

Living By Faith In A Broken World

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Prologue
Living by Faith
In A Broken World

God gave Adam an invitation to partake of the Tree of Life.

God never intended for us to live this life in our own strength and by our own abilities. He wants to return us to “normal,” the original blueprint for mankind. In the Garden of Eden He gave Adam everything he needed to live abundantly. God even gave Adam dominion over the earth and all animals and plants. He gave Adam a “family business,” the Garden, to tend.

Adam’s primary responsibility was to maintain intimacy with God, daily listen to His Word, which was represented by the Tree of Life, obey Him and carry out His commands. Satan convinced Adam and Eve to live by their own intellect and he also convinced them that listening to God’s Word on a regular basis was not necessary. He convinced them the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, their own intellect, was good enough without God’s Word.

Returning to “normal” for us means maintaining an intimacy with Jesus and the Father through the Holy Spirit all throughout the day and night. As we hear Him speak, faith is planted in our hearts as a seed, and if properly maintained, will bear fruit in our lives. The fruit is more than enough for everything we need for life, godliness, and for expanding God’s Kingdom on this earth.

Hebrews 10:38 says,

38 “Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

This Scripture means that those who have found their righteousness in the finished work of Jesus Christ by His death and resurrection, shall sustain their very lives by faith, i.e., by hearing God speak and allowing His fruit to be manifested in their lives.

Go ahead, take some risks and return to “normal.” It will lead you to the abundant life as Jesus described it. Then, when you get to Heaven, you will hear, “Well done.”

The Lord is our Shepherd.

Shepherds take care of their sheep primarily not because they love them as a pet dog or cat, but because the sheep represent profit to them. That is a shepherd's occupation, his business. He may, as a by-product of his primary goal of earning a living, love the sheep and wish to lovingly care for them. However, I do not believe that most shepherds would risk their lives day and night among lions and wolves just to love the sheep as pets. Landlords in old England provided peasants with a tract of land to farm. Their primary interest was to make a profit on the crops. The by-product was that the peasants had somewhere to live and something to eat as long as they served their lord for his purposes.

So it is with Jesus our Lord. Is Jesus your king?

He is our Shepherd so that He may gain His profit from our lives. What is that profit? To love us and others to whom He will be glorified through us. John 15 says that when we bear much fruit, it glorifies Jesus. Fruit is borne through faith in God and especially in His Word as we become intimate with Him. Glorify means to come out of obscurity into the light, to be made manifest.

Jesus' love for us is far beyond what the human mind could think of as "profit" for Himself. His profit includes your well-being because you are part of His bride. That is totally unlike the relationship between the natural shepherd and his sheep.

I am convinced that you will not be unable to see the spiritual mysteries contained in the Bible and in this book, unless and until you make Jesus your King. There is a spiritual law that hides God's wonderful mysteries from those who continue to be "king" of their own lives. When you are desperate enough to make the Lord your Shepherd, or in other words, Jesus your King, then He will reveal to you His fullness, His love, His care for you, and you will partake of the most wonderful blessing that life has to offer!

We encourage you to keep these words in mind as you go through this book. We encourage you to stay away from "selfish and self-centered faith" as some teach. I am just as passionate, and even more, than some of the off-balanced teachers of faith.

But my passion is pleasing God and furthering His purposes and not my selfish desires through faith.

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Chapter 1 An Overview

Jesus' Mission.

Jesus' mission statement is prophesied in Isaiah 61, and Luke 4 records the "pre-Cross" portion of His mission statement that He preached. His mission is change! Not just change for the sake of change, but good and positive change, the abundant life that He promised. He promised good news to the poor, healing to the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

From prisoner to priest.

Isaiah 61:1-6 says,

1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,

3 To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

4 And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities; the desolations of many generations.

5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

6 But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, they shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast."

There is much more change promised in the verses following the above passage. Study the entire chapter.

How does Jesus effect this change in and for us?

First, we need to know that it is an inheritance, something that we inherit from the death of an elder relative. We need to understand that the change for the better in our lives, promised by God through Jesus, is not something that we earn, deserve or even work for. It is a free gift, and inheritance.

1 Peter 1:4 says,

4 “[To] an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

However, even in an inheritance there are conditions. In our modern culture you have to hear the reading of the will. You have to have faith to believe that this relative left this treasure to you.

God puts His own conditions on His inheritance in order to keep it for certain people.

Turning from darkness and receiving forgiveness.

Acts 26:18 says,

18 “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

Overcoming.

Revelation 21:7 says,

7 “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”

Faith and patience.

Hebrews 6:12 says,

12 “that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Living a life of repentance and obedience.

Galatians 5:21 says,

21 “envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Having open spiritual eyes.

Ephesians 1:18 says,

18 “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

He transfers our benefits by hope and faith, coupled with obedience to His conditions.

As we read the above Scripture from Isaiah 61, it brings us hope. Hope is like a blueprint, the goal and the picture of the finished product. Hope is the confident expectation that things will change and be better. However, hope alone will not bring the results. Faith and love have to be added to the promise.

Faith is a major issue with God.

Romans 14:23b says,

23b “..for whatever is not from faith is sin.”

Wow! That is a stinging verse. Everything!

Galatians 3:11 says,

11 “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live [shall sustain his very life to live and breath] by faith.’”

Unbelief is sin.

Hebrews 3:7-12 says,

7 “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice,

8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,

9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.

*10 Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And
they have not known My ways.'*

*11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter
My rest.'*

*12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you
an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living
God."*

God speaks to us things that He has finished before the foundation of the world was put into place, and we often still do not believe, even though they are a done deal!

Hebrews 4:3 says,

*3 "For we who have believed do enter that rest,
as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall
not enter My rest,' although the works were finished
from the foundation of the world."*

What is faith? How does it work? How do we obtain it?

Let's look at the Biblical definition of what faith is, how it works, and how we receive it.

We hear many people say, "What is your faith?" They are asking about their religious beliefs. While there may be some connection, that is not really the accurate view of faith. Others may say, "I have faith that God will do this or that." Often what they really mean is that they hope that God will do something for them, but they are not really sure and they have no basis for that expectation. That is not faith. That is the time to seek God's face so that He may speak faith to you!

Sense knowledge compared to revelation knowledge.

God has given us five main senses with which to obtain evidence from the natural world in which we live. These senses are sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste. We use them to obtain evidence that we are on the safe road as we drive, to listen to another as they talk about things, and so on. We need those senses to navigate this natural world.

However, this natural world is simply the product of the invisible and supernatural, or spiritual, world. What we see in

the natural world is produced by and has its origin in the spiritual world. God warned Adam and Eve that they should live by the Word of God and only use their five senses for certain things. They turned it around and most who came after them followed their example.

Hebrews 11:3 says,

3 “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

2 Corinthians 4:18 says,

18 “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Faith is like a sixth sense.

It is another way of obtaining evidence of truth, a much more accurate way.

Hebrews 11:1 (Amplified Bible) says,

“NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].”

In the NKJ version Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith is a substance, a reality, and something that can be touched or felt, something real or practical, a possession.

Now let's compare the two kinds of senses.

When I touch a table, I know it is real. I have the evidence that it can hold my plate of food. When I touch the revelation knowledge given to me by God through His Word and the Holy Spirit, I have also touched reality. I know that what God revealed to me in His Word by the Holy Spirit is real, and it can perform the task for which it was sent to me. However, how

does this qualify as a “substance” as it’s mentioned in Hebrews 11:1?

The Word of God given to you through the Holy Spirit is a seed.

Jesus taught His disciples about this principle. As a matter of fact, He told them in Mark 4:11 that the parable of the sower contained *the* mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Mark 4:3-4 says,

3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.”

Mark 4:14-15 says,

14 “The sower sows the word.

15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

In this parable the Word of God is described as a seed, which is planted into the heart of a person. That is substance! When a farmer plants a corn seed, he may not be able to eat the corn the next day, but he has substance in the ground and he is assured that if he cares for that seed, his corn will be in his hand where he can use it and eat it. When Jesus, through the Holy Spirit plants a seed into your heart, you will know it. In later chapters we will discuss this more.

How does this substance of faith come?

It comes by “touching God.”

Romans 10:17 says,

17 “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Notice the Greek meaning of “word”: “that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, spoken word.” The word is

rhema, which means, the living voice of God spoken directly to your heart and planted as a seed.

Romans 10:17 (Amplified Bible) says,

17 “So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself).”

One can listen to preachers for years and read the Bible day and night, and they may not receive faith, the seed. Why? They did not receive a *rhema* because the Holy Spirit did not enlighten the Word from *logos* to *rhema*. We have to be cooperating with God for the Holy Spirit to do this. I understand that we are not perfect, and when an unsaved person hears God speak to him that is when he can be born again; that is God’s grace. However, usually when that happens that person has opened their heart in some form of honesty and/or desperation and cry for help.

God is the object of our faith.

Hebrews 11:6 says,

6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

I have seen people who have faith more in what God is going to do for them than in God Himself. While the seed planted in our hearts often indicates what God will do for us, we need to continue to focus on God Himself, His love, the sacrifice of Jesus, and His faithfulness and genius to do what is best for us.

What does the word *faith* mean?

The Greek word for faith is *pistis* (pie-stis). The Strong’s Concordance defines it as, “the conviction of the truth of divine things, the evidence, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervour born of faith and joined with it. It is the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things. It is the

assurance of the salvation wrought through Christ” [paraphrased by author].

Also, it means “the faithfulness and fidelity of the person who has been exposed to the truth described above.” God tests our faith. He can only trust faithful people; those who will with fidelity and faithfulness obey Him so that He may rely upon them.

1 Peter 1:6-9 says,

6 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

9 receiving the end of your faith – the salvation [total healing of your mind, will, and emotions] of your souls.”

Abraham’s life is an example of faith.

Abraham lived in a time when his entire family and culture worshipped idols, idols that one could touch and handle. There was an idol for every issue in life. One day God spoke to Abram (before his name was changed) something that people in his day had not heard of before.

Genesis 12:1-4 says,

1 “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.’

2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

God said many things here that probably really baffled Abram.

1. In those days only an idol could bless.
2. Sarai was barren.
3. He was asked to leave his family, which was like a large corporation. It was not only his culture, but also his livelihood and inheritance.
4. Abram was not told where to go, but that he would need to continue to hear God’s voice to arrive at the appointed destination.

In Genesis chapters 13 and 14, Abram went through some trials in Egypt and a war with Chedorlaomer and other kings who attacked Sodom and took Lot, Abram’s nephew, captive. After that Melchizedek appeared to Abram and accepted Abram’s tithe. Abram turned down great riches offered to him by the king of Sodom with the statement, “But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is* yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’” (Genesis 14:22-23).

Then in chapter 15:1, God comforted Abram: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” Here was his reward for faithfulness and obedience, even in times when Abram had not heard God speak. Abram persevered with patience and with his obedience, which is what God wants from us.

Later in chapter 15, God promised Abram a natural child to carry on his descendents who were promised to be as the stars of heaven. Abram asked how he could be sure of this promise, and God gave him the blood covenant ceremony we often talk about. He was telling Abram that He, God, would exchange natures with him through a blood covenant and that would be enough to

make the promise occur. Genesis 15:6 says, “And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Wow!

After that about 24 years went by, and during that time Abram first conceived a child with Hagar, and then, finally the promised Isaac came through Sarah and Abraham after more dealings in Genesis chapters 16-21. Then, years after Isaac was born, Abraham was told to sacrifice him. We know how that story ended, the lamb showed up at the top of Mount Moriah and it became the sacrifice instead of Isaac. Abraham’s faith was finally rewarded to its fullness, yet, as the Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:39-40, “And all these [including Abraham], having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

Finally, God gave us the testimony of Abraham’s faith as an example for us.

Romans 4:1-25 says,

1 “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’

4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

7 ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;

8 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.’

9 *Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.”*

In other words, was it the legalistic adherence to law of Moses that brought this blessing? Paul said, *no!* It was faith brought about by grace.

10 *“How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.*

11 *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,*

12 *and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.*

13 *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

14 *For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,*

15 *because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.*

16 *Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*

17 *(as it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations’) in the presence of Him whom he believed – God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;*

18 *who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’*

19 *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.*

20 *He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,*

21 *and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*

22 *And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’*

23 *Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,*

24 *but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,*

25 *who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”*

What if you feel that your faith level is low?

The good news is that faith is a fruit of the Spirit, it is a free gift from God. Get in touch with Him, touch Him, and you will just see your faith come without much effort. The effort may be in getting in touch and in enduring to the end, but faith is not worked up, it just comes.

Ephesians 2:8 says,

8 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”*

Future chapters will include these subjects on the ingredients we need to add to faith.

- *Endurance and patience;*
- *Running the race;*
- *Faith works by love;*
- *The Works of Faith;*

Chapter 1 – An Overview

- *Speaking the Word;*
- *Peter's Ingredients to Faith;*
- *The Parable of the Sower;*
- *Hearing God's Voice – The Flowing River.*

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The unseen realm

God the creator, God's Word, Satan, demons, angels, your spirit, your words.
Curses and blessings. Prayer.



The seen realm

Physical bodies, material structures, governments, the kingdoms of this world, the economical system.
The "world system."

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Chapter 2 The Ingredient of Endurance

As we liken our completed faith to a recipe to which we must add many ingredients, the first ingredient we will discuss is endurance.

Hebrews 6:15 says,

15 “And so, after he [Abraham] had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”

Why must I wait? How am I able to wait and endure?

The word *endurance* in Greek is *makrothumeo* which means longsuffering, patience, to undergo heat or suffering for a long time.

Many people will be very disappointed at some future date if they do not take this enduring process seriously and with God’s mind. I submit that there are two main reasons for this enduring process. One has to do with you, the changing of you. The other has to do with others and His Kingdom. I believe fewer believers would give up during the enduring process if they would realize the responsibility, the heavy responsibility, that God has entrusted to them for eternal matters!

How can I wait long enough when my patience to inherit the promises of God seems to be lacking? Longsuffering is a part of fruit, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), which means that Jesus inside of you has the patience needed. That is grace, or a gift for which you did not work; a free gift. You just need to be emptied, reach the end of yourself, and let Him take over. He will!

The writer of Hebrews warns us that if we become sluggish, we may not inherit the promise that God has given us by faith.

Hebrews 6:11-20 says,

11 “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

The anchor of the soul is dug into the very presence of God. Once you have gone into God’s presence, your anchor is fixed. His character and His power will provide the patience you lack. If you have obtained faith, a promise or reassurance by a personal touch or encounter with God through the Word and the Holy Spirit, then your anchor is fixed in solid ground, the very presence of God.

Why does God have us go through this endurance time in order to obtain what He promised? We are warned many times in Scripture that we will have to suffer and endure the trials and testing of faith. I would like to offer four principle reasons that I

have found in Scripture and in my life's experience for this time of enduring.

1. To lack nothing.

James 1:2-4 says,

2 “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

How would you like to “lack nothing”? Keep that hope and vision in your mind and heart as you are going through trials. What a great goal, the abundant life!

2. Character: To have our character developed for God's work and glory.

The process described in Romans 5 is like a potter who is forming a clay pot.

Romans 5:1-5 says,

1 “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

We are told that tribulations produce perseverance, which is a similar word to endurance. Perseverance produces character, which produces hope, and hope keeps us from being disappointed during our enduring times, because, as it says, we are a vessel whom the Holy Spirit fills.

While the pot is on the potter's wheel it is soft clay. If water were poured into the pot while it is soft, it would not hold the substance. Then the potter "fires the pot," or puts it into a very hot furnace, that makes it complete. Then the pot can hold a substance and be of great value.

Romans 5:5 says that we are containers for the Holy Spirit. Therefore we must go through the fires of life, enduring them, in order to be vessels fit to contain the Holy Spirit for valuable work. Our character is shaped and God can give us more assignments for His glory.

3. *Receiving the full salvation, or healing of our souls.*

God wants His character to be stamped on us. The Greek root of the word *character* means to imprint. Our suffering imprints the suffering savior on us.

"But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). The Strong's Concordance defines *saved* as: *Saved: to save, keep safe and sound, to rescue one from danger or destruction, from injury or peril.*

1 Peter 1:6-9 says,

6 *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,*

7 *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,*

8 *whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*

9 *receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls."*

4. *To possess the Kingdom of God through warfare.*

Daniel 7:21-22 says,

21 *"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,*

22 until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.”

We often feel that during these times of trials, endurance and testing of our faith that it is all about us. While there is a truth embedded in that, it is not entirely true. Some of it has to do with what God is working in us, and some of it has to do with the Kingdom of God and the church.

Surprise! Enduring is much bigger than you may think, and there is a much bigger prize. It has to do with reigning with Him. We will talk more about this topic in the next lesson titled, *Running the Race*. The next chapter will deal with the prize, the crown. When we realize that our endurance, our race, is about more than just us and that it carries more responsibility than we first realized, the power to endure comes easier.

2 Timothy 2:12 says,

12 “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

Let history be your teacher.

Looking back at history one can see that all people who succeeded in almost any endeavor, who made a great contribution to society and the Kingdom of God, had that one quality in common, and that being endurance. They persevered. Many years ago I read a book by a man who devoted his life to study the most successful people who had lived in recent history. He found only one common trait in them, which was that they all had succeeded right after failure or apparent failure.

Circumstances and the satanic world will always try to discourage you and convince you to quit enduring. Remember this: with God, if you don't quit, you will win!

The surprise is revealed in the next lesson. It's all about *Running the Race*.

Chapter 3

Running the Race

More About Endurance

In our last chapter, we discussed the need for endurance as a vital ingredient of faith. This chapter re-emphasizes the need for endurance. The writer of Hebrews gives sober warnings to all believers that:

1. *We are in a race, a long endurance race.*
2. *We are in great peril if we give up and do not finish.*
3. *If we do finish the race, there is a great prize for us.*

In other words, "Grow or Die."

Hebrews chapter 6 discusses moving on from the elementary principles of Christ to the road of inheriting the promises by faith and endurance. This chapter also infers that if we do not endure, we may "fall away" and put the Son of God to open shame. While I cannot explain everything this writer had in mind, it sounds serious!

Hebrews chapter 12 is more explicit about the warning!

Hebrews 12:1-2 says,

1 *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

2 *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Hebrews 12:15-17 says,

15 *"[Looking] carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

16 *lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.*

17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

I feel that the reason that Esau is mentioned here is very relevant to our lives.

Esau had an inheritance coming. We have an inheritance coming. As the first two chapters of this book pointed out, we inherit God’s abundant life by faith and by His promises growing as a seed in our hearts. The caution is that there is a time of trial, and sometimes tribulation, between the planting of the seed and the fruit bearing. That period of time is called “The Race.” Esau’s lust of the flesh just said, “Who cares about the promise and the inheritance, my flesh wants to be fed, now.” If we are not careful we can be guilty of saying to God, “I am tired of this suffering, tired of waiting, I just can’t take this pressure any longer, and I give up! This faith stuff does not work.” Giving up is like Esau taking the one morsel of food, which fed his selfish flesh nature.

It is also interesting to note that Esau did not even get the type of stew/soup that he had demanded. Notice in the Scriptures below that Esau asked for red stew, red meat. However, Jacob tricked him and gave him lentils, or vegetable soup. Not only did he lose his inheritance, but also his “flesh nature” was not even satisfied!

Genesis 25: 30, 32, 34 says,

30 “And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.’ Therefore his name was called Edom.”

32 “And Esau said, ‘Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?’”

34 “And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.”

Under the Old Testament, as a foreshadow of Jesus, every firstborn male had a superior birthright to be priest and lord over

all the rest. It carried the privilege of king and priest. Esau forfeited this. We can forfeit our kingship and priesthood if we are not careful to finish the race.

Warning.

Esau could not repent after this incident, and we are warned that this type of behavior will lead to bitterness.

We are also warned to depend upon the grace of God lest we would become bitter.

Hebrews 12:12-15 (Amplified Bible) says,

12 “So then, brace up and reinvigorate and set right your slackened and weakened and drooping hands and strengthen your feeble and palsied and tottering knees,

13 And cut through and make firm and plain and smooth, straight paths for your feet [yes, make them safe and upright and happy paths that go in the right direction], so that the lame and halting [limbs] may not be put out of joint, but rather may be cured.

14 Strive to live in peace with everybody and pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord.

15 Exercise foresight and be on the watch to look [after one another], to see that no one falls back from and fails to secure God's grace (His unmerited favor and spiritual blessing), in order that no root of resentment (rancor, bitterness, or hatred) shoots forth and causes trouble and bitter torment, and the many become contaminated and defiled by it.”

As we “run this race” there are times when it seems like our spiritual knees and hands are feeble and tottering. It makes us feel like giving up. This Scripture tells us that we are *to do* something. Our job is to “make firm, plain and smooth paths” for our feet so that our spiritual limbs do not become disjointed, but rather be healed. Then it says to secure God’s grace.

Why is it that we feel our spiritual limbs are about to become disjointed? It is God’s discipline. Look at the verses in

Hebrews 12 just before the warning about our spiritual limbs and joints.

Hebrews 12:9 says,

9 “Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”

God is attempting to get us onto the path that He can bless. We might need to make some course corrections that will keep us out of the ruts, away from the rocks and keep us on a smooth path. We may need some character changes. It may be forgiveness, giving, getting honest with the government regarding some obligation, paying a back debt or bill, giving up a certain idol, changing our direction in our social or vocational paths, etc.

How do we make smooth paths spiritually and secure God’s grace? It certainly is not through our own human efforts; that will not secure God’s grace.

Here is how.

Psalm 119:105 says,

105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Psalm 91:9-12 (KJV) says,

9 “Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

Staying plugged into the Word of God through the Holy Spirit will keep our paths smooth. Proverbs 3:5-6 also says that if we “know” the Lord in intimate way that He will direct our paths.

The reasons why people give up have to do with too much trouble or too much pleasure.

Example 1 – too much trouble. I know of a man who “gave up.” He did not totally give up on God, so he thought, but he did not believe that this “faith thing” really worked. Tribulation and persecution took place, and the seed was taken by Satan as in Mark 4:17, which says, “and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.”

The result was that he became spiritually very cold, and he was distant from God and the things of God, including the church. He ended up marrying a person that further limited his spiritual walk with God. Years later, he went through an amazing turn-around in repentance. This precious person will go to Heaven, but his life here on earth is limited.

Example 2 – love for pleasures and things of this world. This example had to do with a married couple who had a start with the Lord and attempted to serve Him, but the things of the world, the pleasures of money gave them too much satisfaction. They even attended a Pentecostal church, but I saw them deny the working of the Holy Spirit. They rebelled, committed treachery against some dedicated people of God, and really backslid. I lost touch with them, but have to assume they are not doing well. In Luke 17, beginning with verse 26, Jesus warned against focusing on things like, marrying, eating, and drinking. While there is nothing wrong with these activities, it is the preoccupation with them that is dangerous.

Mark 4:18-19 says,

*18 “Now these are the ones sown among thorns;
they are the ones who hear the word,*

*19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of
riches, and the desires for other things entering in
choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*

Example 3 – the fruit of bitterness. I know of a group of twelve to fifteen people who destroyed a church by their ungodly

attitudes and actions. When a precious pastor was called in by the denomination to close the church, it began to grow. This enraged this group of people, who obviously were filled with bitterness. They began to attempt to destroy the church again by getting up on the stage and singing, uninvited. They would stand in the aisles and pretend to speak prophecy, interrupting the pastor. Finally, the church had to evict them, actually contacting the court and the sheriff. Sometime way back in their history, they quit the race like Esau, they “ate their bowl of soup,” and became bitter.

Okay, lets now focus on the prize.

As the writer of Hebrews said, “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner” (Hebrews 6:9).

Running the Race for the Crown.

1 Corinthians 9:25 says,

25 “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

Revelation 3:10-11 says,

10 “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

The above Scripture was given to the Church of Philadelphia. The Church of Philadelphia represents those believers with whom Christ found no fault and who have not been designated to physical martyrdom as in the Church of Smyrna. Their overcoming has to do with receiving a crown, a prize, the authority, for certain issues in the Kingdom of God. Notice that Jesus warns them that they have the crown, but if they do not endure they will lose it.

The crown is the prize. What is the crown?

“Crown” represents authority and royalty. When we “finish a race,” we receive spiritual authority. Finishing the race is another way of saying “overcoming.” Through this time of endurance God has defeated a spiritual stronghold or curse in our realm of influence. It may be a generational curse that our children do not have to endure. It may also be a curse for a people group who will be set free to hear the Gospel with open eyes and ears.

Authority over what?

The parable in Luke 19 about the nobleman who left his servants a responsibility and then came back to evaluate their stewardship, gives us a look into the heart of Jesus on this issue of running the race for a crown.

Luke 19:12-13 says,

12 “Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, “Do business till I come.””

Luke 19:17 says,

17 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant: because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’”

What is a city? The word *city* in Greek is derived from words that mean to be captivated in your native place of birth, which is a place of war, dispute, and disharmony. The city that one is stuck in before they are born again. God wants to move us from our natural birth city to the City of God, New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God. He does that by having someone overcome for us, having someone run the race for us so that they may gain spiritual authority to set us free. It has to do with Colossians 1:24 which says, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for

you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.”

More than us.

We need to understand that this potential crown has more to do with God’s Kingdom than our own well-being and good feelings. The potential benefits are weighty in God’s mind and kingdom and should give us a heavy sense of responsibility to finish this race, no matter how we feel. As a sister in the Lord said to us recently, “The benefits are exponential as are the consequences for giving up.”

Philippians 4:1 was one of Paul’s cities: “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren [the people in the city of Philippi], my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”

While the race is about more that just you, it is also about you.

We stand against the wiles of the devil, endure with patience and finish the race while our seed of faith is growing. The end of that faith is not only the “salvation of our souls” as we discussed in the previous chapter, it also brings us the manifestation of that issue in life that we have been trusting God for. Perhaps it was physical healing, perhaps finances, perhaps a prodigal child, a healed marriage, etc.

Now that you see the prize, what about the race?

The race is that part of our life during which we must endure hardship while standing on the Word of God for something God has entrusted to us by speaking His Word to us. The seed was planted when He spoke now the “race” is the time during which that seed must grow and then bear fruit. Sticking with God during this time is a race. Not giving up when our minds are screaming at us is the race. The race is not a sprint, it is a marathon.

Hebrews 12:22-24 tells us that we have come (past tense) to the power of the Kingdom of God, to Jesus and His blood. This gives us the confidence that if we simply stay in close intimacy with Jesus and don’t quit, we will win. Jesus already won, so all we need to do is hang on to Him long enough to see His victory manifested in our lives.

Hebrews 12:22-24 says,

22 *“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,*

23 *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

24 *to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”*

Hebrews 12:22-24 infers that we have the power as a gift from God to finish the race.

We have the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Cross, Jesus our mediator, angels, and all the other power factors inferred.

We have Jesus. This is our “verb”: looking.

Hebrews 12:2 says,

2 *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

The word *looking* means “to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something.”

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

We need God’s character and power to overcome our spiritual enemies.

The Holy Spirit is called the comforter. The Strong’s Concordance defines *comforter* as the Greek word *parakletos* (*summoned, called to one’s side esp. called to one’s aid, one who pleads another’s cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate, one who pleads another’s cause with one, an intercessor*).

In the ancient Greek marathons, the *parakletos* was a friend of the runner who began running next to the runner during the final few miles as an encourager. He would verbally encourage him as well as have the runner synchronize with his running steps to keep his mind off of the extreme pain the runner was in.

The Holy Spirit comes along side of us during our race as an intercessor, comforter, encourager, and even as a lawyer.

The Cross.

The blood of sprinkling of the new covenant reminds us that we have been crucified with Christ, yet He lives His life through us. This is the exchange.

Through the Cross and the Holy Spirit we can shed the weights, repent from the sins, put away the flesh nature and finish the race. However, it will require constant intimacy with God. It will require a constant repentance from sin and the flesh nature. It will require standing against the devil with the Word on our lips.

Circumstances and the satanic world will always try to discourage you and convince you to quit enduring. Remember this, with God if you don't quit you will win!

Hebrews chapter 13 shows us some of the disciplines to keep us in the race.

Paul finished.

2 Timothy 4:7 says,

7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

The following is a quote from God Calling¹, Near the Goal - February 13.

In a race it is not the start that hurts, not the even pace of the long stretch. It is when the goal is in sight that heart and nerves and courage and muscles are strained almost beyond human endurance, almost to breaking point.

So with you now the goal is in sight, you need your final cry to Me. Can you not see by the nerve and heart rack of the past few days that your race is nearly run. Courage, courage. Heed My voice of

¹ A.J. Russell, *God Calling*: Barbour and Company, Inc.; Uhrichsville, OH, 1989, Page 43

encouragement. Remember that I am by your side, spurring you on to victory.

In the annals of heaven, the saddest records are those that tell of the many who ran well, with brave stout hearts, until in sight of the goal, of victory, and then their courage failed. The whole host of heaven longed to cry out how near the end was, to implore the last spurt, but they fell out, never to know until the last day of revealing, how near they were to victory.

Would that they had listened to Me in the silence as you two meet with Me. They would have known. There must be the listening ear, as well as the still small voice.

I can remember watching television in 1952 and witnessing the famous swimmer Florence Chadwick attempting a record breaking swim across the Catalina channel in Southern California.

**From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Chadwick)**

In 1952, Florence was the first woman to attempt to swim the 26 miles between Catalina Island and the California coastline. As she began this historical journey, she was flanked by small boats that watched for sharks and were prepared to help her if she got hurt or grew tired. Hour after hour Florence swam, but after about 15 hours, a thick, heavy fog set in. Florence began to doubt her ability, and she told her mother, who was in one of the boats, that she didn't think she could make it. She swam for one more hour before asking to be pulled out. As she sat in the boat, Florence found out she had stopped swimming just one mile away from the California shoreline, her destination. Florence explained that she quit because she could no longer see the coastline – there was too much fog. She couldn't see her goal.

Two months later, Florence got back in the water to try her task once more. This time was different. She swam from Catalina Island to the shore of California in a straight path for 26 miles. The same thick fog set in, but Florence made it because she said that while she swam, she kept a mental image of the shoreline in her mind. She didn't lose sight of the shore because she focused on that image of the coast in her mind, and in this way, she reached her goal.

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Chapter 4 The Ingredient of Love Bloody Love

Many sincere Christians around the world admit that they are disappointed in their walk of faith. They say, “This faith stuff just does not work.” Even those critics outside of Christianity are quick to point out the failures.

Author Dallas Willard stated in his book The Great Omission:²

There is an obvious Great Disparity between, on the one hand, the hope for life expressed in Jesus, found real in the Bible and in many shining examples from among his followers, and, on the other hand, the actual day-to-day behavior, inner life, and social presence of most of those who now profess adherence to him.

The question must arise: Why the Great Disparity? Is it caused by something built into the very nature of Jesus and what he taught and brought to humankind? Or is it the result of inessential factors that attach themselves to Christian institutions and people as they journey through time? Are we in a period when both rank-and-file Christians and most of their leaders have, for some reason, missed the main point?

If your neighbor is having trouble with his automobile, you might think he just got a lemon [a defective automobile]. And you might be right. But if you found that he was supplementing his gasoline with a quart of water now and then, you would not blame the car or its maker for it not running, or for running in fits and starts. You would say that the car was not built to work under the conditions imposed by the owner. And you would certainly advise him to put

² Willard, Dallas. The Great Omission, Harper Collins, New York, NY, 2006.

only the appropriate kind of fuel in the tank. After some restorative work, perhaps the car would then run fine.

This book on faith is meant to address this issue and to simplify the proper ingredients so that your faith may be real, vital, and operative and show results for your life, for those in your realm of influence and for the Kingdom of God. We need to add the proper ingredients to our faith walk. This in no way is meant to minimize the sovereignty of God in our lives. Rather it is meant to put us on His path, His predestined abundant life for us.

Peter lists many vital ingredients to faith.

We will discuss these ingredients and others in this book.

2 Peter 1:2-11 says,

2 “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Notice in the above Scripture:

1. God gives us everything we need for life and godliness by knowing Him.

2. His exceedingly great and precious promises are the containers for everything we need. As I pointed out in chapter 1, we receive His promises, as we are intimate with Him, in the form of a seed that is planted in our hearts. That is the beginning of faith.

3. Peter gives us many of the needed ingredients to add to this process of faith.

This chapter discusses the ingredient of love.

Galatians 5:6 says,

6 “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”

If God has spoken and you have heard His voice, then the promise of God is in your heart, the seed has been planted. However, the seed will only work in a “good heart, good ground.” What is good? Love is the ground that will allow the seed to grow.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8a says,

1 “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails...”

Faith will only operate in people who allow Jesus to live His love life through them.

In Mark chapter 4, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus points out that Satan’s main task is to steal the Word of God, the seed, that He, Jesus, has planted in your heart. Satan can only steal the seed, the Word, the promise of God, by the limited means that Jesus points out in the Parable. Those means have to do with the “ground,” or the character of the person in whom the seed has been sown. Those are people whose hearts are hard, or who cannot bear up against persecution and tribulation, or who are seeking the pleasures of the world. On the positive side, I submit that the “good ground,” or the ground in which the seed will bear fruit, is that person who is living out the character of love, or the character of Jesus. Actually, all the other ingredients that we have and will discuss can fall under the category of love because they are attributes of Jesus, Whose name is love.

Obviously none of us are as perfect as Jesus; however, when we allow the Word of God to convict us of our sin, an amazing thing happens as we repent and confess. We are cleansed and put into the same condition of Jesus, just as if we never sinned.

Satan can find nothing in such a person.

Good news! Love is a fruit. If love is a fruit inserted inside of us, then that is grace.

Galatians 5:22-23 says,

22 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

Caution! We have a choice. What is our responsibility?

Ephesians 3:17-19 says if we are rooted in love, then we can experience His real love, beyond mere knowledge. We can only give love to God and others after we have experienced His love. It is a continuous process. As we experience God’s love and respond to Him and others with that same love, we become grounded.

Ephesians 3:17-19 says,

17 *“..that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*
18 *may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height –*
19 *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

Richard Wurmbrand, founder of The Voice of the Martyrs, said that love is spelled, s-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e.

If love, Jesus, lives in us, and it is Him in us that lives the love life, then our only task is to take up our cross. It is called sacrifice. I call it “bloody love.”

Fear and love are connected.

1 John 4:18 says that perfect love casts out all fear. How do we get the love that casts out all fear and causes faith to operate? Sacrifice. Love somebody that you find impossible to love. That will “ground” you in love.

1 John 4:7-12 (Amplified Bible) says,

7 *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is (springs) from God; and he who loves [his fellowmen] is begotten (born) of God and is coming [progressively] to know and understand God [to*

perceive and recognize and get a better and clearer knowledge of Him].

8 He who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for God is love.

9 In this the love of God was made manifest (displayed) where we are concerned: in that God sent His Son, the only begotten or unique [Son], into the world so that we might live through Him.”

[Verses 9 and 10 say He loved us through His cross.]

10 “In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God loved us so [very much], we also ought to love one another.

12 No man has at any time [yet] seen God. But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!”

Verse 12 says that His love in us is perfected by our acts of loving others. The only way we can love others is by taking up our cross. That may simply mean becoming unselfish, or it may mean forgiving others who have hurt us, even our enemies.

When we take up our cross, the remnant of our old nature is put away, including fear. When all that is left remaining in us is Jesus' nature, fear no longer can haunt you.

1 John 4:13-18 (Amplified Bible) says,

13 “By this we come to know (perceive, recognize, and understand) that we abide (live and remain) in Him and He in us: because He has given (imparted) to us of His [Holy] Spirit.

14 And [besides] we ourselves have seen (have deliberately and steadfastly contemplated) and bear

witness that the Father has sent the Son [as the] Savior of the world.

15 Anyone who confesses (acknowledges, owns) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides (lives, makes His home) in him and he [abides, lives, makes his home] in God.

16 And we know (understand, recognize, are conscious of, by observation and by experience) and believe (adhere to and put faith in and rely on) the love God cherishes for us. God is love, and he who dwells and continues in love dwells and continues in God, and God dwells and continues in him.

17 In this [union and communion with Him] love is brought to completion and attains perfection with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment [with assurance and boldness to face Him], because as He is, so are we in this world.

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

Do you want your love perfected? Find someone unlovely to love, and watch fear evacuate your life and faith rise.

Love and fear cannot co-exist. Fear and faith cannot co-exist. My remedy for fear has always been to press into God's presence and allow Him to cause my faith to rise. When this happens, fear cannot torment you. You cannot love others, or yourself when fear is tormenting you.

The following is a quote from Purpose Driven Life Devotional, "God's Passion For Oneness" by Jon Walker.³

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15 HCSB)

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When Jesus speaks of love, he allows no room for sentimental fantasy or momentary emotion. He sees love through the eyes of the Father, and from this point of view he deeply understands that true, eternal, godly love is bold and strong, but also painful, messy, and sacrificial.

A love of this strength and magnitude can only take root in the soil of abandonment. We abandon our rights, our thoughts, and our schemes. It was this total and uncompromising abandonment to God that led Jesus to say and do only what the Father told him to do. (John 14:10) It was this uncompromising abandonment that led him to the cross.

If we are to become just like Christ, then we also must be abandoned to the Father. We must line up with the thoughts and plans of God so closely that we appear to be "at one" with him, just as a married couple, deeply abandoned to each other, appear to live as one. Through abandonment, we walk so closely with God that, when people see us, they see the Father at work.

Jesus is teaching this abandonment when he says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." In other words, he's not demanding that you be obedient; rather, he's telling you that love for him should compel you to embrace his purposes.

The Jesus way is that you obey God's commands because you love God, not because you must obey God. By actively pursuing the purposes of God, you worship your Creator.

This also gives you a Christ-like perspective on the daily details of your life, turning every decision into a moment of adoration for God. When you let someone else take the parking space, when you stand behind a promise that proves more costly than you imagined, when you extend hospitality to the cranky neighbor next door – these are moments of worship to God because you are choosing to be obedient to his

purposes, rather than doing things your own way. Even choosing not to sin becomes an act of worship, as it brings you into closer alignment with God's commands.

What does this mean?

As you face decisions today, ask God to show you which path will be an act of worship to him. Then (I know this is easier said than done), move where he tells you to move.

As you take this step, keep your eyes sensitive to God's grace and presence in the moment. Do this throughout the day, keeping a log so you can track your movement toward oneness with God and his purposes.

Live this way and watch the fruit spring up in you and all around you as abundant life!

Matthew 22:37-39 says,

37 “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

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Chapter 5
The Ingredient of Works
What Kind of Works?

Paul said we are not saved by works.

Galatians 3:2 says,

2 “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

James said that faith without works is dead.

James 2:17-20 says,

17 “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”

What is God’s truth?

Some error on the side of sitting back and waiting on God. Others error on the side of taking things into their own hand.

Humans of all cultures and nations have this inner battle of knowing or doing, especially in Christian circles. *Knowing*, as it is Scripturally defined, is intimacy with God and/or your spouse. *Doing* means an action. Some cultures error on the side of relationships, knowing, while others error on the side of doing. Many Christians are confused. The answer lies in what I call the works of faith as opposed to the works of the “flesh.”

The Bible tells us that we are to be “doers of the Word.” However, it also warns that we need to be “knowers” before we can be doers.

Matthew 7:21-27 says,

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 *Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’*

23 *And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*

24 *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:*

25 *and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

26 *But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:*

27 *and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

Notice in the first story above that Jesus did not respect the work of the “doers” who did not first “know” Him. He said they would be destroyed.

In the second story, He warned the “knowers” that if they did not follow up their knowing with doing that they would be destroyed.

Mary and Martha.

Luke 10:39-42 says,

39 *“And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.*

40 *But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’*

41 *And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.*

42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’”

Here in the Mary and Martha story I believe Jesus was not rejecting the perfectionist and worker personality of Martha, but He was making a point that before you can do any works that are valuable, you must first become intimate with Him.

Why?

Philippians 2:13 (KJV) says,

13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

When you have spent time knowing Jesus in quiet meditation on Him, His Word, fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit, getting yourself into a position to hear Him, then He takes over your “doing.” It is Him in you that does the works of faith. Your responsibility is hearing and obeying. With that, then God will do the work in partnership with you. There is a mystery that takes place. The only way I can describe it is that you are the “glove,” and God is the “hand in the glove.” Who is doing the work? Is it God or you? The answer is “Yes.”

Perfectionists and people who are driven to works have a difficult time converting their priorities.

In the Kingdom of God, relationships are His priority.

My advice to you is, change! It’s worth every pain. A friend of mine said, “When the pain that you are in exceeds the pain of change, then you will change.”

For some guidance into the disciplines of knowing Him, you may download or read our Flowing River lesson online at <http://www.isob-bible.org/flowingriver.htm>.

I can describe works of faith in two main categories: speaking the Word and obedience to His voice.

1. One of the most important works of faith is speaking the Word.

Romans 10:8-10 says,

8 *“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach):*

9 *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

10 *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

2 Corinthians 4:13 says,

13 *“And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak.”*

I will devote an entire chapter to this later in the book.

Briefly, speaking the Word:

- a. Renews your mind and keeps it in order.
- b. Resists Satan.
- c. Brings angels on the scene.
- d. “Waters” the seed planted in your heart.
- e. Pleases God as He hears your faith.

2. Works also have to do with obedience to His voice.

Why does God give so much emphasis to our works, and at times He seems to emphasize His works are the things that are important? I submit that there is a very simple, but extremely powerful concept in our relationship with God that is often overlooked.

Our obedience to His voice has tremendous power. Faith, by its definition, requires an action on your part

Recall, in chapter 1 we gave the definition of faith:

What does the word faith mean?

The Greek word for faith is *pistis* (pie-stis). First, it means the conviction of the truth of divine things. When you hear God’s Word, or in some other way hear God speak, you are convinced it is true, that it came from the conviction that the Creator spoke.

Second, it means the faithfulness and fidelity of the person who has been exposed to the truth described above. God tests our faith. He can only trust faithful people; those who will with fidelity and faithfulness obey Him so that He may rely upon them. Real faith will culminate into works.

Obedience.

Obedience to God's voice is more powerful than I have time to expand upon in this chapter, but be aware, that it is the key to your spiritual growth, your relationship with Jesus, and to your becoming the recipient of abundant life. It is the key to allowing God to use you in His work.

I have observed many Christians since 1979, including myself. I have concluded by experience and by the Word of God, that obedience to God's voice makes the difference between success and failure. I have read books from many authors who are much more experienced and qualified than myself who confirm this idea.

It is important to be passionate to discover God's voice to you and to be equally passionate to find what obedience to Him you can do in the everyday, even small and apparently mundane, issues in your life. A life consisting of mini steps of obedience leads to a life that is transformed into His image, and a life that glorifies Him.

John 14:15-26 is loaded with the power of this idea.

It states that Jesus will manifest Himself, make Himself real to the one who hears and obeys. This is what lordship is all about. When you make Jesus Lord, you will be saved, i.e., delivered from danger and be made whole. When you surrender your rights to your own decisions and determine only to do those things that Jesus says and commands, then your relationship with Him will skyrocket! Most people must reach the end of themselves and become aware of their own weakness, and the weakness of the world system in order to really rely on hearing and obeying God. This took place in my life in a radical way the very day I got saved in 1979, then on a new and broader level ten months later.

Some of your obedience will be to the conviction of the Holy Spirit of your sin with a gentle admonition (most of the time) to confess and repent.

John 14:15-26 (Amplified Bible) says,

15 If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.

16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby), that He may remain with you forever –

17 The Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive (welcome, take to its heart), because it does not see Him or know and recognize Him. But you know and recognize Him, for He lives with you [constantly] and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you as orphans [comfortless, desolate, bereaved, forlorn, helpless]; I will come [back] to you.

19 Just a little while now, and the world will not see Me any more, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

20 At that time [when that day comes] you will know [for yourselves] that I am in My Father, and you [are] in Me, and I [am] in you.

21 The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him. [I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.]

22 Judas, not Iscariot, asked Him, Lord, how is it that You will reveal Yourself [make Yourself real] to us and not to the world?

23 Jesus answered, If a person [really] loves Me, he will keep My word [obey My teaching]; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home (abode, special dwelling place) with him.

24 Anyone who does not [really] love Me does not observe and obey My teaching. And the teaching which you hear and heed is not Mine, but [comes] from the Father Who sent Me.

25 I have told you these things while I am still with you.

26 But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.

Abraham obeyed the voice of God with works that made no sense to him at all. He was asked to sacrifice, kill, his own son, the son promised to him by God. God greatly blessed his obedience.

Genesis 22:15-17 says,

15 “Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,

16 and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son –

17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.’”

Years before, Abraham and Sarah attempted some “works” but it did not produce God’s fruit. It was their own idea conceived in their own minds without hearing God’s voice on the matter. They set up an offspring between Abraham and Sarah’s maid, Hagar. The result was that Ishmael was born. Later, God agreed with Sarah that Ishmael was to be cast out, for in Isaac was the covenant to be passed down.

Genesis 21:10-12 says,

10 *“Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.’*

11 *And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son.*

12 *But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.’”*

You can only obey God to the degree you are able to hear His voice.

At first, you may not think you are truly hearing His voice, as a real “voice.” It may just be an intuitive sense that you have inside of you that is in response to your reading the Word, something God is convicting you of or about. It may also be a very positive voice in your spirit and/or in the Word as a rhema that jumps off the page. Often His voice comes in the form of a “mosaic.” He paints a mosaic picture by giving you several small events and/or words that seem to paint a picture. He may bring people around you that have something to say or remind you of something in your past. The more you practice hearing His voice, the clearer it becomes for you. The more you hear and obey Him, the more you are able to hear and obey.

Become God’s slave.

Romans 6:16 says,

16 *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”*

Spend a lot of time meditating in His Word.

Chapter 6 The Ingredient of Speaking the Word

2 Corinthians 4:13 says,

13 “And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak.”

The spirit of faith is identified as speaking what one believes.

Why do we speak the Word?

God and man both rule with words. God created with His words, and He recreates with His words. However, He no longer has the authority to speak His words into the earth, except through a human being. Demons have the same restriction, which is why they try to get humans to speak their words. This earth has been created to be ruled and dominated by words.

He gave Adam dominion.

Psalm 8:2-6 says,

2 “Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

4 What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?

5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels [Elohiym, God], and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.”

Psalm 115:16 says,

16 “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’s; But the earth He has given to the children of men.”

Look at some examples of God accomplishing His work by speaking.

Genesis 1:3 says,

3 *“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”*

Genesis 1:6 says,

6 *“Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’”*

Genesis 1:9 says,

9 *“Then God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear’; and it was so.”*

Genesis 1:11 says,

11 *“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so.”*

Genesis 1:14 says,

14 *“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.’”*

Genesis 1:20 says,

20 *“Then God said, ‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.’”*

Genesis 1:22 says,

22 *“And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’”*

Genesis 1:24 says,

24 *“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so.”*

Notice that in the above Scriptures, nothing argued with God’s Word; it always was “and it was so.”

Then God rested after He gave man dominion.

Genesis 1:26 says,

26 *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”*

Genesis 1:28 says,

28 *“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”*

Genesis 2:2 says,

2 *“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.”*

God spoke this mighty word, which resulted in the resurrection of Jesus.

Psalm 2:7 says,

7 *“...will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’”*

Satan distorts truth with twisted excesses in two directions.

For centuries, people have misunderstood the “speaking of faith.” Some have never discovered that God gave mankind dominion over the earth to rule it with words. They have just felt that they should say how they feel. While we do need to be real with God on how we feel, we also need to get beyond our feelings and believe His Word.

Others have missed it to the other twisted excess, believing that speaking in a positive sense is the entire responsibility of a disciple, and that they, not God, may choose what to say and therefore what to claim with their words. This is a form of witchcraft and selfishness. Many cults promote this type of “positive confession.” While positive is better than negative confession, we as disciples must always recognize Jesus as our Lord instead of our own wants and desires.

We need to avoid extremes which miss God’s truth and can create shipwreck in our lives.

The truth is that God desires us to fellowship with Him and allow Him to give us the words to speak. He wants to give us His Words of faith to accomplish His purpose. In the Garden of Eden, Adam was to fellowship with the Word, the Tree of Life, daily, and then have dominion with his words over the earth. God gave him dominion, however, his dominion was to extend only God’s will over the earth and mankind. Adam decided that he could have dominion without the Tree of Life, and that he could speak the word that he decided needed to be spoken, The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

After Adam did that Satan began to convince people to speak his words, and the world fell into chaos. Spiritual beings have been competing to control the words of man ever since.

Life and death are in the power of the tongue.

Proverbs 18:21 says,

*21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.”*

James explained the scientific and spiritual value of words.

James 3:2-12 says,

2 *“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.*

3 *Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.*

4 *Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.*

5 *Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!*

6 *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.*

7 *For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.*

8 *But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

9 *With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.*

10 *Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.*

11 *Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?*

12 *Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”*

Brain scientists have discovered that the speech part of the brain has dominion of the entire brain. Why? God knew what He was doing! The tongue turns the entire course of your life like the small rudder of a large ship determines its course.

God told Joshua that success would come as he spoke the word.

Joshua 1:7-8 says,

7 “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Entering into the rest of God.

Angels hearken, demons flee.

Jesus is the High Priest over our confessions. When the Word of God is confessed and prayed over a person or a situation, it is powerful! Jesus created everything by His Word. Jesus IS the Word. Jesus gave us the authority to use the Word as if it were He saying it!

John 1:1-3 says,

1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

When the Passover was administered to Israel in Exodus 12, the Israelites were told to put the blood of an innocent lamb over their doors and the death angel (demon) would “pass over” and not hurt them. Jesus is the Lamb of God, and we can put His blood over our doors and over the doors of our loved ones and those that we pray for. How?

Revelation 12:11 says,

11 “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

The words of our mouth will apply the blood.

Notice in Exodus 12 that as long as the lamb’s blood stayed in the basin, it did no good. But when they took the hyssop, dipped it in the blood and applied it to their door, then God and the devil could see it. The hyssop was a common weed that did not seem to have much value. The words of our mouth do not seem to have much value, but when we dip them into the Word of God (Who is Jesus Himself) and apply them as blood, God sees it and the devil sees it!

Jesus takes our confession and makes it powerful.

Hebrews 3:1 says,

1 “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.”

When we speak God’s Word, Jesus takes it to the Father and asks Him to perform it.

John 16:23 says,

23 “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.”

Then we can enter into rest and let the Word do the work.

Hebrews 4:1 says,

1 “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.”

His work was finished from the foundation of the earth, therefore we can believe.

Hebrews 4:3 (KJV) says,

3 “For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall

enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

Hebrews 4:12 says,

12 “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Angels go to work when they hear God’s Word.

Psalm 103:20 says,

20 “Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding to the voice of His word.”

Demons flee!

Psalm 149:5-9 says,

5 “Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,

7 to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples (representing our spiritual enemies);

8 to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 to execute on them the written judgment – this honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD!”

Jesus gave us the example.

Mark 11:20-26 says,

20 “Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’

22 *So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God.*

23 *For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.*

24 *Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*

25 *And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.*

26 *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.'"*

Jesus did not say that only He could speak to mountains.

He told the disciples whatever things *you* ask when you pray, believe. Mountains often refer to obstacles in Bible tradition. Look at the process that Jesus spoke:

1. First, He said, "Therefore I say to you..." If Jesus said it to us, then we have the right to believe what He said. Jesus told them, whosoever will receive whatsoever. We are created in the image of God, and God needs us to speak for Him here on earth.

2. He did not just say that you should say what *you* want. He said whenever you pray and believe that you receive those things that you ask, and then you can speak to the mountain. Therefore, we must first fellowship with Jesus in His Word by the Holy Spirit so that we can hear what He says to us. When we hear what He says, faith comes for what He wants for us, not just what we may want for ourselves.

3. When we know that we have received His word, and faith comes as a seed into our heart, then we must speak that word that we have received to bring it to pass.

This is not a formula for claiming selfish requests. However, having said that, there is a law about our speaking that often works for unbelievers and believers alike. The law will

eventually catch up with everyone. We usually get what we speak, unless what we have spoken is confessed as sin.

4. In the above Scripture, Jesus used the word “say” four times and the word “believe” one time.

Personal testimony.

Many times, since I was saved in 1979, God has given me promises for desperate needs. He always instructed me to water the seed by speaking the promise out loud continually. In some cases I spoke the promise for over five years before seeing the mountain removed. My wife and I speak many generic words continually when we pray, including Psalm 91 and Psalm 23. There are many others. We have a seventeen-page prayer list with dozens of Scriptures that we pray over others and ourselves many times every week. They have to do with enemies, blessings and curse, financial issues, children, ministry, and other issues.

Caution, the way is narrow.

In the following passage of Scripture, I believe, Jesus was teaching people how to live in the Kingdom of God here on Earth. In my opinion, He told them to ask, seek, and knock as the way to pray in order to establish His Kingdom.

Matthew 7:7-12 says,

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus was teaching the same “Ask, seek, and knock” lesson in Luke chapter 11 while He was teaching His disciples about prayer. Then He ended that teaching with the following words: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”(Luke 11:13).

When we ask, God gives us the revelation of His will by the Holy Spirit as we seek His will on the matter. Then, when we receive His will, His mind and promise, we may begin to knock, or speak that word that He gives to us.

Matthew 7:13-14 says,

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Speaking the Word effectively is simply the fruit of intimacy. However, I submit that Jesus was stating in the above Scripture that there is a very narrow process for the bearing of fruit.

Notice in the above Scripture:

1. The narrow way, in my opinion, is described in the “ask, seek, and knock” concept.
2. Asking God is akin to begging. We have a need. We come to Him and let Him know that we are unable to meet a need. We begin by “begging.” This is all in the environment of intimacy and knowing Him.
3. Seeking is discovering God’s will, God’s solution, or God’s revelation and/or promise.
4. Knocking is being persistent and speaking the Word. Speaking the Word without intimacy is not God’s narrow way.

Jesus knew that few people would choose the “ask, seek, and knock” way of life. It will lead to abundant life!

Jesus endured the Cross by speaking the Word.

In my opinion, Jesus quoted many passages from Psalm 22 (perhaps even the entire Psalm) that spoke of His suffering on the Cross. Psalm 22 was written centuries before Jesus was crucified.

Psalm 22:31 (Amplified Bible) says,

31 “They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born – that He has done it [that it is finished]!”

Pause here and read the entire Psalm to see how this brought Jesus through the Cross.

To download a prayer guide with dozens of Scriptures that may be quoted and spoken over very practical issues in your life, go to our website below.

<http://www.isob-bible.org/abf/prayerbook.htm>

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Chapter 7 More Ingredients From Peter

2 Peter 1:1-11 says,

1 “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble [fall];

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

This Scripture in 2 Peter is very clear about the subject of faith and its very practical application in our everyday lives.

This is a powerful vision!

In the above Scripture, Peter states that God has given us everything we need for life, the visible things, and godliness, the invisible. He has given us these change gifts in the form of promises, which come by the “knowing” of Him in real time intimacy and fellowship with Him. Peter further states that we must add some ingredients to these promises, to our faith. The promise Peter makes to us if we add these ingredients is wonderful. He says that we will not be barren or unfruitful in knowing God, our calling and election will be sure, we will never stumble, and our entrance into the Kingdom of God will be abundantly supplied.

Peter makes an interesting statement in verse 10: “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble [fall]” (2 Peter 1:10). The word *stumble* or *fall* does not really mean “fall”. It means “formerly, or at some time in the past.” I believe Peter was speaking of his own denial of Jesus as in the past. Here is a man that must have been devastated with failures, and amazed at not only the love and forgiveness of Jesus, but at the power of the Holy Spirit to make him a new man.

To summarize this passage of Scripture:

1. It says that God gives us power for all things that pertain to life and godliness.

To me, that means the practical everyday things we need to live this life, and our character. This includes healing from our past wounds, the wounds that keep us in bondages and addictions. A major part of this healing is discovering, by faith, our real identity in Jesus. Real faith causes us to know that we really have been crucified with Christ and we really have been raised to a new birth, a new race. The supernatural power of knowing the truth of who we are will make us free people.

2. It says that we receive this power by knowing Him, or being intimate with Jesus.

3. It says that one result of this intimacy is receiving promises that give us His nature, character, and all that we need

to escape the corrupt world system and live through the Kingdom of God.

4. As we have been discussing in previous chapters, promises are seeds that are planted in our hearts that will bear fruit. When you know a seed has been deposited into your heart, then faith arises in you.

Hebrews 11:1 says,

*1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.”*

We need vision.

Vision is like hope. It is the expectation that we will obtain or receive something. God is a God of vision. He has a vision of what something will look like, He speaks, and the Holy Spirit does the work.

In my past life I used to create my own visions and dreams. Some of them came to pass, but even those, being out of God's will, had disappointing baggage attached. New Age people create their own vision. We don't have to do that. As we are intimate with God, He gives us our vision, the vision that He intends, with His power, to fulfill in our lives. It will set you free to know that God has promised you His great plan for your life. Most of the time we don't really know what the vision or dream will really look like when it is fulfilled. It is always superabundantly beyond what we can think, dream or even pray for.

When God grants you His vision, self-discipline will be something that you find that comes easier.

Let us go back and review what we have learned.

1. Jesus came to change things for the better. Isaiah 61 and Luke 4.
2. His changes come to us in the form of a gift, an inheritance. They are not something that we earn or work for; we receive them in the wrapping of grace.
3. His inheritance comes to us by the media of faith. Faith brings to us His inheritance.
4. Faith is given to us by grace, it is a free gift.

5. Faith comes to us by hearing God speak, through His Word and Holy Spirit.

6. Faith brings to us the seed planted in our heart when we hear the Word of God.

7. Faith becomes a substance, a spiritually tangible reality. This is similar to an agricultural seed. Even though it is not visible to the eye, it is real. Faith is the title deed, the reality of a spiritual truth and promise that cannot be perceived with the physical senses. It is like a “sixth sense.”

8. Faith, in order to come to its fullness and bear the intended fruit, must be nurtured and developed in each person.

9. Each person must add several ingredients to his/her faith. We have been discussing these in various chapters.

So far we have added endurance, long-term perseverance, love, and works. In this chapter, we will season our faith with several other ingredients.

Diligence – self-discipline.

Peter’s Scripture instructs us to add several ingredients. However, he makes it clear that we need to use diligence as we make the additions.

The Microsoft dictionary ⁱ defines *diligence* as: *Persistent and hard-working effort in doing something, the care or attention expected by the law in doing something, such as fulfilling the terms of a contract.*

The Strong’s Concordance defines *diligence* as the Greek word *spouda* {spoo-day'}, *diligence, haste, business, care, forwardness, earnest care, carefulness, haste, with haste, earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything, to give all diligence interest one’s self most earnestly.*

I believe the key to diligence is giving of attention.

If you are passionate about receiving God’s inheritance for you, you will give more attention to the needed ingredients than anything else in life. It will become your passionate priority.

I believe that the term self-discipline can and should be used for diligence.

I am not talking about the self-discipline of “don’t do that,” but the self-discipline of simply giving priority to the ingredients

of faith we have been discussing. When we do our part with the ingredients, God will give us the power for the “don’t do that” issues of life.

Self-discipline for running the race.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 says,

24 “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

The following is extracted and quoted from the book, The Richest Man Who Ever Lived.⁴

Diligence is a something that you are not born with, but is a learnable skill that combines creative persistence, a smart-working effort rightly planned and rightly performed in a timely, efficient, and effective manner to attain a result that is pure and of the highest quality of excellence.

The rewards of becoming truly diligent.

You will gain advantage.

"The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty" (Proverbs 21:5).

You will control the situation, rather than have the situation control you.

"The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor" (Proverbs 12:24).

⁴ Steven Scott. *The Richest Man Who Ever Lived.* A Currency Book, Random House, New York, NY, 2006, pages 12-27.

You will experience true fulfillment.

"The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich" (Proverbs 13:4).

You will attain the respect and admiration of those in authority.

"Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men" (Proverbs 22:29).

Your needs will be satisfied.

"He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!" (Proverbs 28:19).

You will experience ever-increasing success.

"Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, But he who gathers by labor will increase" (Proverbs 13:11).

Your efforts will be profitable.

"In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23).

The result of not being diligent.

Your efforts will come to nothing.

"In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23).

Overcoming laziness, the opposite of diligence.

There are four root causes of laziness according to what Solomon wrote in the Proverbs. Self-centeredness, conceit (arrogance), ignorance and irresponsibility. Often he combines these last two into a category he calls foolishness.

The root causes of laziness.

Self-centeredness.

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts" (Proverbs 21:2).

Conceit (arrogance).

"The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can answer sensibly" (Proverbs 26:16).

Ignorance and irresponsibility (foolishness).

"I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down" (Proverbs 24:30, 31).

Solomon's steps to bring diligence into your life.

1. Wake up to reality.

"How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep – So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man" (Proverbs 6:9-11). In other words, stop procrastinating.

2. Define your visions.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

"Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18).

3. Effectively partner.

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22, KJV).

4. Pursue wisdom.

"How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver" (Proverbs 16:16).

Add to your faith.

Seven ingredients to faith are offered in our anchor Scripture, 2 Peter 1:1-11. We have covered some of them in previous chapters. I want to briefly cover them here again.

Now give your diligence, self-discipline, to these ingredients.

1. Peter's first ingredient, virtue.

The dictionary defines this word as: *Being morally good or righteous.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *arete arete {ar-et'-ay}, a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action, virtue, moral goodness, any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity.*

While I understand that we are righteous by faith, having that understanding should lead you to putting off the things of your old nature and putting on Jesus' new nature. Yes, He does live inside of you, but you can choose to allow Him to live His life through you or to live as if He never moved in.

Colossians 3:5 says,

5 *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*

Colossians 3:12-14 says,

12 *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

13 *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

14 *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*

2. Peter's second ingredient, knowledge.

The dictionary defines this word as: *A general awareness of possession of information, facts, ideas, truths or principles. Familiarity of understanding gained through experience or study.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *gnosis, knowledge signifies in general intelligence, understanding, the general knowledge of Christian religion the deeper more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion, such as belongs to the more advanced, esp. of things lawful and unlawful for Christians, moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living.*

We need to continually study the Word to gain knowledge. A daily study of and meditation upon the Proverbs and Psalms is valuable for wisdom and knowledge. However, notice that one of the definitions of knowledge is “gained through experience...” Often we obtain God's discipline through painful experiences. He is not beating on us, but He allows us to experience the pain so that we really learn the lesson. When I have been through some painful lessons, it has caused me to make sure I do not cause others to experience similar pain through my actions. Experiencing pain causes me to be extremely sensitive to others. Experience is a great teacher.

On the positive side, we gain knowledge through experience by following people who are successful in those areas in which we are interested. Much of my education in life has been through mentoring in business and spiritual matters.

3. Peter's third ingredient, self-control.

The dictionary defines this word as: *The ability to control your own behavior, especially in terms of reactions and impulses.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *egkrateia, self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, esp. his sensual appetites), temperance.*

It is important to note that self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit that resides in us. Self-control comes by grace, by allowing Jesus to live His life through us. When we sin through lack of self-control, it is our opportunity to allow Jesus to cleanse us and watch His self-control to take over.

4. Peter's fourth ingredient, perseverance.

The dictionary defines this word as: *steady and continued action or belief, usually over a long period and especially despite difficulties or setbacks.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *hupomone, patience, enduring, patient continuance patient waiting, steadfastness, constancy, endurance, in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.*

It is important to note that longsuffering is part of the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit which resides in us. Longsuffering is very similar in meaning to perseverance. It is also an act of grace to us. We studied endurance and running the race in previous chapters. They are key ingredients!

5. Peter's fifth ingredient, godliness.

The dictionary defines this word as: *conforming to the laws and wishes of God; devout; pious.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *eusebeia, godliness, holiness, reverence, respect, piety towards God.*

My opinion is that it could be defined as “holiness,” or “the life of Jesus lived out in a person through the Holy Spirit.” Live in such submission to the Holy Spirit that you are able to detect His slightest touch when He wants you to confess your sin.

6. Peter's sixth ingredient, brotherly kindness.

The dictionary defines this word (kindness) as: *the practice of being or the capability to be sympathetic and compassionate, an act that shows consideration and caring.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *phileo, Philadelphia. love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love, love of the brethren, in the NT the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren.*

This is one of the “love types” we see in Scripture. It is not to be confused with the God's type of love, agape.

A definition from the website:

http://www.albatrus.org/english /potpourri /sermons /what_is_love.htm

PHILEO Expresses Love of personal affection, or of pleasure, including even the relevant passions when required. It does not involve intelligence or high purposes. This concept places Phileo at a level inferior to that of Agape. It is a feeling that finds attraction in another person and it expects a return.

Kindness to others has been an attribute that is often ignored. Sometimes kindness is simply listening rather than speaking. It can be showing a sincere interest in another person and their welfare. Kindness can be demonstrated by not judging others and letting them know that.

7. Peter's seventh ingredient, love-agape.

We devoted an entire chapter to this, however here are some additional comments.

Most English dictionaries do not have an adequate definition for agape. The online Wikipedia includes this in their definition: *The term agape is rarely used in ancient manuscripts, but was used by the early Christians to refer to the self-sacrificing love of God for humanity, which they were committed to reciprocating and practicing towards God and among one another.*

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word as: *agape agape {ag-ah'-pay}. It is love that is only originated in God. God is love; agape. His unconditional love towards all, even His enemies is motivated by His own character of preferring the well being of others even to His own self-sacrifice and death on their behalf. I call it "bloody love."*

A definition from the website

http://www.albatrus.org/english/robertourri/sermons/what_is_love.htm

*This is the Love of intelligence, of reason and comprehension coupled with the corresponding purpose. Its concept is vastly superior to any other form of Love. In essence "Agape" is a permanent benevolent attitude toward God and human beings, without **any** condition, that freely springs out of the Agape God has place in the heart of His own. It is*

disinterested love that does not need anything in return. We can only Agape others only if God has firstly filled us up with His Agape. All the other form of love need a reaction, a return to maintain themselves, whilst Agape comes from God and the beneficiaries that are full of it do not need a confirmation from others, being fully satisfied in the Agape of the Lord.

Ephesians 2:4-6 (Amplified Bible) says,

“But God – so rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us, Even when we were dead (slain) by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ; [He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him, for] it is by grace (His favor and mercy which you did not deserve) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ’s salvation). And He raised us up together with Him and made us sit down together [giving us joint seating with Him] in the heavenly sphere [by virtue of our being] in Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One).”

John 3:16 says,

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Chapter 8 Parable of the Sower

The Mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Mark 4:11-12 says,

11 “And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,

12 so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’”

Notice that this is *the* mystery of the Kingdom of God, not one of its mysteries.

The Strong's Concordance defines *mystery* as the Greek word: *musterion* {moos-tay'-ree-on}; from a derivative of *muo* (to shut the mouth); hidden thing, secret, mystery; generally mysteries, religious secrets, confided only to the initiated and not to ordinary mortals.

I believe that mysteries in the Bible are things that are hidden from ordinary understanding but are meant to be revealed to those who passionately dig for them and who meet the conditions to receive revelation knowledge, *rhema*, from God.

In this book about faith we have been discussing what faith is, what its intended value is, how we receive it, and many of our responsibilities for adding ingredients to it. Jesus simplified the faith process in the Parable of the Sower in Mark chapter 4. He made it simple enough for the uneducated fishermen of His day to understand, but so simple that it confounded the learned and lettered religious people of His time. Interestingly, it is still hidden from many Christians today.

Desperation.

I recall back in the early 1980s to when and how God revealed this mystery to me. It crashed into my soul like light crashing into a dark place. It was during a time of great need and desperation in my life. I had always been hungry to hear God speak, but when He spoke this time, it came in with a loud crashing and life-changing event.

Notice in the above Scripture that Jesus stated that He intentionally has this mystery hidden. I often wondered why He would say, “And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And *their* sins be forgiven them.” He was referring to Isaiah chapter 6 wherein it is recorded that Isaiah had a new revelation of the Lord. This occurred when his King Uzziah died. Uzziah had been a great and powerful king of Israel. He brought prosperity and safety from enemies. But when he died, Isaiah’s hope turned only to the Lord. It is out of that desperation that God reveals Himself to people. In that same chapter, God called Isaiah to go preach an unusual message.

Isaiah 6:9-11 says,

9 *“And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.*

10 *Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.’*

11 *Then I said, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered: ‘Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate.’”*

When Isaiah asked the Lord how long he should preach this strange message, the answer was, in my paraphrase, “Until they become desperate.”

The Parable of the Sower.

Mark 4:1-13 says,

1 *“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.*

2 *Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:*

3 *‘Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.*

4 *And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.*

5 *Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.*

6 *But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away.*

7 *And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.*

8 *But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.'*

9 *And He said to them, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'*

10 *But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.*

11 *And He said to them, 'To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,*

12 *so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'*

13 *And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?''*

The seed is the Word of God, the ground is the heart. The Word is intended to and is capable of bringing to you everything you need for life, but too many people forfeit the treasure! Why? Like the natural farmer whose crops fail, they fail to tend the garden.

Mark 4:14 says,

14 *"The sower sows the word.*

[Luke 8:11 (KJV) says, "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."]

Hard ground, a hard heart.

Mark 4:15 says,

15 “And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

The shallow heart. Too much trouble.

Mark 4:16-17 says,

16 “These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.”

Wherein lies the failure?

I have seen too many believers absolutely forfeit their inheritance by giving in to their emotions when trouble and persecution hit them. Complaining, being unthankful and many such ungodly attitudes give Satan what he is looking for, a seed that he can steal. The inheritance that God desires for these people is then lost. The only way our faith will produce is to maintain a godly attitude during our trouble and persecution. We must be forgiving and walk in love, which includes taking up our cross against ungodly emotions.

Fight to get the victory, and you have lost the battle for sure. Victory is past tense by faith.

"And he said, 'Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's'" (2 Chronicles 20:15).

The worldly heart. Too much pleasure.

Mark 4:18-19 says,

18 *“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,*

19 *and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*

The good heart is the noble and honest heart.

Mark 4:20 says,

20 *“But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”*

[*Luke 8:15 (KJV) says, “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”*]

This is called grace. This is watching God’s seed becoming a full-grown plant in your life. It is an absolutely amazing experience!

To see God provide for your needs beyond what your own ability could accomplish is amazing. Beyond that, to see God reach out to save and heal others beyond what your ability could accomplish is even more amazing. How can I describe it? You have to taste it for yourself.

Seeds do not hide in the ground forever.

Mark 4:21-22 says,

21 *Also He said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?’*

22 *For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.’”*

In 2002, God took me to the other side of the world to an African nation to visit a group who had been using our Grow or Die book for discipleship. I saw fruit! I should not have been amazed, but I was! I saw refugees who could not legally obtain

work because they were not citizens bearing fruit for their own lives and for the Kingdom of God. They had planted five churches in previously unreached villages, some of them deep in jungles. When I boarded the airplane for my trip home, the Lord said to me, “Also He said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light’” (Mark 4:21-22). It was Father’s Day in the United States of America, and I received a prophecy from a friend of mine that my Father wanted to take me, His son, on a special trip just to show me some cool things and to spend time with me. He did, and I was amazed! When we see God’s fruit in our lives, it humbles us, knowing that something was accomplished by grace, by Jesus in us. It causes us to respond like Peter did to the large catch of fish, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8).

Your spiritual eyes and ears either grow or die.

Mark 4:23-25 says,

23 “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

24 Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’”

God’s word is a supernatural seed. It is real!

When God speaks His Word to us, it is planted into our hearts as a seed planted into the ground. It is intended to bring fruit to our lives and to further the Kingdom of God. This is how God relates to us, through His Word in our hearts. Notice in the parable that when this seed is planted, Satan goes to work. Satan is not afraid of us, he is only afraid of Jesus. And Jesus is manifested today as the Word planted into our hearts. Living

this way will certainly bring tribulation and suffering, but it will also bring the abundant life the Jesus spoke of.

After the class the students failed the test.

Immediately, the same day, after this teaching, Jesus gave the final examination to His disciples when He said, “On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side’” (Mark 4:35).

As He spoke this, the Word was planted in their hearts just as He had been teaching them. However, the circumstances immediately were contrary to the planted Word.

Mark 4:37-38 says,

37 “And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’”

Jesus responded in mercy but also with a disciplinary word.

Mark 4:39-40 says,

39 “Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

40 But He said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’”

Did they learn the lesson?

Mark 4:41 says,

41 “And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’”

Trust the Word, trust Him, trust His mighty power, trust His love for you, and not your physical senses.

Hebrews 10:38 says,

38 “Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

The Word planted into your heart is the title deed, the guarantee of His promise.

Hebrews 11:1 (Amplified Bible) says,

1 “NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].”

It is similar to a pregnant woman who cannot yet see the baby, but she knows that something alive is in her.

What kind of fruit can you expect to see?

In general, the Word of God manifests God’s plan for your life when you live by bearing fruit. I believe that since our body is God’s temple that we can expect to see those items that were in the Old Testament temple to be manifested as fruit in our lives.

There are three kinds of fruit, one for everything we need and everything God needs.

1. Fruit of the Spirit: The Law. Interior fruit. This is godly character. This is the fruit that makes you like Jesus. Read Galatians 5:22-23, which says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

2. Fruit for our lives: Manna. This includes our social situation, family, health and body, finances, etc.

3 John 1:2 (KJV) says,

2 “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

I have experienced more of my needs cared for as my character changed.

1 Corinthians 9:7 says,

7 “Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit?”

Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?”

John 4:36 says,

36 “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.”

A personal testimony.

There was a time in our lives back in 1983 when our income was not sufficient to meet our projected expenses. I got alone with the Lord in a local park, just walking and kicking rocks, telling Him about my problem.

He spoke so clearly and said, “Larry, if you will believe 2 Corinthians 9:8, put it on your lips and in your heart, and if you will speak it out as many times during the day as you can, I will provide for your needs. By the way, please tell me what your budget is.” So I told the Lord the minimum that I needed to care for my family. In less than five months our income increased to just what I had told the Lord I needed! However, reflecting on this time in my life, I must admit that for years prior to this time I had been giving sacrificially, even large amounts out of my very need.

3. Missionary fruit: Aaron’s Rod that budded. Fruit for others or ministry.

John 15:8 says,

8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Our work for the Lord will not count for much, unless it is fruit and not the work of our flesh.

All fruit has seed inside of it for reproduction.

Genesis 1:11 says,

11 “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so.”

Once the interior fruit grows inside of us, it spills out seeds that produce exterior fruit, or ministry to others.

A personal testimony.

I had never really planned to have a ministry such as International School of The Bible. I always had a heart to serve God, however. In 1995 the Lord spoke to me in two ways. He spoke Psalm 68:11, which says, “The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed [published] it.” He told me that if I wrote and published the Word, that He would see to it that a great host would proclaim it, or re-publish it.

He also spoke to me from Mark chapter 14 where it tells the story of a woman who broke her alabaster flask to pour out its costly oil of spikenard on Jesus. The Lord spoke to me and said, “Larry, will you take your substance and pour it out on My Body, just because it feels good to Me?”

These words, or *rhemas*, from the Lord became seeds in my heart, and they are now bearing their fruit! The interesting thing is, that the seeds continually multiply with each piece of fruit, which causes the fruit to grow exponentially! It has and still is, and the nice thing is that I had very little to do with it. Sure I worked hard, but only in obedience to what I heard God speak to my heart. I attempt to avoid “my plans.”

Seek intimacy with God. Prepare your heart to be good ground. You will encounter much warfare, but you will glorify God.

John 15:1-8 says,

1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they [the KJV original version identifies “they” as men] gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

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Chapter 9 Hearing God's Voice

We have been studying all about faith, how God uses it, what it is, and what ingredients we need to add to it. Several times in this book I wrote about that faith comes by hearing God speak, or in other words, faith is the by-product of our intimacy with God.

Romans 10:17 says,

17 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word [rhema, or voice] of God."

Hearing God during our times of suffering has been invaluable to me.

In my experience the most important time for me to hear God's voice is when it does not seem like God is working in my life, when the promises of God seem to be for others and not for me, or when circumstances continue to worsen. There are seasons of God's dealings that we will not completely understand. His ways are higher than ours. Although He has usually revealed to me why He had to take a certain path, He has seldom revealed it to me until after the suffering was over.

It is during those long suffering periods that God's voice is precious!

James 1:5 says,

5 "If any of you lacks wisdom [hearing God's voice], let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

That is a promise that I stand upon when I just can't understand why certain things just take so long to change. While I understand that we cannot demand that God speak to us, there have been times when I brought this Scripture before Him, and asked in faith. I can remember times when within just a few hours He spoke back.

Even in those times we have to ask in faith, in trusting in His Word.

James 1:6 says,

6 *“But let him ask in faith [for wisdom], with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”*

In all Biblical dispensations, hearing God’s voice has been a major issue.

Many of the patriarchs heard God’s voice. One of the most important of these was Abraham.

Genesis 11:32 – 12:3 says,

32 *“So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.”*

1 *“Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.*

2 *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.*

3 *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”*

During the dispensation of the Law, hearing God’s voice was emphasized.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 says,

1 *“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.*

2 *And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God.”*

During Jesus’ time on earth He emphasized hearing His voice.

John 10:27 says,

27 “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*”

After the resurrection hearing His voice is much more common.

That is because the Holy Spirit has been poured out on mankind and it is He who caused us to hear God’s voice.

Revelation 1:12-13 says,

12 “*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*

13 *and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*”

Acts 18:9 says,

9 “*Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent.’*”

Romans 8:14 says,

14 “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*”

The Strong’s Concordance defines the Greek word *sons: huios*, which means a son who is maturing into the likeness of his father, as opposed to a son who was simply begotten.

God’s voice heals.

In my experience through the Bondage Breakers ministry, the only way addicts of any kind can be healed is by hearing God’s voice. This is emphasized in most addiction ministries. If we stop and think about it, we all are in need of the same kind of healing. All of us are somewhat addicted to many ungodly things and habits, including addiction to the works of our flesh. We can even become addicted to comfort and pleasure. Many find themselves seeking God for an easier life.

Jesus made it clear. He said if you want salvation, deny yourself, die, then – follow Me.

If we don’t practice God’s presence and learn to continually hear His voice, faith will not come. If faith does not come, then we cannot inherit His promises, we will not have everything we need for life and godliness, and we will not see change in our lives. God cannot use us to the extent He would like to unless we can hear His voice.

Peter’s last words before he died.

In a previous chapter about Peter’s ingredients, he warns his readers to make sure to always be intimate with God in order to hear His voice, in order to obtain His promises, which will bring everything needed for life and godliness. This must have been of extreme importance to Peter since these were among his final words. In 2 Peter chapters 1 and 2, he warns that there are only two paths. First was the Word of God rising in your hearts like the daystar rises to bring morning light. The other path was to be influenced by false teachers bringing selfishness and even worse things.

Peter’s final words were strong.

2 Peter 1:12-15 says,

12 “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,

14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”

Hearing God’s voice brings knowing, not conventional learning.

When Peter, James and John were taken up by Jesus’ transfiguration in Matthew chapter 17 they recognized Elijah and Moses without ever seeing them before. They had no pictures of

them, they just knew. When the Holy Spirit takes you into the Kingdom of God, God’s presence, and you hear His voice, knowing just comes. Often it is a knowing of more of Jesus. Sometimes it is a knowing of who you are in Christ and of His love. Other times it is a knowing of yourself and how undone and sinful you are. Then He gives you the opportunity to appropriate forgivingness and grace and then He replaces you. Your flesh burns off. Supernatural things are accomplished for your life and for the furthering of the Kingdom of God.

Passionately pursue knowing God in His presence! The rewards are eternal, not just for this temporal world.

The Flowing River.⁵

"There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony (Exodus 25:22).

As a child of God, you are entitled to experience an ever-deepening relationship with the Lord. This includes enjoying fellowship in His presence, but it is much more. Matthew chapter 6 emphasizes reward in prayer as opposed to answered prayer. The reward is God Himself. Other results of prayer are simply by-products. If you are sincere about deepening your relationship with Jesus you may, but there may be a price to pay. God reveals Himself to those people who submit to and obey Him (John 14:21). God also reveals Himself to those who seek him diligently and with pure motives. Often we must remove ourselves from the familiar, and find time to set aside just for Him. God seems to honor those who hunger and thirst for true righteousness and holiness. If you do not hunger for these, at least ask God to give you that hunger.

We know that God’s presence never leaves us, but I am talking about something totally different. I am talking about

⁵ Taken from the book Grow or Die. <http://www.isob-bible.org/flowingriver.htm>

entering into His glory, His awesome and very private glory. This is different from corporate worship. This is just you and God in His Holy of Holies! This kind of encounter does not necessarily include a manifestation in your physical flesh. Although it may include that, it may simply be a deep inner and quiet connection. You experience His glory to such a degree that your life is eternally transformed. I am talking about a deeper baptism in the Holy Spirit, beyond the gifts. I am talking about His holiness invading you and burning off your Adamic nature. As you read on, know that when I use the word “presence” I am talking about this extra dimensional realm.

When a believer knows with faith that Jesus wants to fellowship with him, he can experience that fellowship provided he submits to God’s conditions. His conditions are simply to submit to Jesus as Lord, and to quickly obey His Word.

Isaiah 66:2 says,

2 “‘For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,’ says the LORD. ‘But on this one will I look (to pay attention to): On him who is poor (afflicted, humble, needy and weak) and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”

One major attribute of humility is the wiliness to repent and turn from our old ways, which are unlike God’s character.

Those conditions may seem like “old stuff” for many Christians, but there is more to these than may first meet the eye. So many Christians are in “prisons” that are not necessary. They have compromised being real and honest with themselves and with God. At some point in time they knew that they had compromised, but now they do not even realize that they are in “prison”. Often the enemy maintains his prison doors with tactics that are very religious.

Many do not want to face pain, and refuse any type of confrontations. Therefore they compromise not receiving God’s best. Others live by rules, legalism, or performance in some sort of pretended holiness. They feel that they are pleasing a harsh God. Still others live by “false grace” feeling that God understands that they are not perfect, therefore why even try to

live by faith. They pray when they are in a hard place, but none of these people are enjoying the person of Jesus, the very presence and fellowship of the Creator! They may enter the Kingdom of God when they die, but they are living in Hell while they are on Earth.

The Flowing River will build your faith, and will invite God to fulfill His desire to reveal Himself to you. It will also give you some things that you need to do in order to react to His invitation. After I had known the Lord for less than one month I went to a convention and the evangelist made the statement, “The Lord is my best friend. He is closer to me than my wife.” When I heard that I became hungry for the same thing, and have pursued it ever since.

Bible studies, sermons, books, discipleship lessons are all good, but if you do not experience the presence of the Lord you are missing *the* nugget of the Christian life. When you know that Jesus is in the room with you, everything changes. Your joy comes, afflictions seem to diminish, faith rises, and His grace becomes bigger than everything in life that you need to face.

When I discovered this Scriptural path for entering His presence called The Flowing River, my friendship and intimacy with Jesus expanded greatly. I discovered this during times when I could not sense His presence, and when things in life were not going very well with me. I discovered that I could go for a 30-minute walk and in my mind go through the Flowing River pathway, and I would find myself at peace and in contact with the Lord. The goal is to eventually dwell in this place as a lifestyle. This is also a “what to do path” to cooperate with God for getting your practical needs supplied.

People are really hurting.

Some cannot pay their bills, others have received a bad doctor's report, some have children who have gone astray, and perhaps others have families that are falling apart. We need to be able to know how to cooperate with God through the blood covenant lifestyle so that we can make it in this life, between now and the time we leave this body and go to Heaven.

Besides enjoying God’s presence, there is a very practical “what to do” path in the Flowing River.

Do we really need to follow a path?

This idea of following a pathway to enter the presence of God is in no way meant to reduce your relationship with God to a formula, or to infer that you must enter into His presence in the way I am going to describe. I do believe that the Flowing River contains relationship skills that will either enhance your relationship with Jesus or perhaps even allow you to make contact for the very first time.

When my children were very young it was always up to me to initiate relationship times. However, as they grew older they began to have more choices and the relationship and fellowship that we could enjoy depended more and more on how they related to me.

The children that would come to me just for friendship, for advice, for appreciation and thanksgiving would always enter into a deeper relationship with me than if they simply came to me for an allowance or to pay a bill. I always had grace, and how they acted never varied my love for them, but I had deeper fellowship with them when they exercised their free wills and their relationship skills. Even if at times they would act in an adverse way, my unconditional love would kick in (most of the time). My mercy and grace is what was supposed to draw them to me, but they needed to react and make a choice.

In a sermon recently preached at Southeastern University, Dr. Mark Rutland helped me to put some of this into proper perspective. He said the following:

“We are not trying to access the supernatural, but the supernatural, the Living God, Jesus Himself, is trying to access us. Witchcraft, sorcery, and divination attempts to contact the supernatural.”

Response and obedience to God’s beckoning is what gives us contact with Him in the supernatural. Again, it is God’s initiative that even gives us the desire to obey Him that we might be in contact with His living presence. God is pounding at your

door saying, “Please obey Me.” Contact with Him often depends upon your obedience.

Obedience is a lifestyle, not an event. There is a progressive ladder of obedience. As you live longer, the issues for obedience grow and build upon one another. The price continually gets higher. We are called to take up our cross, and we do that. However, next time the cross carries a higher price. We never have to take up that old one again, but the new one requires more sacrifice and more obedience because the prize becomes more valuable.

Be prepared! I have seen many people experience Jesus after going through the Flowing River just one time. Make this a habit and your life will change eternally.

God’s purpose is to reach a dying world and at the same time bless us. How?

We were blessed in order to become a blessing to a lost and dying world. God told our forefather Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

The only way we can bless others is to allow Jesus in us to do it through us. The only way He can do it through us is for His character to prevail over our old Adamic nature. This pathway I am going to describe is an opportunity for you to allow God to work His holiness and true righteousness into your life. As you begin to take up your cross and allow the loving God to gently chasten you, you will become more and more like Jesus, a partaker of His character. He will free you from your inner prisons, He will gently bring you to repentance about issues that are hurting you, and your life will never be the same. However, this path is not without pain. If you are lazy, if you will not confront yourself and others who are harming you, you will not enter into this life of fellowship with the Lord. As we become cleansed and become more like Jesus, we enjoy more of His presence, and our lives simply bless others.

Without holiness no man shall see God!

I thank God that righteousness and holiness are legally imputed to us as gifts. But as you deepen your relationship you begin to experience a true and actual transformation of your character into righteousness and holiness. I am not talking about some put on holiness. That kind of religious play-acting produces bitter and angry people, whereas true holiness produces joy, love, and all the fruit of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:24 says,

24 “..and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

Highway 35. The Highway of Holiness in Isaiah chapter 35.

Isaiah 35:8 says,

8 “A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.”

Isaiah chapter 33 speaks of the Israelites experiencing judgment due to their sinful lifestyle. Isaiah 34 speaks of God bringing them through the overcoming process and Isaiah chapter 35 shows the result, which is holiness. The benefits are listed in chapter 35. They include joy, singing, the desert and wastelands becoming springs of waters, deserts blooming with roses, abundant rejoicing, seeing the glory of the Lord. It describes blind eyes being opened, feebleness being healed, fear turning into faith, the thirsty given springs of water, and living above your spiritual enemies. It would do you well to study this chapter in this context.

Ezekiel 47:1-12 shows a picture of a flowing river.

The picture God showed to Ezekiel was of the Temple of God, its ordinances and design, and a river flowing from it. God spoke to Ezekiel and showed him that this was a river of life flowing from God down to the Dead Sea into the putrid waters.

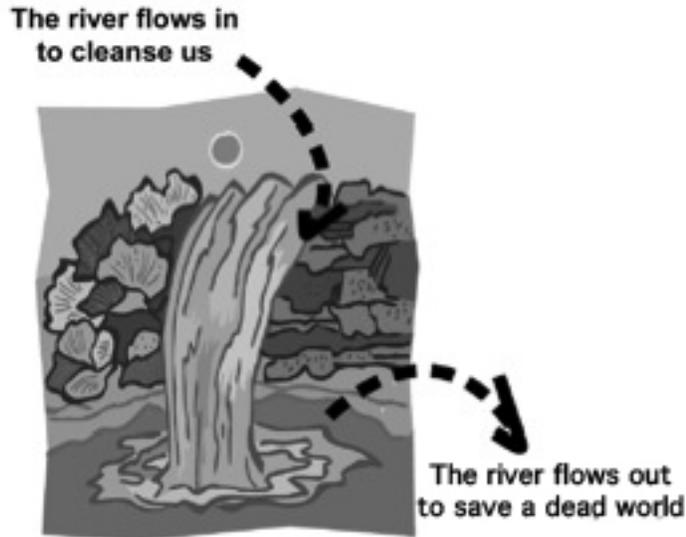
This river would heal the waters and make them alive. The Scripture in chapter 47 of Ezekiel says that this river started out as a small stream as it came out from under the Temple, but then it progressively became deeper and deeper until it eventually emptied into the Dead Sea. As it did, the Sea became alive with life. The sea in the Bible normally stands for the sea of lost humanity. God was showing Ezekiel that the only way that dead people could live would be to be touched by God through something called a river that was to flow from His very presence.

John 7:38 says,

38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

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The River flows in to cleanse you – The River flows out to save a dead world.



“Write it down Ezekiel.”

God told Ezekiel in chapter 43:10-11 to write down this picture of the Temple and its ordinances so that the people could see it and so that they could repent and thus be a blessing to others. That is what the Flowing River lesson is all about.

Where is the temple today?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says,

19 “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

We cannot become blessed nor be a blessing without the real presence of God.

We need the presence of God to set us free and cleanse us in order to do any kind of ministry, even effective prayer. Here is the pattern for experiencing the fullness of the Lord for your life, for your church, and for the world. We need the presence of God to set us free and cleanse us in order to do *any* kind of ministry, even effective prayer.

Here is the pattern for experiencing the fullness of the Lord for your life.

Acts 2:42-43 says,

42 *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

43 *Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.”*

Notice the three things the apostles did daily that resulted in many wonders and miracles:

1. *The apostles’ doctrine.* This is the daily study of the Word of God.

2. *Prayers.* This most likely included more than one kind of prayer. The early church often confessed who they were in Christ and confessed the Word.

3. *Fellowship and breaking of bread.* This was daily communion, or the taking of the cup and the bread in remembrance of the blood covenant.

The early church took communion at least weekly, if not daily. It was their way to enter into the presence of God and experience a deep knowing of Him in a personal way. It was not a religious practice, it was a time of enjoying Him in a real way.

The purpose of communion was to bring the partakers into God’s presence. The story in Luke 24:30-31 is an example. In it they found healing and all their needs supplied.

Luke 24:30-31 says,

30 *“Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.*

31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.”

The presence of God, through His flesh and blood covenant, meets all our needs. (Taken from Dick Reuben’s video series, “A Pattern for Revival Fire: Covenant Meal – The Lord’s Table.”)

The Flowing River is a daily exercise that does the same thing (not to replace communion, but in addition to it). The Flowing River walks one through the blood covenant and brings the person through the veil, which is His flesh, into the Holy of Holies, right into His presence! We need His presence daily, not just once in a while!

In John 6:51 Jesus says that He is the Living Bread that came down from Heaven. Hebrews 10:19-20 talks about a new and living way of coming into the Holy of Holies through the veil that is the flesh of Jesus.

What all of this is saying is that the way into the presence of God is through the recognition of the blood covenant; His blood and flesh. You will see that going through the Flowing River recognizes the blood covenant much in the same way as does communion.

We need to know that there are enemies that want to stop God from being real to us.

Our enemies come at us in three main ways:

Our will

Our mind

Our emotions

are all attacked by Our Flesh, the World and Satan.

Question:

How do we overcome these enemies to get into God’s presence for FELLOWSHIP?

Answer:

God has already provided for all victory over all enemies! The way into His presence was provided at the Cross when the veil

was torn from top to bottom - Mark 15:38. Now it is our job to cooperate. We must take up our cross – that will give us the victory!

Luke 9:23-25 (KJV) says,

23 *“And he said to them all, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

24 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*

25 *For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?’”*

The word for *life* in Luke 9 means “*soul*”, or the will, mind and emotions. The word *deny* means to say *no* to.

The key to abundant life and receiving all that Jesus has for us, including His presence, is to complete the blood covenant by taking up our cross.

Many of us know the magnificent, all inclusive, all powerful work done by Jesus on the Cross of Calvary; how He shed His blood for our sin, and rose from the dead to give us life. We cannot add to that. However, in order to take advantage of that work, we must also die. We must take up our cross, deny ourselves and follow Him. We must lose our life.

Our relationship and fellowship with God are based upon a blood covenant. To the Western mindset that can be a foreign thing. The closest comparison we have is marriage, and so many people have an understanding of this relationship that is contrary to the Bible. Ask yourself this: Would you negotiate with your mate-to-be on how many other intimate relationships you are allowed after your marriage?

Two deaths, Jesus’ and yours, activate the blood covenant!

What is so important about a blood covenant?

1 Peter 1:18-19 says,

18 *“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your*

aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

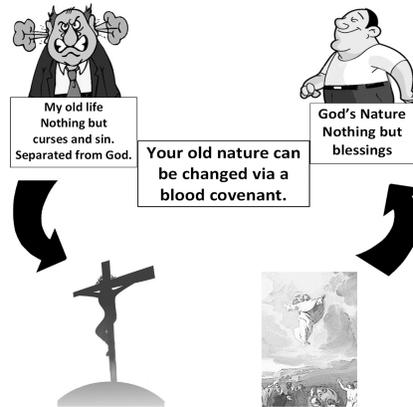
19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Leviticus 17:11 says,

11 “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

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**The spiritual life can be exchanged by the law of substitution.
A blood covenant changes your family inheritance.**



Family inheritance. This basically means that people may be born into a certain family, and from that family lineage they will receive blessings and curses as their inheritance. However, blessings and curses can be changed. Tribes in Africa, in American Indian culture and some Asian type societies have always looked for ways to swap or trade blessings and curses with other people.

Since ancient times, people have drank blood that was offered to their god, so that they could be like God.

Before the Foundation of the World, God prearranged to have Jesus crucified according to the *eternal* Spirit, which means that the substitution principle was in effect before any man was created (Revelation 13:8).

In order for a blood covenant to truly be effective, there must be blood shed by two parties, or there must be two deaths and two crosses. We must die to our self and commit all we are and all we have to Jesus. The good thing is that Jesus also commits all He has and all He is to us!

When we connect the Cross of Jesus to our cross we are plugged into God, and Power happens!

There are always two crosses that must connect to make a blood covenant.

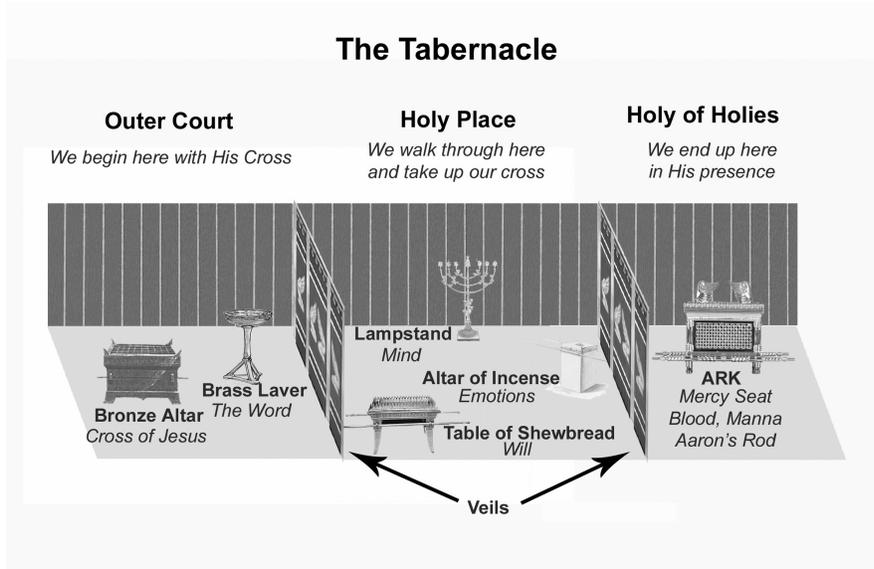
The Tabernacle is a powerful symbol of the two crosses to use as a prayer guide.

It will help us take up our cross and walk us into the very presence of God for FELLOWSHIP!

The following is a quote from God’s Plan and the Overcomers (6) - Watchman Nee.

The Old Testament tells us how the chosen people of God lived on earth. At first, the tabernacle served as the center of the 12 tribes; later it was the temple that became their center. The center of the temple was the ark. The tabernacle, the temple and the ark are all types of Christ. As long as the children of Israel maintained their proper relationship with the tabernacle or the temple they were victorious, and no nation could overcome them. Even though their enemies learned how to fight while they themselves were not familiar with fighting, the children of Israel overcame all their enemies nonetheless. But the moment they had problems with the tabernacle or the temple, they were taken into captivity. Nothing else, whether they had powerful kings or great wisdom in themselves mattered at all; the only concern, which mattered, was whether or not they had offended the ark of the tabernacle or temple. If the Lord had the preeminence, then theirs was the victory. So too with us today. In minding the victory of Christ, we also have the victory.

As you journey into fellowship with God, picture taking a walk through the Tabernacle as the priests of the Old Testament did.



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God’s reason for the Tabernacle was to apply blood in order to restore the Glory of intimate fellowship.

Why is the Tabernacle such an important symbol in restoring intimacy with God

Notice in chart 1 that God and Adam enjoyed fellowship and intimacy before sin entered.

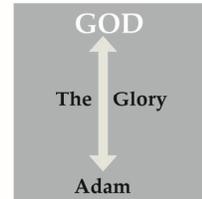
Notice in chart 2 that sin entered, the Glory of Fellowship was broken. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

It required blood to bridge the broken fellowship, forgiveness of our sin. This is the value of forgiveness.

The two courts, the Outer Court and the Holy Place represent His Cross and our cross, the blood of both parties.

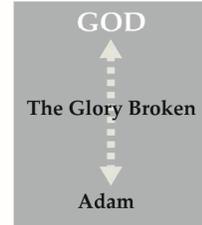
“There will I meet thee, and I will commune with thee from above and mercy seat, from between the two cherubin which are upon the ark of the testimony.” (Exodus 25:22)

(CHART 1)



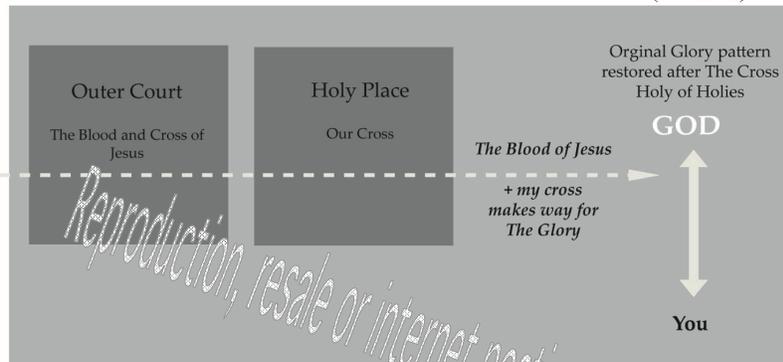
The Glory Pattern after the sin. All fall short of the Glory of God

(CHART 2)



The Tabernacle added two chambers to restore the Glory through the blood.

(CHART 3)



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First: His Cross

Under the Old Covenant, Israel held an annual day of atonement, called Yom Kippur. The sins of Israel were to be dealt with on this one day of the year when the high priest prepared to go through the Tabernacle on behalf of Israel for their sins.

At the Bronze Altar, in the outer court, there were two young goats called calves. One was given a scarlet cloth around its neck indicating it would be slain for blood. The other was tied up outside the gate indicating it was to be the scapegoat. The first goat was slain at the altar and the priest took its blood into the Holy of Holies, where he presented it with incense off the altar of incense (the place of praise). As the incense burned, it filled the Holy of Holies with smoke, which represented (and actually released) the presence of God. The priest would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat once and in front of it seven times. Outside, every person in the camp lay prostrate through all of this. No one saw any of it happening, yet it meant that his or her sins would be forgiven for the entire year.

Next, as the priest returned and changed his clothes, he laid his hands on the head of the other goat, the scapegoat, symbolizing the transfer of all of the sins to the head of the animal. There was to be a very rugged man chosen to take the scapegoat into the desert wilderness and lead it to a place from which it could not return. He would take it to an inescapable place. They would go to a valley surrounded by ledges and cliffs and the goat was lowered down so it could never escape (Leviticus 16:21-22).

Now as the priest laid hands on the scapegoat, beginning the second part of the ceremony he confessed the sins of the entire Israel. He would say, “Lord, place my sins and the sins of the people on the head of this goat. Now go and depart.” As they led the goat out of the camp, all of the people stood and rejoiced. They could all see and understand, even the children. The scapegoat is symbolic of Jesus being our scapegoat, being lowered into Hell for us with our sins on His head. He took our sin and removed it forever, never again to be found or to return.

Psalm 103:12 says,

12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Micah 7:19b (KJV) says,

19b “...that thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

Hebrews 9:12-14 (KJV) says,

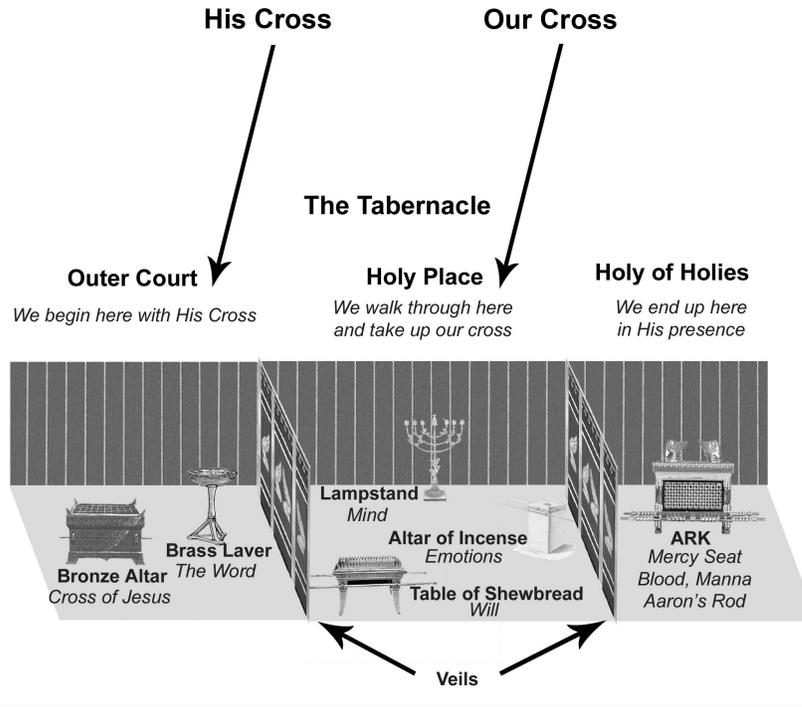
12 “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

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Second: Our Cross



When Jesus said that we must deny ourselves, lose our life for His sake etc., He was using a word that refers to our soul. So we must deny, or say *no* to, our soul.

Our soul is three parts: will, mind (intellect) and emotions.
The Holy Place represents that part of our being, the soul. It has three pieces of furniture that represent our Will, Mind and Emotions (see above picture). Saying *no* to these and yes to what God has is the taking up of our cross.

Our will -
Our mind -
Our emotions -
are attacked by Our Flesh, the World, and Satan.

What is taking up your cross all about?

We teach here in this Flowing River chapter that we need to “take up our cross” in order to realize the Glory of God, His presence in our own personal lives.

In the Garden of Eden Eve thought that she could have both the Glory of God and independence. She did not believe that taking the path to independence, The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, would lead to such a tragic end. In doing so she would not only lose the Glory of God in her life, but she would enter a realm that she had never agreed to specifically. That realm is what the Bible calls the world system, the Whore of Babylon, the evil woman as described in Proverbs 7.

God told her if she ate of her own independence that she would die, or literally be separated from God. She did not realize what that really meant.

She had not experienced the dead end of the world’s way. She thought God had lied, and that gave her insecurity.

2 Corinthians 11:3 says,

3 “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

Eve had the total Glory of God and yet was tempted away. That shows that the temptation, the lie, is very strong for you and for me. Often it takes our experience of the failure of the World’s way in order to value Jesus just for Who He is, and do whatever is needed to prepare for His Glory in our lives.

We need to understand that our independence by default takes us to the Whore, the world. There is no other choice except for God. We are deceived because we don’t know that independence takes us right into the arms of the Harlot.

The Harlot is spoken about in Proverbs 7. It shows how the World, the Harlot, entices people. Then compare that to Proverbs 8 which talks about Wisdom, which is Jesus Himself and how He lures people.

When I saw Jesus in 1979 I already knew that there was nothing in the way of the World that was of any value. I saw that

nothing in the World’s system works. I was in bondage to it and controlled by it.

Taking up our cross really means agreeing to God’s ways especially if they are painful and not comfortable at the time, but knowing that it will lead to our benefit, our abundant life and to God’s eternal purpose for us and His Kingdom.

Can we really take up our cross without help? We can only take up our cross to a point, but not all the way. We don’t have enough hands to crucify all of ourselves; the last nail must be inserted by the world. We must experience some sort of pain and breaking to really get the job done. God does not do this, the world does. We can offer to God those things that we control, those things that we are aware of. However, God sees with vision we do not have. He knows those things in your soul that are keeping you from complete healing and connection with Him. The more of you that can die, the more of Him can live in you. His plan is not to clean up your old life, but to have you experience the crucifixion with Him.

Now we will take a journey to each of these items in our prayer time and journey right past our enemies into the very presence of God!

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**“The Flowing River”
(Daily Prayer Guide)**

T o J o u r n e y I n t o
T h e P r e s e n c e o f G o d

Instructions:

1. First, read the first 7 pages, then re-read them again at least once a month. Then, start here on this page on a daily basis, taking at least twenty minutes to make contact with God.

2. When you start through the tabernacle your back is to be toward the world and your face toward Jesus. This is important, for the Holy Spirit will not honor you with His presence if you are facing in the wrong direction (spiritual direction, Acts 26:18).

3. Go to each “stop” and deal with that subject in prayer with the Lord. Look up some of the Scriptures. Be alert for areas of repentance, for this is one of our main contributions toward this fellowship time with God.

4. It is preferred that you go through all these stops at one time. You can do it in *twenty minutes*. However, if you do not have time in one sitting to go through this entire process, do not give up. Instead, begin the process in the morning, and go through at least one step. Then, do the next one at lunch. If you need to go ahead and continue the next day. Eventually, live a life of this process and it will be a natural process of always staying in His presence.

The Outer Court

First Stop: The Bronze Altar – The Cross of Jesus.

Brazen Altar

Forgiveness.

The blood covenant swaps everything that we have that is bad for everything that God has that is good. However, we cannot have forgiveness of sins without making Jesus Lord (Romans 10:9-10).

Start out today by being honest with Jesus.

1 John 1:9 says,

9 “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

A big part of taking up your cross is being GUT-LEVEL HONEST with God. You need to be totally transparent and tell Him everything. Take time to pour out your heart to him as you would your best friend!

1 John 1:7 says,

7 “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Jesus said in John 3:19 that sin had no power as long as people came out into the light with the truth, and did not attempt to hide in darkness. Jesus did not die for our excuses; He died for our sin!

Relationship Disciplines and Skills.

Here are some relationship disciplines that we feel are extremely important if you are going to pursue an authentic relationship with the Lord Jesus.

God is inviting you to discipline your life to relate to Him and get to know Him. This is how the blood covenant blessings flow into your life:

1. Make a firm decision to pursue the relationship. Offer yourself completely to God (Romans 12:1-2). This is our blood covenant response to a mighty blood covenant offered to us by God.

2. Take time to listen. You must take in His Word. Words are blood covenant containers. You must always be in a

disciplined Bible study of some kind. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you.

3. Take time to talk. Speak your words. Some people write down their thoughts and feelings in a journal, which can be very valuable. If you have never taken time to be honest with God, you should write down your thoughts, emotions and feelings daily in a journal. You will see God speak back to you! Be gut-level honest. Honesty with your blood covenant partner Jesus will cause your sin to go on Him. You cannot and will not overcome any bondage without this gut-level honesty.

4. Take time to talk. Speak His Words. Read Psalms and Proverbs by the day. One discipline is to read aloud five Psalms every morning. Use the system of the calendar. As an example, on the 24th of the month read Psalms 24, 54, 84, 114 and 144. Also read Proverbs 24. In this system the student will read all Psalms and Proverbs every month. Using this system renews the mind, speaks the Word to Satan, and allows the suffering believer to relate his/her emotions to the Psalmist’s. Provisions can be made for months with 31 days, and for Psalm 119. God may lead you to other Scriptures to read out loud as you progress, but this is a good start, and can be a continued blessing for the rest of your life.

5. Obey God. Ask God to give you something simple, something small every day that you may obey. It may be just encouraging another. It may be not driving down the same street that fed your addiction. It may be confessing your sin to Him.

This is a big thing!

John 14:21-23 says that when we obey His Word that He will reveal more and more of Himself to us. Once you have “seen” Jesus, your relationship with Him will no longer be a discipline, but it will be a passionate pursuit. The apostle Paul had this passion when he said in Philippians 3:10 (Amplified Bible), “[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over

believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope].”

6. Communion. Take communion on a regular basis. Many people take it daily.

7. Stay in fellowship. It is important to be in fellowship with strong Bible-believing, Spirit-filled believers for refreshing and encouragement.

You need to walk in love, and when you fail, run to God to be cleansed.

Romans 8:2 says,

2 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

If we stay turned toward God and stay honest with Him, He will see us through even in our mistakes and stumbling.

Look at the Flowing River Appendix F and give yourself an honest evaluation. If there are no known sins then confess Galatians 2:20 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

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Appendix F
A Spiritual Check-up.

- **Love** – Are you treating others with the unconditional love of God?
- **Selfishness** – Putting your own needs over the needs of others. Love is concerned with the welfare of the other person; are you more concerned with yourself and how you feel?
- **Stealing** – Can you remember taking money for property that was not yours?
- **Cheating** – Did you get anything from anyone unfairly?
- **Lying** – Any designed form of deception.
- **Slander** – Speaking evil of someone. You do not have to lie to slander. Have you spoken about others without love?
- **Immorality** – Are you guilty of stirring up desires that you could not righteously feed? Sexual vice, all impurity, even against your own body.
- **Drunkenness**, drugs sorcery, carousing.
- **Foul or polluted language**, evil words, unwholesome or worthless talk. Filthiness, foolish, silly, and corrupt talk.
- **Envy** – Behind the talk of other’s failures and faults usually lurks envy.
- **Ingratitude** – How many times have others done things for you that you are not grateful for?
- **Anger** – Have you been bad-tempered?
- **Cursing** – Have you used gutter language?
- **Needless silly talk.** Talking and acting like a moron. Jests and practical jokes that tend to undermine the sacred and precious standards of life. Have you made fun of an ethnic group or a certain part of the world, a state or region in your country, or some politician? Ethnic and regional jokes have no place in holiness.
- **Hardness** – Did you fight back, murmur or return evil for evil?

- **Habits** – Have you continually over-indulged natural appetites; how about your eating habits?
- **Half-heartedness** – Can you remember times when you deliberately shirked your full share of responsibility?
- **Hindrance** – Have you destroyed another’s confidence in you by needlessly taking up their time? Have you betrayed another’s confidence in you?
- **Hypocrisy** – Did the life you lived before some people make all you said of Christ and His gospel a lie?
- **Broken Vows** – Is there a vow you made to God that you have not kept?
- **Unforgiveness** – Are you holding any resentment against anyone, friend or foe?
- **Divisions**, clicks, the party spirit of having differing groups.
- **Lustful**, rich and wasteful living, greediness. Overspending on shopping, wasting time.
- **Not treating** wives, husbands, children, and parents with love and honor.
- **Not being content**, being jealous of what others have and you do not have.
- **Love of money** – A person without any money can still have the love of money.
- **Idolatry** – Any desire in your life above your desire for God.
- **Strife** – Have you stirred up strife by unneeded words?
- **Witchcraft** – Manipulating another to meet your needs.
- **Rebellion to authority** – Boss, teacher, parent, spiritual leader, etc.
- **Love of the World** – Includes: Sins of the eyes - What are you reading or watching? Lust of the flesh - What are you desiring? Pride of life - What part of your life do you think you can handle without God being involved? - Pretending in thought or life to be more or less than you really ARE.
- **Pride** is the greatest sin of all. Examine these areas:
 - Do you focus on the failure of others or are you concerned with your own sense of spiritual need?

- Are you self-righteous and critical or compassionate and forgiving, looking for the best in others?
- Do you look down on others or esteem all others better than yourself?
- Are you independent and self-sufficient or dependent, recognizing your need for others?
- Must you maintain control or do you surrender control?
- Do you have to prove you are correct, or are you willing to yield the right to be correct?
- Do you have a demanding spirit or a giving spirit?
- Do you desire to be served or are you motivated to serve others?
- Do you desire to be promoted or are you happy when others are promoted?
- Do you need to receive the credit or are you happy when others are recognized?
- Do you feel confident in how much you know or are you humbled by how much you have yet to learn?
- Are you self-conscious or not concerned with yourself at all?
- Do you keep people at arm’s length or do you risk getting close to others. Are you willing to take the risk of loving intimately?
- Are you quick to blame others or do you accept responsibility?
- Are you unapproachable or easy to be entreated?
- Are you defensive when criticized or receive criticism with a humble and open heart?
- Are you concerned with being respected or being real?
- Are you concerned about what others think or what God thinks?
- Do you work to maintain your image or do you die to your reputation?
- Do you find it difficult to share your spiritual needs with others or are you willing to be open and transparent?

- Do you try to hide your sin or are you willing to be exposed when you are wrong?
- Do you have a hard time saying, “I was wrong, will you please forgive me?”
- When confessing sin, do you deal in generalities or do you deal in specifics?
- Are you remorseful over your sin when you get caught or are you grieved over your sin and quick to repent?
- When there is a misunderstanding or conflict, do you wait for others to come and ask forgiveness or do you take the initiative?
- Do you compare yourself with others and feel deserving of honor or do you compare yourself to the holiness of God and feel a desperate need for mercy?
- Do you think you have little or nothing to repent for or do you have a continual attitude of repentance.
- Do you think that everyone else needs revival or do you continually sense a need for a fresh encounter with the filling of the Holy Spirit?
- Are you proud when you are around a new Christian or do you delight in his/her zeal? Are you willing to learn from him/her?
- Are you intimidated when you are around a more mature Christian, or are you hungry to learn from his/her experience?

Surgery needed?

If the Holy Spirit shows us sin, we must go back to the place where the Lord first met us. It is the Cross again. We see the Lord Jesus once crucified for that sin, bearing our penalty.

A line of blood trickles down from The Cross’ splintered base. The sight should shock and grieve us because we see the awfulness of God’s judgment. We need to understand that all of God’s wrath and judgment was put on Jesus at the Cross.

Jesus is waiting there for us, not to condemn us, but happy to have us come to the Cross to give Him our sin. So many Christians run from God in shame and guilt when they discover

sin. Past sins, mistakes and bad decisions, if left unchecked, will block God’s presence from you.

God wants you to grow up and learn and not make the same mistakes again, however, bringing you into His presence without shame and guilt is extremely important to Him. That is the only way you can glorify God and be free from all bondages. Romans 8:1-2 says that there is indeed the Law of sin and death. What you sow is what you will reap. The law of sowing and reaping is absolute for the good seed, however, for the bad seed there is a remedy. That remedy is the Law of the Spirit of Life, which nullifies the Law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-4 says,

1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

God’s remedy for sin is to come to the Cross, come to the Holy of Holies into His presence and let His character flood your character. His holiness will replace your sin. This is the only remedy. We cannot do it ourselves. It is the displacement method. We do not empty out our sin, God floods us with His holiness and love and the sin must leave. Do not be discouraged if you have to do this time and time again. God is not the one who condemns, Satan is. God will take you back as many times as you come. When you stop coming is when He is grieved.

Walk out into the light of reality. Drop your self-deceit and face this sin for what it really is. Turn from it, from your heart. Take sides with God against it. Purpose in your heart NEVER to go back into that sin again.

Confession:

1 John 1:9 says,

9 *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Psalm 103:8-12 says,

8 *“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

9 *He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever;*

10 *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.*

11 *For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;*

12 *as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*

Forgiveness is not the same as excusing. Forgiveness is a strong word that means to cut away and remove like a surgeon cuts out a cancer. Forgiveness of sin means that the sin is removed from you and put on Jesus who bore it on the Cross. We do not excuse a wrong done to us. That would not be right. However, we do forgive it, we take it off of the person and put it on Jesus.

Confession is agreeing with how God sees the matter and speaking it with your mouth. Confession is not just saying it, confession includes being in agreement with the Word. Humility is admitting you are wrong.

Will you do this now? Will you go to your gracious and loving Father as a little child and humbly ask His forgiveness and confess your sin?

“Oh God, You know my foolishness, and my sin is not hid from You... for Your Name’s sake, pardon my iniquity, for it is great... If you, Lord, would mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

Oh God, my Father, I come to you to confess my sin(s) of:
(Now list and confess them.)

Your Word says that these acts and/or these attitudes are sin, and I hereby agree with Your Word. I call this sin what it is. I make no excuses for it. I no longer want to hold this sin in my spirit, soul, and body. I want to get it out and expel it. It is separating me from You. It is destroying me. I want to be healed in spirit, soul, and body, and I want to be close to you. I accept your forgiveness. Thank you for putting this sin on Jesus, and thank you that He took it to His Cross for me. I know I do not deserve this exchange, but I am so thankful to be free.”

Restitution is the willingness to pay back or restore wherever possible. If you are now forgiven before the Lord, are you ready to ask Him for the courage to confess and restore to others you have wronged? Your conscience must be clean before both God AND man if you want to know true freedom. You cannot stand for God with a dirty past in other’s eyes.

Memories of your failure in their eyes will drive you deeper into bondage each time you remember them. If you have not asked their forgiveness, your guilt will kill your faith and rob you of direction and purpose. You will not, of course, have to confess every sin to everyone; just the sins committed against the ones you know you have wronged.

The rule: The circle of confession should only go as far as the circle of committal. Those sins against God alone, you have left with His loving forgetfulness (Psalm 103:8-13; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34). Those against God and man must be made right with BOTH God and the person(s) wronged.

Portions of this Appendix F were taken from Winkie Pratney’s tracts published on the World Wide Web, used with permission.

Second Stop: The Laver – The Word of God.

Brass Laver

Now that our conscience is clear and we can make contact with God, let’s get into the Word.

The Word says that the priest would die if he tried to get into the Holy Place without stopping at the Laver. We cannot proceed into God’s presence without being cleansed by the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26-27).

The Laver will cleanse us from the filth of the world. It will also be a mirror to judge us; it will bring things to our mind that we need to get right with God. The Word will renew our mind so that we can think spiritually and stand against the words that demons speak into our minds.

The Word also tells us that Satan is judged (John 16:11). Be sure to say this out loud, “Satan you have been judged a loser!”

Spend an abundant amount of time in the Word!

- a. Use your devotion book.
- b. Use your ISOB or other Bible study book.
- c. Read the Proverb for today.
- d. Read one or more Psalms.
- e. Read other books about the Bible, or just read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to interpret. Read through the Bible in a year’s time.
- f. Listen to some teaching or music tapes that have the Word.

Third Stop: The First Veil – Thanksgiving.

First Veil: Thanksgiving

Come into His gates with Thanksgiving, into His courts with Praise.

Now that you have been in the Word, you know you are right with God, Satan is judged. You have a lot to be thankful for! Even if you do not have things around you to be thankful for, try to find some. Thank Him that you are saved and going to Heaven.

Just thank Him for what the Word says. Thank Him because the Word says to and because you know you have

giving

victory if you hang on. Thank Him for the promises that He made to you that have not come into your life as yet. Thank Him because you know that He wants to take all of unfavorable circumstances in your life and turn them into something beautiful. Thanking Him is a major relationship skill. Children always stay in better relationship with their parents when they are grateful as opposed to always begging and complaining.

Fourth Stop: The Table of Shewbread – Your Will.

Table of Shewbread

The next Stop is inside the Holy Place. This is where you give Jesus your will for His will, your mind for His mind, your emotions for His emotions. This is taking up your cross, denying yourself and following Jesus (Luke 9:23). Only you can tell God to take all of your heart, He will not violate your will. He needs to hear you tell Him about the things of your will that you are surrendering to Him.

Exchange the desires of your heart (even if they may be good) for God’s plan or will for your life. Lay down your wants, desires and plans and ask God for His.

God is continually looking at our will; that is what Shewbread means. Bread is ground up flour, mixed with oil and baked in the fire. Our will and our desires must be continually offered up to the altar to be ground and burned. This is a very special sacrifice to God, for it is *our* will, and He will not overwhelm, nor control us. Offer your body a living sacrifice, so that we may prove that perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

Make up your mind to forgive even if you do not feel like it.

This is an opportunity to repent, to turn from the paths and ways of the world toward God’s paths. When we turn, we get the power of God (Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 3:16).

Exchange the lusts of the flesh for the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:19-23).

Fifth Stop: The Golden Lampstand – Your mind.

Golden Lampstand

Exchange your old thoughts for the mind of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 tells us the warfare is in our mind. It tells us that strongholds are our reasonings that hold captive our thoughts, and these thoughts keep us from the true knowledge of God. There is much to be said here because our thoughts are the very core of our being. We must set our thoughts free! How? When we were slaves to sin, we used the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is our reasoning. Now we should be using the Tree of Life, which is the Word of God. I no longer think and decide, but I use my mind for its’ God-given purpose, and that is to listen and obey! This alone will destroy the strongholds in our minds. When we truly see the Glory of God as Paul did on the road to Damascus, we no longer reason, we simply say, “Lord, what do you desire for me to do.” Take your negative thoughts captive by bringing them honestly to the Cross; giving them to Jesus as something you do not want. This is powerful!

Demons constantly accuse us and bombard our minds with half-truths. Isaiah 11 tells us that God replaces our natural intellect with that of the Holy Spirit: i.e., Spirit of The Lord, knowledge, counsel, wisdom, understanding, might and fear of the Lord.

We need to get our mind renewed by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Romans 12:2). Sometimes our intellect does not know how to pray. Romans 8:26 says we should use our prayer language to pray God’s perfect will. Every time you use your prayer language, you are praying out God’s Word and God’s will. Your speech center dominates the entire brain, so your mind is being renewed and smoothed out to tell your flesh to conform to God’s will.

The Helmet of Salvation. Our brain needs salvation from cleverness, from allowing our mind and intellect to take God’s place in our lives. Without this, we will never walk in God’s

perfect will for our lives (Romans 12:1-2). More often than not, this is not something that we can or will voluntarily give up. Usually it takes a “breaking,” a set of circumstances that take us beyond what our brain can negotiate and/or solve. Only then can we quietly wait on God for Him to speak and be silent while He works out our lives.

The Lampstand traditionally represents testimony. We should utilize our intellectual powers to speak God’s Word as a testimony to the enemy.

Sixth Stop: The Altar of Incense – Your Emotions.

Altar of Incense

Exchange your old emotions, induced by your flesh and the World, for God’s fruit of peace, joy, love, hope, etc.

This is the place of a sacrifice of praise. Read Psalms 145-150 out loud if you do not *feel* the praise in your heart. God is seeking those who worship Him in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). From this point of praise, God will seek you and desire your company!

Give Him those emotions that you have been holding back; perhaps your tears, maybe the raising of your hands, or perhaps just revealing to Him your true emotions. Go ahead, no one is looking except Him!

In front of this altar is the thick veil that hides the Holy of Holies and the presence of God. God wants you to come through the veil more than you desire to. He will pull you through. No natural man could go here without dying.

This veil tore from top to bottom when Jesus died on the Cross, giving us entry into God’s presence by His blood and indicating that His death removed the obstacle that sin created for coming into the very presence of God. Praise Him for this fact.

The Holy of Holies is the place where there is no light except for God. The High Priest could only go here once a year, and only under certain conditions. The incense censor from this

altar actually went into the Holy of Holies with the High Priest once a year. This symbolizes that your praise and worship do not stop here but that they are the entry into His presence, and they go with us.

Your Spirit: The Ark of the Covenant – God’s presence.

Ark of the Covenant

Your destination: Now God pulls you through the veil into the Holy of Holies – The very presence of God.

Here is the Ark of the Covenant. It is covered by the Mercy Seat that is sprinkled with blood. We needed mercy at the Bronze Altar, the Cross, in the very beginning. However, now in His presence is a new dimension of realizing His mercy and the blood of Jesus in a way that only the Holy Spirit can show you. His mercy endures forever. It is almost impossible to write about, it must be experienced. This is when the seed of the Word is planted in your heart. When the Word of God is anointed by the presence of the Holy Spirit, it is powerful!

On either side are huge angels protecting everything. There is no light in here at all, except for the Light of God.

Remember, the Ark of the Covenant is now in our heart! It is no longer an external thing. We are the Temple of God. Meditate on that.

1 Corinthians 3:16 says,

16 “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

The Ark contents symbolize three main things:

The manna, or the Word of God: When you are in God’s presence, the revealed Word of God comes alive! The Bible becomes Scriptures, the Scriptures become the Word, and the Word becomes flesh. The Word is now in you! If you have time, this is a great place to open your Bible and let the Lord speak. Manna also speaks of our provisions. All of our

provisions, love, security and significance are already inside of us. This includes everything we need for life and godliness. Fruit for our provisions here on earth is provided by God’s Word (2 Peter 1:1-11).

Tablets of Law: This is a precious reminder that the Law of God is written on our hearts. It is no longer a list of do’s and don’ts.

Aaron’s Rod: This signifies our anointed ministry to be workers and prayer warriors for God. There were 12 broken almond rods placed in the Temple at God’s command. The one, that would supernaturally bud during the night, would be the one whose owner would be God’s appointed minister. Only God has our ministry for us, and we only realize what it is when we are in His presence (Numbers 17:8).

Here is where we can really receive the promises of God in His Word. When we receive them here, we know that we will have them!

Philippians 4:19 says,

19 “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Here you are in Glory! Here are all the riches of Heaven waiting for you.

Begin to thank God that these three things are not just in front of you, but they are *in* you. Not only are they *in* you, but also the blood and mercy seat and angels are protecting you with them. Psalm 91 says that the angels protect you in your way of service and obedience.

Now you are equipped to be a real intercessor. You are sharing in the High Priestly ministry of Jesus and praying for others effectively. Jesus said in John 15:7, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

Taking up your cross brings fruit.

God’s presence for fellowship is not the only reason for taking up your cross to come into the Holy of Holies, but it accomplishes another very powerful thing.

It activates God’s fruit within you for supernatural activities in your life and in your realm of influence. Notice, in the Ark, the three potential items of fruit: fruit of character, fruit for provisions, and fruit for influencing your realm for the Kingdom of God, ministry. When you deny your old self, refuse the path that Adam and Eve chose which led to the World’s system, you will discover all three types of fruit become manifested in your life.

This would be a great time to just sit back and bask in the presence of God.

Once you have gone through the Tabernacle as we have described, take some time here to be quiet and enjoy being with Him. You do not even have to talk. God enjoys this, and you will too. This is what this lesson is all about, coming into the presence of God! Stop and enjoy God.

Determine that you will practice the presence of God on a daily basis. It is the main ingredient for victory in this life and the next.

We have covered a lot of ground on the subject of faith. I would like to give you one thing to commit to your memory about this subject.

Hearing God speak to you personally is the only thing that will produce faith and therefore an abundant life. This comes only to the person who:

1. Understands that he/she is weak without God’s faith.
2. Disciplines his/her life to take the time and effort to make contact with God on a regular basis every day.

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Endnotes

ⁱ When the term *dictionary* is used, it is referring to the Microsoft dictionary utilized in the software Microsoft Word.

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