you!*



BECOMING STRONG IN GOD

When someone becomes a Christian they are made into a brand new person – the old really has gone! (II Cor. 5:17). However, a battle still goes on within us between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh, in this context, is a learned independence of God, prior to becoming a Christian. The mind has been programmed by our old, independent ways of thinking and doing things, and this is where the truth of Rom.12:2 needs to be applied.

One man, when seeking to describe the battle that went on inside him between the flesh and the spirit, said it was like two dogs fighting within him. “Which one’s winning?” asked a friend. “The one I feed the most!” was the man’s reply.

NOW READ GEN.3:1-12; ROM.6:1-4, 8:12-14; I COR.9:27.

The bible reveals that we are spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:23) and living an effective Christian life depends much on understanding the place and function of each. The following chart and details may help:

A	SPIRIT	COMMUNION, INTUITION, CONSCIENCE ETC.
B	SOUL	WILL, INTELLECT, EMOTIONS
C	BODY	SEEING, SMELLING, FEELING, HEARING, TASTING

1. FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT

Communion: We are made for, and need to enter into a love relationship with God (John 4:23).

Intuition: Our inner knowing by the spirit (Rom.8:16; Mark 2:8).

Conscience: Seeing right and wrong from God’s point of view (Psalm 51:10).
(Conviction of sin etc.)

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE SOUL – DECISION MAKING

SPIRIT



SOUL



BODY

The spirit wants to take us heavenward. Our bodily desire (unchecked) would pull us down. The soul chooses which to respond to – so David instructs his soul, “Praise the Lord” (Psalm 103:1).

The will: To willingly co-operate with God (Matt. 7:21; Matt. 26:39) – Gethsemane.

Intellect: Allow our minds to be renewed by God’s word (Rom.12:2).

Emotions: God’s desires worked into us. (Phil.2:13). Right thinking and actions leads to right emotions (Gen 4:6,7).

3. FUNCTIONS OF THE BODY - PHYSICAL – THE VEHICLE OF GOD’S SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH US

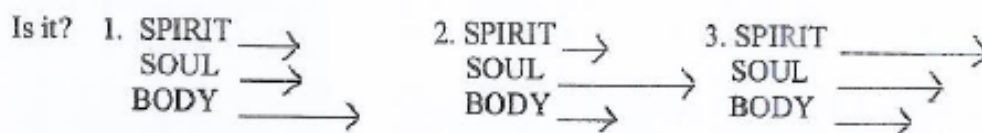
When Adam & Eve chose to rebel against God and eat of the forbidden fruit, they died spiritually (Gen.2:17), deciding to operate by their own will, intellect and emotions – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – they chose to rely on their soulish faculties. It is the same as the bass guitar (soul) attempting to take the place of an unwanted lead guitar (spirit). When Jesus Christ died and rose again, he restored the spiritual relationship that had previously broken down in Eden. God’s spirit joined again with ours, and we were made spiritually alive (Rom.8:10). The danger is that Christians can try to “help God out” by relying on their own will power, reason and feelings, rather than on the Spirit

(see Isa.30 especially v15 and Zech.4:6).

IN CONCLUSION: Realise

- 1) God wants us whole with the spirit leading and sensitive. The soul co-operates by our evaluating (I Cor. 14:29), choosing (Rom. 6:16) and right desires (I Cor. 3:1). The body needs to be looked after as God's temple, and is the vehicle for the spirit and soul.
- 2) Faith without works is dead: the body is meant to be willing and available to do God's will.
- 3) The spirit needs to be kept strongest to rule over the soul and body. A healthy devotional life etc. will be to the spirit what a good diet is to the body.

Which is the strongest drive in us?



CARNAL

Bodily appetites ruling
(Phil.3:19)

SOULISH-(RULING)

Will, intellect, emotions
(I Cor.3:1-3; Gal.3:1-5)

SPIRITUAL

The spiritual man!
(Rom.8:14)

QUESTION: What is the difference between a soulish and a spiritual Christian?

The daily time spent in prayer and bible study etc. is crucial to our becoming strong in spirit and has been dealt with before, including teaching in "Tension and balance in the Christian life," which also deals with the relationship between spirit, soul and body. Clearly, five minutes prayer and 35 minutes television on a regular basis, is hardly likely to produce a spiritually strong believer! Let us look at the practice of fasting as one means of being strengthened by the spirit.



FASTING A NEGLECTED DISCIPLINE

Isaiah Chapter 58 and Matthew 6:16-18

Many people, including some inside the Church, have difficulty seeing the point of fasting, which is “the practice of abstaining from food – for a specified period – for spiritual purposes.” These notes are intended to help explain its place and value.

Notice firstly that fasting and praying are both equally accepted as normal by Jesus (Matt.6:5 & 16). He said: “When you fast,” not “if.” Charles Wesley wouldn’t even ordain a man to the Methodist ministry, unless he committed himself to fast on two days a week until 4 p.m. However, the motive for fasting needs to be pure (Matt. 6:16-18) and not simply as a religious exercise. In Isaiah ch.58 the Israelites abstinence from food was not matched by an abstinence of wrong actions against their neighbours etc. and was therefore a pointless, religious exercise.

Secondly, understand a reason for its effectiveness. We each have a number of different appetites – hunger (Mark 11:12); greed (Phil. 3:19); sexual (I Cor. 7:5) and spiritual (Matt. 5:6) etc. When legitimate bodily appetites are denied at the expense of the spiritual appetite - as Jesus’ was in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-4) the spiritual appetite is strengthened and sharpened and can rule over the whole man more easily (I Cor. 9:27). The exact opposite is also true, when self indulgence pushes out appropriate devotional activities – prayer, bible reading, fellowship etc.

Thirdly, the bible makes it clear that some prayer needs the reinforcement of fasting to obtain its objective (Dan.9:1-3; Mark 9:29) some people fast before making big decisions, seeking to be more sensitive to the voice of God (Act 13:2). Often the body and mind initially react against this new discipline, but many discover a new clarity of thought and effectiveness, once this principle of a regular or partial fast (Dan.10:2) has been embraced. Our lives are so regulated by our eating that this change in routine should lead to a great sense of freedom and relaxation and often a sense of timelessness.

For a very few people there may be sound medical reasons not to fast, but be encouraged by I Kings 8:18. Neither should an absolute or total fast (no liquids) even be contemplated except by clear God-given guidance.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP by Derek Saunders

When we consider what God has done for us and what he will do for us, it causes a deep inner longing for us to express our love and appreciation of God.

Ecclesiastes 3:11:

Mankind is incomplete without Jesus Christ in their lives.

All over the world people have a longing to worship something, a car, a sports team, money or even themselves. This is because they are created and designed to praise and worship God, otherwise they/we may put a substitute 'god' in it's place.

PRAISE

Definition: To commend, to extol, to glorify.

Praise isn't quiet and static, it's active!

There are many exhortations to praise God in the bible, but in Hebrews there are seven different words for praise, each different, but all are outward expressions, i.e. vocal or physical.

1. Yadah Hands raised in surrender (Ps. 63:4, I Tim.2:8).
2. Towdah Hands raised in thanksgiving, particularly for things not yet received (Ps.50:23).
3. Halal Extol God, celebrate, rave, boast of God's exploits, be enthralled, enthusiastic.
4. Shabach Shout, speak to God in a loud voice (Ps. 117:1; Ps.63:1-4; Ps.47:1).
5. Barak Kneel or bow down in an attitude of worship, to bless God (Ps.72:11,15; Ps.95:6).
6. Zamar Use musical instruments (Ps.150; Ps.57:8-9).
7. Tehillah Sing (Ps.22:3; Eph.5:18-19).

WORSHIP

Definition: Worship is intimacy with the Father.
It is the outpouring and overflowing of the whole being, spirit, soul and body.
It is responding to all that the Father is.
It is loving him.

In the Old Testament, the one Hebrew word that is consistently used for the worship of God is "shacha". This word is translated as: worship, to bow down, to reverence, fall down, prostrate, stoop, crouch and beseech humbly. Worship is more than an attitude – it is an attitude expressed (Gen.24:52; Ex.4:31).

In the New Testament there are three separate Greek words for worship:

1. Latreus Public worship (Phil.3:3).
2. Sebomai To fear or hold in awe (Rom.1:25).
3. Proskuneo This is a combination of two Greek words and is the most common.
'Pros' which means "towards" and "kuneo" which means "to kiss."
Literally then, "proskuneo" means "to kiss towards." It pictures the relationship between two persons who have deep, committed, loving feelings for each other.

IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

John 4:23-24:

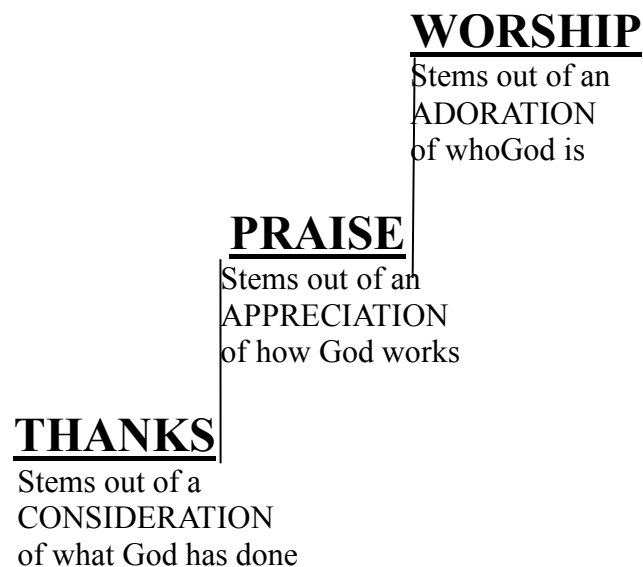
God is looking for worshippers, for people who will worship in spirit and in truth. 'In spirit' means, that we love God from our spirits, from our hearts and that we are led by the Holy Spirit in our worship.

'In truth' means that we are honest and sincere and that we are scriptural in our worship, according to God's word.

Praise and worship is to be a *natural* thing in the life of a believer, a response from being in his presence.

It is important to realise that the Psalmist says – "I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart and into his courts with praise....."(Ps.100).

There are different levels/steps we can experience in the worshipping of God.



Acknowledgements "Firm Foundations"

KNOWING GOD'S WILL AND FUNCTIONING IN HIS GIFTS

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 12

For many people including myself, coming to faith in Christ was a wonderful, transforming experience. There are some people whose feelings don't seem to change for a very long time, although their conversion is just as real, but many have gone through a honeymoon experience in which a whole new, exciting world has opened up. Once a honeymoon is over it is still a life that God wants us to live and enjoy to the full (John 10:10), but just as with any marriage, we have to follow the euphoria of the honeymoon with a facing up to our responsibilities and commitments, and a healthy Christian will want to know what God's will is for their life.

TWO WRONG EXTREMES

1. Indifference to God's will.
2. Anxiety – It is hard to hear God when we are not at peace.

CONSIDER: Do you think of God's will as a DESTINATION OR A WAY OF TRAVELLING?

Some Christians seem to be very gifted, but not very fruitful (see Gal.5:22-23 and Rom 11:29). Why do you think this is? God is firstly concerned with our character. He wants us to be holy (I Thess.4:3). In fact his will for all believers is to make us like his son, Jesus, (Christlike) Rom.8:29.

Now we turn from character to gifting and here there is rightly great diversity, but before we can truly know God's plan and purpose for our lives (end of Rom.12:2) there are three essential steps that we must take. Recognising God's amazing love and mercy to ourselves, our grateful response must be:

1. (v.1) **PRESENT OUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE**

A complete availability to God – we are now Jesus' hands and feet.

2. (v2) **BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF THE MIND**

God wants to bring our thinking into line with his. Once our bodies (v1) and minds (v2) are devoted to God, he can begin to reveal his will to us. Right thinking is looking at life from God's point of view.

Question: How can we renew our minds?

Can you think of any examples in which our pre-Christian thinking and experiences may have resulted in our needing to change our thinking, and renew our minds?

3. (v3) **DO NOT THINK OF YOUR SELF MORE HIGHLY THAN YOU OUGHT.....BUT WITH SOBER JUDGEMENT.** What does this verse mean?

PLEASE REFER TO THE GIFT CHART AND DETAILS AT THE END OF THIS STUDY ON GUIDANCE, TO HELP FIND OUT WHERE YOUR GIFTING MAY LIE (V6-8).

PRINCIPLES OF GUIDANCE

PRE-REQUISITES: When we are always seeking to live by the principles of God's word, we will experience God's guidance without always being fore-warned – UNCONSCIOUS GUIDANCE – “Who touched me? (Mark 5:29-31). Our view of God will determine much of our attitude to guidance. Do we walk in freedom or fear? See Gen. 3:1-3. Is it: “Did God say you are not to eat

of any of the trees in the garden?” (Portrayed as a narrow, limiting killjoy), or is it, “We may eat of any of the trees in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?” (great liberty and freedom, yet within God’s boundaries).

SEE JOSHUA 1:3; Acts 16:7. God can guide a moving ship, not a stationary one.

Romans 12:2 Becoming passive and expecting God to work through us, without our active co-operation, is one of the great deceptions of the Christian life, making it possible for Satan to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit and get “a hold” on our minds and bodies. The passivity that Satan requires can be seen in the experience of a spiritist medium who allows his/her body and mind to be TAKEN OVER by the spirit.

THE THREE HARBOUR LIGHTS OF GUIDANCE



1. GOD’S WORD – Is your course of action, scriptural? (Matt.4:4).

(This includes a willingness to submit our perceived guidance to other Christians – see James 3:17 – ‘...submissive ...’ i.e. ‘willing to yield to reason’ - (Amplified).

2. INNER WITNESS – (Rom.8:14; Col.3:15). An inner conviction or knowing, producing peace. The Holy Spirit is a guide, showing us the next step.

3. CIRCUMSTANCES- Jer.32:8. The land Jeremiah thought of buying, became available.

When the above are in line, go right in.

ONE STEP AT A TIME! Gen.12:1. Obey what God reveals, then He will show us the next step, but take that step! God cannot guide a stationary ship!

WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES Sometimes we go through dark, confusing experiences (Is.50:10). Maybe doubts about a proposed marriage or new job. John went through such a period of conflict (Matt.11:2-3). At such times we must examine ourselves to see if we have contributed to the problem in some way, but if this is not the case then we need to look at our original guidance and if this checks out, simply “keep our nerve” in the darkness of the tunnel, until we emerge into the light (Is 30:21). See also “The Journey of Faith,” note especially the final comment.

LAMBS AND SHEEP John 10:4. When we are young in the faith (lambs), we may not have learnt to recognise the voice of the shepherd. Discerning God’s voice comes with practice. God is seldom in a hurry, so beware of panic. If in doubt, wait until sure. A man of God David DuPlessis told me “If I’m unsure whether God is speaking (as opposed to the devil, or our own overheated emotions) then I ask God to either make the voice or impression I am getting, stronger if it is of God, or take it away if it is not God speaking to me.” God speaks until we grow deaf or obey (Matt 13:15). When we have failed God badly we can sometimes walk under a cloud of condemnation. After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he sincerely repented. The second child born to them was Solomon, whom the Lord loved. He was part of the Messianic line from which Christ came (II Sam.12:19-25). See how the prodigal son was treated, on his return from the far off land (Luke15:20-24). God took us on, knowing us far better than we know ourselves. Jesus looked beyond Peter’s failure to what he would become (Luke 22:31). The cross is the proof that the ashes of defeat can become the seedbed of victory.

DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTINGS

GIFTS OF GOD Romans 12	GIFTS OF HOLY SPIRIT I Corinthians 12	GIFTS OF CHRIST Ephesians 4
1. Prophecy Luke 24:25,32; Eph.3:4-5	1. Tongues	1. Apostle
2. Serving (Helps/Ministering) Acts 6:1-7	2. Interpretation	2. Prophet
3. Teaching Acts 17:11	3. Prophecy	3. Evangelist
4. Stimulating (Encouraging, Exhorting) Heb.10:25	4. Knowledge	4. Pastor
5. Giving II Cor. 8:1-5	5. Wisdom	5. Teacher
6. Ruling I Thess.5:12	6. Discernment	
7. Mercy (Kindness, Empathy) Luke 7:13-15	7. Faith	
	8. Healings	
	9. Miracles <i>SPEAK, KNOW, DO AS JESUS DID</i>	

QUESTION:

What three steps should precede our discovering and properly exercising the Gifts of God? (see Rom.12:1-3). What is humility in this area?

Complete the gift chart on the printed sheets, discuss findings with a mature Christian friend/leader and begin to function.

WRITTEN BY SELWYN HUGHES (CWR) – REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION.

Points to ponder before attempting to discover your basic gift

1. When you consider that Paul's listing of the seven basic gifts in Romans 12, follows on from this earnest appeal "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice," it suggests that we ought to approach the whole subject in an attitude of prayerful expectancy. *Dedication must precede revelation.* Approach the matter after a period of quiet prayer and meditation, asking God to help you find and develop your unique ministry.
2. Remember that our natural talents and aptitudes are often the natural wrapping in which a spiritual gift may be deposited. God's gifts are often in line with a natural ability, and this is why our natural faculties often point the direction in which a spiritual gift may be used.
3. The absence of any particular gift does not excuse us from the obedience to other Scriptural commands. If a person does not feel he has a gift of "giving" he is still expected to support the Lord's work financially. Similarly if a Christian does not possess the gift of "sympathy" he is still expected to show mercy and comfort the feeble-minded (I Thess 5:14). This may raise the question, "*If we are all expected to do so much where is the need for specific gifts?*" In some way the Church is like a football field in which although the players each have a separate function, all are expected to try and get a goal. Each one of us has a responsibility to work for Christ, but the major part of our work must be along the line of spiritual gift (or gifts) which we have been given.
4. Confirmation that you have a certain basic gift will also come through the discernment of other believers. In fact, other Christians may see a gift in you long before you yourself are aware of it. It helps to prayerfully share with other Christians your conclusions before attempting to develop your gifts.
5. Just as deep settled peace pervades our beings when in the centre of God's will, so a feeling of great joy arises when exercising a basic gift. This inner joy is often a clue to the presence of a gift, and this is often unconsciously communicated to those on the receiving end of your ministry.
6. Once you discover you have a basic gift don't go around telling everyone, but adopt the attitude described by Paul in Philippians 2:3; "Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others better than yourself. Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and in what they are doing" (TLB), Watch for opportunities to minister your basic spiritual abilities, and be quick to close in with what God is showing you.

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN HAVE GIFTS

1. I enjoy presenting God's truth in an inspired and enthusiastic way.
2. I am always ready to overlook my own personal comfort in order that the needs of others may be met.
3. I find great delight in explaining the truth of a text within its context.
4. I am able to verbally encourage those who waver and are spiritually troubled.
5. I am able to manage my financial affairs efficiently so that I can give generously to the Lord's work.
6. I find it easy to delegate responsibility and organise others towards spiritual achievement.
7. I readily find myself sympathising with the misfortune of others.
8. I am conscious of a persuasiveness of speech when encouraging people to examine their spiritual motives.
9. I have the knack of making people feel at home.
10. I delight in digging out facts concerning the Bible so that I can pass them on to others.
11. I have a deep concern to encourage people toward spiritual growth and achievement.
12. I am cheerful about giving material assets so that the Lord's work can be furthered.
13. I am able to effectively supervise the activities of others.
14. I enjoy visiting those in hospital, or the shut-ins.
15. I am able to present the Word of God to a congregation of people with clarity and conviction.
16. I am happy when asked to assist others in the Lord's work.
17. I am concerned that truth should be presented in a clear fashion with proper attention to the meaning of words.
18. I am at my best when treating those who are spiritually wounded.
19. I have no problem in joyfully entrusting my assets to others for the work of the ministry.
20. I am able to plan the actions of others with ease and supply them with details which will enable them to work efficiently.
21. I have great concern for those involved in trouble.
22. I find myself preaching for a verdict whenever I present the truths of the Word of God.
23. I delight in providing a gracious haven for guests.
24. I am diligent in my study of the Bible and give careful attention to necessary research.
25. I am able to help those who need counselling over personal problems.
26. I am concerned over the question of financial assistance being available for all sections of the church.
27. I am deeply sensitive to the need of a smooth running administration so that every phase of activity is carried out decently and in order.
28. I work happily with those who are ignored by the majority.
29. I find my preaching brings people to a definite point of decision.
30. I enjoy taking the load from key people so that they can put more effort in to their own particular task.
31. I am able to explain well how the Bible hangs together.
32. I am acutely aware of the things that hold people back in their spiritual development and long to help them overcome their problems.
33. I am careful with money and continually pray over its proper distribution in the work of the Lord.
34. I know where I am going and am able to take others with me.
35. I am able to relate to others emotionally and am quick to help when help is needed.

Instructions

Use the thirty-five statements overleaf to help you discover your basic gift or gifts. Rate yourself with the following scale by writing the appropriate number in the corresponding number

square (below). Ask yourself: ‘Is this statement true in my spiritual life and experience?’

Greatly **3** Some **2** Little **1** Not at all **0**

After you have completed the chart by rating yourself for each of the thirty-five statements, add the scores in each horizontal

each row indicates your level of interest in that particular gift. The highest scores may lead you to a clearer understanding of the

A CHART TO HELP YOU FIND AND DEVELOP YOUR UNIQUE MINISTRY

						TOTAL	GIFT
	1	8	15	22	29	(Please fill in after the test is completed)	
Row A							
Row B							
Row C							
Row D							
Row E							
Row F							
Row G							

Row A – Prophecy; Row B – Serving; Row C – Teaching; Row D – Stimulating the faith of others; Row E – Giving; Row F – Ruling or coordinating; Row G – Sympathy.

Once you have discovered your basic gifts – what next? Ask God to flood your life with His Holy Spirit so that you will become inwardly sensitive to the best gifts to expand and amplify your ministry. These gifts of the Spirit are described and defined

evangelist then this will become apparent to you through the recognition of those of your own local body, and by a spiritual witness to your own heart. Don’t be over-concerned with aiming at being an apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher or evangelist. Concentrate on the depth of your ministry, and God will

Definition	Explanation	Dangers
Gifts of God		
Prophecy – or the God-given ability to present truth.	A persuasiveness and power in speech which brings to light things previously concealed.	a. Proud of rhetoric or persuasive speech. b. Dependent on ability to speak rather than on the Holy Spirit to convict. c. Seeing people as groups – not individuals. d. Judgmental and a sharp tongue without love.
Serving or demonstrating love by meeting practical needs so that others can be free for service.	An ability to detect personal needs; to overlook personal comfort so that the needs of others can be met. Romans 12:10	a. Proud of good deeds. b. Pushy or premature in attempting to meet the needs of others before they themselves realise what those needs are. c. Bitter when good deeds are not appreciated. d. Over-emphasis on practical – neglect of spiritual.
Teaching or clarifying truth by ensuring the accuracy of context etc.	An ability to research and unearth facts from Scripture, Romans 12:11. This involves diligence, fervency in study and careful research.	a. Boasting of knowledge one has accumulated. b. Concentration on details rather than principles. c. Captivated by research rather than responses. d. Believing truth is discerned through intellect.
Stimulating the faith of others in specific action towards definite goals.	An ability to counsel others and encourage them towards spiritual growth. Romans 12:12	a. Boasting about personal results. b. Discouraged when progress is slow. c. Indiscretion in sharing results. d. Giving too much time to the wrong people.
Giving or joyfully entrusting personal assets or possessions to others for the work of the ministry.	An ability to organise personal business; able to wisely invest and make quick and sound decisions about the right use of money.	a. Becoming proud of one's generosity. b. Measuring spiritual success by material gain. c. Attempting to buy influence with money. d. Overlooking long-range goals.
Ruling or coordinating the activities of others for the achievement of a common goal.	An ability to preside or lead; seeing future consequences of one's actions; able to distinguish major objectives and help others visualise them.	a. Proud of power over people. b. Using people to accomplish goals. c. Overlooking character faults in those who can be useful to reaching goals.
Empathising by an ability to identify with and comfort those in distress.	An ability to sympathise deeply with the misfortunes of others; mentally and emotionally relating and giving aid.	a. Proud of ability to sympathise. b. Resenting others who are not sympathetic to needs. c. Failing to be firm – guided by emotions, not logic.
Gifts of the Holy Spirit		
Tongues – the ability to speak supernaturally in a language never learned.	Used in (a) congregational worship to bring a message from God or (b) privately as a devotional exercise.	a. Regarding 'tongues' as a mark of maturity. b. Proud of the prominence the gift inevitably brings.
Interpretation of tongues – the ability to supernaturally interpret a message given in tongues.	Used to interpret the mind of the Spirit as given through a message in other tongues.	a. Dependency on initiative. b. Over-zealousness in failing to develop sensitivity.
Prophecy – the ability to supernaturally convey God's message for the moment in the language of speaker and hearers.	Used to convey a message of edification, exhortation or comfort to God's people at specific times.	a. Interjecting personal feelings. b. Extending the ministry beyond limits. (Judgmental and harsh.)
Word of knowledge – a supernatural revelation to meet an emergency or crisis.	Used to supernaturally impart to a person or group a fact of knowledge which at that moment is otherwise unknown.	a. Hesitancy in communicating due to no logical explanation. b. Failure to exercise reason.
Word of wisdom – a supernatural revelation showing how to apply the right solution.	Used to supernaturally impart to someone the right procedure to take in a difficult situation.	a. Over-dependency on gifts. b. Lack of prayer and spiritual exercise.
Faith – the supernatural ability to visualise and witness spiritual achievement.	Used to supernaturally empower a person to 'believe' beyond their own natural faith.	a. Fear of being proved wrong. b. Ignoring others' feelings.
Discerning of spirits – the supernatural ability to discern the source of supernatural manifestations.	Used to detect the presence of evil spirits or to examine the source of manifestation which is dubious.	a. Seeing the problem not the person. b. Acting harshly – not firmly.
Gift of healing – the supernatural ability to bring God's healing power to the sick.	Used to bring deliverance to those bound in disease, infirmity, affliction etc.	a. Moving on one's initiative. b. Failure to develop sensitivity.
Working of miracles – the supernatural ability to suspend natural laws.	Used to bring God's power to bear upon a situation where natural means fail.	a. Pride in experience. b. Lack of prayer and devotion.
Gifts of Christ		
Apostle – the gift of pioneering new territory for the gospel of Christ (example – a modern missionary).	This is a person in whom the gift of Christ dwells for the express purpose of making major in-roads with the gospel message.	a. Holding attention by virtue of one's position. b. Being proud because of personal selection.
Prophet – the gift of directing vision towards matters of vital concern in relation to immediate goals.	This is a person in whom the gift of Christ dwells for the purpose of elevating spiritual vision in the Body of Christ.	a. Attempting to move people by demand rather than love.
Evangelist – the gift of being able to point men and women to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.	This is a person in whom the gift of Christ dwells for the purpose of attracting large numbers of people to salvation in Christ.	a. Failure to recognise other related ministries. b. Relinquishing concern once converts have made a decision.
Pastor – the gift of being a shepherd to the flock of God.	This is a person in whom the gift of Christ dwells for the purpose of developing a group of believers into spiritual maturity.	a. Seeing only the needs of the local fellowship. b. Attempting to meet every need by personal effort.
Teacher – the gift of being able to expound the truths of God's Word in context and to make profound truths simple.	This is a person in whom the gift of Christ dwells for the purpose of edifying the Body of Christ in relation to the basic concepts of successful Christian living.	a. Expounding truth without applying principles. b. Becoming more interested in principles than people.
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FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO.5

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The Christian faith stands or falls on the resurrection. Anyone can talk about life after death – many do – but when Jesus came back from the dead, His claims were validated.

READ I Cor.15:1-28 (Paul’s teaching on the resurrection of Jesus) and I Peter 1:3. The early Church wasn’t exactly composed of the socially elite! I Cor.1:26-29. In what ways do you think that the resurrection was a message of hope to the people Peter was writing to?

It is hardly surprising that those who have set out to discredit the Christian faith, have sought to disprove the resurrection. Two different men who tried to do this, a scientist called Morrison, who wrote the book, “Who moved the stone?” and the well known lawyer, Josh McDowell, who amongst other books wrote, “Evidence that demands a verdict,” both became Christians, following their attempts to destroy this central doctrine! When Jesus had been crucified, a spear was thrust into his side to ensure he was dead (John 19:33-34); blood and water, a sign of a ruptured heart, poured out of him. He was then placed in a tomb hewn out of solid rock, with the entrance sealed with a stone that would have taken several men to move, and guarded by Roman soldiers who, if they had fallen asleep on watch, would have been put to death (Acts 12:19), and would have been, but for the wicked cover up of Jesus’ resurrection.

For many of us, however, the reality of Jesus’ resurrection was settled with little or no knowledge of the above points, at the time. If Jesus hadn’t risen, where did this wonderful new life we are experiencing, come from? See the change this realisation made in Jesus’ disciples! (Luke 24:13-35; Acts 9:2-6 & 19-22). It changed them from men who ran away when Jesus was arrested, into men who were willing to die for Jesus – Why? What changed them?

Consider the statement: “A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.”

Why do you agree or disagree?

The resurrection of Jesus proves:

1. His sovereignty and supremacy over all things (Matt. 28:19).
2. Our sins have been paid for (Rom.4:25).
3. He was who he said he was (Rom.1:4).
4. He has overcome sin and death; when man and devil had done their worst, Jesus rose from the grave – the last word was with God (Col.2:12-15; Heb.2:14-15). Man’s verdict was death to Jesus! God the Father showed that He had, by the resurrection, reversed that human verdict! Jesus declared righteous.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER SPIRITUAL LEADER WHO HAS COME BACK FROM THE DEAD? WHAT DOES THIS SAY TO YOU?

THE NATURE OF JESUS’ RESURRECTION:

Full bodily resurrection (John 20:24-29) without our human limitations. We will receive glorious bodies, free from pain, disease, ageing and death (Rev.21:3-4) like Christ’s resurrection body.

AT CREATION God fashioned Adam’s body from the dust of the ground, and breathed life into him, and man became a living soul (Gen.2:7). When a person dies the body returns to the ground (elements of the earth) and the person’s spirit goes to God, if he is a true believer (Phil 1:21-24;

II Cor.5:6-10) or into Sheol if he is not.

SHEOL (Luke 16:19-31). Up until Jesus' death the departed spirits of men and women went into Sheol. Sheol had two regions, an upper and lower region. The righteous went into the upper region (Abraham's bosom/paradise), the unrighteous went into the lower region (a place of torment).

JESUS' RESURRECTION: As Jesus rose from the dead his spirit returned to his body, and it was some time before this that Jesus took the upper region or Paradise, and lifted it up to where God the Father was.

When a believer dies now, he goes straight to be with the Lord (heaven); when an unbeliever dies, they still go to Sheol, the lower region; they will one day be resurrected and condemned. Whichever one a person may go to, they are awake, alert and conscious.

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

READ I Thessalonians 4:13-18.



Jesus is coming back for his bride the Church, and when this happens the dead in Christ will rise first. The Christians who have fallen asleep (died), will be resurrected first, then those who are still living and the resurrected ones, will all receive glorified bodies. Then we will meet the Lord in the air and be with him, forever.

NOTE: Death is not the end for anyone, we have to live with our choices both sides of the grave, suicide therefore, neither solves nor relieves anything, nor escapes from reality. The spirit is eternal.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY: Although we are given new bodies at our resurrection, it is clear that we are recognisable. The nail prints were visible in Jesus' hands (John 20:10-14 and 27). God is able to re-constitute AND transform our bodies "in a twinkling of an eye" (I Cor.15: 51-55). See also Matt.27: 50-56 - the resurrection of some holy men when Jesus died, and references to the men of Nineveh (Matt.12:41).

ONE WICKED DECEPTION involves the supposed 'Gospel of Barnabas' which we can prove was written in the 14th Century. The Jewish 'year of Jubilee' occurs every 50 years, but the writer of "Barnabas" said it was every 100 years! Pope Boniface the eighth, decided in the period AD1300-1350, the year of Jubilee be changed to every 100 years, contradicting Leviticus 25:11. The following Pope, Clement the sixth, promptly changed it back to the correct, every 50 years, so we know that the so called writings of Barnabas, was a medieval forgery, which had to be written in Pope Boniface's reign, in an attempt to deny the basic truths of who Jesus was, and His death and resurrection etc. This forgery is quoted today, to this end. There are also glaring historical and geographical inaccuracies, which the true disciple Barnabas would have known.

It has been suggested that Judas or others were substituted on the cross for Jesus, but the resurrected Jesus, complete with nail prints in His hands and feet, appeared to His overjoyed disciples on a number of occasions (John 20:24-29; I Cor. 15:3-8). The disciples would surely know the difference between Jesus and Judas! From all this it is hoped that the reader will be satisfied it was Jesus who literally died, was buried and rose again on the third day, and that no substitution could have occurred – THE TOMB IS EMPTY, HE IS RISEN!

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE NO. 6

ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

Many speak of God's love towards us shown at Calvary, but the cross also speaks of God's judgement on sin! We need to keep these two aspects in balance. We must understand that at his second coming, Jesus will deal with all those who have not repented and put their faith in him, cf. Is.61:2; Luke 4:18-2. Notice the difference between the two comings of Christ in the last phrase – Day of vengeance..... In the days of Noah, God gave mankind 120 years warning before judgement came (Gen.6:3-8) but judgement *did* come! (Note the warning in II Peter 3:3-13).

JUDGEMENT HAS TO BE FACED

ROMANS 3:23 - All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We often make the mistake of comparing ourselves with each other rather than by God's standards, see Rev.1:17 and 6:15-17. We could never pay the penalty and still live, John 3:16; I Cor.15:1-4.

ROMANS 6:23 – The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. God has to punish sin by death, and yet came to give us the gift of new life. So Jesus, his Son died in our place.

GOD WANTS ALL TO BE SAVED – 2 Peter 3:9 – and to know we're saved, I John 5:11-13.

CROSSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE - John 5:24.

For the born again Christian, the fear of a judgement of condemnation, is past. Two men committed a serious robbery. One was caught, acknowledged his crime and went to prison, the other man evaded capture. Eventually the first man was released from prison and met up with his former partner in crime. If a policeman approached these two men and sought to arrest them for the robbery, the first man could rightfully say, "I've faced up to my crime, I've served my sentence and you have nothing on me," but the second man couldn't say that – he lives in fear of being caught, living in fear of "Judgement Day" (see 1 Cor 10:31) – "if we judged ourselves."

When we are confronted with God's judgement on our lives and are willing to acknowledge our sin and repent, we find that Jesus has already paid for our sin at Calvary, **by his suffering and death on the cross, in our place.** (N.B. There are however, occasions when restitution to others is necessary). **MANY CHRISTIANS LIVE UNDER A CLOUD OF CONDEMNATION FOR PAST FAILURES, GOD WANTS US TO LIVE FREE FROM SUCH CONDEMNATION – ROM.8:1.** We are seen by God as being clothed in Christ's righteousness. **BELIEVERS HOWEVER MUST KEEP SHORT ACCOUNTS WITH GOD (SEE MATT.5:25-26).** NOTE: God's discipline in the lives of believers – Heb. 12:4-11; cf. ROM.1:18-28 – given up by God – NOT DISCIPLINED.

We next need to ask ourselves exactly what is meant by judgement. For example, the judgement that goes on at the Chelsea Flower Show, is totally different, from the judgement that goes on at a murder trial. One is a matter of reward, the other of punishment and both are taught in the bible.

JUDGEMENT FOR REWARD - Matt. 25:21.

Our faithfulness in this life will result in new areas and responsibilities in the next. (N.B. We will not all be sitting round playing harps in the next life, but serving Jesus very actively, when he returns to earth).

JUDGEMENT FOR PUNISHMENT – Matt.25:41.

A real living faith will result in a fruitful, effective and changed life, John 15:5. It has been suggested that the differing destinies covered in I Cor. 3:15 and Matt. 25:26-30 lay in this; whilst those covered in I Cor.3:15 sought to use what God had given them, the man in the Matt. 25:26-30 passage, did not.

NOW READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE: I Cor.3:10-15. AFTER DISCUSSING CF. EPH.2:8 WITH EPH.2:10.

WE HAVE SEEN THAT THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF JUDGEMENT:

BEMA SEAT – (For true Christians) See I Cor.9:24-27; II Cor. 5:10; Rom.14:10.

GREAT WHITE THRONE: Rev.20:11-15.

THE DOCTRINE OF IMMINENCE: The early church *appeared* to have expected Christ's second coming in their lifetime. When we die, we pass out of the realm of time into eternity, and so Christ's return has always been only one lifetime away from anyone whenever they lived, and we must therefore live in the expectation of Christ's return. No one knows when their life will end.

REMEMBER! We have to live with our choices, both sides of the grave! Heb.9:27; Luke 16:19-31. The bible teaches that our destiny is settled at death. There is no second chance, reincarnation or purgatory.

ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THE ABOVE?

1. **THE SPIRITS IN PRISON** (see I Peter 3:18-20). One eminent bible teacher believes that this group alone heard the Gospel after death, from the mouth of Jesus Christ, whereas another believes that Jesus simply made a proclamation to them "I've won!"
2. **THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WITHOUT HEARING THE GOSPEL** (see Gen.18:25 – "will not the judge of all the earth do right?" Rom.2:12-16). Some believe that they are forever lost, but that their blood will be on the hands of those who had the opportunity to tell them, but didn't (Ezek. 3:18), others believe that each will be judged according to the light they had. It certainly is a principle of scripture that the more God gives and enlightens us, the more we are answerable for, (James 4:17); and therefore the converse has to be true too!

PROPHECY AND GOD'S VIEW OF HISTORY

If you were watching a passing parade you would only be able to see that which was immediately visible before your eyes – i.e. THE PRESENT. If however you are able to rise up a considerable level ABOVE the parade, you would be able to see the entire procession FROM BEGINNING TO END. The ground level view is man's, the aerial view is God's. God knows the beginning from the end, and the bible illustrates this. Beyond our understanding God is revealed in the bible as OMNIPOTENT (All Powerful), OMNIPRESENT (All Present), and OMNISCIENT (All knowing), Ps.2:11-18; Dan.2:27-45; Rev.11:18, including how everything will end without violating man's free will choices. Queen Esther was told that if she didn't speak up for her Jewish people (her free will choice) God would bring deliverance from another source – (God's sovereignty). (Esther 4:4). Daniel knew that God had decreed that the Jewish people would be captives in Babylon for 70 years (God's sovereignty) but Daniel set about praying this into being (Daniel's free will) – Daniel 9:1-3. God though is in control of all history, and we can choose to be part of the answer, or part of the problem.

Let's look at a few examples of already fulfilled prophecies, Jesus would be:

1. Born in Bethlehem – cf. Micah 5:2 and Luke 2:4-7. Mary and Joseph were actually travelling when she gave birth – a little earlier or later and Jesus would have been born elsewhere!
2. Born of a virgin - cf. Isaiah 7:24 and Luke 1:26-31.
3. Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey - Zech. 9:9 and Matt. 21:5 – denoting gentleness, humility. At Jesus' Second Coming He will be riding a white horse, speaking of a conquering King, including terrible judgement – Rev. 19:11.
4. Jesus pierced through his hands and feet – Zech. 12:10 and John 20:27 written 700 years before crucifixion was invented by the Phoenicians! It has been said that the nail prints in Jesus' hands are the only man made thing in heaven!
5. Jesus resurrected – Ps. 16:10, Mark 16:6-7 and Luke 24:13-32. Anyone can talk about life after death, but if someone comes back from the dead? Note the transforming reaction of the resurrection on the disciples! (Luke 24:30-35).
6. The destruction of the Temple (In 70 AD) Prophesied by Jesus – Matt. 24:1-2, historically verified by Flavius Josephus in 75 AD.
7. Ezekiel prophesied the destruction of Tyre (ch. 26) and in verse 12 he stated that the fabric from their “walls and fine houses” would be “thrown into the sea.” The debris from the part of the city on the mainland, was used as a causeway into the sea to attack and destroy the remaining citizens of Tyre, by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. As Ezek. 26:14 stated, it has never been rebuilt (the mainland city had been captured and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 572 BC).

The fulfilment of the Bible's prophecies is, to my mind, proof of its accuracy and inspiration. Sometimes there are initial fulfilments with a further fulfilment (or completed one) later. Many would see such a comparison between Antiochus Epiphanes and the ultimate Anti-Christ (Daniel 11:31; Matt. 24:15:2; II Thes. 2:3-4). If you compare Is.61:1-2 with Luke 4:18-19, you will see that the last part of that prophecy, “The day of vengeance of our God” - Is.61:1-2 is missing from the prophecy in Luke 4:18-19. This is because Jesus' first coming was to proclaim the opportunity for all to come to Him - “the acceptable day of the Lord.” The purpose of Jesus' Second Coming will include, “The day of vengeance of our God” - see Rev. 6:16-17. Please remember the the Second Coming of Christ is ONLY ONE LIFETIME AWAY FROM ANYONE, whether we lived in the first or 21st century. After death there are no second chances – Heb.9:27 and Luke 16:25-26. The Old Testament prophets often had a very limited view as to how their prophecies would be fulfilled – e.g. Dan. 12:9: 8:26-27 including the possibility of a later, second fulfilment. This has been likened to our seeing two mountain peaks appearing as one from a distance yet proving to be a great way apart when you arrive at the first peak!

AN ONGOING FULFILMENT can be seen in Daniel's interpretation of the future world empires – Dan. 2:31-45, right up to the second coming of Christ. The empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome – with many seeing the latter continuing initially as the 'Holy Roman Empire' led by the various Popes etc. and finally overthrown by the OTTOMAN'S (Ottoman Empire 1301-1924), which was ISLAMIC. Many fundamentalist (Islamic groups) would claim to be fighting to restore an Islamic Caliphate culminating in their Universal Government. The writer believes that both Eastern (Islamic) and Western legs of a revived ROMAN – OTTOMAN Empire will play key roles (feet of iron and clay), prior to the return of Jesus Christ to set up his Kingdom on earth. The awaited Islamic leader, the twelfth Iman or Mahdi, fits the Biblical picture of 'Anti-Christ', whilst the 'Politically Correct' West will seek to combine all religions and beliefs (ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT) which will include a favourable inclusiveness towards Islam (Eastern foot and leg). The world system will see such 'unity' as a key factor in world peace and 'opponents' who believe in the uniqueness of Jesus (John 4:6) will seek to be silenced by 'political correctness'. The writer believes that fundamentalist Islam will seek to take advantage of this.

A STRONGLY RECOMMENDED BOOK – 'God's War on Terror' by WALID SHOEBAT

SEE REVELATION CHAPTER 17

Two pictures which show the woman (a prostitute), riding the beast (a bull), a false religious system. The second is situated outside the European Union Parliament building in Brussels.



Head of Gold
BABYLON
(BC605-539)

Breast of Silver
PERSIA
(BC539-331)

Thighs of Brass
GREECE
(BC331-168)

Legs of Iron
ROME
(BC168-AD476)

Feet of Iron & Clay
EASTERN LEG-
Islamic Nations
WESTERN LEG-
Europe
(AD476-2nd Advent)



Drawn by C. Bentley

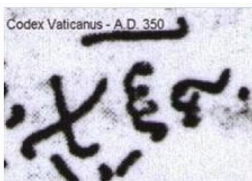
Pictures used by kind permission of www.albatrus.org/english/living/ourtimes/images/

BABEL

The first picture is a painting by Peter Brueghel in 1563, portraying the unfinished tower of Babel (Gen. 11:3). The second picture based on Brueghel's painting, shows the completed E.U. Parliament building in Strasbourg but designed to appear unfinished – which the E.U. intends to complete that which Nimrod failed to finish. AIM: a common political economic and religious system in a growing European Union. Islam seeks a restored caliphate and ultimately universal government. On the back of the American dollar are the words 'NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM' which is Latin for 'New World Order'.



Pictures used by kind permission of www.albatrus.org/english/living/ourtimes/images/



666? - This 'wording' appears in Revelation 13:18 and was originally read/interpreted as '666', or in some early manuscripts as '616' or '665'. Walid Shoebat in his book, "God's War on Terror," states that it is ARABIC writing, and means/says, 'In the name of Allah.' Walid was born and raised in Bethlehem, reads Arabic, and converted from Islam to Christianity.

GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICES

God's love is everlasting
(Jer. 31:3; Rom. 5:8; John 3:16)
God alone can draw us into salvation
(John 6:44)
Deliverance for Israel would come
after 70 years (Dan. 9:2)
Esther, God's instrument
(Esther 4:14, Joseph (Gen. 50:19-21)
Paul called on Damascus Road
(Acts 9:5; 6,15)
Salvation a free gift
(Rom. 6:23; I John 5:11-13; Eph.2:9)
Talents given by God
(Matt.25:14-15; I Cor. 12:7)

MYSTERY

DEUT. 29:29
ROM. 11:33
II COR. 12:4

MAN'S FREE WILL CHOICES

Keep yourselves in God's love
(Jude 21)
Whoever will may come
(Mark 8:24; II Peter 3:9; Mark 16:16)
Daniel needed to pray
(Dan. 9:3)
Esther could say "no"
(Esther 4:12-14)
Paul's fear of disqualification
(I Cor. 9:27)
Work out your own salvation
(Phil. 2:12, James 2:14-18)
Responsibility to use
(Matt. 25:26-30; Rev. 3:3)

TRIBULATION AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION

READ REVELATION CHAPTERS 6 AND 7

Prior to the second coming of Christ to set up his Millennial reign on this earth, the bible teaches that there will be a terrible time of conflict and upheaval known as the Great Tribulation (Rev.7:14). Many believe that this is Daniel's 70th week, mentioned in Daniel 7:25. This is distinct from the times of "trial and tribulation" that all true believers have to face (Acts 14:22). Some Christians believe that all who belong to Jesus Christ will be taken off the earth (raptured – see I Thess.4:16-17) before the Great Tribulation begins, returning at the end of this seven year period to reign with Christ, others believe that Christians will have to endure half the Tribulation (Rev. 13:5-10) and others still, that the Church will go through it all. One, well known bible teacher says that it is better to be prepared to go through the Tribulation and find that we don't have to, than not to be prepared for it and find that we do! After the "so called" Cultural Revolution in China when the Church went through terrible persecution, the leaders repented afterwards for failing to prepare the Church for persecution. Many were caught off-guard and unprepared, with tragic consequences; we need to be ready to suffer with Christ (I Peter 4:1; Rom.8:17) whether we are talking about general tribulation, or otherwise.

It is sad that differing views concerning the "end times" (eschatology) has led to so much bigotry and division. It is important for each person to attempt to come to a clear conviction and understanding as to these matters, but the emphasis is always to go on **being ready** to face God with a good conscience (I John 2:28) and to lay down our lives and suffer with Christ (Rev. 12:11). The Jews had two pictures of the Messiah in the Old Testament – the Suffering Servant (Is.53) and the Conquering King (Psalm 2). Their desperation for liberation from the Roman yoke, meant that many were not "open" to any type of Messiah other than the latter type and they missed what was "under their noses," scripturally – and we can too! We should also remember that biblical prophecies can be like jig-saw pieces; where they fit in may not be apparent until we have more of the picture at a later date (Dan.12:8-9). Biblical prophecies usually had an application to 1) the present situation 2) an ongoing application and 3) a great and final fulfilment e.g. Is.7:13-14. Hold onto what you can understand and put the rest on the "back burner," but do not give up on what we *currently* find obscure!

The Great Tribulation can be seen positively - whether the Church shares in it, or is taken out of it – in two ways:

1. The Greatest Darkness is Just Before the Dawn – The pattern taught in the earlier teaching in "The Journey of Faith" applies here. There we saw the pattern, "Promise > Problem > Provision, where in the middle or wilderness (problem) stage, we seem to be going backwards not forwards. The Israelites went out of Egypt, but instead of going straight back to Canaan, had to trust God in a Wilderness which eventually lasted 40 years, and claimed the lives of all but two of them! So too with Jesus Christ; his crucifixion seemed like the end to his followers "we had hoped....." (Luke 21:21) but was simply the springboard to a new beginning – you cannot have resurrection and something better, without the death of the old!
2. Birth pangs (Rom.8:18-25). The upheaval on the earth is likened to the agony of childbirth. The pain may be terrible, but new life is coming out of it! AS SUCH, THINGS WILL GET WORSE, BEFORE THEY GET BETTER! We can make the mistake of focusing on the "birth pangs" rather than on the glorious new order that the Second Coming of Christ will bring in. The bottom line is this, whether the Church has to go through the Tribulation or not, or to what extent we are called to share in the sufferings of Christ – even to the cost of our own lives, as almost 300,000 believers world wide experienced in 1990 alone (Rev.12:11) – isn't any price worth paying, or any "birth pangs" worth going through to be part of God's glorious, new

world order, where sickness, suffering, pain and death are no more and we live eternally with God, forever secure, and industriously employed in his new earth!

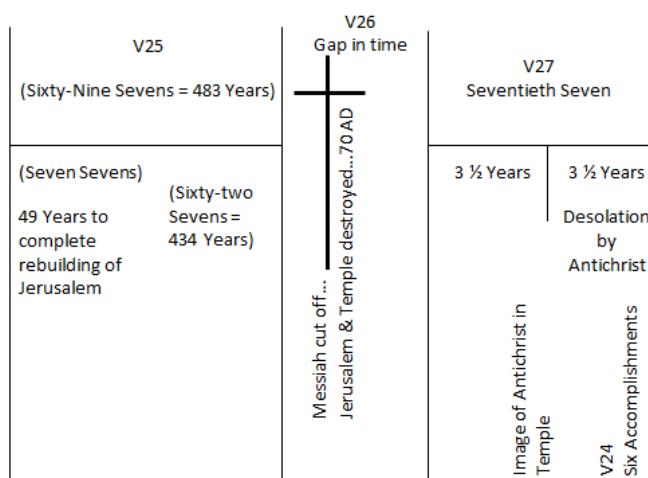
NOW READ DANIEL CHAPTER 2 AND REVELATION 17:12-13.

BEING PREPARED: In the early Roman Empire compromise was the subtle danger, as well as “out and out” persecution. The Christians in the time of the Emperor Domitian, were offered their niche in the temple for “their god,” but this was refused because they stated that, our God is not one amongst many, but the only true and living God (Ex.20:3; I Kings 18:21) and Jesus Christ is the only way to him (John 14:6). Provided you were prepared to proclaim “Ceasar is Lord!” (Rev. 1:10) on “The Imperial Day” you could believe what else you liked. Persecution in the last days will involve direct opposition to all believers, but also this subtle temptation to compromise our allegiance, and not stand on the truth. Many professing believers today are seeking to empty the bible of the virgin birth, the resurrection and everything supernatural. The bible predicts the rising of the Anti-Christ (II Thess.2:1-4; Rev.13:1-5) coming out of one of the ten toes of the revived Roman Empire (Dan.2:41-43). After initially making a treaty with Israel he will break this, half way through. He will be the new “Ceasar”, without whose mark no one will be able to buy or sell (Rev. 13:16). Some believe that this will be similar to a bar code seen on groceries etc. whereas Walid Shoebat believes it will be some Islamic identification mark, worn around the head or wrist. God’s servants were sealed in Ezekiel’s day by their hatred of sin (Ezek.9:4). Also note that in the west the pressure is already on to deny the uniqueness of Christ, supposedly in the name of tolerance – to avoid offending other religions etc. and to one day subjugate all religions to a new “one world” religion, under the control of the Anti-Christ – N.B. “Anti” does not here mean “against” but “instead of.” Do we put anything or anyone in first place, instead of Christ? Within the United Nations building today is a black stone, which is intended to be the focal point of worship for all nations and religions, represented there.

The last days before Christ comes again to this earth will be a terrible time of suffering and persecution, involving unprecedented war, famine, rejection, betrayal, hatred, earthquakes, and cosmic upheaval, martyrdom, deception etc. (Matt. 24 – note esp. v21-22) but let’s remember to see beyond the darkness and the birth pangs, to the wonderful new creation of which we can be part.

The Prophecy of Seventy Sevens (490 Years) – Daniel 9 vs 24-27

Decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah 14 March 445BC	Presentation of Messiah as Prince 6 April 32AD	Covenant of Antichrist with Israel	Second coming of Messiah to establish Kingdom of God
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DANIEL'S PROPHECY – based on a 360 day (12 x 30 days) LUNAR (MOON) CALENDAR in use then.

WEEKS (HEBREW – SAVUA) means 'SEVENS' and can be days, weeks or years. SIR ROBERT ANDERSON was employed by Scotland Yard as chief of the Criminal Investigation Department and these facts and figures are taken from and verified in his book 'The Coming Prince'.

THE MILLENNIUM

(Some take the view that the Millennial reign of Christ will see a *progressive transformation* – using the servants of God – others expect an instantaneous perfection. This article takes the first view).

READ ISAIAH 65:17-25 (Transformed Creation)

The lion will lie down with the lamb

Following the Great Tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to this earth to set up his kingdom. The earth will have been ravaged and scarred, and there will be much work to do. God's people will be caught up to meet him in the clouds (I Thess. 4:13-18) and will be taken to Jerusalem, from where God will reign in a benevolent dictatorship for 1,000 years (Is.2:1-4; Micah 4:1-5; Rev.2:26-27), having forcefully put down his enemies (Zech.14:1-5; 12; Rev.19:11; 19-21) and where everyone will have to acknowledge his Lordship (Phil.2:10). His people will be entrusted with varying degrees of responsibility, according to how we have handled his gifts and responsibilities, in this life (Luke 19:16-19). What we learn and do now, will be a preparation for our ruling and reigning with Christ, then. Even in the perfection of Eden before the Fall, work and creativity was allotted to Adam, and it will be so in the Millennium for all God's people. Everything will begin to be restored to its original perfection (environment etc.). Can you imagine a world in which crime, sickness, pain, poverty, injustice, ignorance and pollution are progressively eradicated, where wild animals are tame, the whole creation beautiful, and the world is ruled by God in love, purity and justice? Such is Christ's coming, millennial reign!

NOW READ ISAIAH 35

FOUR STAGES OF RESTORATION

1. Satan bound for the period of the Millennium – the Beast and False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev.20:1-3).
2. Unbelievers Removed – Matt.13:40-43 – this happened in the days of Noah; those accounted righteous were left on the earth. Some believe that those who survive the Great Tribulation i.e, not involved in Armageddon will go on having children, who will need to make their own response to God. If this were not the case where would Satan draw his final, vast rebellious army from, at the end of the Millennium once he is released? QUESTION: Why do you think this rebellion occurs? (Rev.20:7). Note John 21:1-14 – Jesus' resurrection body and the disciples mortal bodies, side by side, as in the Millennium.
3. Death Overcome – last enemy to be destroyed (I Cor. 15:20-26), (a) Jesus resurrected, (b) Church raptured and believers raised (I Thess. 4:13-17), (c) unbelievers resurrected at the end of the Millennium (Rev.20:11-15).
4. The earth – curse gives way to blessing. The Fall: Thorns (Is.55:13); violence between men and animals (lion and the lamb – see Is. 65:25; Rom. 8:18-25). Long life again (Is.65:20) – as in the book of Genesis e.g. chapter 5.

THE ETERNAL STATE

READ GENESIS 2:4-18; 3:6-24.

In the beginning God created the earth for man to live in. He made a garden (2:8) – the Garden of Eden – and put Adam in charge of it, to work and take care of it. God gave Adam freedom of choice which love necessitates, for you cannot force someone to love you. Adam chose to live independently of God and he was expelled from the garden. Whether there were any differences between Eden and the rest of the world is unclear, but what is certain is that Adam's experience went from righteousness and fellowship with God, to rebellion, guilt and fear (3:10), perfection and harmony in the created order, to a battle with it (3:17-18) and bodies of radiance and glory, to ones of death and humiliation (cf. 3:8; Matt.17:2; Ex.34:29). There are many people who believe that the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden are meant to be taken allegorically. Jesus in Matt.19:4-6, and Paul in I Cor.15:21-22 and Rom.5:12 clearly took the Genesis record literally. Nowhere in scripture are we led to believe otherwise. In the same way the new heaven, earth and Jerusalem, are a literal picture of God's reversal of the curse and ultimate victory and blessing.

NOW READ REVELATION 21-22:6.

The bible speaks of a new heaven and earth (Rev.21:1) after Jesus has returned and reigned for 1,000 years. God's people live with him in an incredible new city the new Jerusalem, where we will spend eternity. This city descends onto the new earth (Rev.21:2). Once again everything is a picture of perfection and harmony between God and man. The city itself is about 1,500 miles in length, breadth and height, making it either a cube or a pyramid – like transparent gold, through which all the foundation stones will be seen. Note the situation outside this city (Rev.22:15) and the parallel between Eden before the fall, and the New Jerusalem after the Millennium. The light will be provided by the radiance of God's presence (Rev.1:16), illuminating the city like a diamond, and rendering the existence of the sun for the city's light, unnecessary. It was only discovered in about 1970 that all the precious stones mentioned in Rev.21:19-21 are *anisotropic*, that is, if you took a sliver of the stone and subjected it to pure light, it would become every colour of the rainbow, as opposed to other, so called precious stones *isotropic*, which turn black when subjected to the same light source – revealed to John 1,900 years ago, and is further proof of the bible's inspiration! See how Abraham was motivated by the prospect of living in God's city (Heb.11:8-10). Are we as willing to make such sacrifices now? What we are considering is only a hint of what lies ahead (I Cor. 2:9-10). Some teach that Zeph.3:9 means that our common unity will again be expressed in one language, as was the case before the flood, remembering that the changes have gone on IN US as well as AROUND US (Rom.8:18-25).

When we have some idea of what is awaiting us, it should put our present difficulties and trials into perspective (II Cor. 4:17) and we should be motivated to live lives of faith and love, because of the hope stored up for us in heaven (Col.1:5). We shall be totally transformed (radiant new bodies etc.) and the city stored up in heaven will descend to earth for us to live in.

Why not Google 'Isotropic Stones' by David Pawson (6 minutes), Scientific Evidence in the Bible.

PERSONAL WHOLENESS – A BLUEPRINT

God's goal for every believer is to make us like Jesus (Rom.8:29) but what *specifically* is there in the character of Christ that we should be looking to see in our own lives?

In Ezekiel 1:10 we see a description of four faces that represent four different aspects of the character of God, which we can see in Jesus, since Jesus shows us what the Father is like (John 14:9). These characteristics should become evident in our own lives; so seeing and understanding the meaning of these four faces, should provide us with a blueprint for PERSONAL WHOLENESS. Ezekiel saw the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. Let's see what each represents.

FACE OF A MAN speaks of the compassion of God. He did not leave us to attempt to struggle up to his standards, but came down to where we are, in the person of his son, Jesus. God knows what it feels like “in our shoes” (Heb.4:15). Whenever people came to Jesus, acknowledging their need, he reached out to them and touched them at their point of need (Matt.8:1-4; Luke 7:36-50). Before Jesus whipped in the temple, he wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41) and on the cross shows his amazing love and compassion for us all.



FACE OF A LION – Jesus' willingness to use a whip in the temple is one example of his ability to confront wrong (Prov.28:1). It is essential to see the balance at Calvary between God's unconditional love, and his judgement on sin, *and our need to face our sin*; if we don't we will be confronted with it when it is too late. Many gentle people are afraid to speak out, when it is necessary. The face of the lion is part of the wholeness God wants to see in our lives (Matt.18:15).



FACE OF AN OX - An ox used to faithfully keep plodding on, treading out the grain (Prov.14:4) and what a picture of the faithfulness and dependence it provides to keep going, doing a job week in, week out, with little or no encouragement, but with the knowledge that it is what God wants us to do. It seems that today, unless we see immediate results, we want to change. God himself remains totally dependable, so that we can *always* rely on what he says. Ask any leader what it means to have someone they can rely on, to do what they have said they will do, week in, week out! It may not be the “fireworks” side of God, but it is part of the wholeness he wants to see in our lives (Rom.12:7a).



FACE OF AN EAGLE – Speaks of the spiritual realm (Is.40:31). Note that in the Old Testament, mounting up with wings like an eagle, precedes running and walking. In the New Testament, being seated, IN CHRIST (Eph.2:6) in heavenly places, precedes *walking* worthily and *standing* against Satan. We are to be Spirit filled (Eph.5:18) and Spirit led (Rom.8:14). Our character is shown in the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Gal.5:22-23) and our equipping is shown in the GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (I Cor.12). God wants us to live in the heavenly realms, so that we might walk worthily on earth.



Jesus is portrayed as the:

LION in MATTHEW'S Gospel – Christ as King.

MAN in LUKE – meeting human need; perfect humanity.

OX in MARK – Gospel of service (servant) – key words: “Straightway” or “Immediately”.

EAGLE in JOHN – Divine Son of God; Heavenly.

We are meant to be firm and strong, yet compassionate; faithful and active, yet resting in God and totally spiritual people. Sin has twisted these functions, so that we sometimes get angry and confrontational over silly little issues, when we should show compassion; and are gentle and indulgent when a firm stand or statement, is called for. We are passive when we need to be practical

and worrying and acting in the energy of the flesh when we need to be resting in God. Untwisting these functions and getting them back in the right place is the biblical concept of wholeness.

CHRIST'S CHARACTER IN US – MATTHEW 5:1-12

The “Sermon on the Mount” begins with a description of a certain type of character, before we see it outworked in the rest of the sermon (chapters 5-7).

BLEST THE

V3. POOR IN SPIRIT – HUMILITY – A total dependence on God, having recognised our own poverty of spirit.

JESUS: John 5:19 OTHERS: John 15:5; II Cor.1:9

RESULT: THERE'S THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN – ALL GOD'S RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

V4. MOURN - SENSITIVITY – Takes sin seriously and feels the pain of others.

JESUS: Is.53:3; Matt.27:46 OTHERS: Matt.26:75

RESULT: COMFORTED – GOD'S PRESENCE WITH US, INJECTING STRENGTH INTO.

V5. MEEK - JOYFUL SUBMISSION – Freed from my rights.

JESUS: Phil.2:6-8 OTHERS: Luke 1:38

RESULT: GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR INHERITANCE AND PROVISION.

V6. HUNGER & THIRST SPIRITUAL HUNGER FOR CHRIST - LIKENESS.

PURSUES RIGHTEOUSNESS - AND GOD'S AGENDA.

JESUS: Matt.3:15 OTHERS: Acts 17:11

RESULT: SATISFIED – GOD WILL SATISFY OUR APPETITE!

V7. MERCIFUL - EAGER TO FORGIVE.

JESUS: Luke 23:34 OTHERS: Acts 7:60

RESULT: OBTAIN MERCY – REAPING WHAT WE HAVE SOWN

V8. PURE IN HEART - FREEDOM FROM MIXED OR PERVERSE MOTIVES.

JESUS: Matt.4:10 OTHERS: John 1:47

RESULT: SEE GOD – SENSE OF HIS PRESENCE NOW, PLUS THE WONDER OF ETERNITY WITH HIM.

V9. PEACEMAKERS - RELATIONSHIP RESTORERS – (WITH GOD AND OTHERS).

JESUS: Luke 7:48-50 OTHERS: Acts 10:36; 9:26-27.

RESULT: CALLED, SONS OF GOD – RECONCILERS ESPECIALLY DEAR TO THE HEART OF GOD.

V10. PERSECUTED FOR RESULT OF IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS.

RIGHTEOUSNESS - JESUS: John 15:18 OTHERS: Acts 5:41.

RESULT: KINGDOM OF HEAVEN – GREAT REWARD Rom. 8:17.

WITHOUT LOVE, HOWEVER GIFTED I AM NOTHING

I CORINTHIANS 13

LOVE IS: Patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (v4-7).

A SUGGESTED DAILY OR PERIODIC PERSONAL EXAMINATION

Try putting yourself in this verse – e.g. “I am patient, kind etc.” going through the whole list and allowing the Holy Spirit to bring to mind, times of impatience etc. Repent where appropriate, and ask God to fill you/me anew with His Holy Spirit, with His accompanying fruit – “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

CAN YOU BE..... TOO HEAVENLY MINDED? - COL. 1:5

“They overcame by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives unto death” (Rev. 12:11).

Many in the early Church went rejoicing to a martyr's death, because the reality of leaving this earth and being eternally with Jesus, was infinitely more wonderful than anything this world had to offer! Paul wanted to share in the sufferings of Christ (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:17-18) and go to be with Jesus, but knew that the Father wanted him to stay on earth, to minister to others (Phil. 1:21-24). When the fear of death is overcome, then we are truly free – (Heb. 2:14-15) – provided it is based on God's truth and love. “No murderer – (e.g. suicide bomber) has eternal life.” (I John 3:15; I Cor. 13:3). THE MORE HEAVENLY MINDED WE ARE, THE MORE EARTHLY GOOD WE SHOULD BE! For as we draw on this life of God's (heavenly) Spirit, so the greater our effectiveness on earth, should be.

On what is our real hope and motivation for living based! Col. 1:15.

CHRIST IN THE WORKPLACE

CO-CREATORS WITH GOD – Work was given to Adam before his rebellion against God, and throughout the Bible man is seen as a co-creator with God - to be His hands and feet, mouthpiece etc. A story is told of a lady who on seeing a beautiful garden, remarked, 'Isn't it amazing what God can make out of a piece of wasteland!' 'But' said the gardener, 'you should have seen what it was like when He had it to Himself!' We are His hands and feet.

In the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1) we will be allocated practical responsibilities, according to how faithful we have been with the talents entrusted to us, on this earth (Matt 25:21-23). Our creativity is part of our being made in God's image, and laziness is a major sin in God's eyes. Few things can emasculate a healthy man more than his not being able to provide for his family through regular employment. Where possible, finding fulfilment through the right vocation is ideal, but it is important that we are seeking to be a good advertisement for our faith, in the more mundane jobs in life. First century Christian slaves had no choice in the work they did, but we and they have the freedom as to how we respond to life's experiences (including work) – whether we become better (more Christ-like) or bitter.

Many of us will spend much of our lives in the workplace, often with members of the opposite sex and sometimes in an environment of profanity, affairs and crude joking. How we conduct ourselves in such an atmosphere, is of crucial importance to our Lord. The darker the environment the more light will stand out. Sometime we work amongst 'respectable people' to whom the above standards may not fully apply, but our lives can create an inner hunger and realisation of that, 'something missing' which was how I came into a personal relationship with God. A true Christian's standards may bring persecution, but often respect at the same time. Light exposes darkness which is why some people hate and want to extinguish the light (Jesus or the person concerned John 3:19-20). It is often best to let others see our character and good work standards, before opening our mouths about our faith, maybe some time later. Some 'Christians' are persecuted because they are obnoxious and pushy in the way they impose on others.

KEY PRINCIPLE – Aim to be an excellent worker, doing it as unto God irrespective as to whether the employer is fair and appreciative, or not – see this clearly in Eph. 6:5-9. Paul did not endorse slavery. In his letter to Philemon (a slave owner), he appealed to him to have his runaway slave back, as a brother, not a slave. Christianity is meant to work by changing relationships within society (as demonstrated here), not by a violent revolution John 18:34. Vocationally we should seek to be the best we can be, without our work becoming our god or relegating God into second place or worse, or our family life etc. being compromised. It is recognised that sometimes there are circumstances beyond our control e.g. having no alternative but to work away from home in order to feed one's family etc. It's 'as far as it lies within your power.....'

THE UNEMPLOYED – Sometimes feelings of personal worthlessness can come into the life of an unemployed man, who feels a failure for not being able to provide for his family. It is vital that he sees himself as secure, significant and worthwhile in God's eyes (see 'You matter to God' teaching in the manual). There may be many practical unpaid jobs we can do to serve others, which are precious in God's sight. After all, Jesus and His disciples lived with no regular or guaranteed income!

With the emphasis now on both sexes having a good career, the value of being a good home-maker, in which the whole family unit can thrive, has sometimes been seen as something inferior! Admittedly financial pressures may make it necessary for both husband and wife to work and earn, but the stability of a good, well run home combined with a life long commitment to each other, provides a secure environment which is as priceless in God's eyes as any vocation! No doubt Jesus

really valued the welcome and hospitality that Mary and Martha's home provided (Luke 10:38).

Consider how the 'psychological' problems in children, for example have increased with the break up of the family unit, and the lack of a well-run, stable home environment. Home-making is a crucial, God given vocation and area of work, as vital as any area of employment (bringing money into a stable, well run home) – a perfect partnership of work, inside and outside the home!

Also consider the biblical emphasis on hospitality and what a ministry it is (Heb.13:2; Rom. 12:13; Titus1:8). How can people feel 'at home' in a tip, or appreciate a God of order? Just as behind a Church leadership people are 'freeing up' the Pastor etc. by serving through the ministry of helps in such areas as creche, welcoming, sound system, tea making, secretarial work etc. (It's been said that Stephen, the Christian martyr (Acts 7:54-59, started out as 'meals on wheels' to Hellenist Jews!) - so a good home-maker is doing an invaluable job for the family, and indeed for the Kingdom of God! God values the home-maker as much as the family member, out in the work-place!

.....

ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH by Pastor Rana Kundi

In the passage of Matthew 16:13-20 – there is a conversation between the Lord and His disciples which revolves around the identity of Jesus. The two questions He asks are; firstly, who do people say that He is? And secondly, who do the disciples think He is?

The disciples reply by stating; the people claim Jesus is a prophet, like John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah. However, to the second and more personal question of who they personally think He is, Peter correctly replies with, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answers with: ***¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.***

Now there seems to be some controversy around this text, as the Roman Catholic church seem to believe that St Peter is the rock upon which Jesus builds His church. However, this is not the case. The debate revolves around the words *petros* meaning Peter, a detached or loose stone, and *petra* which indicates a mass of rock. Therefore, Jesus is not building His church upon St Peter, but rather upon his confession of the truth; namely, Jesus is the Christ and the everlasting rock and chief cornerstone (1 Cor 10:4, Isa 26:4, Eph 2:20). Furthermore, Peter never referred to himself as the foundation of the church, but always directed His audience to Jesus (Acts 4:11-12, 1 Pet.2:4).

In v19 the Lord goes on to say - ***¹⁹ 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^d in heaven.***" The expression of 'binding and loosing' were common in Jewish legal phraseology, and it declared if something was lawful or unlawful, permitted or prohibited. An example of 'binding' is found when the apostles used their authority to lay no greater burden on gentile converts than the following requirements; ... abstinence from food sacrificed to idols, from blood and from the meat of strangled animals, and also from sexual immorality (Acts 15:28-29). Therefore, the ceremonial laws which the Jews adhered to were 'bound' for gentile converts. In contrast, on the day of Pentecost 3,000 souls were 'loosed' in order to enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 2:41).

Moreover, the expression of 'binding and loosing' is also seen in Matt 18:18 in the context of church discipline. For instance, when a church member repents of their sin they ought to be 'loosed' or restored to fellowship, while those who are unrepentant are to be 'bound' and if necessary, excommunicated. In summary. William Kelly writes 'whenever the church acts in the name of the Lord and really does His will, the stamp of God is upon their deeds.'

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

READ MATTHEW 8:5-13; ROMANS 13:1-2

All of us will inevitably find ourselves in situations where our Christian consciences conflict with some external form of authority. From Matthew 8:5-13 (esp. v9) we can appreciate that the Centurion's great faith in God was likened to his understanding of authority; being a man both *in* and *under* authority, he would appreciate God's authority *over* all the affairs of men including his servant's sickness. Today in such an anti-authoritarian society we must be careful not to get caught up in the "spirit of the age." God has delegated authority within the state (Rom13:1-2), the church (Heb.13:17), employment (Eph.6:5-8) and the family unit (Eph.5:22-25). This does not mean we become passive or compromise with what we believe to be right (Acts 4:19) but the spirit in which we act, always reflects a recognition that all authority is from God, even where abuse of position occurs. When our attitude is right, God can deal with such abuses. (Note Jesus' attitude to Pilate's position and His Father's sovereignty, John 19:10-11).

We sometimes react wrongly when we fail to recognise God's sovereignty (cf. Acts 1:8; 8:1 also Rom.8:28; II Peter 3:9 and Prov.16:4), preferring to take matters into our own hands when we have an earthly rather than a heavenly perspective (Rom.8:18 and Acts 7:54-60). In pursuing God's kingdom – see Romans14:17 for a present day definition – we often find that this is best furthered by our *response* to sufferings and trials, which may come through harsh treatment from "the world" and those in authority. In such situations we can see God's kingdom growing within us, although others over us in this world may be totally unjust. The cross of Christ – followed by his resurrection – is the proof and pattern for this principle.

Any dispute with God's delegated authorities has to be handled in a spirit that shows respect and recognition for their God given position, even though you may have problems with the person concerned. A policeman may be a wife-beater, but when he stops the traffic, he carries authority and responsibility from "on high."

When confronting injustices and abuses of position make sure that:

1. You act in a right spirit.
2. Show proper respect for God's delegated authorities.
3. Recognise God's sovereignty and over-ruling.
4. Respect your Christian conscience.
5. Keep an eternal perspective (Rom.8:18).
6. Remember, our standards are not right and wrong, but the standards of the cross.

READ PSALM 73 – A study in *apparent* injustice where the wicked appeared to be prospering. Do you identify with the Psalmist?

1. What difficulties was the Psalmist wrestling with?
2. What mistakes or sins had he fallen into?

3. What was the turning point for the Psalmist?
4. What were his final conclusions?
5. Can you think of any present day injustices that perplex you/others – how could this Psalm help?

The problem of suffering – some considerations

1. Most importantly – Jesus has experienced all of man’s suffering when on this earth – rejection, pain, loneliness etc. so any hurt person can identify with Jesus.
2. No freedom of choice – which love necessitates – without consequence. God will not force us to love and obey him. Deut.28 (cf. the blessings for obedience v1-14, with the consequences for disobedience v15-end). Selfish and sinful choices e.g. drinking and driving, may result in the suffering of others.
3. God never promised that we would be immune from suffering, sometimes quite the reverse for Christians (II Cor.11:23-29; Rom.8:17b).
4. All suffering is ultimately a result of man’s sin and broken relationship with God. One day in the new heaven and earth all suffering will be a thing of the past. In the meantime we all live in a fallen, sinful world, with all its pain and tragedies (Rev.21:3-5; Matt.24:6-14; John 16:33).
5. Realise that only God knows all the answers and mysteries. WE CANNOT BE “ALL KNOWING” as creatures rather than the creator (Rom.11:33-36).
6. Balance all the above with a recognition of God’s sovereignty, and realise that his purposes are being worked out, despite appearances to the contrary (cf. Acts 1:8 with Acts 8:1; Rom.8:28; I Cor.10:13; Job 1:12; Prov.16:4).
7. Ripeness – just because God allows wickedness to “have its day,” does not mean that he will not deal with it AT THE RIGHT TIME (Gen.15:16; II Peter 3:9; Gen.6:3; Ps.73:17). Such verses show his sovereignty (Prov. 16:4).
8. The problems in the world shows what happens when people reject Jesus – and therefore the mess we get into without him, seems to me to show the existence of God and the need to look to him.



THE CHRISTIAN AND THE DEMONIC

READ LUKE 8:26-39

Two wrong extremes:

1. Over emphasis – blaming everything on evil spirits.
2. Ignoring – We need to know our enemy and his devices – II Cor.2:11. Reality of evil spirits seen in the behaviour of the herd of pigs. God wants us to actively co-operate with him, whereas Satan seeks our passivity, in order to accomplish their respective tasks. Between one quarter and one third of Jesus' ministry involved delivering people from Satanic bondage (deliverance).

Three ways people get into bondage

1. Deception - including passivity and ignorance of the truth.
2. Rebellion – e.g. Deut.18:9-12 (see Occult practices mentioned).
3. Inheritance – see principle in II Sam.21:1 (curse); Lev.26:40; Ex.20:5.

The Occult takes three forms:

1. Witchcraft – domination, spells, curses etc.
2. Divination – fortune telling, palmistry, horoscopes, tarot cards etc. (revelation).
3. Sorcery – physical objects – charms, bracelets, (with Occult significance), rings, some forms of music.

BACKGROUND TO CONFLICT

Rebellion of angels etc. Is.14:12-15; Ezek.28:12-19; Jude 6; II Peter 2:4; Rev.12:4; Eph.1:9-10.

Jesus has dealt with sin at Calvary and disarmed Satan (Col.2:15). Satan therefore has to rely on our rebellion and his deception in our lives to gain any foothold. Lucifer (Latin for light reflector) cf. his title with that of Jesus Is.14:12 and Rev.22:16 and our role today (Matt.5:14).

Two questions posed

1. Can a Christian need deliverance?
2. How much of people's problems have a demonic aspect?

Some views include transference (Acts 19:15-16); emotional problems (i.e. pent up anger), sins of the flesh etc., failure to deal properly with past wrong involvements.

A key question

How far does conversion affect every area of our lives, and change whatever happened to us BEFORE conversion?

Total change may be hindered by:

1. A lack of openness
2. A lack of discernment Some problems get missed that would otherwise have been dealt with (see Acts 8:4-8 to discover what happened when the Holy Spirit was moving in power)

in their situation).

3. A lack of appropriation Do sick people automatically get well when converted, even though they/we may believe that the ATONEMENT includes even our physical sicknesses?

It is the experience of some (including myself) that a simple authoritative command in the name of Jesus, can set a person free in a way in which no other form of ministry can.

SOME MINISTRY POINTS

1. Pray first in a spirit of total dependence upon God.
2. Check the foundation e.g. genuine repentance and conversion.
3. Pursue a good spiritual diet e.g. daily prayers, study etc.
4. Discover when presenting problem started and what was happening around that time.
5. You may use a check list – but this needs to be wisely and sensitively presented.

PRAY LIKE JESUS who took authority over FEVER (Matt.8:14-16); A STORM (Mark 4:35); A FIG TREE (Mark 11:20-25); EVIL SPIRITS (Matt.8:30-32).

Address it thusYOU CANCERYOU RESENTMENT YOU MOUNTAIN etc.
LEAVE HIM/HER IN THE NAME AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS.

The best and most effective approach has been found in obtaining the full help and co-operation of the counsellee (without which, freedom will not normally be obtained) by:

1. Getting the counsellee to repent of and renounce all sins and wrong involvements and to do the actual praying (of renouncements, petitioning God etc.) themselves.
2. For the minister to seek to target the person, not the evil spirits in long wrestling matches. – What does the counsellee really want to see happen? (their choice).

IN EFFECT YOU ARE SEEKING TO GET THE COUNSELLEE TO REMOVE THE GROUND AND LEGAL RIGHTS FOR EVIL SPIRITS TO OPERATE.

THE BASIS FOR OUR PRAYING WITH AUTHORITY

Ephesians.1:19-20; 2:6.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Note the warnings given in I Peter 5:8 and Eph.4:27 – “Give no place (INHABITED LAND) to the devil. We will be affected by whatever we open the door to. Note finally that the message from Luke 8:29-39 IS THAT Jesus can set free the most entangled of captives. Instead of being driven around by the devil, the man was now at rest, he was able to exercise self control and was properly dressed. His mind had been restored by a single, simple command from the Lord Jesus, and he went home to witness for/to Jesus for

HIM WHOM THE SON SETS FREE SHALL BE FREE INDEED (John 8:36).

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

READ EPHESIANS 5:15-6:20 - See also “Understanding the Bible” in “The Makers Handbook” to appreciate the background to the warfare with Satan.

THE REAL BATTLE

In the Wilderness Jesus dealt with Satan’s claim to God’s throne, at Calvary he dealt with Satan’s claim to God’s creation.

THE REALITY OF THE DEMONIC – Luke 8:26-39.

Evil spirits seek to inhabit bodies. The behaviour of the pigs showed the REALITY OF THE DEMONIC. These pigs did not suddenly develop a mental illness!

TWO WRONG EXTREMES

- (1) Ignoring Satan – Know your enemy in order to combat his strategies (Eph.6:11; II Co.2:11).
- (2) Focused on Satan – JESUS is our life, love and focus, not Satan (Heb.12:2).

Being a legalist will lead to defeat (Gal.5:1; Rom.7:18-19), but at the other extreme is PASSIVITY AND LICENSIOUSNESS, which is more subtle and therefore potentially, more dangerous (Gal.5:13). When we expect God to “take us over” and think and act for and through us without our choice and conscious co-operation, we are liable to be deceived by Satan who knows how to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. To become a Spiritualist Medium you have to be *taken over* by the spirit, seeking to be completely passive in body and mind. The Holy Spirit, needs our active co-operation – he renews our minds, he does not over-ride them (Rom.12:2).

PRAYING THROUGH - See Daniel 10:1-14.

We need to persist in prayer until we know we have broken through in the spiritual realm (see below). Some situations require minutes, others years of prayer.

GOD	↑	3RD HEAVEN II Cor.12:2
SATAN (Resister)		MID HEAVEN Rev.14:6
MAN	↓	1ST HEAVEN Psalm 19:1

EVERYDAY VICTORIES AND DEFEATS - Before Paul deals with the Christian’s armour, he deals with the sort of areas where our biggest battles often are – in the home and places of work. God wants his divine order in the family unit (Eph.5:22-6:4), our employment (Eph.6:5-9), in the church (Heb.13:17) and in relation to the state (Rom.13:17). Satan is an Anarchist and his attacks are often on God’s order in those four areas, and this is where our defeats often come! If Satan can destroy our credibility then it is unlikely we will have an effective ministry (Matt.5:13).

THE ARMOUR: “Having done all, to stand” (Eph.6:13) – leave no areas in our lives that the devil can get a foothold in. We need to ensure we have done all that God requires us to do.

THE BELT OF TRUTH: Ephesians 6:14a. The first piece of armour mentioned! Satan wants us to doubt the word of God, see Gen.3:1, “Did God say?” A principle of warfare is “divide and conquer” (Matt.12:25). This is true (a) between believers (I Cor.1:12), (b) within ourselves (James :1:7-8) when confusion and double mindedness can turn us into walking civil wars! Since Satan has been disarmed at Calvary (Col.2:15) he has to rely on deception and lies. We must stand firm in the truth.



BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: Ephesians 6:14b. Protects the heart. Clothed in the righteousness of Jesus (Luke 15:22). God sees me IN CHRIST; this is my standing before God. However, if my daily conduct and standards are low, then I will lack confidence when I come before God (I Tim.1:18-20) and the heart will go out of me, in the fight.



SANDALS OF PEACE: Ephesians 6:15. We have peace with God (Rom.5:1) but may still not know the peace of God, because of fear etc. cf. Col.3:15; Mark 4:39-40. From a place of peace with God we should be ready to share this gospel of peace with others, wherever we go “gossip the gospel.”



SHIELD OF FAITH: Ephesians 6:16. When Jesus went into the Wilderness, Satan tried to make Jesus lose faith in his Father – “What kind of Father would leave his son (he insinuated) in a wilderness like this with no bread?” (Matt.4:3). Maintaining confidence in God and in his promises, whatever the circumstances. Faithfulness and loyalty are a shield to us.



HELMET OF HOPE OF SALVATION: cf. Ephesians 6:17a; I Thessalonians 5:8. A helmet protects the head – specifically our thought life. The opposite of hope is despair. Our confidence in God’s sovereignty (Rom.8:28) and an expectation of good daily (which should be confessed – Rom.12:21) and of future glory, keeps us thinking positively and victoriously, whatever the circumstances see also Rom.8:31-39.



SWORD OF THE SPIRIT: Ephesians 6:17b. This is our first offensive weapon and the one Jesus used in his Wilderness experience, “.....it is written.....” We need to *speak out* God’s word to put Satan to flight. PRAYING.....WITH ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS: These prayers can reach out to anyone, anywhere in need. The sword is only an arms length.



WHY THE ARMOUR?: Ephesians 6:18-20. Knowing God’s protection we are free to pray for and minister to others. There is no armour for the back; if we give in to fear and turn and run we will give territory in our lives to Satan (Eph.4:26). We are told to STAND our ground (Eph.6:11).



OUR AUTHORITY IN CHRIST: When a policeman or woman raises his or her hand to stop the traffic, drivers recognise that behind that raised hand is the authority of the land. In a similar way we have the authority of Christ (Eph.1:19-20;2:6), where all principalities and powers are under his feet and therefore, ours. Note Jesus’ authority over: a storm (Mark 4:39) “be strangled,” sickness (Matt.9:6-8) and evil spirits (Matt.8:28-34).

HANDLING THE SECTS by Pastor Barry Kirk

Barry & his wife Bunny were involved with the Watchtower (J.W's) before coming to faith in Jesus

The various sects believe either that their leader is divine, or has divine inspiration. Cults seek to get their people totally focused on their new leader or group. It is therefore good to remind them of the life they had outside the cult – ask questions about past family life, friends, interests etc. They have been indoctrinated.

EXPLAIN THE GOSPEL TO THEM: Rom.1:17. Agree to listen to them and read their literature if they will give their word to read yours, and listen to your beliefs and testimony etc.

Each of us should be able to share a simple outline of the gospel within 30 seconds to two minutes. This should be practised. Offer to pray with them. Using the name of Jesus in prayer will cause them to 'close down.' Instead pray, "Dear God, draw us to the truth" etc. etc.

Say I will pray for you, and do it! For one or two weeks.

Tell them 'God loves you.' This is something they may not have experienced from Christians, or their own sects. The writer pursued faith in Jesus, once he saw in another Christian something he had not received, in his own life. Let others see that love for them, rather than a door slammed in their faces. God has His time for rescuing the cult member. Give safe hospitality.

Share your assurance of eternal life – I John 5:11-13. No cult member has that assurance, so they are kept in bondage to their cult – 'To be safe you have to stay with us – and keep doing what we're doing.'

Three questions to ask cult members

1. Who do you say Jesus is? Do you worship and pray to Him? I see the disciples did – Matt.28:17; John 20:28-29;14:14. Paul prayed to Jesus (II Cor.12:8 -9). Do you believe Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine? (Incarnate Deity) Luke 24:38-42; II John:7.
2. Ask, 'What is your final authority?' 'Where do you get your authority from?' (They won't say the Bible).
3. 'How do you get right with God?' They deny the person of Jesus (Cross – finished work) – what Jesus did – I Cor.15:1-8.

SOME EARLY SECTS whose arguments are propagated today, denied the divinity of Christ, pointing to such scripture verses as Col.1:15, "First born from the dead." Jesus' resurrection is referred to here as bringing into existence the start of a brand new creation – II Cor. 5:17 – as the first born of this new race. It also refers to the biblical privileges of the first born – the inheritor – not as Arius (256-336 AD) stated, that it meant that Jesus was created – i.e. that he was the first of God's creations. Many Greek scholars see the consequence of Jesus being first born (from the dead), best clarified in Psalm 89:27 – 'I will appoint Him my first born, the most exalted of the kings of the earth' see also Rev. 11:15 & Eph.1:18-23. The word for 'first born' in Greek is 'prototakos' (used in Col.1:15), whereas first created is 'protokistos'.

COMMUNICATION AND COUNSELLING

“Much of what happens at the front of the church is only first aid” – George Miller.

A Brisbane specialist, believes that 90% of all illness is EMOTIONALLY BASED (from “YOUR HEALING IS WITHIN YOU” by Jim Glennon). In the same chapter, “The Healing of the Memories” he explains how a major upset can cause physical problems, about two years after the original crisis or upset. It seems we can carry the emotional strain of the original event, for up to that period of time, until we finally “cave in” under the pressure.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH has been defined as “acknowledging our emotions experientially, whilst choosing to express them biblically (CWR), e.g. Eph.4:26, i.e. don't bury or deny your feelings, but aim to respond like Jesus, biblically. Have two or three trusted, accepting friends that you can share your deepest feelings with.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLE:

A girl with an occult background, who retains such materials, makes a commitment to Christ. She is looking forward to her wedding day, when her partner calls it off and she is devastated by the rejection, and begins to withdraw from all in-depth relationships for fear of further rejection. She becomes embittered by what has happened, and a deep sense of resentment towards her intended marriage partner sets in. Following this, serious stomach problems develop. Consider the various areas of ministry that *could* be needed:

1. Repentance and destroying all occult materials – take authority over any demonic presence, commanding not asking it, to leave.
2. Forgiveness towards her fiancée.
3. The healing of emotional wounds – some Counsellors teach that the inviting of Jesus into a painful memory/experience, to transform it by a new awareness of His presence – maybe with a word or picture – and to replace the distorted view we have of God with His love, instead of the pain. Some people have been so damaged, that without some form of ministry they are unable to trust (have faith), or see God as Father, correctly.
4. Prayer for physical healing.

N.B. It may not be necessary to pray specifically for each of the four areas, but just notice how inadequate simply dealing with the physical problem would be without facing the underlying causes (I Corinthians 11:30).

LEVELS OF COUNSELLING

LEVEL 1: ENCOURAGEMENT – SUPPORTIVE – FEELINGS

LEVEL 2: EXHORTATION – DIRECTIVE – BEHAVIOUR

LEVEL 3: ENLIGHTENMENT – TRANSFORMATIVE – THINKING

To communicate properly you need to be able to “tune in” to the other person’s feelings. This will get you into their heart, whereas knowing their thoughts will simply get you into their mind. Tremendous harm has been done in the church by exhorting (trying to change behaviour), without first attempting to get alongside the person. EMPATHY has been defined as “your pain in my heart.” Much “play-acting” goes on in the church, because people expect condemnation and exhortation only, if they share their true feelings. A good sentence to use when seeking to encourage is: “I’m a good listener – and I care” (Proverbs 18:13). People don’t want to know how

much we know, but how much we care!

LISTENING

Learn to do this carefully first, without thinking about what you would like to say until the other person's finished. Then summarise back what you've heard AND PERCEIVED!..... "If I'm hearing you correctly, you have been sayingetc."

COMMUNICATION

7% The words we speak. 38% Tone of voice. 55% Body language.

Consider how you might say: "I hope you find a solution to your problem," in the following ways:

- a) Disinterested – e.g. Muttering into a newspaper with head down arms and legs crossed.
- b) Sarcastically – e.g. Where your tone of voice and facial expression exudes HOSTILITY.
- c) Caringly – e.g. Speaking gently, with good eye contact, leaning forward slightly etc.

Yet consider that in each case the SAME WORDS were used.

A PERSONAL COUNSELLING APPROACH – I want everyone who comes to leave with real hope, even if their circumstances don't change for some time.

1. SHOW ACCEPTANCE OF PEOPLE AS THEY ARE

Consider Jesus' encounter with Zaccaeus (Luke 19) and the "Woman at the well" (John 4). Get alongside a person and try to feel their pain (EMPATHY) before seeking to exhort them, (Jesus wept over Jerusalem before he whipped in the temple) - "Never whip before you've wept" - David Duplessis. People need to know how much we care first, not how much we know – ONLY THEN will they usually "open up".

2. UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM (ROOT CAUSE) – Sensitively ask relevant questions and look to the Holy Spirit for discernment. Find out when the presenting problem started, and what may have led to it.

3. MINISTER THE SOLUTION

Keep a balance between counselling within your depth, and refusal to be intimidated by the counsellee's problems. Remember the three basic needs of security, significance and self-worth.

- a) Obtain good reference books on specific problems OR
- b) Consider referring to a more experienced counsellor
- c) Look to God for the ability to help, at all times.

Especially look out for unscriptural ways the counsellee may be thinking, (Rom. 12:2) and confront with a wise and SENSITIVE use of scripture (PRACTICE AND TEACH BIBLICAL MEDITATION).

Look out for areas of unforgiveness, occult involvement etc. - I personally use a questionnaire now as a preliminary to in depth counselling.

Check the person's willingness to change, along biblical lines.

Check the person's life style is healthy – adequate rest, relaxation etc. and that he/she has a good spiritual diet – or help them towards one.

Wherever possible work under the authority of leaders – don't be a spiritual lone ranger – someone else may have to pick up the pieces.

A "FREEDOM IN CHRIST" APPOINTMENT IS A VERY THOROUGH WAY TOWARDS HAVING A COMPLETE SPIRITUAL CHECK UP AND CLEANSING, AND IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED FOR ALL CHRISTIANS.

PASTORAL CARE AND EVANGELISM

It has been said that the Church has two doors, a front door through which new people are coming in, and a back door through which people are leaving. Bringing people to faith in Christ is wonderful as is retaining and properly caring for them - providing for their various needs etc. In this way we will minimise those wanting to leave through the back door - and this is my personal passion.

Firmly establishing people (like new-born babes), with proper care and love, equipping for growing up etc., is very much the needed provision in any Church. RESPONDING to this offered spiritual care of good teaching, caring, small groups etc, is the new person's responsibility, and provided the Church is doing all in its power to welcome, feed, nurture etc, then we have to recognise that, even when the best care has been offered or provided, some people will want to get out through the back door, or not come in at all!

There were people who walked away from Jesus (Jn 6:66; Lk 18:22), and Jesus respected the free will choice that God had given them, to reject His offer of life. As long as we're doing all we can to "close the back door," continuing to pray for such people etc, we shouldn't feel guilty or failures, any more than Jesus did!

I have two aims when people are approached, or they approach us, possibly with some personal issue:

1. I want to convey absolute acceptance and love to the other person. They may have been seriously judged because of imprisonment (crime) addiction (drugs), marital failures, multiple sexual affairs etc, but what do they experience in our presence - acceptance or judgement? Who are we to look down on anyone, when God has saved us from a hell bound destiny, from which we were powerless to escape? Look how Jesus approached two social outcasts – Zacchaeus, (Luke 19:1-10), and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:4-30). God loves all people even if they don't change, and they throw His offer of life back into his face, although it has to be stressed that part of love is to make people aware of the ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES of their rejection.
2. I want anyone seeking friendship, care, etc. to leave a personal encounter WITH HOPE. The problem may not have changed, but they should leave us with renewed strength and encouragement to go on, as a result of what has been conveyed through us. Remember, a person can live for about 60 days without food, about three days without water, but about six seconds without Hope! Hope is the opposite of despair, it is the spiritual helmet that is meant to protect the mind (1 Thes 5:8) - Hope has been defined as, "The expectation of good, in the mind," (Derek Prince).
Having said that, the call is to "Go out and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). We all need to be skilled in clearly explaining how to receive Christ into our lives, (John 1:12), and I like to use the "knowing God personally" booklet, available from "Agape". May it never be said of us, "I can't hear what you are saying, what you are is speaking so loudly!" Our lives are perhaps the only bible some people will ever read.

THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM TO CHRISTIANITY by Pastor Billy Fenning

It is important to see the challenge of Islam to Christianity in the context of the growing belief in pluralism in western cultures. This is the belief that all religions are the same, worshipping the same God. Pluralism is a false premise because whilst there may be similarities between religions, all religions are not mutually compatible.

Next to Christianity Islam it is the fastest growing religion in the world and stands classified along with Christianity as possessing a certain group of important characteristics; monotheism, personal foundation and universalism - its mission, to reach out to the world.

There are those who would advocate that Allah is the same as the God in the Christian Bible, and whilst there are many similarities between both religions there are great differences that make belief in them both incompatible. So, do Christians and Muslims worship the same deity? Is the Islamic notion of Allah compatible with the Christian belief in God? The answer is that Islam and Christianity are incompatible on many levels and as David Mathis once said: 'Christians and Muslims who disagree with respect will show more courtesy than pretending we all believe the same thing.' *Some examples of these differences are set out below.

Jesus or Allah

What the Bible teaches about Christology is in direct opposition to Islamic thought as expressed through the Quran. Christians believe the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the second person in the Godhead, the Son of God, that was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. The resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of our Christian faith. The Bible also teaches that Christ is to be worshipped.

However, Islamic teaching, whilst having high respect for Jesus Christ, who is mentioned 90 times in the Quran and is referred to as a prophet, falls short to a considerable degree in its positioning of Jesus in comparison with Christianity. The Quran makes it clear to believe that Jesus is God will seal your destiny to hell (Quran 5: v 72-73).

Muslims preach that Jesus was born of a virgin and preached the truth (Quran 3 v 45-47) however Christians believe He was born of a virgin and is the truth (John 14:6). Also contrary to Christianity, Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified and therefore did not rise from the grave (Quran 4 v 157-158).

The Bible teaches that Jesus, because of His resurrection, confirms His sonship and what He said to be true (Romans 1:4). He has become the Saviour of the world, He is not just an example of righteousness, He was the sacrifice that allows mankind to obtain righteousness.

The Muslim worldview regarding man is that he doesn't need a Saviour he needs Sharia Law. Man's problem is his ignorance, therefore he needs laws and regulations to teach him the way (Sharia means way to water – therefore it is the way to life). However because Islam is a fatalistic religion no one can be assured of their eternal destiny, because they don't know what Allah's will is for them on the day of judgement. They believe that their good and bad deeds are being recorded, but at the end of the day only Allah will determine their destiny (Quran 3 v 115 - 116).

The Christian worldview of man is so different; man's problem is not just his ignorance but his brokenness before God. The way of healing is only found in the cross of Christ, not in a system of rules and regulations, not in Sharia but in the grace of God. We can know forgiveness of sin through a loving God who has made a way of reconciliation possible through Jesus Christ

(Ephesians 2:8).

Is Allah the same as the Christian God?

Allah is a pre-Islamic, Semitic word parallel to the Hebrew word Elohim (God). They may share a similar name but they are two different persons completely different in character.

What Christians believe about Elohim, the God revealed in the Bible, is totally different to the Quran's description of Allah. 'God is love' (1 John 4- 8) but the concept of unconditional love has no place in Islam. Muslims seem to stress God's power at the expense of His love and mercy. Allah's love is conditional. He loves: 'those who do good' (Quran 2 v 195), 'those who fight for his cause' (Quran 61 v 4), 'those who fear him' (Quran 3 v 76), and 'those who are pure' (Quran 9 v 108).

The main practical message about God is that he would punish the wicked and reward the good people. Allah guides and misguides, both punishes and forgives. There is a high degree of fatalism in the Islamic concept of the relationship between Allah and his subjects. Muslims believe in one God, Allah who is mighty and all powerful and the idea of God coming down to communicate with them in human form is repulsive to them (Quran 4 v 171 and 19 v 34-35)

Quran or the Bible

Islam is unique among the religions of the world in that its sacred scriptures are said to be the revelation of God to one man. The Bible was written over a period of 1600 years, by 40 different authors, all from different walks of life and yet because of Divine inspiration the Bible is unified through its clear concepts of God and salvation (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21).

The Quran is only a subjective record of the visions, convictions, opinions and hopes of one individual, Muhammad, who produced his own scripture. He had no divine confirmation of being a prophet by performing miracles.

Christianity is unique in that it adopted into its own canon the sacred scriptures of its parent religion (Judaism). Muhammad was not foretold in either Old or New Testaments, however Jesus fulfilled 3,500 prophecies concerning His life predicted in the Old Testament.

The challenge for Christians is not Islam but our obedience to God and His Word. There are inconsistencies and failure in the lives of all founders of religion, except for Christ. The fact they all went through a period of uncertainty searching for the light, indicates they were mere human beings in need of spiritual light and salvation. Jesus Christ never once searched for the Light, He had a consistent God consciousness not only of character, but direction, because HE IS THE LIGHT.

Our challenge as Christians is to share the light in the midst of darkness.

Recommended Books: 'No God but one –Allah or Jesus', Nabeel Qureshi
 'Seeking Allah finding Jesus', Nabeel Qureshi
 'Unveiling Islam', Ergun Menmet Caner

*Mathis, David (2016) "Loving Muslims Begins with Honesty" www.desiringgod.org

USING GOD'S WORD AS A SWORD

Jesus overcame Satan in the wilderness at the end of 40 days by quoting God's word on each occasion, "It is written" Satan is a defeated foe, but often resists the people of God, but the fact is he cannot fight a long war. Christians need to stand persistently, consistently and daily, on the word of God. Ed Silvoso, the Argentinian minister, speaks of the time when a colleague watched the demolition of a wall by a strong man with a sledge hammer. Apparently the wall showed no sign of breaking up until about the 35th blow, but by the 40th blow the wall had been completely demolished by the unshakeable and confident persistence of the man with the hammer.

Very often in the lives of individual Christians, strongholds have developed – maybe constant failure in a certain area, or a problem with fear or resentment, for example, has left us in a state of despair, even though we know we should not be in bondage to anything. Finally we may give up, or live in an uneasy state of compromise, maybe after years of failure. The following approach should help:

List the areas of desired change in your/my life.

1. Prayerfully find appropriate, meaningful scriptures that affirm God's truth e.g. to counteract fear you may choose II Timothy 1:7.
2. Write down each verse on a separate page in a note book.
3. Speak out those various scriptures – twice a day. Do this by the calendar, for 40 days.
4. Additionally, use one of these verses each day to meditate on, as explained later on this page.

RENEWING THE MIND

It is no coincidence that the very first piece of armour mentioned in Ephesians 6:14 is the belt of truth. Unless we take our stand on the *truth* of God's word against the lies of the devil – instead of beginning to question it as Eve did in the garden of Eden – we will soon find ourselves in deep trouble spiritually. Satan often seeks to keep us in conflict about God's word by asking us, "Did God say?" (Gen.3:1). Over the years we may have come to accept thoughts, feelings and ideas about God and ourselves which are contrary to his word – and therefore lies! We have to challenge and replace these wrong beliefs with what God thinks and says about himself, and us. Generally speaking, many of us have learnt to walk by sight (including our thoughts and feelings) rather than by faith in God and his word (II Cor. 5:7) a reversal of the divine order.

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

"In the life of true holiness everything depends on the control of the thoughts"- F.B. Meyer.

Isaiah 26:3 has a French translation as, "You will keep in perfect peace, him whose imagination stops at you." The Hebrew word for imagination, literally means "conception," therefore the imagination is the creative part of us" (Andrew Wommack). "Change the secret pictures in the gallery of you mind" (CWR), substituting godly pictures (imagination), e.g. seeing Jesus on the cross, loving and non-retaliatory, instead of dwelling on hostile and unloving thoughts, concerning enemies.

The words used in the Hebrew for meditation ‘hagah’ and ‘siyach’ mean to ponder, imagine, contemplate, reflect, pray, commune, murmur, mutter and converse with oneself. In other words, meditation means to roll a word around in the mind, continually contemplating, pondering, dwelling upon, viewing it from every angle, weighing it and considering it carefully. To do this, not just once, but over and over again until you begin to talk to yourself about it, allowing it to penetrate and saturate your thinking,” (acknowledgements – CWR – “Bible Characters”). Bishop Hall wrote of meditation as the pastime of the saints, but that was 300 years ago. Today it is almost a lost art; yet notice how success and meditation were linked together in the life of Joshua (Joshua 1:8). A further illustration of what Bible meditation is, is to think of a cow chewing the cud. The cow keeps bringing up over and over again what it has eaten; in like manner we should constantly recall to our minds the spiritual food from God’s word. Take a verse or passage of scripture and milk it of every possible insight we can.

HOW TO MEDITATE

Write out an appropriate verse or passage of scripture; begin to dwell on it and write down the various thoughts that come, and finally turn it into prayer: e.g. “I have loved you with an everlasting love: I have drawn you with loving kindness” (Jer.31:3).

“I” God loves me personally! “With an everlasting love” – a love that does not depend on my love for God; a love that does not change; “I have drawn you with loving kindness” – God draws us; he has not got a big stick in his hands, they are nail-pierced! How God must love me, after what has happened in my life etc. etc. As we dwell on a verse or passage in this way, so new insights will come, which can be written down under the verse. An excellent time to meditate is just before we go to sleep. Having a closing thought from God’s word will continue to “lay on” and work in our minds, throughout the night – isn’t that better than going to sleep dwelling anxiously on our problems and waking up tense!

Now turn the above thoughts into prayer: e.g. Thank you for your love for me, personally. Thank you that your love for me does not change, even when I let you down. Help me never to abuse your love; forgive me for the times when I have hurt others and when I have not loved and accepted others, as they are. Thank you that you do not want me to serve you in a servile fear, but out of a response of love etc.

Now try this on a daily basis and in this way God will begin to bring our thoughts into line with his. Then our minds will begin to be renewed and we will indeed be building on the truth, rather than on the lies we have believed in the past.

SOME BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

1. Joshua 1:8 – Good success.
2. Psalm 1:2-3 – Everything you do prospers.
3. Psalm 119:97-100 – True understanding (more than teachers).
4. Psalm 119:9-11 – Power over sin.
5. Proverbs 4:4 – Discover how to live.
6. Romans 12:2 – Aids the process of being transformed.
7. Philippians 4:8 – What you dwell on will “rub off” on you.

MEDITATION IS NOT COMPLETE UNTIL IT HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY APPLIED

WHY ISRAEL?

God called the Jews into a special covenant relationship with himself. Their very smallness and vulnerability meant they would always be dependent on God, and it could never be said that they were powerful or victorious because of their own resources or military might. God loves all people, but he needed a people he could prepare, prior to his own entry into this world as a Jew. Through the giving and receiving of God's laws by Moses and the prophets, Israel was being prepared for the coming of the Messiah.

Although the majority of Jews rejected Jesus when he came, we must never forget it is through the Jews that we have our knowledge of, and relationship with God (John 4:22). *Any nation* or people that Jesus could have been born into, would have killed him, as there are people in *every nation* who prefer darkness to light, with the inevitable consequences (John 3:19). If you were going to reach out to a large town you might well consider starting with a few, carefully chosen people who would one day reach out on your behalf, and ultimately beyond your own borders. This was God's way of reaching the world through the Jews, but they weren't willing to see beyond themselves to the rest of the world (Acts 1:6-8; 22:21-22). God still has a special place for the Jews (Rom. 11:28-29) and after their scattering throughout the nations following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans, they again are returning to their own land, as prophesied by Ezekiel (36:24; 37:27-29). The Jews were given the land unconditionally (Ex. 32:13) although its occupation has always been conditional (Deut. 28:58-63). In May 1948 an amazing prophecy was fulfilled (Is. 66:8). Whereas other nations have come and gone, God has promised that they would always be a nation before Him (Jer. 31:35-36). This should give us tremendous confidence before God, if we are tempted to think that he may have given up on you or me! God called us into a covenant relationship – and he's a covenant keeping God! (II Tim. 2:12). He took on Israel (and you and me) knowing us far better than we know ourselves (Luke 22:31-34); our failures don't catch God out, although we must pursue a holy life (Heb. 12:14).

We see the sovereignty of God in his dealings with Israel. Despite the attempts of Haman (Esther 3:5-6) to annihilate the Jews, a King's insomnia turned the whole situation around in their favour! (Esther chapter 6) and despite Hitler's purge of the Jews, his depraved and evil actions had the effect of promoting a homeland for the Jews, following the determination of many to see them with their own land again, after the war. Romans chapters 9-11, shows how the hardening of Jewish hearts toward the gospel, led to it being taken to the Gentiles (see Acts 1:8 and the beginning of the process in Acts 8:1, following persecution in Jerusalem). Once the full number of Gentiles have become Christians, then God will again open the eyes of the Jews (Rom. 11:25-27). (The writer understands that the number of Messianic Jews including Rabbis, is increasing steadily at this present time). Many who believe the Church will be raptured before the Great Tribulation, also believe the Jews will carry out a massive evangelisation programme during the Great Tribulation, once their blindness is removed (Rev. 7:4-8). We have a debt as Gentiles to the Jews, see the warnings of "cursing and blessing" (Gen. 12:2-3) and "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6), for it will be Christ's capital when he returns to rule and reign. Woe betide anyone who touches the apple of God's eye! (Zech. 2:8).

PALESTINE relates to a geographical area, rather than a people. This and comments below are from an Internet article "Mandate for Palestine" - The Legal Aspect of Jewish rights by Eli E. Hertz.

1) Historically the official British mandate – vintage documents, speak of the Jews and Arabs of Palestine – not Jews and Palestinians. 2) Before local Jews began calling themselves Israelis in 1948, the term "Palestine" applied almost exclusively to Jews and the institutions founded by Jewish immigrants in the first half of the 20th Century, before the state's independence. 3) Today Israel's Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 1936 by Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Germany, was originally called the "Palestine Symphony Orchestra," composed of some 70 Palestinian Jews. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SOVEREIGN ARABIC STATE IN PALESTINE.

Arab Nations never established a Palestinian state themselves.

ISRAEL AND THE LAND by Pastor John Angliss

Prior to the return of the Jews to the newly reformed state of Israel in 1948, the entire area of Israel had been under the control of four basic rulers described by seven periods (Romans, Muslims, Crusaders and the British).

(1) THE ROMAN PERIOD 63 BC- 324 AD) This had commenced in 63 BC, but was heightened by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the destruction of the second temple by Titus. From this point on, Jews were scattered to the four corners of the earth, and were persecuted and are still hated by many. From 132-135 AD, Bar Kochba, a Jew led an unsuccessful uprising against the Romans. As a result, the emperor Hadrian changed the name of Israel to PALESTINE and Jerusalem became AELIA CAPITOLINA and a temple to Jupiter was constructed on the Temple Mount. Jews were not allowed in Jerusalem. All of these were derogatory actions against the Jews.

(2) THE BYZANTINE PERIOD (324-638) The emperor Constantine moved the Roman Capital to Byzantium (renamed Constantinople). This was the eastern leg of the Roman Empire (described as part of the legs in Daniel's image). It remained under this control apart from 614-629 when the Persian conquest of Jerusalem took place, but it was recaptured by the Byzantines.

(3) THE EARLY MUSLIM PERIOD (638-1099) Six years after Mohammed's death, the Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem and Jews were re-admitted to Jerusalem. Part of the empire was ruled by Arab dynasties. NB in 691, the Dome of the Rock was completed and in 701, the Al Aksa mosque was completed. In 1010 Caliph al-Hakim ordered the destruction of synagogues and Churches.

(4) THE CRUSADER KINGDOM (1099-1244) They captured Jerusalem, but in 1187 Saladin recaptured it. However, there were various compromises until 1244 when the Turks captured Jerusalem and ended any Crusader rule. At this point, CHRISTIAN Jerusalem is lost, not to be administered by Christians again until 1917 (see below).

(5) THE MAMLUK PERIOD (1260-1517) (Muslim) The Mamluk sultans of Egypt defeated the Turks in 1244, and the Mamluks of Egypt captured Jerusalem in 1260.

(6) THE OTTOMAN TURKISH PERIOD (1517-1917) (Muslim) The Ottomans effected a peaceful take-over of Jerusalem, and Suleiman the Great (Magnificent) rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, including seven of the present day eight gates and the Tower of David. The Golden Gate (East gate) was sealed to prevent the Messiah's entrance (see Ezekiel 44:1-3). (The New gate was opened in 1889).

(7) THE BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD (1917-1948) The British conquest under General Allenby at the head of the allied troops. This led to the famous BALFOUR DECLARATION, which "viewed with favour the establishment in Palestine, of a national home for the Jewish people." During this period, in 1922, Winston Churchill, the foreign secretary, divided 77% of the land with the stroke of a pen and this proportion became the Hashemite kingdom of JORDAN.

(8) THE ISRAELI PERIOD (1948 onwards to date) Following the United Nations Resolution of November 29th, 1947, the British mandate ended on May 14th, 1948 (see above). Since the re-birth of the state of Israel, there have been several wars (almost all wars of attrition), where Israel has gained land by simply defending itself.

Through all of the periods mentioned above, there have ALWAYS been Jews living in the land (A REMNANT) and since 1885 (the 1st Aliyah) and particularly since World War 2, thousands have returned from the four corners of the earth.

THE MAPS ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES show the original land of Israel promised to Abraham (Isaac and Jacob) by a COVENANT which has never been revoked, and also the position from the British mandate up to 1949, after the First war following Israel's independence in 1948.

Subsequent wars have brought further conflict over the land between Israel and Palestinian Arabs.

Perhaps the most important to date was the Six Day War of June 1967, which brought Jerusalem fully back into the hands of a Jewish Government for the first time for centuries, and is a partial fulfilment of Luke 21:24.

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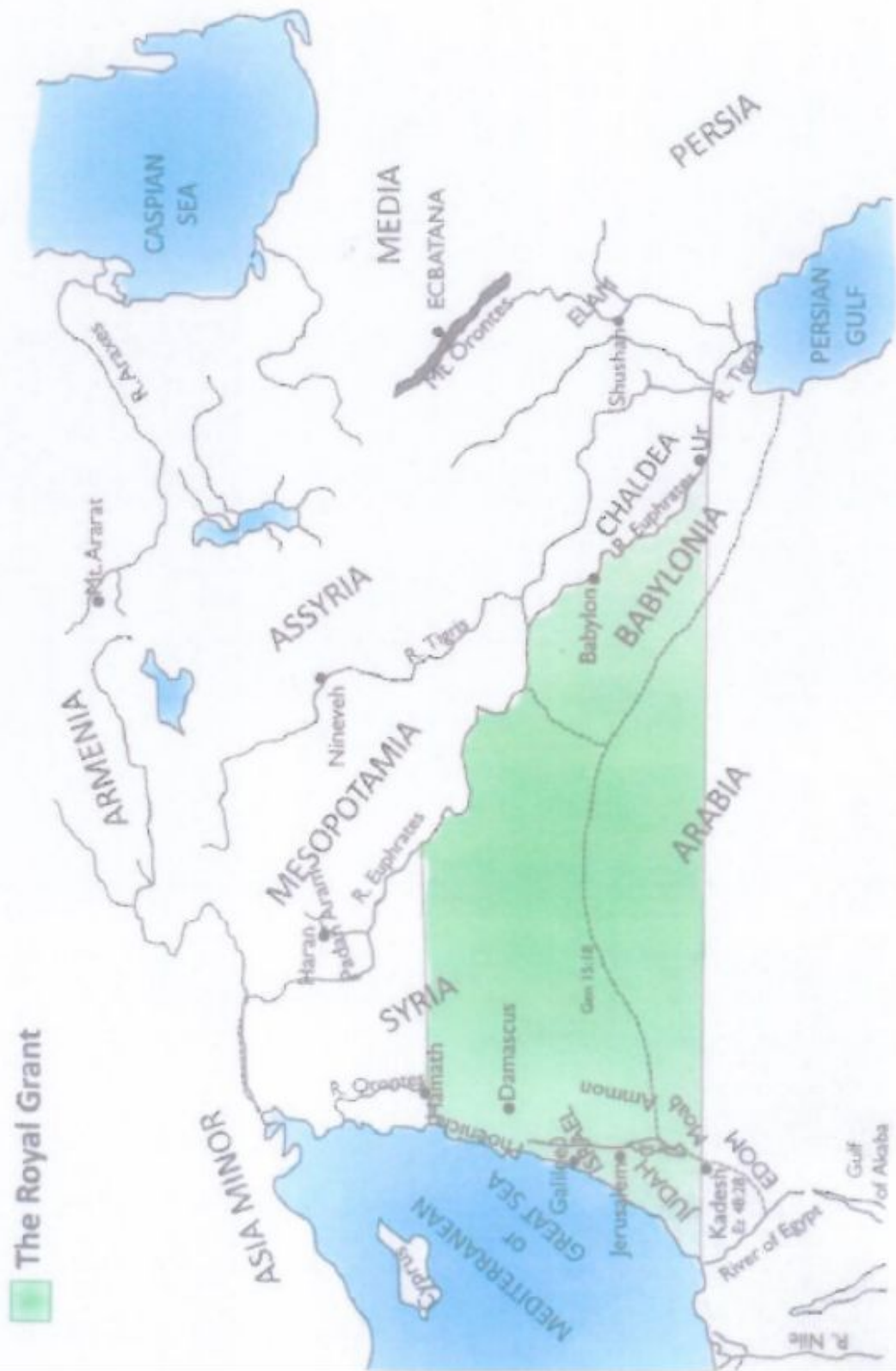
THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Arabs take their descent from Ishmael, who was born to Abraham by a slave girl, Hagar (Gen. Chapter 16). God had already decided to continue the Messianic line through Isaac who was a miracle baby, born in their old age (Gen 17:15-22), but Abraham and Sarah had 'tried to make things happen' through Hagar, with the resulting conflict, which continues to this day (cf. Gen 16:12; 25:18; Gal 4:28 – 31).

Most, but not all Arabs, are Muslims. They believe that God sent Mohammed, about 600 A.D, and that he is God's last word, imagine then the inevitable conflict when the Jews returned to their ancient homeland, just as had been prophesied! A reborn, nation in the midst of 110 million Arabs, many of whom are hostile to the state of Israel! This clash between Judaism and Islam has no political solution. Both are waiting for a different Messiah and the two ideologies and beliefs could never permanently co-exist.

At the second coming of Christ He will fight for Israel, destroying her enemies and will Himself reign from Jerusalem (in the time referred to as 'The Millennium'), simply because of His covenant and sovereign choices. Two days after the state of Israel was re-established in May 1948, six Muslim nations attacked, determined to 'drive the Jews into the sea.' This aim remains the Islamic objective of many. The writer understands that Arabs/Muslims living in this area, were told to get out until the Jews had been annihilated; then they could return. Israel, however, defeated these invading armies, and this trapped those who had left, in a buffer zone, which today constitutes the internationally disputed West Bank area. Referring to events leading up to His second coming, Jesus told the Jews to rapidly flee from Judea, the disputed area – Matt 24:15-21. When the 'Abomination of Desolation' occurs, (II Thess. 2:3-4), it appears that a multi-national force will invade to drive out the Jews from Judea, and impose a Palestinian state (Zech. 14:1-3). Although the Jews were scattered and persecuted, following the destruction of the temple in 70AD, God had promised the land to Israel through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and His promise will be fulfilled, for it is God's world not man's, to populate and determine boundaries, as He sees fit!

THE ROYAL GRANT TO ABRAHAM



“Mandate for Palestine” The Legal Aspects of Jewish Rights Eli E. Hertz

1920 - Original territory assigned to the Jewish National Home



“In Palestine as of Right and Not on Sufferance ...”

“When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance.”

Winston Churchill
British Secretary of State for the Colonies
June 1922

THE TRUTH ABOUT FATHER GOD

Sometimes we are greatly hindered from walking by faith in our Father God because of lies we have believed about Him. We are to have a healthy fear of God – awe of His holiness, power and presence – but we are not to be afraid of Him. Romans 8:15 says, “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, and by Him we cry, Abba Father.” The following exercise will help break the chains of those lies and enable you to begin to experience that intimate Abba Father relationship with Him.

Work your way down the following lists, one by one, left to right. Begin each one with the statement in bold print at the top of the list. Read through the list aloud.

I renounce the lie that my Father God is:	I joyfully accept the truth that my Father God is..
Distant and disinterested.	Intimate and involved (Ps.139:1-18).
Insensitive and uncaring.	Kind and compassionate (Ps. 103:8-14).
Stern and demanding.	Accepting and filled with joy and love (Rom. 15:7; Zeph. 3:17).
Passive and cold.	Warm and affectionate (Is. 40:11; Hos. 11:3-4).
Absent and too busy for me.	Always with me and eager to be with me (Heb. 13:5; Jer. 31:20; Ezek. 34:11-16).
Never satisfied with what I do; impatient and angry.	Patient and slow to anger (Ex.34:6; II Peter 3:9).
Mean, cruel and abusive.	Loving, gentle and protective of me (Jer. 31:3; Isa. 42:3; Ps. 18:2).
Trying to take all the fun out of life.	Trustworthy and wants to give me a full life. His will is good, perfect and acceptable for me (Lam. 3:22-23; John 10:10, Rom. 12:1-2).
Controlling or manipulative.	Full of grace and mercy and He gives me freedom to fail (Heb. 4:15-16; Luke 15:11-16).
Condemning or unforgiving.	Tenderhearted and forgiving, His heart and arms are always open to me (Ps.130:1-4; Luke 15:17-24).
Nitpicking, exacting or perfectionistic.	Committed to my growth and proud of me as His growing child (Rom. 8:28-29; Heb. 12:5-11; II Cor. 7:4)

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IN CHRIST

*I renounce the lie that I am rejected, unloved, dirty or shameful
because IN CHRIST I am completely accepted. God says.....*

John 1:12	I am God's child.
John 15:15	I am Christ's friend.
Romans 5:1	I have been justified.
I Corinthians 6:17	I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him.
I Corinthians 6:19-20	I have been brought with a price. I belong to God.
I Corinthians 12:27	I am a member of Christ's Body.
Ephesians 1:1	I am a saint, a holy one,
Ephesians 1:5	I have been adopted as God's child.
Ephesians 2:18	I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
Colossians 1:14	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
Colossians 2:10	I am complete in Christ.

*I renounce the lie that I am guilty, unprotected, alone or abandoned
because IN CHRIST I am totally secure. God says.....*

Romans 8:1-2	I am free forever from condemnation.
Romans 8:28	I am assured that all things work together for good.
Romans 8:31-34	I am free from any condemning charges against me.
Romans 8:35-39	I cannot be separated from the love of God.
II Corinthians 1:21-22	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
Philippians 1:6	I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected.
Philippians 3:20	I am a citizen of heaven.
Colossians 3:3	I am hidden with Christ in God.
II Timothy 1:7	I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.
Hebrews 4:16	I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need.
I John 5:18	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

*I renounce the lie that I am worthless, inadequate, helpless or hopeless
because IN CHRIST I am deeply significant. God says.....*

Matthew 5:13-14	I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world.
John 15:1,5	I am a branch of the true vine Jesus, a channel of His life.
John 15:16	I have been chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit.
Acts 1:8	I am a personal, Spirit empowered witness of Christ.
I Corinthians 3:16	I am a temple of God.
II Corinthians 5:17-21	I am a minister of reconciliation for God.
II Corinthians 6:1	I am God's co-worker.
Ephesians 2:6	I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.
Ephesians 2:10	I am God's workmanship, created for good works.
Ephesians 3:12	I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
Philippians 4:13	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!

*I am not the great "I AM" of Exodus 3:14, John 8:24,28,58
"but by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Corinthians 15:10).*

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EPILOGUE: A LIFE WITHOUT GOD

In the early 1900's a British MP Horatio Bottomley, who was a founder of a well known magazine "John Bull", was involved in a scandal that resulted in his imprisonment. Whilst in prison he was visited by a Chaplain from the Church Army. As they talked together this former MP, now a prisoner, asked how the Chaplain had become involved in this particular ministry. "Well," said the Chaplain "It all began when an evangelist came to my town, and in our local hall he challenged us to commit our lives to Christ, and my life changed from that point."

The prisoner had actually been in the same meeting, and had heard God's call on his life that day, but had done nothing about it. Here were two, totally different destinies, as a result of the differing choices made by these two men, many years before. "I've come to the conclusion," said Horatio Bottomley, "that a life without God is a wasted life!" At the request of the Chaplain, the prisoner wrote out and signed the statement, "A life without God is a wasted life." The Chaplain had that written statement on his desk, for many years after that.

I think about those, who, getting near the end of their own lives, can look back on key decisions made many years previously. Maybe many of their physical abilities have seriously waned, yet for the child of God – rather like a life assurance policy – THE OLDER IT GETS THE MORE PRECIOUS IT GETS, which cannot be said by those who turned a deaf ear to the call of God, many years before (Prov.5:11-14).

AND FINALLY.....

REMEMBER! "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come," (II Cor 5:17). If you have repented and put your trust in Jesus, you are a brand new person in a brand new family – God's!

The sun is in the sky, whether it is visible or covered by cloud. The answer therefore is to remove the clouds, not put a new sun in the sky! All sorts of issues may "cloud" your life and mine, but if Christ is in you, you are a brand new person!

Rod. Wood.