

PLUG IN

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Plug Into Growth

*Teacher Edition
Melanie Stone*

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Before we can grow in the Lord and live a victorious Christian life, we must first recognize that our relationship with God has been made possible through the righteous position we have through Christ Jesus.

I. Our original position

A. God is our life

God created us to know Him and find our life in Him.

Genesis 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

Isaiah 43:7 "...whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

Acts 17:28 "In Him we live and move and have our being..."

B. God is upright

God is good. God created us to know what is good. If Adam had not disobeyed God, we never would have known what is evil.

God is the author of life. He sets the standard for what is right.

1 Peter 1:15 "...be holy, for I am holy."

C. We were positioned in relationship with God

Adam and Eve were in a relationship with God. They heard His voice and they knew His presence (Genesis 3:8).

God created the human race as spirit beings, children that could know Him and be known by Him. God created men and women to hear His voice and enjoy His presence.

Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."

II. Our position was lost

A. Sin of self-sufficiency

1. God gave Adam the choice to obey or disobey

Genesis 2:15-17

2. Satan cast doubt on God's character

Genesis 3:5

The lie about God: He wants to control you.

The lie about you: You can be in control.

Much of the problems people face today are centered around the issue of control. It can be difficult to trust the Lord and turn over our lives for those who are guarding themselves against the fear of control, past hurts and disappointments, or failures.

3. Adam chose to disobey God

Genesis 3:6

B. Turning away from life

To turn away from God is to turn away from life. Spiritual death is a result of being separated from God. Sin caused a separation between God and the human race.

Isaiah 59:2 "But your iniquities have separated you from your God."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death..."

Being separated from God has brought a curse to the earth we live in (Genesis 3:17, 18). Sin and death have corrupted the world and everything in it (Romans 8:21,22).

Included in life are things to enjoy such as joy, peace, contentment, comfort, confidence, wisdom, healing, and provision. Separation from life has brought pain, depression, loneliness, fear, guilt, shame, sickness, and lack (Deuteronomy 28).

God completes us. God makes us whole. Apart from God we are found wanting. We can try and try, but what we have is never enough to satisfy the need for God that we have in our hearts.

C. The fallen position of the human race

Being separated from God changed the position of the entire human race. You were born into a fallen position.

Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men..."

Psalms 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

The nature of our spirit was sinful and dead to God. Even if we tried to be righteous, we couldn't because of our separated position from God. One definition of sin is to "miss the mark" as if you were aiming for a target and didn't hit it. God even gave the Israelites a list of rules called the Law to show them that they couldn't possibly keep them all.

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

III. Jesus took our position

A. God wanted our relationship with Him to be restored

John 3:16 "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."

B. God sent His Son to become a human to be our sacrifice

Jesus was born into the human race, but God was His father. He was without sin and His spirit nature was uncorrupted.

Philippians 2:5-8

C. Jesus took the sin of the world and died our death

Colossians 2:13-15 "13) And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all the trespasses. 14) having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15) Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."

D. God raised Jesus from the dead.

Romans 5:17 "For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one (Adam), much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

IV. Our position has been restored

A. Jesus made the way

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Salvation is not deserved and cannot be earned. You have no control in the deal. You can only surrender yourself and receive the free gift God has for you.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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

B. We are reconciled to God

1. We hear of God's love and choose to trust Him

God wants us to willingly surrender our lives to His loving care. We do not need to fear being manipulated by God. We do not need to fear that He will not do what is best for our lives.

1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment (punishment). But he who fears has not been made perfect (mature) in love."

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

2. We acknowledge our sin

God wants us to acknowledge our iniquity so that we can receive His forgiveness. We can't blame anyone or anything for the condition we are in.

There is no sin too big for God to forgive.

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

1 Peter 3:9 "... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

3. We recognize our need for a Savior and ask for forgiveness

We must understand that we do not have what it takes to be good enough for God. We must stop trying to fix ourselves or attempting to make a good presentation of ourselves to God to find acceptance. We cannot control God's love for us. We cannot get His attention through good works. We cannot buy His love.

Romans 10:9 "...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."

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

4. We surrender our lives and return to the Lord in dependency

God will never force Himself on a person. He still gives us the opportunity to choose whether we will receive Him or not. This applies not only to salvation, but also to our continuing relationship with the Lord.

Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

C. Our spirit is changed

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

II Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

When we return to the Lord, He restores life to our spirit.

D. We are positioned together with Christ

Ephesians 2:4-6 "4) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5) even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 6) and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

We have been seated in a position of being right with God. We are in a position to receive what God wants us to have. We are in a position to do what God wants us to do. We are in a position to be what God wants us to be.

I. Spiritual Maturity

The church is filled with people who have had a salvation experience, but they are all at different levels of spiritual maturity. Spiritual growth is not determined by the years you have been saved or by the age you are when you first receive Christ. We develop as Christians as we become more like Christ.

A. God continues to show grace to the Christian

It's important to realize that becoming a Christian does not mean that you are expected to be perfect. You should know that the people you go to church with are not perfect. Your church leaders have not arrived at perfection. Only God is perfect. Spiritual growth is for everyone.

God knows that we continue to need His help to live the Christian life. There is grace and forgiveness for the Christian.

II Corinthians 12:9 ..."My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

B. Spiritual growth is a process

Once we have received salvation, God wants us to begin to grow spiritually. Becoming a mature Christian does not happen overnight.

When we are first saved, we are like a young child, a person who is growing to become like their parents. God is our father and we are becoming more like Him. When we begin to become more like God, we will begin to have His character, to have His desires, to have His wisdom, to have strength to make the right decisions. It is a process of maturing – a process of growing stronger spiritually (Galatians 4:19).

II Peter 3:18 "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..."

I Corinthians 3:1; Hebrews 5:12 – 6:3

C. There are tremendous benefits to spiritual growth.

There is a great joy and satisfaction in having a close relationship with God. There are blessings for the person who has grown in the strength of holiness. There is tremendous power available to the Christian who has come to understand and experience the Holy Spirit.

II. Characteristics of a Mature Christian

When Christians mature, we become more like God and begin to take on His characteristics. Similar to an adolescent, we don't often see our immaturities until we grow out of them. We think we're strong and independent until we're put through a few hardships. God has a way of letting us go through difficulties to help us see our weaknesses and then to begin to transform us. If we allow God to have His way, we'll come out of our tribulations stronger and more mature.

1 Peter 5:10 "...may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

James 1:2-4 "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."

An example of a trial could be a situation where you aren't getting what you want or being made to wait before you get your desire. A trial could be people misunderstanding you or criticizing you. The answer to a trial isn't to jump out of the fire, but to allow God to perfect you while you are in the middle of it. If you do not endure through difficulties, you may never grow spiritually.

A. A mature Christian will focus on others

A mature Christian has been made whole by God; therefore, they are free to take their eyes off of themselves and consider the needs of others. Mature Christians enjoy helping others. They enjoy serving the Lord, their leaders, and other people.

Matthew 20:26 "...whoever desires to become great..."

Just like a child or young teenager, an immature Christian is self-centered. They can only see things from their point of view. They act as if people and circumstances should revolve around them. Immature Christians find it difficult to serve unless they see how their work will advance them.

Philippians 2:3, 4 "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit...look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

B. A mature Christian is gracious

A mature Christian is gracious. They accept people where they are and love them as they improve. Their attitude is to build people up rather than to tear them down. They are careful not to speak negatively of someone else.

Someone who is spiritually mature is full of God's love, so they aren't easily hurt or offended. Their heart tank is full, so it is not difficult for them to love others out of their overflow. In contrast, an immature Christian has not fully known the wholeness that God's love provides, so they are needy for love, easily hurt and continually offended.

An immature Christian is also judgmental and critical. Because they have not fully received grace, they love to find fault with others and find flaws in someone else's work. They seem to have a need to talk negatively about others, pointing out the imperfections in others. They don't realize their judgments are keeping them even farther apart from God.

Matthew 7:2 "...with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you..."

C. A mature Christian has self-control

Self-control is considered a fruit of the spirit, or a characteristic of someone who is spiritually strong. Someone who has self-control is someone who lives by their spirit, not letting their emotions, reasoning, or physical desires get out of control. The mature Christian is able to maintain self-control because they have yielded their control to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Other characteristics of a mature Christian are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness (*Galatians 5:22, 23*).

Someone who is immature lacks self-control. Their emotions are ruling them. Their actions are based on what they are feeling or thinking at the moment. They can be extremely talkative; feeling a strong urgency to focus on self and to excessively talk about what concerns them. Immature Christians lack self-discipline. They aren't diligent with responsibility.

D. A mature Christian is humble

Humility is a characteristic of surrendering to the Lord and yielding to others. Mature Christians will quickly and easily give themselves to the Lord. A mature Christian does not have a problem working together with others; contributing their ideas, abilities, resources, and strengths for the good of the whole group.

Immature Christians do not know the joy of being dependent on the Lord or the value of being part of a group. They want to be in charge. They come across as thinking they are superior to others. They want people to do things “their way.” They refuse to give in to someone else’s thoughts and suggestions. They also enjoy the attention they get when they feel they have influence. They sometimes attempt to manipulate people or events to get what they want. If they don’t get what they want, they become easily frustrated and may even quit.

E. A mature Christian is confident

A spiritually mature person is confident in their faith in God and in who they are in Christ. They’ve come to know God and trust Him as they’ve experienced His faithfulness through circumstances in life. Their faith has been tested, and they remain standing firm in their relationship with God.

*II Thessalonians 1:3 “...**your faith grows exceedingly**, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.”*

When you are confident in God, He gives you a grace and a tolerance for other Christians who are not as mature. When you are put in a place where you need to bring correction, you can do it without being defensive or argumentative.

A spiritually immature person feels inadequate and insecure. Their focus is on themselves, and they are looking for people to show them acceptance and value. Because they are self-centered, someone who is insecure can also come across as arrogant and competitive. They often will try to shift blame to others when they feel inadequate.

F. A mature Christian is teachable

A mature Christian has grown in wisdom and understanding. An immature Christian is opinionated and is not teachable.

*I Corinthians 2:6 “we speak wisdom **among those who are mature**, yet not the wisdom of this age...”*

G. A mature Christian lives a holy lifestyle

As we grow spiritually stronger, sin doesn’t have control over us, keeping us bound by wrongful desires. As we mature, the desires of God grow stronger inside of us, and we enjoy doing the right thing. A spiritually immature person is easily pulled by temptation. It’s not that the Christian has lost their salvation (dies again spiritually), but they are living far beneath God’s best. Christians that have chosen to allow sin in their lives are hindering their spiritual growth.

Philippians 3:13-15 “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15) Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind...”

III. How to Grow Spiritually

A. Yield to God

The more we struggle within our own strength, the more difficult it is to receive what God has for us. We need to continually turn to the Lord, and ask Him to reveal Himself to us and to develop His character on the inside of us. We should not hold anything back from Him, but to trust His love and allow His Spirit to uncover, restore and strengthen us in every way.

James 4:6 “...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

B. Give time to the Bible

The Bible is God’s Word to us. When we daily give ourselves to it, we grow spiritually.

1 Peter 2:2 “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”

Hearing and believing the Bible are only part of our spiritual growth. We also need to put action to what the Bible says.

James 1:22 “...be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

The Word of God helps us to change the way we think. Right thinking leads to right behavior (*Psalms 119:11*).

Romans 12:1, 2

Guard against false teaching. When you study the Bible and let the Holy Spirit guide you, you will know the truth. When you know the truth, you will be able to recognize what is a counterfeit of truth. Surround yourself with teaching that you can trust.

It might help you to follow a reading plan or to set aside a certain time of day to read the Bible.

C. Give time to prayer

Prayer is about having a relationship with God. You can talk to Him and know that He is listening. You also can be assured that He wants to reveal Himself to you. You can't physically see God with your eyes or hear Him with your ears, but you can know Him and hear Him within your heart.

Jeremiah 33:3 "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

Spending time with God will also allow Him the opportunity to transform you into the image of Christ, growing and maturing day by day.

II Corinthians 3:18

D. Get to know the Holy Spirit

When Jesus left the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He is with you and in you. God gave Him to us so that God could reveal Himself to us.

John 16:13 "...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth..."

E. Participate in church

We are only hurting ourselves if we isolate ourselves from other believers. God has designed for us to be part of a group, something bigger than ourselves. God gave us to one another to strengthen one another. Not only should we get involved in church, but we should also surround ourselves with strong Christian friends.

Hebrews 10:24, 25

God has given us spiritual leaders to care for us so that we can grow up together.

I Peter 5:2-4

A church is a group of people working together to do great things for the kingdom of God. God wants each person to be involved in some part of the ministry.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Life in God gets better and better as we mature and become more like Him!

When we have an encounter with God, we also encounter His love. The love of God cannot be underestimated – it is only the love of God that can make us whole, heal our hurts, draw us close, compel us to step out into the world, and enable us to believe for the impossible.

God's love causes us to recognize our worth. God's love gives us the security of knowing where we belong. God's love removes feelings of guilt and shame so we can receive His embrace. His love melts away fears, calms a restless heart, and satisfies what we're searching for. Everything that God does, He does in love. You cannot separate yourself from the love of God (Romans 8:35).

I. Receiving a New Love

A. God has a different kind of love

1 John 4:8 "...God is love."

If someone tries to understand God's love by relating it to a love they've known on earth, they'll not fully comprehend how great His love is.

Apostle Paul prayed a prayer we should all pray for ourselves – a prayer that we would be filled with all the fullness of God by being able to grasp the width and length and depth and height of God's love. We can experience more of the life God intends for us if we will open our hearts to take in the scope of the love God has for us.

Ephesians 3:14-19.

A description of God's love:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (amplified) "(4) Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. (5) It is not conceited, arrogant, and inflated with pride; it is not rude or unmannerly and does not act unbecomingly. Love, God's love in us, does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it, it pays no attention to a suffered wrong. (6) It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. (7) Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything without weakening. (8) Love never fails, never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end."

B. Your heart has to be receptive

Everyone at some point has experienced some type of hurt or disappointment by another person. Once we've known the heartache of being mistreated or rejected, our natural response is to protect ourselves from letting it happen again. We usually set boundaries for people, only allowing them to come as close to us as we feel we can trust them. If they have wronged us, we continue to stay in control by holding onto their offense as a reminder not to let them get too close to our hearts again.

There are also times when people have felt disappointed in God, whether it seemed like a prayer has gone unanswered or another Christian has let them down or maybe we've failed and feel that we're not good enough for Him. We can easily put ourselves at a distance from God as well, lowering our expectations in Him as to avoid the pain of feeling abandoned by Him.

We put up these boundaries to guard ourselves from further pain, but the very walls that we put up to protect ourselves are also the walls that continue to keep God out of our lives.

Human love usually puts conditions on love, meaning we will only allow ourselves to give or receive love if certain conditions are met, such as, "I will love you as long as you don't hurt me." God's love is unconditional. He loved us while we were still living in rebellion against Him (Romans 5:8). When He sent His Son to die for us, there were no strings attached. He isn't trying to manipulate us. He isn't after the things we own or the talents we possess. He created you simply to love you.

Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Even though God knows that He is the best thing that could ever happen to us, He won't force Himself on us. God does want to have a close relationship with us, so He will come near to us, hoping that we'll allow His presence in our lives.

C. God floods you with His Spirit

Romans 5:5 "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

God's nature is love. God changes our nature to be like His. He mends our brokenness and fills up what we are lacking. God also sends His Spirit of love to surround us and to live in us.

II. Loving God Back

1 John 4:19 "We love Him because He first loved us."

A. God does not want a relationship that is based on obligation

God wants you to want to be with Him. He doesn't want to control you. He doesn't use guilt and shame to manipulate you into a relationship.

B. God does not want a relationship that is based on performance

God wants us to know that He accepts us as we are and will not require us to try to fix ourselves before we can come to Him.

C. God does not want a relationship that is based on fear

God wants you to love Him because He is gracious.

III. Releasing Others

A. We can be forgiven

We all deserve to go to Hell, but we're not getting what we deserve. Jesus took our punishment.

Matthew 18:21-35

It takes humility to receive the free gift of forgiveness. We didn't pay for our sins – Jesus did. We didn't earn our salvation – it was a gift. We need to surrender control in order to receive God's goodness and mercy in our lives.

We need to learn to forgive ourselves. If we can't forgive ourselves, we need to ask the question, "Is the price Jesus paid on the cross not enough for me?"

How can we forgive someone else if we haven't received it for ourselves?

Luke 7:47 "...her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Jesus enjoyed the relationships He had with the forgiven tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes. Why? Because they knew what they were forgiven of.

B. We can be healed

To forgive means “to loose.” When we let go of an offense, we are relinquishing our rights to hold a charge against that person – we are no longer a victim. When we let go of an offense, we are also letting go of a hurt, and hopefully will trust God to heal it. If we don’t let go, God can’t touch it.

C. We can risk letting go of offenses

When God’s love makes you whole, you are complete, lacking nothing. You aren’t depending on a person to complete you – you are healed, you are whole. If someone were to hurt you again, you know the Healer. His love is not only enough to heal you, there is more than enough to overflow onto someone else.

D. If we don’t forgive, we put ourselves in judgment

Matthew 6:14,15 “(14) For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15) But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Remind yourself of what you deserve and what you have been forgiven of. You have to receive God’s love before you can give it away.

Unforgiveness is a worse sin than any other. You are setting yourself in opposition to the work Jesus Christ did on the cross.

If we do not forgive, we are bringing harm to ourselves. Unforgiveness will break our fellowship with God. It will stop the blessings of God from getting to us. It will rob us of our joy and peace. Unforgiveness also gives the enemy access into our lives.

E. Forgiveness is a choice

Forgiveness is a command, not an option. However, God gives you the choice to obey Him or not. You may not feel like forgiving someone, but choose to forgive anyway based on a decision, not an emotion.

Ephesians 4:32 “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Colossians 3:13 “even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

Forgiveness is many times an ongoing process. You may choose to forgive one day, start thinking about it, and build up resentment again.

When we forgive, it is more than just words we say, we are releasing a person in our heart. When we truly forgive someone from the heart, our actions and our thoughts will show it.

1 John 3:18 "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

The love of God doesn't love from a distance. The love of God is aggressive and reaches out.

11 Corinthians 5:14 "the love of Christ compels us."

Compel: "constrain, confine, leaves no option."
I forgive you; His love leaves me no other option.

We are never more like God then when we forgive.

F. God will help us to forgive

It is a sin not to forgive. We need to ask God to forgive us.

We also can ask God to help us forgive, not in our own strength, but with the love He has put in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Many times our own natural love is not enough. We need His love. Forgiveness is supernatural.

Matthew 5:43-45 "...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven..."

The love of God is not selfish, it focuses on the other person. Ask the Lord, "You have blessed me; what can I do to bless this person?"

G. Forgiveness chooses not to remember

When God forgives, He doesn't mention it again. He puts distance between the sin and the person (*Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22, Isaiah 1:18*) When you truly forgive, you choose never to bring up the past ever again.

Faith is a very personal thing between you and God. Faith is more about who you believe in rather than what you believe in. Faith describes your personal relationship with God.

I. Know Who Has Your Heart

A. You can't trust someone until you know them

Is God trustworthy? These are a few of the many characteristics of God.

1. He is loving

1 John 4:7 "...God is love."

2. He is righteous and just

Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He."

3. He is good and merciful

Psalms 106:1 "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

4. He is truthful

Hebrews 6:18 "...it is impossible for God to lie.."

5. He is faithful

2 Timothy 2:13 "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

B. How you can get to know God

1. Read the New Testament

The whole Bible will reveal God's character to us. The New Testament gives a good revelation of the relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ.

2. Experience His presence in prayer and worship

One of the best ways to get to know God is to experience Him for ourselves. As we open up our hearts to Him in prayer and worship we can experience His presence in our lives.

3. Participate in a life-giving church

People are not perfect, so they are not always a perfect example of God's character. However, we can learn about God through Bible-based teaching, the fellowship of mature believers, and participation in outreach and ministry.

Hebrews 13:7 "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."

4. Listen to your heart

You are a spirit being, and in your heart you can know what is true and what is not.

II. Open Your Heart

A. Is it difficult for you to trust?

Fear of being hurt or violated
Fear of being rejected or criticized
Fear of being abandoned or unwanted
Fear of being used or manipulated
Fear of being punished or condemned
Fear of being misunderstood

God's love casts out fear.

1 John 4:18

B. Do you feel the need to be in control?

People feel the need to control when they are afraid to trust.
People feel the need to control when they want their own way.
People feel the need to control when don't want to need anyone else.

C. God knows you need Him

Your life is found in a relationship with the One who created you and loves you. The need you have for Him is not to keep you on a leash, but rather to infuse you with His power, His life; and to give you everything you need.

D. God wants you to trust Him with your life

When we come to God for salvation, we are doing more than asking for forgiveness. We are surrendering control of our lives to His loving care. Our faith is not just a belief for eternal life, but it is also a description of our daily relationship with a God that we earnestly depend upon.

III. Live from your Heart

A. Faith is believing

Faith deals with the realm of the spirit. God is a spirit. You are a spirit. Your relationship with God is a spiritual one. The way you live a life with God is spiritual. The natural realm is described by what you can experience with your mind and body – your intellect, emotions, senses.

The things of the spirit are not normally seen or heard or touched. They aren't scientifically proven; they don't always make sense to reason. We believe that Heaven exists, but we've never been there. How do we know it is real? We know it is real in our hearts, our spirit. Faith believes in things we cannot see.

II Corinthians 5:7 "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

What evidence do we have for the things we believe about God, salvation, Heaven, or the promises God has given us? Our faith is our proof – the knowing we have in our heart that what we believe is right and that what we believe in belongs to us. We just know that we know in our heart. It is our experience, our conviction, our belief, our faith.

Our faith tells us that God's promises are ours right now. When we receive salvation, we received it at that moment, but we aren't in Heaven yet. We received it when we asked for it. Faith believed that we have what we ask for, when we ask for it. The word "evidence" in the Greek has also been translated "title deed" in other documents, meaning our faith is our proof of ownership. It's settled, it's mine. We can be glad, we can have peace, we can prepare for it's arrival.

Faith is different from hope. Hope is for the future; faith is for right now. We don't try to make sense of it, we just know that our Father said we can have His promises, so we receive them. Faith begins where the will of God is known. If God says we can have it, that's enough. That is the confidence that we have. If God has not said it, we can't have that same confidence. When we hear what God wants for us in the Word, we can believe Him for it.

1 John 5:14, 15 “(14) Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

Romans 10:17 (NIV) “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

If you can see it, you don't need to believe for it anymore. It's not just a matter of the heart anymore.

Hebrews 11:6 “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.”

1. You believe that God is able

He can. He can do what you need Him to do for you.

Matthew 19:26 “With God all things are possible.”

Mark 9:23 “All things are possible to him who believes.”

2. You believe that God is willing

He will. He will for you because He loves you.

He wants to meet your needs (*Matthew 6:30*)

He wants to keep you safe (*Matthew 8:26*)

He wants to heal your body (*Matthew 8:10*)

And much more...

B. Faith is trusting

Faith not only believes something to be true, faith also will open up to trust the Lord.

1. Faith opens the heart

When you are in faith, your heart is open, giving God access into your life. Fear, self-sufficiency, and doubt are all examples of things that keep God out. If you refuse to open up to God and all His possibilities, you miss out on knowing Him intimately.

2. Faith is personal

Many people think they are in faith because they believe, but do they really trust? What if you don't understand why things happened the way that they did? What if they don't get what they have believed God to do for them? Do they get disappointed? Do they stop believing?

God loves you as an individual. He is deeply concerned about your trust in Him. He wants you to have a growing, developing, thriving relationship with Him. God wants you to be blessed.

More than the blessing, God wants us to know Him as the giver of the blessing. He's my Healer, my Provider, my Savior, my Redeemer, my Father, my Lord, my Protector, my Deliverer, my Counselor, my Friend, my Brother, my Intercessor, my Resurrection, my Life.

When we realize who He is to us, we are complete. No longer will we look to another person or thing to make us whole. We have found what we've been searching for.

3. Faith rests

God loving you isn't based on you being good enough. Faith doesn't require you to earn God's acceptance and approval. Faith is being real, genuine, and transparent with confidence of God's love. True faith rests in God's love. True faith isn't trying to get God to give you something. True faith will receive what God wants you to have.

4. Faith stands the test

You don't know what you've got until it's tested. You think you would obey Him, but you don't know until you are asked to do it. Faith is more than a classroom experience. Faith has to be experienced. Faith is about living in Him.

Tests bring you to an end of yourself.

Tests show you that you need Him.

Tests show you that you can do nothing without Him.

Tests show you that no one else can be what He is to you.

Testing is to strengthen and establish you in a humble, surrendered relationship with Jesus Christ.

Don't jump out of the fire of testing. Embrace the trials so that you can be purified and developed in your relationship with God. Cling to God through the difficulties (*Deuteronomy 30:20*). Like Jacob, never let Him go (*Genesis 33:25,26*). Like Abraham, grow in your faith when tested (*Romans 4:16-20*).

1 Peter 1:7 "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,"

James 1:3 "...the testing of your faith produces patience."

1 Peter 5:9 "Resist him (Satan), steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

Going through difficulty will prove if you are faithful, or full of faith. If you are full of faith, you are steadfast, you are constant, you are trustworthy.

C. Faith is depending

Faith is more than just believing, more than just trusting; faith is the complete surrender of our life to the Lord. Real faith is an incredible reliance upon God for who He is, giving Him the place of authority in our lives. When we are truly yielded and dependent on God, it will be seen in our active obedience to Him.

An illustration of faith: if you have faith in a chair to hold your weight, you will believe in the chair, you will trust the chair, but you really don't have faith in the chair until you sit in the chair.

Matthew 14:22-31 (Peter walks on water)

Peter didn't just believe, Peter didn't just trust, Peter was dependent on Christ to the point where He would act. He said to Jesus, "If it is you, command me to come out on the water." Jesus said, "Come." Peter stepped out on water. Peter walked on water to go out to Jesus. The winds caused him to fear, and he began to sink. When Jesus lifted him back up out of the water He said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

You don't really have faith in your heart until it is something that you live by. *James 2:14-26 "... faith without works is dead."*

God wants our obedience, not out of obligation, but in loving dependency, falling back into His arms, trusting Him that He has our best interests at heart. It is the greatest life anyone could ever know.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Faith is not something that we do so that we can influence God to work a miracle for us. We are not being dependent upon God if we are trying to manipulate Him into action through our works. Faith is not faith if we are trying to earn a promise by our performance, even if it is through doing good things like speaking the Word, praying and fasting, giving an offering, etc. These are wonderful things, but if they are being used as a tool to earn God's approval, they are being done with the wrong motive. God doesn't have to do anything based on our works. God doesn't owe us anything. We owe God a debt that is impossible to repay. We need to learn to receive by grace.

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

Real faith puts God in the driver's seat. Obedience comes from a yielded heart; works comes from a controlling heart.

Galatians 3:5 "Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Galatians 5:6, II Corinthians 12:9, I Corinthians 2:5

IV. Your Life is Different Now

A. With God you can live with victory over sin

When you are living in dependency upon God, you can live over the power of sin.

I John 5:4 "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."

I Timothy 6:12 "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

II Timothy 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

B. With God you can have fellowship with other believers

II Peter 1:1 "To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:"

Having faith isn't about the belief of one person. Faith is about a relationship with God that we all share and cherish together.

Philippians 1:27 "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,"

Real faith brings unity. True faith brings about the development of one another and meets the needs of one another.

Acts 16:5 "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."

Ephesians 4:13 "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;"

C. With God you can experience miracles

God's power is received by faith. God's power can change your circumstances. Salvation is received by faith. Anything that we have from God must be received by faith, based on His grace.

1. Faith receives

Several times when Jesus worked miracles, Jesus mentioned their miracle was received because of their faith:

The paralytic was healed (*Matthew 9:2*)

A woman was healed (*Matthew 9:22*)

The blind were healed (*Matthew 9:29*)

A daughter was delivered (*Matthew 15:28*)

Acts 3:16; James 5:15

2. Unbelief does not receive

There were also times when miracles were not received, and Jesus said it was because they did not have faith:

Mark 6:5, 6 "Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.(6) And He marveled because of their unbelief..."

Mark 11:12-14; 20-24 disciples could not cast out a devil.

Doubting does not receive.

James 1:6 "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."

Conclusion

Faith is the position your heart is in. If we know Him, believe Him, trust Him, and depend upon Him, we will enjoy the life of faith.

Sin – just hearing the word can make people feel uncomfortable, inadequate, or rejected. Sin carries with it the idea of failure and punishment. When sin is recognized it is usually associated with feelings of shame, guilt, and fear. Every person that has ever been on this earth has been acquainted with sin in some form and in some measure. Every person living and breathing has the potential of making a wrong choice, feeling a wrong desire, or thinking a wrong thought.

Sin separates us from a Holy God, yet God's desire is to have us restored in our relationship with Him. Sin can keep an unbeliever feeling like an outsider. Sin can keep a struggling believer feeling like a failure. Sin can cause any Christian to point out the faults in someone else's life in order to feel better about their own shortcomings.

God wants to help us overcome sin so that we can have a more intimate relationship with Him. God wants us to win over sin so that we can know more of God's blessings in our life. God wants us to have victory over sin so that we can help bring someone else closer to Him.

In this lesson we are going to look at how God's grace can uphold us, how His power can transform us, and how God's love can fill us with His compassion.

I. God Will Never Give Up on You

A. You are God's creation

Why does God love you so much?

You came from Him. Have you ever seen a parent of a young child think for one minute that their child has disappeared? People that have not received salvation are God's missing children. He is looking for them to come home to Him.

Matthew 18:11; Luke 15 (entire chapter)

The value of an object is known by the price someone is willing to pay for it. We can know that each of us has worth to God by the price He paid for us in giving us His Son. God sent Jesus to the earth not only to pay the price for sin with His death, but also to suffer the torment and punishment of those sins. God paid a high price for us, even while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

Isaiah 53:10, 11; John 3:16

B. There is no sin so great that God can't forgive

1. God's grace isn't fair

You do not deserve God's love. None of us do. If we got what we deserved, we would all be destined for hell.

If you think you have to deserve God's love, you are trying to come to God based on your own merit. The only way to come to God is by grace through faith.

Ephesians 2:8, 9

2. Your sin is not greater than God's love

God knows what sin is. There is nothing that you have done, are doing, or will do that could ever surprise Him. There is no thought, imagination, or fantasy that will shock God and cause Him to turn the other way.

3. God will forgive you more than once

Sin can have a hold on a person and won't easily let go. It's like Pharaoh refusing to let go of the Israelite people. Time after time, miracle after miracle, plague after plague, Pharaoh would release the people and then pull them back. Some sin can have the same type of hold.

How long will God continue to forgive? When Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive a Christian brother up to seven times, Jesus answered, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." ¹ If God expects a human being to be so forgiving, imagine how forgiving He can be.

4. Forgiveness should cause us to repent

Should we take advantage of God's grace and continue to sin knowing that God will forgive? Romans 6:1,2 says "Certainly not." As gracious as God is, we should know that sin still has consequences and God will allow consequences for the purpose of bringing us to the end of ourselves. Also, there is no possible way that we can have a close relationship with God and not surrender our lives completely to the Lord. In addition, if we want the blessings and power of God operating in our lives, sin will cut us off from experiencing a greater measure of the glory of God.

¹ Matthew 18:22

II. Everybody Deals With Temptation

A. Get real

1. You are not yet perfect

Even if you have been born again, you are not perfect.

It is still possible for you to become tempted, to make a wrong choice, or to hurt another person. As we spiritually mature, it is important to stay reliant upon God and not develop an attitude of self-sufficiency or pride.

2. You experience unholy desires

You are spirit being, but you also have a soul and a body (I Thessalonians 5:23). If you have received salvation, your spirit was recreated in the image and likeness of God, but your soul and body have not gone through that same transformation. When the Bible refers to the “flesh” it is referring to the parts of you that are not spirit, in other words, your soul and your body. Your flesh still experiences desires that are not holy.

3. You live in a corrupted world

The world we live in has been corrupted by sin. We are surrounded by distortions of what life should be. Wickedness is all around us. When we are born again, we are still in the world, but we are not of it.² Heaven is our home, the place where we belong and one day will be.

4. You have an enemy

The spirit realm is real and God does not want us to be ignorant of it. It is nothing to fear or avoid. God is a spirit. You are a spirit. God has sent us the Holy Spirit. The Bible also makes it very clear that we have a spiritual enemy, Satan. There are also evil spirits, or demons, that are at work in the earth. It sounds like something out of a sci-fi movie, but the spirit realm is something very real. God wants us to be strong in Him and be aware that we have an enemy who wants to pull us away from Him.

1 Peter 5:8, 9 “(8)Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.(9) Resist him, steadfast in the faith...”

² John 17:13-17, James 4:4,5

B. Sin is anything outside of God

Sin is simply anything that is outside of God. God is the author of life and the standard for all that is upright. If it is in God, it is right. If it is outside of God, it is wrong. God is love. Sin is opposite of love; sin is something that damages our relationship with God and with people.

God has given us several ways to know the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

Bible convictions

We know what is right and wrong by reading the Bible (*II Timothy 3:16*).

Heart convictions

We know what is right and wrong in our hearts (*Romans 1:18-21*).

Holy Spirit convictions

The Holy Spirit will let us know if something is right or wrong (*John 16:8*).

Personal convictions

God may ask you to do something specific that He isn't asking of someone else (*James 4:17*).

C. Temptation is something that tries to draw you away from God

James 1:12-14 “(12) Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (13) Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he Himself tempt anyone. (14) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”

The verb “tempt” means “to attract by holding out the probability of gratification or advantage, often in the direction of that which is wrong or unwise.”³

To be tempted means that you are being drawn or pulled to make a wrong choice. God would never try to hurt you or harm you in any way. God loves you and is constantly drawing you closer to Him; not trying to lure you in a direction that is farther away from Him.

It is also sin to be a tempter, someone who is enticing someone else to think a wrong thought, feel a wrong desire, or do a wrong thing. If you love God and love people, you will not want to make them stumble in any way. God sets Himself against anyone that pulls someone farther away from Him. Don't make yourself an enemy to God. Don't work in opposition with the Holy Spirit.

³ Random House Dictionary

James 4:4, 5 “(4) ...do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?”

There is a holy jealousy, a jealousy that God feels for His people (*Exodus 20:5*). It is a jealousy where God wants to protect what belongs to Him. If someone or something is trying to tempt a child of God to pull that person away from God or his family, they are setting themselves against God and against the people that love that person.

D. Sin has consequences

1. Sin can be deceiving

Sin is often times deceptive, meaning it doesn't appear to be as dangerous as it actually is. Sin can begin by temporarily satisfying a carnal desire, but it doesn't satisfy for long. In the end, if you play with fire, someone will be burned. Sin always is followed by destruction.

2. Sin can take time to develop

The enemy is very patient, sometimes spending years getting you into a vulnerable position where you are hurting, lacking, or alone. Stay close to the Lord and you will not be prey to the enemy.

3. Sin is destructive

Sin will hurt you, sin will hurt others, and sin can damage the work God is trying to accomplish through the Church. Sin always is working death – bringing destruction to anyone and anything in its path.

E. You can be restored

1. Be accountable for your choices

If you want to be restored, the first step is to own up to it. Don't blame someone else. Don't make excuses for the wrong choice you made. Take responsibility for your actions.

Jeremiah 3:13 “Only acknowledge your iniquity...”

If you have something in your life that is causing you to act inappropriately, ask God to show you the truth, bring His light on it, and heal it. You need to trust God's love enough to be transparent with Him and let Him see the areas where you are lacking. God has provided all that you need in the cross.

2. Repent and ask God for forgiveness

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When a person repents, they are choosing to turn away from sin and turn back to God.

3. Receive His grace

God's grace is His ability to take us beyond ourselves. What we can't do, He can do. His grace makes up the difference.

4. Cultivate a relationship with God

When we first received Christ, God placed us in a position in His family. He placed us in right standing with Him. From this relationship, God wants us to grow strong in Him.

II Corinthians 5:21

When we receive the nature of God in a recreated spirit, His desires become our desires. As we cultivate our relationship with God, we begin to love what He loves and hate what He hates. As we spend time in the presence of God, His power begins to transform us, and we become more and more like Him.

II Corinthians 3:18

III. How to Win Over Sin

A. Run

The first thing to do when you recognize that you are being tempted, is to separate yourself from the temptation. If you think you can "handle" it yourself, think again. Look for the exit; look for the way of escape, and run for the door.

I Corinthians 10:12 "(12) Therefore let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall. (13) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

A wise Christian will realize that we can't stand in our own strength. Don't allow yourself to be put in a compromising situation. You may need to make some changes in your lifestyle. If someone is pulling you toward a wrong choice, you may have to confront them and tell them your convictions. You may have to cut off some relationships if they are keeping you apart from God.

Watch what you allow into your mind. Guard what you allow yourself to see, hear, and think on. If you have a wrong thought come to mind, start thinking on something else.

Proverbs 4:23 "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

B. Let God see you

Be honest with God. He knows the things you struggle with. Are you willing to trust Him with the things that are pulling at you? Can you pour out your heart and emotions to Him, asking Him for strength?

If you can't be transparent with God, why not? Do you want to let the sin go? Are you ashamed? Are you afraid that God won't approve of you? Let it go and run into the arms of God, asking Him for help in a time of need. `

Matthew 6:13 "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one..."

Psalms 139:23 "Search me O God, and know my heart..."

C. Feed the fires of the right desires

Desires are like fires – the more you feed them, the more they grow. You have desires that are placed in your reborn spirit by the Holy Spirit. You also have desires of the flesh, the part of you that hasn't been recreated – your soul and body. Feed your spirit through things like prayer, Bible study, and church services. Starve the flesh by staying away from things that tempt you.

Galatians 5:16, 17 "(16) I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

Hebrews 3:13

IV. Show people uncompromising love

Unbelievers are not all that different from us. Thank God we've come to know God's love and forgiveness. We should want the same for everyone else. Let's remember what we've been forgiven of. Let's remember the feelings of shame, guilt and fear that we've struggled with. Let's be thankful for the grace that we've freely received.

Since most people fear God's judgment and the criticism of Christians, we know that to reach the lost, we are going to have to go to where they are and demonstrate a love that is accepting and a power that is transforming.

God is a God of order and honor. When we show respect to His authority and power, we will have His favor. When we learn the authority He has given to the believer, we will walk in His power. When we show respect to authority He has established in our church, our government, our work place, and our home, we will know God's glory and accomplish great things for the kingdom of God.

I. God Has Ultimate Authority

A. God is the originator of the world

1. God created the world by His command

Hebrews 11:3 "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."

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....God SAID, 'Let their be light;' and there was light."

Romans 4:17 "...God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did."

Psalm 33:6-9; Psalm 148:1-6

2. God created the world by His power

Isaiah 48:13 "Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand up together."

Isaiah *45:18*
For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: " I am the LORD, and there is no other.

Revelation *4:11*
"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Job 38-41

B. All things belong to God

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

C. All things are sustained by God

Read Acts 17:24-28

Hebrews 1:3 "...upholding all things by the word of His power..."

II. God Delegated Authority to Mankind

God created the earth for mankind, then delegated authority of the earth to men and women.

Genesis 1:26-28 "(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' (27) So God creat4ed man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them, (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.'"

III. Adam Gave Satan Authority

A. Satan fell from Heaven

God created Lucifer. He used to sing worship to God. He thought He could be equal with God. He was wrong.

Luke 10:17-20 "(17) Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' (18) And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'"

Isaiah 14:12-15 associated with the King of Babylon

Ezekiel 28:12-15 associated with the king of Tyre

B. Adam was told to keep the garden

Genesis 2:15

C. Adam's sin gave Satan his seat of power in the earth

II Corinthians 4:4 Satan is called "the god of this age."

D. God immediately had a plan to defeat Satan

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed (Jesus); He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

E. Satan is our enemy

Satan wants to hurt God. The way to do that is to kill, steal, and destroy what God loves – us.

I Peter 5:8,9

IV. Jesus Came With Authority

A. Jesus entered the earth as a man

Jesus was born into the earth as a human being. He had a legal right to be on the earth.

B. Jesus walked in the authority of God

John 1:1-3; 14

Hebrews 1:3

C. He had authority and power in His ministry

1. He taught with authority

Matthew 7:29 “...for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

2. Jesus commanded demons

Matthew 8:28-34 Gadarenes

3. Jesus commanded nature

- a. The Storm (*Mark 4:39*)
- b. The Fig Tree (*Mark 11:11-25*)

4. Jesus commanded healing

- a. Centurion’s Servant (*Matthew 8:1-13*)
- b. Lazarus (*John 11:42, 43*)
- c. Widow’s Son (*Luke 7:12-15*)

D. Jesus became sin and defeated Satan

Galatians 3:13 "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.')"

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

Colossians 2:14,15

I Corinthians 15:57 "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 16:19-20

V. We Have Authority In Christ

A. Our authority is based on our position

1. The way to God is through dying to self

To have a relationship with God, we must surrender to His authority as Lord of our lives. We must recognize our need for Him and let go of our control.

This is why we have water baptism. We are symbolizing our death by going under the water and our new life when we come out of the water.

Romans 6:3-14 (Colossians 2:10-13)

Galatians 2:20

2. We are risen with Christ

We are risen with Christ and have authority over Satan and the curse of sin.

Ephesians 2:6 "...raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

We are to reign in life! *Romans 5:17*

God ALWAYS leads us to triumph in Christ. *II Corinthians 2:14*

B. Using our authority is our responsibility

Matthew 28:18, 19 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth, (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’”

Represent Christ on the earth and use His name. We have a responsibility to our Lord, to do His work and give Him what He gave His life for. We are His body – here to act on His behalf.

Ephesians 1:19-23 “(19) and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (20) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (22) And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

I Corinthians 12:12-14

There are times for prayer to ask God to move, but there are also times when God puts the ball in our court and tells us to do the work of the ministry.

C. What we can do with our authority

1. Live above sin

We can't expect to walk in God's power if we are not living in our authority over sin. We used to live underneath the power of sin, but since Christ redeemed us, we are no longer under it's control.

Romans 6:22 “..now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”

2. Take authority over Satan and demons

Luke 10:19, 20 (19) Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall be any means hurt you. (20) Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

We should not be surprised at the authority we have in Christ. It would be like a soldier saying, “My guns works!” Of course it does. Our excitement should be in the life we have in Christ.

Paul casts out spirit of divination in the name of Jesus.
(Acts 16:16-18)

Revelation 12:9-11 "...they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus), and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

3. Heal the sick

Acts 3:1-10 "(6) Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you, IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH, rise up and walk.'"

4. Take your inheritance

Live in all the blessings that God has promised you, such as protection, provision, favor, and liberty. God has done His part in making the blessings available, but He also expects us to do our part in receiving them.

D. How to operate in authority

1. Submit to God

James 4:7 "...Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Jesus often spent time with God. If we don't spend time with God, we can't expect to have His power available. The value of authority is based on the power that backs that authority. The power that backs us up is God!

1 John 4:4 "...He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

2. Be led by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit only does the will of the Father. He is here to help us operate as representatives of Christ. He is the power, or anointing, of God. We can do nothing on our own. He is God, so we need to follow His leading.

3. Use Jesus' name

We have authority in the earth as representatives of Jesus Christ. We don't act on our own behalf, but we act on behalf of the Lord. The name of Jesus is not a magic wand to get what we want; rather it is to be used to do His work. When we act in His authority and according to His will, there is power to back us up.

John 16:23, 24 “(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. (24) Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Mark 16:17-18 “(17) And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; (18) they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

John 14:12-14

4. Bind the devil

Ephesians 6:10-18 “...Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand...”

Matthew 18:18 “Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

5. Use your mouth

Mark 11:22-24 “...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.”

6. Expect God’s power to back you up

A police officer has a badge that gives him authority. People respect his authority because they know his has the power of the government backing him up.

When you do the works of Jesus, you should expect the power of heaven to back you up.

When we enter into a relationship with God, He asks us to trust Him with the lordship of our lives. He wants us to depend upon Him to be the source of our life. He wants us to trust Him with every area of our lives, including our finances.

The real issue behind money is our heart- how we relate with God and others. Money is just a tool that we use, but if it is used inappropriately, it can cause damage to relationships and bring division in marriages, families, and friendships. If money is not used correctly, it can keep people from rising to their potential and fulfilling their destiny; it can destroy beneficial businesses and tear down communities. If money is not used wisely, it can even hinder the growth of the kingdom of God and the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God cares about our relationship with Him. Not only does God want our needs to be met; but more importantly, He wants us to know Him as our Provider. He wants us to have the freedom to believe anything is possible with Him. He wants us to have the freedom to liberate the people around us. He wants us to have the freedom to be an open channel He can use to reconcile the world to Himself.

Psalms 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

I. God Promises to Care for Us

God's blessings in His covenant to us include promises to meet our needs.
Deuteronomy 28: 1, 2

A. God wants us to know His love

We aren't going to be able to trust with our money if we can't trust Him with our hearts. When we have a revelation of God's love, we can be confident that God wants what is best for us. When we come to know God, we can know that He would never manipulate, control, or abuse us in any way, including in the area of our finances. Instead, God has promised us that He will always care for us by abundantly meeting our needs.

Philippians 4:19 "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

III John 1:2 "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

B. God wants us to depend on Him

Deuteronomy 8:18 “And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

God wants us to lean upon Him to help us with our finances rather than trying to do it on our own. He wants us to turn away from our grip of control, and trust Him with our money.

Jeremiah 9:23, 24

C. God wants us to know His peace

Matthew 6:31-33 “(31) Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ (32) For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (33) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

When we come to know God as a father who knows our needs and wants to care for us, fear melts away into peace, and our hearts are settled in faith in Him.

D. God wants us to know contentment

1 Timothy 6:6 “...godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Philippians 4:11 “...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”

There are people who do not know the blessings of God because they never feel they have enough. They might be looking for some sense of worth from others based the things they possess, but with God there is a contentment that comes from being complete in Christ. Their dissatisfaction could also just be based in selfishness and greed, always looking to be pleased with something better, something new. Instead of having joy and peace, there is envy, jealousy, and covetousness. Whatever the reason, God wants His people free to be content and thankful for what we have.

E. God wants you to know His wisdom

Some never know the blessings of God because they don't know that God has promised to meet their needs. They are genuinely ignorant of God's desire to bless them.

Joshua 1:8 “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.”

II. God Has a Portion

Many have missed out on a relationship with God because they fear He is after their money. Some stay out of church because they think the church is after their money. Whether you give money or not, you are always welcome at this church. However, it is our responsibility to teach you God's principles to show you how you can grow in your relationship with God and know His provision, as well as how to avoid the consequences of disobedience.

A. God asks for the tithe

The word tithe literally means "tenth." God set the principle to give Him ten percent of the income that comes into your household.

Proverbs 3: 9, 10 "Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; (10) so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."

The tithe is also called "first fruits" in the Bible, because God asked His people to give to Him before that increase was spent anywhere else. God wants us to worship Him with the tithe, trusting Him to care for us.

B. Who does the tithe belong to?

Malachi 3:8-11

Since the tithe belongs to God, we freely give it to Him, trusting church leadership to distribute it as the Lord directs them. Since we see the tithe as belonging to the Lord, the pastor should look to the Holy Spirit for guidance in how to distribute it and also be accountable to godly men and women for counsel in the distribution of it.

C. Where does God say we are to give our tithe?

Malachi 3:10

A storehouse is where you are being fed. God wants us to give it to the local church that we have committed ourselves to. According to the Bible, taking care of the place we worship is our corporate responsibility.

If we do not our tithe, we are stealing from God and our finances are cursed. We are taking finances that He could be using to strengthen and grow your local church and instead spending it on ourselves.

Offerings are what we give over ten percent. God may instruct us to give an offering to the church, a person in need, a charity, etc.

D. Who receives our tithes today?

Hebrews 7:8

Tithing is both an Old Testament and a New Testament principle.

E. An offering is anything that we give above the tithe.

Out of love for the Lord, we also want to give to Him above what is required in offerings.

II Samuel 24:21-24

Someone offered to give David his animals for sacrifice and David replied, *“No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; not will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.”*

III. Right Attitudes about Money

A. See yourself as a steward of what God gives to you.

Psalms 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.”

I Corinthians 4:2 “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”

A steward is someone who takes care of another person’s finances. We must realize that in a covenant with God, everything that we have we share with God.

God wants us to look to Him for direction on where to spend or to give money.

B. God wants us to give to Him from the heart

Exodus 25:2 “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.”

God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle, a place of worship for the Jews when they were in the wilderness. He only wanted offerings that were given from a willing heart. We read in Exodus 36:5-7 that Moses had to tell the people to stop giving because they had brought in more than enough.

II Corinthians 9:6-10

The Greek word for cheerful in verse 7 is *hilaros*, where we get the word *hilarious*, meaning joyful. The kind of giver that God enjoys is someone who gives willingly, freely and joyfully from the heart, without any restraints.

Luke 21:1-4

The amount does not give the offering value, it is the heart of the one giving it. God wants us to give generously.

C. God wants us to be generous.

Luke 6:38 "Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

D. We are not to love money.

I Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil..."

Matthew 6:19-21 "... (21) for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Luke 12:15 "...one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Philippians 3:7-9

Money is not evil, but the love of it is. We are not to put our trust in it. We are not to find our value in it. Money is a tool that we use to serve God, not to use as a way to serve ourselves. Trust God that He will prosper you.

The amount of money that you have does not determine your worth as a person. The amount of money that you give to the Lord does not give you more value than someone else.

James 2:1-9 we are not to show more honor to a wealthier person.

E. God wants us to have good work ethics.

God isn't just looking at what we do, but also how we are doing it. If we want to be successful in the eyes of God and if we want to have His blessing on our finances, then we have to follow His guidelines for how we work.

If we want to be prosperous, we have to do more than just believe God to pour it out of heaven. We have to learn from the whole counsel of God.

1. Work diligently.

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

Ephesians 4:28 "...let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

Go the extra mile, do more than what is asked of you. Make sure that you are there on time, or earlier.

If you can work and choose not to work, you are not taking responsibility that God wants you to have. God does not want us to burden others when it is within our power to care for ourselves.

"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." II Thessalonians 3:10

2. Have a good attitude

Your attitude is an indicator of what is in your heart.

3. Work honestly.

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

4. Be faithful with what you have

Matthew 25:14-30

5. Show fairness

Matthew 7:12 "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them..."

6. Work well with others

To accomplish something, it requires that people work together toward a common goal.

Philippians 2:1-4

If you work well with other members of the team, you will be a blessing to your leader. If you do not work well with others, your leader will not be able to put their trust in you.

7. Respect and serve your employer

Colossians 3:22-25

F. Give to the poor.

Proverbs 19:17 “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.”

Galatians 2:10 “They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.”

Proverbs 22:9

G. Use wisdom in your finances.

1. Give God the first ten percent.

The way we spend money shows where our priorities are.

2. Pay yourself by putting money into savings.

3. Spend within your budget.

II Corinthians 8:12 “...according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.”

We should not spend or give money if we need it to take care of our needs and the needs of our family.

I Timothy 5:8 “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

4. Avoid debt.

Proverbs 22:7 “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”

5. Set financial goals and make investments.

Ask God about His plan for your life and work out a written financial plan to help you achieve those goals.

We know that God's power is available to heal and restore every area of our lives, including our health. Because of Jesus Christ, we can receive God's healing touch in our hearts, minds, and bodies.

I. Where Did Sickness Come From?

A. Sickness did not originate with God

God's creation is good.⁴ God did not create sickness. There is no sickness where God dwells.⁵

James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

B. Sickness is a result of sin

Through sin, death entered the world. Sickness is a result of sin, a consequence of being separated from life. Sin carries a curse, part of which is sickness, disease, and deformity.⁶ Sickness is part of the world we have been born into.

Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-"

Sickness is not from God. God does not take pleasure in seeing someone suffer from disease or deformity.

C. Sickness is destructive

Sickness takes away from people. Sickness destroys people's health, finances, and well-being.

John 10:10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy, I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

⁴ Genesis 1:31

⁵ Revelation 21:4

⁶ Deuteronomy 28:1-68

II. Jesus Brought Us Healing

A. Jesus' ministry on the earth included healing

Jesus healed everyone that came to Him in faith.

Matthew 8:16, 17 "(16) When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, (17) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'"

Acts 10:38 "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

B. Jesus became a curse and paid the price for our healing

Sickness is a result of sin. When Jesus paid the price for our salvation, He also made the way for our restoration from sin and death in every area.

Galatians 3:13 "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')."

Matthew quoted Isaiah 53:4 when describing Jesus' healing ministry. Not only did Jesus have the power to heal on the earth, but He also took the punishment of sickness when He went to the cross.

Isaiah 53:4, 5 (Amplified) "Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains [of punishment], yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten and afflicted by God [as if with leprosy]. (5) But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our guilt and iniquities; the chastisement [needful to obtain] peace and well-being for us was upon Him, and with the stripes [that wounded] Him we are healed and made whole."

C. Salvation includes physical healing

The Greek word for salvation is *sozo* (#4982), and means, "to save, heal, cure, preserve, keep safe and sound, rescue from danger or destruction, deliver."⁷ The word is used in the New Testament for both salvation of sins and physical healing.

⁷ The Spirit Filled Life Bible

Salvation brings restoration to every part of mankind that was distorted by sin. The salvation Christ provides for us includes supernatural healing and wholeness spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and in every other way.

III. Healing for Today

A. Jesus gave us authority over sickness

Jesus told us to heal the sick.

Mark 16:17, 18 "in My name...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

B. The Holy Spirit has the power to heal

The power of God backs up our authority. When praying for the sick, we need to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and learn to minister under the anointing.

Luke 5:17 "...the power of the Lord was present to heal them."

Luke 6:19 "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all."

There are some spiritual leaders in the church that are appointed by God as evangelists and carry a special healing anointing.⁸

C. Lay hands on the sick

Why would we put our hands on people when we pray for their healing? Because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and His anointing, His power, flows out of us.

Sometimes people also anoint or rub oil on a person as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The anointing can also be transferred through cloths that have been prayed over.⁹

James 5:14 "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

⁸ I Corinthians 12:29; Acts 5:15

⁹ Acts 19:12

D. Hindrances to healing

We don't know everything about every situation. We may not understand why we don't see more miracles; however, the Bible is clear that healing is available for everyone. There are several reasons why we don't see people receive their healing or other promises from God. Here are some of them:

1. Lack of unity and honor in the church and government
2. Lack of intercession for the world around us
3. Ignorance of the promises or the work of the Holy Spirit
4. Fear
5. Doubting or unbelieving heart, impatience, lack of worship
6. Hardened or proud heart, self-centeredness
7. Sin
8. Unforgiveness
9. Being judgmental or critical of others
10. Religious control, trying to manipulate God and others
11. Disobedience, refusal to act on God's instruction
12. Laziness, spiritual or otherwise

IV. How We Can Receive Healing

A. Seek the Healer

Don't just seek the healing; seek the Healer. Don't just look for the gift; look for the Giver of the gift.

Spend time in His presence. His light drives out darkness. His love drives out unrighteousness. His life drives out sickness.

God does not always heal people in the same way, with the same methods. He wants us to be dependent upon Him for what we need.

B. Believe His promises to you

The only way to have a relationship with God is to be dependent upon Him. Trust is something that is personal, something special between you and the Lord. Find scriptures for your situation and believe His promises to you.

God wants you to be well. Doctors and medication can be instruments that God can use to help you. Getting medical assistance does not affect whether you are trusting in God or not.

C. Receive His promises to you

1. Use your heart

Just like you receive salvation, receive it as your own in your heart.

If we have received the promises, we will see it as done. If we see it as done, we will be thankful, we will have joy and peace, we will have confidence.

2. Get under the influence of God's power

It is the power of God that brings healing. Immerse yourself in the anointing of God through corporate and individual worship, mediation, study and prayer.

Sometimes healing comes instantaneously. Other times healing comes progressively. Stay in His presence to receive all He has for you.

D. Act on His promises to you

1. Be obedient

God promised the land of Cannon to the Israelites, but the Israelites were still required to go in and fight for it.

We have to act in obedience to what God tells us to do. In the Gospels we see that many times Jesus would tell people to do something before they were healed – stretch out your hands, pick up your bed and walk, go show yourself to the priests, etc.

2. Use your words

We also see that Jesus used His words to exercise His authority. He has told us that we can do the same.

Mark 7:31-37 to the deaf man, "Be opened."

Matthew 8:2-4 to the leper, "Be cleansed."

Matthew 9:1-8 to the paralytic, "Rise, take up your bed and go!"

Matthew 12:10-13 with a withered hand, "Stretch out your hand!"

Mark 11:23 " 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."

Acts 3:6 Peter says to lame man, "Rise up and walk."

E. Never, never, never give up!

You are not alone in living the Christian life. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us with our day-to-day lives. The Holy Spirit is here to give us guidance, revelation of God's Word, conviction of sin, strength for living, power for miracles, and whatever help we need to accomplish the will of God the Father.

I. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit is a spirit being

When we refer to the Holy Spirit, we are not referring to a force or power; we are referring to a spirit being. In some Bible versions, the term Holy Ghost is used, "ghost" being an old language term meaning spirit.

B. The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity

There is one God. He is our Father and our Creator.

God has a son, Jesus, who is recognized as deity.¹⁰ He also has a spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is also recognized as deity.¹¹ Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are part of the Godhead and yield to God the Father. The three have always existed together.¹²

C. Sent by Jesus from the Father

John 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

When Jesus left the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to help us. The term "helper" does not mean that the Holy Spirit is here to do our bidding; on the contrary, we are to yield to Him so the will of the Father can be accomplished.

The word "helper" in the original language is "parakletos," literally translated, "one called alongside to help." The word was used in literature for an attorney, someone who appeared on behalf of another to help in time of need. The word signifies a comforter, intercessor, helper, advocate, and counselor. The Holy Spirit gives us what we need to know God, to live for God, and to serve God.

¹⁰ John 10:30; John 14:9-11

¹¹ John 4:24; John 14:16

¹² Genesis 1:2, 26; John 1:1-3, 14; I John 5:7; Luke 10:18; Colossians 1:16, 2:9; Exodus 3:14

D. **The Holy Spirit lives within us**

Before the cross, human spirits were separated from God and filled with sin. Under the old covenant, the closest God could get to people was by dwelling in the tabernacle or temple, behind a veil, in the Holy of Holies. The Holy Spirit could come upon them or be among them.¹³

Now that the human spirit can be recreated through salvation, the Holy Spirit has come to live on the inside of us.¹⁴

I Corinthians 6:19 “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?”

Think if it...the power that created the universe; the power that has raised the dead, healed the sick and casts out devils...resides on the inside of us!

II Corinthians 4:7 “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

II. **What does the Holy Spirit Do?**

A. **Guides**

God will have the Holy Spirit guide us in our decisions and lead us in the way He wants us to go.

Romans 8:14 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”¹⁵

B. **Reveals**

I Corinthians 2:10-16

The naturally minded person cannot understand things that are outside of this physical realm. The things of the spirit are not understood by logic, reasoning or with the senses. To understand the things of the spirit, you have to listen to your heart. Because they are outside of natural understanding, spiritual matters are known as “mysteries” and “secrets.” God isn’t hiding spiritual things from us; however, He does want us to open up our hearts and search to know the things that pertain to the spirit.

The Holy Spirit will uncover spiritual mysteries for us by revealing the truth of the Word to our hearts.¹⁶

¹³ Exodus 25:8, 9; I Samuel 10:10

¹⁴ Matthew 27:51, John 14:16, 17

¹⁵ Acts 16:6-10

¹⁶ John 16:13

C. Bears Witness

A witness is someone who has seen or heard or experienced something and knows it to be true. The Holy Spirit will confirm to us that something is true or warn us that something is not true. He will keep us on track so that we don't get off into error or extreme.

Why do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Were you there? Why do you believe in heaven? Have you seen it? No, we have a knowing in our hearts that these things are true. The Holy Spirit will let us know that these things are true.

Romans 8:16 "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God."

D. Convicts

John 16:8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me (Jesus) unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."

E. Strengthens

We need help to live our lives for God. We aren't alone, the Holy Spirit will renew our strength.¹⁷

Romans 8:13, 14 "(13) For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." "

F. Anoints for Ministry

Jesus was anointed for ministry. When He ministered, He did so with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:38 "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

Jesus told us that we were to do the works that He did and to do greater works than He did.

John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

¹⁷ II Cor. 4:16

The Holy Spirit anoints Christians to do the works of Christ.¹⁸

There are hurting people all over the world. We are not the answer, but we contain the power that will set them free.

I Corinthians 2:4, 5 “(4) And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Isaiah 10:27 “...the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.”

G. Works signs and wonders

God’s power is made available to us by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 2:4 “God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”

H. Moves through Spiritual Gifts

I Corinthians 12:7-11

There are nine manifestations or activities of the Spirit listed in this chapter. The church has referred to them as the “Gifts of the Spirit.” There might be a gift that you have been used in more often than others; however, the gifts do not belong to any particular individual.

The nine gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit happen as the Spirit wills, not by the determination of a man or woman. The Holy Spirit moves on willing people to build up believers in the church through the gifts; however, the gifts of the Spirit are also for reaching people outside of the church. The gifts may be experienced in a public setting or they may be used to minister to individuals.

The Gifts of the Spirit:

Word of Wisdom
Word of Knowledge
Discernment of spirits
Gift of Faith
Working of Miracles
Prophecy
Tongues
Tongues Interpretation

¹⁸ Luke 12:12; I John 2:27; Acts 8:18, 19

III. The Infilling of the Holy Spirit

A. The plan for the infilling

In John 7:2, 37 Jesus and His disciples were celebrating the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (dwelling places). We know that the Jews would construct huts or booths to live in for seven days to remember living in booths as they traveled out of Egypt.¹⁹ We also know that the Jewish men would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.²⁰ History tells us that during this Jewish feast the priests brought water to the temple (symbolic of the water supplied from the rock in Exodus 17) while the people recited Isaiah 12:3 “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” The water was poured out on the altar as a sacrifice to God, while the people shouted and sang.

While this is happening, Jesus stands up and cries out with a loud voice, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink! He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water!”

Verse 39 reveals to us that Jesus was talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit not only wants to fill us, but He also wants to overflow out of us to minister to someone else. We are the traveling tabernacles of the Holy Spirit. We are the place the Holy Spirit resides.²¹

B. The purpose of the infilling

Acts 1:8 “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses...”²²

Jesus wants us to experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 2:1-4 for the account of the initial infilling.

Day of Pentecost was known as the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Harvest.²³ All Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem. Jews gathered from several nations to be there. Wherever the disciples were gathered for the feast, a multitude heard the sound of the wind and came together because of it. Peter stood up and preached and 3,000 people were saved and water baptized that day.

Acts 2:38, 39 “(38)...Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (39) For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

¹⁹ Lev. 23:33-44

²⁰ Exodus 23:14-19

²¹ Spirit-Filled Life Bible

²² Acts 4:31

²³ Lev. 23:15-22, Ex. 23:16

C. Is the infilling a separate work from salvation?

- When a person is born again, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the believer.
- When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit empowers the believer.

It is possible for people to receive the infilling at the same time that they receive salvation; however, it is possible to be saved without ever knowing the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

1. Two baptisms

a. Baptism of water

Matthew 3:11,12

When a person is water baptized, they are giving expression to their salvation experience. They have surrendered their lives to Christ, signified by the immersion, and they receive new life, signified by coming up out of the water.²⁴

b. Baptism of fire

Acts 1:4,5

Jesus is the one who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. The fire is not a literal fire, but it signifies the power of the Holy Spirit that will cleanse and empower the believer. You must be born again before being filled with the Spirit.

2. Examples of the separate experiences

a. The Disciples

- The disciples first received salvation after Jesus was raised from the dead (John 20:22).
- The disciples first received the baptism of the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 2:1-4).

b. The Samaritans

- The Samaritans received salvation (Acts 8:4-8).
- The Samaritans received the infilling (Acts 8:14-17).

c. The Ephesians

- Paul met believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1).
- The believers were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-6).

²⁴ Romans 6:1-5

D. Praying in the Spirit

Acts 10:44-48

When someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, they normally react with praise to God. We also see people speaking things about God in a language that they have not learned. We call it praying in the spirit.

You do not have to pray in the spirit to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never push something on you that you don't want to receive. There are several purposes given for praying in the spirit. In I Corinthians 14, Paul talks about both the private and the public use of tongues.

Private Use:

- If it is a personal thing, the person you are talking to is God.²⁵
- It's part of God's plan for your spiritual growth.²⁶
- It is the Holy Spirit helping us to pray things we don't understand.²⁷
- It is spoken from the heart, not the intellect.

Public Use:

- Sometimes it is for a public message, and in this case, must always be followed by an interpretation.²⁸
- It can be a sign to an unbeliever.²⁹

E. How to be filled with the Spirit

Luke 11:13 "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!"

Believe that God wants you to experience His power, and ask Him to fill you with His Spirit.

F. Be continually filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:19, 20 "be being filled" is the literal translation.

²⁵ I Cor. 14:2

²⁶ I Cor. 14:4

²⁷ Romans 8:26, I Cor. 14:2

²⁸ I Cor. 14:13-15

²⁹ I Cor. 14:22

Prayer is a big part of the Christian life. Through prayer we can know God. Through prayer we can accomplish great things for God.

I. Our Relationship with God

An effective prayer life begins with an intimate relationship with God.

Philippians 3:10a (amplified), “[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]...”

A. Our relationship with God is spiritual

- God is a spirit.³⁰
- You are a spirit, made in God’s image.³¹
- Our relationship with God is spiritual.

God wants us to know Him. The way to know God is heart to heart, spirit to spirit.³²

B. Our communication with God is spiritual

In the world we live in, we do not see God with our physical eyes or hear God with our physical ears. We know God in our innermost heart, our spirit.

I Corinthians 2:11 “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

C. Prayers are answered as a result of our relationship with God

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.”

Through our position in Christ, we can have a close relationship with God. Jesus instructed us to go directly to the Father, in His name.³³

³⁰ John 4:24

³¹ Genesis 1:27, I Thessalonians 5:23, Romans 8:15, II Cor. 5:17

³² John 17:21, I Cor. 6:17

³³ John 16:23

II. The Purpose of Prayer

God wouldn't tell us to pray if our prayers have no meaning or purpose. When God asks us to pray, He intends for something to be accomplished. There are several reasons for coming to God in prayer.

A. Expression

One reason we pray is to express our heart to God – how we're feeling about Him and our lives. We also want to hear anything that God has to say to us, including His thoughts about us, His plans, His purpose, His heart.

B. Worship

Another reason we pray is to honor God for who He is and what He does. When we worship God, we honor the place of authority He has in our lives, releasing Him to reign in our circumstances.

Acts 16:23-26 Paul and Silas worship God and are released from prison.
II Chronicles 20 Israel worships God and receives the victory.

C. Consecration

We can dedicate our lives to the Lord through prayer. There are times when God is asking us to obey Him and we need to give ourselves to His leading. Jesus is our example when He prayed, *"nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42)."*

It is in the presence of God that we find the anointing. Jesus often separated Himself to give His attention to the Father.³⁴ If we neglect our time with Him, it will decrease our effectiveness.

James 5:16 (amplified) "the earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man (that) makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]..."

There are also times when we need to repent and separate ourselves from anything that isn't pleasing to the Lord. Sin will put God at a distance from us. God wants to be near us. Prayer will help us to stay close to God in the spirit so that we can resist temptation.³⁵

James 4:8 "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..."

God also commits Himself to us through His covenant. He has dedicated Himself to caring for us, making promises based on what Christ accomplished at the cross.

³⁴ Luke 5:16, Matthew 17:21

³⁵ Matthew 26:41

D. Commitment

1 Peter 5:7 (amplified) “Casting the whole of your care – all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all on Him; for He cares for you affectionately, and cares about you watchfully.”

Philippians 4:6,7 “(6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (7) and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Through prayer we can also turn over our cares to the Lord. So many times we carry the load of our cares in our own strength. God doesn't want to see us striving in our limited ability. He wants us to trust Him with the control of the things that concern us.

E. Petition

Another reason why we pray is because we need God's power to change our situation. Prayer can be a call for help. We need to ask God how He wants to help us, and then we can be confident that we have what we ask for.

1 John 5:14, 15 “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

James 4:2 “...you do not have because you do not ask.”

God wants to help us. God wants us to come to Him in dependency for the things that we need. He wants us to rely upon Him in prayer and never give up.³⁶

F. Intercession

Prayer can also be given on behalf of another person. We know God's will for that person and we know the need, so we pray as a mediator, someone who can stand in the gap.³⁷

Many times God cannot move until someone prays. God will not force Himself into a situation. God wants us to call upon Him, inviting Him to move on behalf of someone else.

Certain types of prayer are continued to be made until the answer comes through. In Acts 12:5, constant prayer was given for Peter when he was in prison, and God released him!

³⁶ Luke 18:1-8, 1 Thess. 5:17

³⁷ Ezekiel 22:30

G. Agreement

There are times when we come to God individually, and there are times when we come to God with one or more persons. There is tremendous power in corporate prayer.

God has power to move when we are walking in love and harmony with one another. His nature is love, so to be moving with Him in the spirit, we also must operate in love. Unforgiveness will hinder what God can do.³⁸

H. Faith

When we are in an upright and intimate relationship with God, we can operate in His anointing. From the spirit, we can accomplish great things for God by praying in faith, speaking out the will of the Father.

God wants us to do great things in the earth so that His will can be done. There is tremendous power available to those who have spiritual understanding and act as representatives of Jesus Christ through the power of His name. There are times in prayer when that authority includes binding the enemy from operating in a situation.

I. Praying in the spirit

There are times when we don't know how to pray or what to pray. This is one purpose for praying in the spirit. Our mind may not understand, but from our heart the Holy Spirit is praying mysteries to God.

Romans 8:26 "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

I Corinthians 14:2 "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries."

I Corinthians 14:15 "...I will pray with the spirit, and I will with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."

Praying in the spirit also builds us up spiritually.

I Corinthians 14:4 "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself..."

Jude 20 "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit."

³⁸ Mark 11:25, 26

III. How to be Led by the Spirit of God

Romans 8:14 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

A. Listen to your heart

You have a human spirit. You can perceive things in your heart. Some people call it intuition, but it is really a knowing that you have in your spirit.

The Holy Spirit can guide you through your own heart convictions. You can have a knowing when something is right or wrong.³⁹

Acts 15:25 "it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul."

Proverbs 20:27 "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart."

B. Knowledge from the Holy Spirit

There are times in prayer when you suddenly "know" something that you didn't know before. The knowledge does not come from your head, your own thinking, the knowledge is dropped in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 27:10 "...Men I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

The Holy Spirit will sometimes give us knowledge when we are ministering to people so that we can know how to minister to them.⁴⁰

The Holy Spirit can also give us revelation knowledge about scripture. It is very important to know that the Holy Spirit will never disagree with the Bible.

Jesus talked about having ears to hear, meaning someone who can understand spiritual things. *Mark 4:9 "...He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

Not everyone understands the things of the spirit because they don't know how to listen to their heart. Spending time in prayer will help us to be aware of the spirit realm and comprehend the things of God.⁴¹

I Corinthians 2:6-16

³⁹ Jeremiah 40:4

⁴⁰ John 4:16-18

⁴¹ II Kings 6:17

C. Voice of the Holy Spirit

There are times in prayer when we can “hear” a specific word from God in our spirit.

Acts 13:2 “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”

Acts 8:29, 30 “(29) Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’ (30) So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’”

The Holy Spirit speaks to us individually, but He sometimes will speak to us to give a message to another individually or to speak a prophecy to a group.⁴²

D. Visions and Dreams

God can also speak through a vision or a dream. If a vision or dream is from God, God will immediately reveal the meaning.⁴³

Don’t make the mistake of limiting the work of the Holy Spirit to the New Testament. As we prepare for the return of Christ, we also need to rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the plan of God for our generation.

Acts 2:17 “And it shall come to pass in the last days,’ says God, ‘That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.”

IV. How to Establish a Life of Prayer

A. Focus on your relationship with God

If you do not have a personal relationship with God, prayer will be done out of duty more than desire. When you know God intimately, you will enjoy spending your time with Him.

When you have a relationship with God, you know you can trust Him, letting Him see you, not hiding anything from Him. Come to Him honestly and with an open heart. When your relationship is built on love, your time with Him will be free of feelings of fear and guilt.

⁴² I Cor. 14:1-5

⁴³ Acts 10:9-16, II Cor. 12:2, Acts 9:10-16, Acts 16:6-10, Acts 22:17-21

B. Recognize that spiritual growth is a process

Your relationship with God will grow as you mature in Him. Don't feel badly if you aren't farther along in your prayer life. Don't quit because you aren't seeing answers to your prayers. Continue to yield to the Holy Spirit and you will develop in your spirit, learning to recognize His voice and leading more clearly.

C. Be familiar with the Word of God

Our prayers should be based on the will of God and His promises to us. The more we know of the Bible, the more the Holy Spirit can lead us in prayer.

D. Be led by the Spirit

Spend time in prayer waiting on God, listening to Him. The Holy Spirit may have something specific that He wants to say or a direction that He wants you to pray. Be careful to respond to His leading promptly.

E. Some practical ideas

- It is a good idea to set aside some time each day for study and prayer. If we don't set aside some time, we usually have little of it left.
- Pray in the morning before you get busy. Give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to give you guidance for what you will do that day.
- Have the Bible by your side in case you need to look up a scripture or make reference to a promise.
- You may want to have a prayer journal where you keep a record of what God is saying to you, what scriptures you are standing on, how God has answered prayers, etc.
- Find a place that is quiet and free from distractions so that you can put your attention on God.
- If your mind is filled with thoughts of things to do, write them down on a piece of paper to remind yourself of what you need to do later.