



# CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

*An introduction to the  
teachings of our Christian Faith*

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS: An introduction to the teachings of our Christian Faith

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# CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHINGS OF OUR CHRISTIAN  
FAITH

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# INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to provide you with the foundations of the Christian faith, to get you moving in the right direction, and make sure the grass roots teaching of the Bible about our life in Christ is deeply rooted in you. This booklet is not a comprehensive study or a systematic theology – it is meant to assist as a study manual in a teaching environment (a Bible study, home group, etc.).

What we believe about God and ourselves determines the entire course of our lives. If the foundations are wobbly, the whole building of our lives will be the same.

The course is divided into twelve weeks of teaching (twelve chapters) and is made up of three big ideas foundational to Christianity: **in Christ** (salvation); **Christ in Us** (knowing God); **Christ through us** (living for God). Simply put: how we come to know God and live for him.

As you read the Bible and follow this course you will notice there is often a trend in terms of how things are presented: we will be told to *know* something, *believe* something or *do* something. Along the way you will see this process playing out.

This book is intended to be a resource to Christians and churches elsewhere, and is made available to be copied and distributed as widely as possible. We hope that this resource will be a blessing to you and will contribute, however humbly, to the extension of God's kingdom.

## PART 1: IN CHRIST

### **Ephesians 1:17-19a**

*"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe ..."*

# CHAPTER 1

## EVERYONE IS TO KNOW GOD

### Acts 17:22

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for*

*"In him we live and move and have our being";  
as even some of your own poets [philosophers] have said,  
"For we are indeed his offspring."*

### Acts 17:29

*Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art*

*and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

## **So you want to know God, do you?**

This passage above reveals an important secret to learn in your lifelong journey with God: God wants this more than you do. He made you for the primary purposes of relationship with him. That is the reason you exist. You actually don't exist to experience life, be successful, get married and have children, or make a mark on the world or anything like that. You exist for him. God made you for his own good pleasure. Bringing you into relationship with himself brings great pleasure to him.

But there's more.

## **You can worship a god you don't actually know**

The philosophers quoted above (verse 28) wanted to know a god that also knew them, but yet their god was still 'unknown'. How is this possible? It's easier than we probably realise, because it's very possible to make up a god of your own. This is what these people in Athens had done, with all their man-made statues and so forth. Today you might not be worshipping a god that you carved out of wood or bought from a store, but it's very possible to attribute to the God of the Bible characteristics that suit you. He can be the god who gives

## EVERYONE IS TO KNOW GOD

you what you want and exists to make you happy, who is there to fulfil all your dreams; or he can be the god who hates you and is constantly weighing up how good or bad you are.

Both of these would be wrong. God is the God of the Bible who has revealed himself in history. You will need to get to *know* Him as he is not as you want him or think him to be. He doesn't exist for us, we exist for him. Our imaginations and ideas aren't good enough for really getting to know God - instead, we have to get to know him through the way he has chosen: Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures.

### Can I introduce you to God?

If you were to shake hands with the Lord God for the first time, what would his credentials be? Here are some of them:

#### 1. The God who made everything you see and know

He is the God behind the wonder of creation. He made it all from nothing. He has existed eternally and made time and the universe and the solar system, the earth, every blade of grass, every atom and particle... and the complex you. He knows how it all works and keeps it all working. There is nothing above him in power, knowledge or ability. He is above everything you can name or think of.

#### 2. The God who made you and watches you very closely

You are the crown of all that he made. Humans were his best part of creation. Even though you might be able to scientifically and biologically explain how you came to be, God was actually making it

happen. Every cell that divided to make you, he told to divide. He knows every atom of your physical existence and every complexity of your personality. He gifted you, gave you your intellect, and has been ordering your life. You can make your own choices and he is there, watching everything. He can recall every thought you have ever had, and will have. He knows how you will respond before you do. He could describe you better than you can yourself. He has seen everything you've done on the face of the earth. He remembers all the right, wrong, naughty, downright wicked, good and loving things you have done. His eye is always on you, there is nowhere you can hide.

### **3. The God who has no needs, but wants companionship**

He has ordered your entire life so that you would come to a place where you would think about companionship with him. This God is loving. He intervened in your life many times – most of them unknown to you. He let just the right amount of right and wrong take place so that you would call out to him. He needs nothing. He is complete all on his own. He is totally secure and happy within himself. Companionship with him is easy, he needs no propping up from us. He doesn't have a personality that's hard to deal with. Actually, knowing God is pure joy for us.

### **4. The God who is personal**

The God of the Bible is all-powerful but not a power. He knows everything but isn't a library of facts. He is kind and giving but isn't a genie in a lamp. He talks, he leads people, he has emotions, he has a personality, and certain ways that he does things. He is very patient,

the perfect gentleman, and willing to forgive faults in people who want to know him.

## **5. The God who decides what is right and does everything right**

There is no hint of evil in God. He cannot be manipulated to dishonest gain. He will never bend the rules and always does everything right. He always judges rightly because he knows everything about everyone and every situation. Because he decides what is right he also decides what is wrong; and there is a lot wrong in the world. God hates evil and wrongdoing. He hates it so much he will banish evil from his universe completely one day. There will not be a hint of evil when God wraps up the history of this world.

## **6. The God who wants you to change your mind about him**

God knows that when people first encounter him as he really is, the first thing they want to do is run and hide. We all immediately feel guilty and ugly, knowing that his perfect eye is very displeased with their imperfection.

It's true. He is displeased with imperfection. But there's more to the story: he has provided a solution. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's only Son - he is our salvation. God wants you to come to a place where you experience a joyous relationship with him, but it only happens through the Lord Jesus.



## 7. The God who has a long-term view of things

When we talk of companionship with God we are not referring to something short-term but something everlasting. One day, God will renew the world, and it will be exactly as he always intended it. God's paradise will once again be brought into being. In this paradise, God and his people will live, together - no longer separated by the gulf of evil, but joined together as a bride and groom. Forever.

There is more to know about the God of the Bible than is revealed in these verses. We will spend our whole Christian lives getting to know God - even closely and intimately. Do you know the plan for your life? We can tell you - companionship with the God of the Bible through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. When you look at Jesus, you see God.

### Would you like to walk with God?

#### **Acts 17:28**

*"In Him we live and move and have our being."*

The long trajectory of a life walking with God has three intertwined parts. In him we are to live, to move, and come to be. You will first have to come to live.

You will need to come into relationship with the God of the Bible. He is the one who makes you able to relate to him. He does this by giving Jesus to us as our Saviour.

You will then have to learn to *move*. Moving with God is learning about him and yourself. It is getting to know him, his ways - what he likes and

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dislikes. You will need to grow up in your thinking about God.

Then you will come to *be*. Not only does God want to know you and walk with you, but he wants to change you to be more like he is. You'll still be you, of course - your personality, skills, and so on will remain, but you will become more like him in love, patience, kindness, care, joy, fearlessness, security, and so on. He wants to make you whole - as he is whole. He wants to heal the broken parts of your life and heal you totally. This only happens as we live more like him, which he makes happen by giving us his Holy Spirit. We will learn to walk like Jesus did and respond to situations like he did. It is a lifelong process. It begins on the first day we meet Jesus, and carries on until he returns or we meet up with him in our death.

You might also want to read these verses that outline what's been said in this short introduction: Ephesians 1:3-14; Colossians 1; Acts 26:12-23 (the story of Paul's conversion).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EXTRAVAGANT LOVE OF GOD

#### **1 John 3:1 (NIV)**

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"*

Have you ever thought of God as a father who loves you extravagantly? This concept might be new to you. The first thing you probably ask is, "why?" Is there something you have done to deserve his love? Or does he love you because he is expecting something from you?

These two questions are framed by our world and its general philosophy of love. Our world has very little time for extravagant, unconditional love - the kind of love God actually is. (1 John 4:8.) His love is unconditional, undeserved and absolutely perfect. We do not have to work to receive this awesome love. In the world, love is always conditional - if you behave according to the rules, then you will be loved. Or, if you are loved, it means you will be expected to behave in a certain way! But God's love is not like this at all. He loved us long before we were even born and always intended for us to be his sons and daughters - "In love he predestined us for adoption as sons [and daughters] through Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:4.) His plan has always been to give you eternal life. You receive *eternal life* for doing nothing at all, but for simply trusting (having faith in) Jesus for it.

## God can be known

### **John 17:3**

*"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."*

Jesus defines *eternal life* as knowing God. God is a father and *can be known*. By you. Personally. Today. This is a stunning truth. The Christian life is a journey of knowing God more and more, and as you get to know him, having more and more faith (trust) in him. What's important here to know is that the Christian life is *not about becoming a better person*, but rather loving others as God loves them because God loved you first! "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19.) We love because of God's love, not because we are righteous and good people! Only God is good! (Mark 10:18.)

Why can we know God? Because he loves us and is our Father! Can you see how it all comes back to God's love? It's not complicated. God has never distanced himself from us, but we have often distanced ourselves from him. He proved his love for us by becoming one of us in Jesus, going through the same temptations and trials we do, and even suffering death on a cross! (Hebrews 2.) We do not work for his love and acceptance, we already have it, and the evidence is in Jesus's love, which is so clearly displayed in the gospel books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus died, just like we do, but he overcame death! And by putting our faith in him, and not in our own righteousness, we are linked into a relationship with him where he covers our sins and we

do not have to face judgement for our sins any more!

Jesus taught those who entered the kingdom of God - which is anyone who believes in Jesus - to regard God as their Father. He taught His disciples to address God as "our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). All Jesus' teaching encourages a relationship with the Father that is intimate, close and tender. We need to understand that God as Father is the perfect Father -- He eagerly desires that we rely on Him for all things, whether it be provision (Matthew 6:25-34) and protection (Matthew 10:28-31), or the ability to love the unloved.

### **Is it difficult accepting God as a father?**

None of us have had perfect fathers, and too many have had no father at all. Sin has destroyed countless father-child relationships to the point that they not only function sub-optimally, but in many cases, totally break down. Because we are continually faced with imperfect father figures, our concept of what a father should be becomes distorted and we often, sub-consciously, transfer this to our relationship with God.

So we need to consider what thoughts come to mind when we hear the word 'father.' Is it the loving, gentle, warm, forgiving, protecting, providing, doting father that Scripture reveals? Or have we allowed our earthly fathers and other authority figures to veil who God really is as our Father? We need to ask God to help us set aside our preconceptions and experiences of earthly fatherhood in order that we may relate with Him as He intended. In the words of Floyd McClung, "Don't ever resent the failings of your human parents. They

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are just kids that grew up and had kids. Rather rejoice in the wonderful love of your Father God."

In God we have a perfect Father. We can unreservedly trust Him to always be the same: His character and attributes are both constant and consistent (Matthew 5:43-45, Matthew 7:9-11, James 1:17). Our heavenly Father always has time for us, delights in us, longing that we will come to him not with clasped hands, but open arms, and He desires us to put all our trust in Him. Scripture continually expounds God's passionate love and goodness toward His children. "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:18.) Your real Father is waiting eagerly to reveal Himself to you; all He desires is that you ask Him.

## Scriptures

Below is a list of scriptures highlighting God's love as a father, which will encourage you.

- **Ephesians 1:4b-5a:** "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ."
- **Ephesians 1:11a** "In him we were also chosen."
- **John 1:12-13** "Yet to all who received him, to all who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, ... but born of God."
- **Romans 8:15a** "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship."
- **Galatians 4:4b-5** "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born

under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

- **2 Corinthians 6:18a** “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters.”
- **Psalms 68:5a-b** “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows.”
- **Deuteronomy 10:18a** “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow.”
- **Psalms 146:9a** “The Lord ... sustains the fatherless and the widow.”
- **Psalms 68:6a** “God sets the lonely in families.”
- **Isaiah 54:10** “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”
- **Isaiah 61:8b-9** “In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”
- **Luke 15:21-24** “The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” So they began to

celebrate.”

## **We continually discover this love**

The life of a believer is one of continually discovering this love of God. We'll never touch the bottom of it. For all eternity we'll still be discovering it. There is an infinite depth to know God and his love more and more, and to love each other more and more – forever. And this love of God is found in the face of Jesus Christ. He is, as a poet put it, the “hound of heaven” who continues to pursue us, who never stops loving us.

## **If God loves us, why do we have to believe in Jesus? Isn't that exclusive?**

It is exclusive, but that doesn't mean that it isn't true. Every single person, regardless of age, background, race, income, or any of the other ways we separate ourselves from others, are invited to believe in Jesus. “Every tongue, tribe and nation”. It is an inclusive exclusivity!

Every other religion and philosophy teaches us that our good works earn us some kind of merit with God or the universe, or however God is depicted. At the core of all of our worldly philosophies and religions is self-righteousness. Even philosophies that don't believe in God or gods, such as atheism, do not address humanity's self-righteous problem but, in fact, encourage it. Become an atheist and become more moral than religious people, they say these days. With Jesus, however, it's different. Here we do not earn anything from God or work to become better than someone else, but simply come to God as we are!



## CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

This truth must be unpacked in greater detail for it to make sense. In the next section we will do just that.

## CHAPTER 3:

### SALVATION

We live in an "if ... then ..." world where acceptance is performance orientated and conditional. In the previous chapter we discussed how God's love is not like this at all. He does not save us because of what we do but because he loves us. He loves us because he loves us! Because he is love! (1 John 4:16.) That's it!

What is your response to God when he tells you that he loves you? Do you tenderly receive his love or do you anxiously and actively search for a way to earn his approval? The Gospel (which, by the way, means 'good news') tells us that God gives us eternal life and heaven, today and for eternity, for us *doing nothing at all except trusting Jesus for it*. This means we take our hope off of our own works and what we do and we put our hope and trust in Jesus, knowing what he did on earth and what he does today is enough.

What this all means is often difficult to grasp in a few sentences, which is why the Bible is not a list of bullet points but looks at this from many different angles.

### Let's start at the beginning

In Genesis 3:5, the serpent tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The serpent's

words were, *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**"* Adam and Eve ate from the fruit, and the story shows us that the reason was because they lost trust (faith) in God and rather wanted to be "like God" themselves, knowing (discerning) good and evil.

From that point on, all of us have been disobeying God and **wanting to be God for ourselves**, making up our own rules and justifying ourselves for doing what we do, while judging others for not living up to the rules. We will even use God's righteous requirements, his 'law', as a path of making ourselves look good and justifying ourselves, proving to God that we are righteous – and also, effectively, being God over others. This plays out in a myriad of ways:

## 1. We often see ourselves as more righteous than others

- Think of how we gossip about others sometimes. "So and so said this, and would you believe what happened? Honestly, I can't believe some people!" We love scandal, don't we? But notice when we're caught for falling short of even our own standards we quickly say 'everyone makes mistakes' or 'don't judge lest you be judged' (a misquote from the Bible) or call everyone else a hypocrite. We all have double standards, judging ourselves by our intentions but judging others by their actions. But the scriptures say: *"You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?"* (Romans 2:21.) If we want to hold morality and God's law over others, what about ourselves?

SAVED. FOREVER.

- Sometimes it shows itself in our prejudices - we judge others on their education or race or talent or economic position in life. We judge others on how they dress or speak, where they grew up or went to school, or what they do for a living, and so on.
- We make up whole philosophies and religions that allow us to work ourselves into heaven and improve ourselves, to show just how wonderful we think we really are. Often we'll even build these systems off of God's own Word. We honestly believe that if we just work hard enough and learn how to be smart enough and practice hard enough at good works, we can even be as righteous as God himself. Perhaps we won't state it that way, but we do think that way!
- We'll often even turn social activism into a self-righteous affair, believing we are better than 'those people' who don't 'stand up' for a particular minority group or cause. Western society's intolerance of intolerance is a clear example of our self-righteous hearts. This culture teaches us that those who are more righteous are those who let people do what they want! Western society versus Islam Sharia law is one self-righteous system clashing with another.

## 2. We'll often shift the blame for why we do what we do

- In today's culture, it's popular to pretend as if we're victims of our chemistry, upbringing, social status, etc. Someone may

have hurt us in the past in despicable ways, or we may have been dealt a 'bad card' in life, but that does not mean we are exempt from living according to God's standard.

- Even if we become highly critical of ourselves rather than others, and think of ourselves as 'unworthy' or 'weak', we are actually still shifting blame to some aspect of our personality or upbringing or inability, rather than taking responsibility for what we do and coming to realise we are in need of a saviour. We generally like to avoid repentance.
- Perhaps we'll spiritualise why we act why we do and blame it on the 'sinful nature' or even the devil.
- Sometimes we find life disappointing and begin to judge God or 'life' for our disappointment, and we'll act out in response to this, doing and taking what we want because we apparently 'deserve' it or something along those lines.
- We'll often blame some mysterious group for why things go wrong - it's the fault of all 'those people' who are 'lazy' or 'weak' or 'uneducated' or 'poor' or 'hypocrites' who don't know how to be live according to the accepted standard.

### **Adam blames Eve, Eve blames the serpent**

Notice that the first thing that happens in Genesis after Adam and Eve eat the fruit is Adam blames Eve for tricking him (Genesis 3:12) and Eve

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blames the serpent. While the serpent was guilty, he wasn't the only one guilty! They tried to justify themselves before God and that's the story of humanity throughout history.

The scriptures use different ways to show us the condition of our hearts and our tendency to justify ourselves. Job, a righteous person in the Bible, faced calamity in his life and questioned why, if he was such a good person, did such tragedy come. But Job was "righteous in his own eyes" and "justified himself rather than God" (Job 32:1,2). We are doing this all the time. Adam and Eve's sin shows us how we all have an inherited tendency to disobey God - which is sin - and even be self-righteous about it!

## No one is righteous

*"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."* (Romans 5:12.) Not one single person throughout history, except Jesus, has been free from sin. *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23.) Your sin and our collective sin have caused us all to be separated from God. "But your iniquities have separated you from your God." (Isaiah 59:2a.) This is not because God has separated himself from us, but because we have **all** gone our own way.

Our problem with sin is that we know good and evil, but we can't do anything about it! We tend towards evil even when we try our hardest not to. In fact, the harder we try, the more we find how useless we are! *"For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate... I have the desire to do what is right, but*

*not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me."* (Romans 7:14-20.)

## No good work will do it

**No good work can free you from sin, get you eternal life, or justify you before God.** *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."* (Psalm 51:5.) Even our good works are laced with selfish, self-righteous motivations. **We are all under God's just condemnation for our sin**, which is what the Bible means when it speaks of being under God's law. We are all accountable to God for not living up to his standard, his law. Often we'll try and re-interpret God's law so that it becomes something we can live up to - and we have religions and philosophies that do that - but, eventually, we'll even fall short of our own standards. **None of us can work ourselves into heaven.**

## But there is good news

Is there any escape from the condemnation we are under? Is there any escape from God's righteous requirements? We cannot work ourselves out of it, because sin is always with us. The only escape out of the system is to die.

But then we face God's judgement! And his judgement will be *eternal death* - hell. *"For the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23a) *"The soul that sins is the one who will die."* (Ezekiel 18:4b) *"But as for the*

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*cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*  
(Revelation 21:8.)

But what if someone were to die in our place, take on our punishment, so we would not have to face it and can go free?

## Justified by Jesus

### Isaiah 51:5,6

*"But he [Jesus] was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement  
that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we  
like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his  
own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

Jesus is the escape! He was perfect in every way yet was 'pierced for our transgressions'. God has to give you eternal life on the sole basis of his mercy. And that's precisely what he has done – through Jesus! How does this work, and what does this mean?

**1. When Jesus died on the cross, he became a substitute for the punishment due to us.** He stood in for us and represented us to God, so that his victory over death and sin - evidenced by his resurrection - becomes our victory, through faith in Him.

A substitute in a sports team represents the whole team and when he



wins he wins for the whole team. As Adam represented mankind and his sin became our sin, leading us to sin, so Jesus represented mankind to God and his victories become ours. (Romans 5.) As the scriptures say: *"Jesus Christ laid down his life for us"* (1 John 3:16a) and is the *"propitiation for our sins."* (1 John 2:2.) He died in our place.

## **2. When he died on the cross, he became sin for us**

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

This is the Great Exchange - Jesus knew no sin and never sinned, but on the cross he became sin, suffering the punishment of it, so that your sin would *not* be judged and you would *not* be punished. He took your sin and in exchange you received his perfect righteousness. Think about that - God sees you as righteous before him, because of Jesus! This is what we mean when we say Jesus justified you before God. This is all yours simply by believing in Jesus!

**3. By believing in Jesus, we spiritually enter into his death and die to the law.** What this means we died to what was condemning us - God's standard, his law. We are no longer judged by God's law but are judged by Jesus' work, which was perfect. *"You also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God."* (Romans 7:4.) So you live your life free from condemnation - you need no longer live with guilt! It's all been paid for! The law no longer accuses you because you are in Christ!

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Of course, if we do not put our faith in Jesus we stand condemned because we are still trying to live by our own righteousness, and therefore the law accuses us. We remain prisoners to sin. "But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given *through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*" (Galatians 3:22).

**3. By believing in Jesus, we are also spiritually raised with him and are set free from sin.** God vindicated Jesus even though mankind condemned him to the cross, by raising him from the dead. "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. *For one who has died has been set free from sin.*" (Romans 6: 5-7) You were once a slave to sin, you are now no longer under any obligation to obey your old desires and those things that hold us all captive. You can live the life of Jesus in this world!

We enter into Jesus' eternal life through faith in Him. We are given the Holy Spirit and are united into him. Dying and being raised with Jesus means you are "born again" (John 3:3). You are saved! Then the promise goes further: one day when we physically die, we will also be raised with him physically.

## Justified by faith alone because of Christ alone

**God is the one who is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."** (Romans 3:26.) We tend to want to 'deserve' God's mercy, however, because that's how we like to treat each other. But God has made a better way: a way that is not dependent on our ability to be righteous (we all fail at that) but is dependent on Christ's life, work, death and resurrection: all of which happened in history.

The theological phrase for this Great Exchange, this setting us free, is "justification by faith alone". The only way you are justified is not by your work but by your *faith* - by believing in Jesus. There is no other way, no loophole, no law or code or work that saves you. You are justified by faith alone because of Christ alone.

## Repentance

Coming to faith in Christ Jesus means that, for the first time, you realise that you are personally to blame for the sins you've committed (you 'repent' of your sins) and that no good works of any kind will actually put you into the right with God or even yourself. Jesus began His preaching saying, "The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" To repent does **not** mean that you are sorry for your sins and will, from now, be a good person. That approach means you still are trying to live up to God's standards in your own righteousness. Instead, it means to place your faith fully and only in Christ. You cannot rely on your own works to save you. You can't make yourself good enough for eternal life. Nothing and no-one

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can justify you except God himself. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9.)

So you have to rely solely on His mercy and grace, found in Jesus. It is God, and God only, who justifies you. As Romans 3:24-26 says, you "are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

This is what it means to 'have faith' in Jesus. This is what it means to have 'salvation'. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

## You must receive Christ

### **Colossians 2:6**

*"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him."*

All the promises of Jesus' salvation for you are sure and true, but you must *receive* them - you must *decide* whether you will put your faith in Jesus or not. As writer and theologian R.T. Kendall says, to put your faith in Jesus means, essentially, "to put all your eggs in one basket" - the basket of Jesus Christ. He must be your Lord, which means you

have no other lord. For all spiritual matters you trust Jesus and make him your Lord, throwing away all your other options - philosophies, religions, money, etc.

"I need no other argument  
I need no other plea  
It is enough that Jesus died  
And that He died for me.<sup>1</sup>"

If you haven't already, decide *now*. Will you put all your eggs in the basket of Jesus? Why wait?

## Water Baptism

### **Acts 8:36b**

*"Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised?"*

Once you have decided to put your faith in Jesus, the next step is always water baptism, as it is a public declaration of your faith. It is the outward and visible symbol of your inward, and unseen, rebirth. When we put our faith in Jesus we are "baptised into Christ" (Galatians 3:27). The word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptiso" which means "to immerse, dip, plunge into or bury" and is always used in its intensive form, meaning to *completely submerge*. You are completely submerged into Christ. **Romans 6:3-11** puts it in several ways:

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<sup>1</sup>

*My faith has found a resting place* - a hymn by Eliza Edmunds Hewitt (1851-1920).

*"3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

*"5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

## **1. It is a picture of what has happened**

Going under the water depicts how we are united with Christ in His death, dying to ourselves, and coming up again depicts how we are united with Christ in his resurrection, living our new life. It is a graphic depiction of what has happened to you and an objective event in our lives that we can look back on and remember. This is especially helpful when we are struggling with whether we have really been saved!

## 2. It is a picture of what will happen

It is not only a picture of what has happened to us in our past, but also a picture of our hope to come, where we will physically be resurrected from the dead.

## 3. It is a public confession

Water baptism is also a public confession of our commitment to Jesus. In many cases it is only when Christians are baptised that persecution becomes heavy, because of the public nature of this confession of faith. So *invite your family when you get baptised*. This is it, you're a new person here.

## Questions that may arise:

### Why must I be baptised?

Firstly, Jesus himself was baptised! In Matthew 3:13-17, John the Baptist tries to deter Jesus from being baptised. But Jesus says, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (NIV). Baptism indicated that He was consecrated to God and was approved by God, with the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus and a voice from heaven saying, "This is my son with whom I am well pleased." At Jesus' baptism, John publically declared Him to be the Messiah (a Jewish word for "Saviour". "Christ" is the Greek equivalent.)

Jesus's baptism was an example to His followers. Thus he commanded in Matthew 28:19-20a that we should, ""Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and

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of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

We are baptised into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18, Galatians 3:27). The emphasis on this is to show that this is Christian baptism, not Jewish or pagan or another religion.

## Has the Church always practised baptism?

Baptism has always been a practice of the church, since the beginning. Here are some scriptures where you can find it:

- The first converts in Jerusalem (Acts 2:37-41).
- The Samaritans (Acts 8:12-13).
- The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-38).
- Paul (Acts 9:17, Acts 22:16).
- Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:33-48).
- Lydia and her household (Acts 16:13-15).
- The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-34).
- Crispus and other Corinthians (Acts 18:8).

It is important to understand that baptism, in itself, doesn't save anyone, but for those who repent and believe, it is outward obedience necessary for proving our inward repentance.

**This is why all believers must be baptised.** This is not infant baptism



or adult baptism, but *believers' baptism*. Only believers can be baptised. Baptism is the symbol of existing change, not the cause of change.

### **But what if I was baptised as a baby?**

It's clear that babies cannot repent. Jesus was not baptised as an infant. He was dedicated to the Lord in Luke 2:22, but this did not involve water baptism.

Children who are old enough to understand the gospel and able to exercise personal faith can be baptised. This can happen at a very young age because the gospel is simple enough for a child to understand.

### **I walked away from Christ, but have now made a recommitment. Should I be baptised?**

No. Baptism is a once-for-all act, just as being born again is not a recurring event.

### **What about sprinkling with water?**

Full immersion in water is preferable to sprinkling, as it is what we see in scripture (Acts 8:38-39). If no water is available for some drastic reason, then pouring water over the head is fine, but full immersion is always preferable.

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## When should I be baptised?

As soon as you have come to faith in Jesus! In the early church, people were baptised as soon as they believed. "Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." (Acts 2:41.) Paul was baptised as soon as he believed. Conversion and baptism were almost simultaneous in the early church, often happening on the same day. See, for example, Acts 10:47-48.

## Where must I be baptised?

Anywhere! We don't need baptismal fonts, holy water, etc. The nearest water will do. See, for example, Acts 8:38-40.

## Who can baptise me?

Any believer may baptise you. It does not need to be an elder or pastor or deacon, or any leader of any sort. In scripture we do not see any reason to believe otherwise.

**In conclusion, baptism is a simple act of obedience to the revealed word of God.** It invites God's blessing and establishes us on a godly foundation. "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24)

## What should I do when I get baptised?

Trust God to fill you with his power - with his Holy Spirit. Trust him to empower you and bless you in this wonderful experience of water

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baptism. There is power in the force of the statement you are making, and you enter in to all that God has for you by virtue of your affirmation. Baptism is not a light, 'iffy' thing. Let this be a conviction. Don't be surprised when you come out of the water you are filled with the Holy Spirit and experience something. Do this by faith - trusting God to do what he says.

## CHAPTER 4

### YOUR SALVATION IS SECURE

#### **John 10: 27 – 29**

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

When God justifies you and saves you freely because of Jesus and your faith in him, not because of your good works, there is nothing that will change this. No sin can make you lose your salvation. No good works guarantee it, so how could any sin make you lose it? Neither you, or the devil, or a demon, or anyone else in all the universe can snatch you out of the Father's hand. You are eternally secure. From the moment we repent and believe in Jesus we enter God's kingdom.

#### **Warnings in scripture**

We realise that there are many strong warnings in scripture that can be thought to refer to a loss of salvation. The question is, are they speaking of salvation, or something else? Three points are important here:

## 1. The words *salvation* or *saved* are not technical words in the Bible.

Over the generations these words have become synonymous with the idea of "going to heaven" but the scriptures use these words much more loosely. For example, the New Testament was written in ancient Greek where the word for 'save' is the same word used for 'healed'. Matthew 9:21 says, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well" in our English Bibles, but if we were to translate it literally (word-for-word) it would say, "If only I may touch his garment, I shall be saved." Translators may substitute the word 'saved' for 'well' to make the passage more clear.

*Saved* is also a *present-continuous* word. In other words, it has a beginning and then *continues*. You *are* saved and *are being* saved and *will* be saved. It isn't static.

## 2. Easier-to-understand passages must be given preference

Every picture the Bible paints of our salvation is often clear and very difficult to misinterpret. For example, John 10:27-29 clearly says no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand. Romans 8:31-39 clearly says that *nothing* can separate us from the love of Christ. The pictures used throughout the scriptures of being 'born again' or 'adopted as a son' (Romans 8:14 - 17; John 1:12-13; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 1:4-6) are pictures that cannot be reversed. Scripture goes even further to indicate that we were *predestined* for salvation!

### **Ephesians 1:3-10**

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*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 **he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will**, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

One cannot be born again and then unborn again, and then born again, again. God does not adopt you as a son or daughter and then un-adopt you, and then adopt you again when you behave accordingly. You cannot be predestined and then unpredestined because you've done something wrong. All this would mean God's love is conditional after all! Not even Satan himself is able to snatch you from the Father's hand - is he more powerful than God?

These scriptures are easy to read and understand, whereas scriptures that could point to a loss of salvation are usually notoriously difficult to understand. For example, **Hebrews 6:4-6** says:

*"For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared*

*in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt."*

Even theologians struggle with this passage! Further Bible study is required, and we cannot touch on every passage and detail here. This is why we study the Bible throughout our lives, as there are many treasures to explore!

### 3. God wants to give us more than entrance to heaven

The context of the passage of Hebrews 6 above indicates that it isn't your salvation in view but your *inheritance* - the "more" God wants to give you in addition to your salvation. This is why Hebrews 6:12 talks of *inheriting* promises. Your inheritance is what God wants to give you in *addition* to heaven. Note that Jesus says, "great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12) but does **not** say, "heaven is your great reward." We are able to get rewards in heaven through our works of faith to God, but we do not get heaven through such works. Heaven and salvation are free, but God wants to reward you for what you do as well. Isn't it exciting that we do not have to work for our salvation but that God also does honour our work by giving us even more than salvation?

Our inheritance is a running theme throughout scripture and most of the warning passages refer to a loss of the 'more' God wants to give us. We see, in the Old Testament, that God saves Israel out of Egypt but

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also promises them an *inheritance* - the promised land. God never abandoned Israel even when Israel abandoned God. He never sent them back to Egypt, but many people did not get to enter the promised land - they didn't possess their inheritance. Likewise, God will never abandon you or send you to hell or leave you in sin, but you can lose the extra blessing he wants to give by sin in your life.

After speaking of being predestined in Christ, Ephesians 1 continues by saying (vs 11 - 14) that:

*"In him we have obtained an **inheritance**, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guaranteed of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

The Christian life is about enjoying God and *working* and serving him. Our works are rewarded and we can eventually take possession of the inheritance God has for us. For each of us this inheritance might look a little different as God unfolds and reveals his will and call for us.

But there is no single picture in the scriptures that describes salvation (justification) that indicates that it can be lost. Once we are saved our salvation is protected by Jesus - no one can rob us of it. Not even ourselves! The question is, who saved you? God did. He worked this



out ahead of time. You can't lose it if you didn't do it, and you didn't do it - God did it! God's predestined salvation is indeed a mystery, but is a profound, joyous mystery!

### **Does this mean I can sin as much as I want?**

Why would you want to? "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:15.) God has made us 'new creatures' (2 Corinthians 5:17) so why would anyone still want to live in their old, sinful habits and addictions? Those things led to death! (Romans 6:21.) God has an inheritance for you that brings far more joy than any sin can offer. Why go back to the things that destroyed when you can have the things that give life?

### **Saved for good works**

Sin does not mean God will reject you, but it does mean you will live a life that God does not reward. How could he reward sin? Sin does not do anyone good, including ourselves. The exciting reality of our Christian life is that we are not saved *by* good works but are saved *for* good works. We have an amazing opportunity to actually love people without hidden agendas or any of what we do becoming about our own righteousness or self-justification, because the Holy Spirit lives in us! God has a purpose and plan for your life, and has prepared good works in advance for you to do. (Ephesians 2:10.) He rewards us over and above our salvation for these good works! There is more for you, even though you already have it all!

**But, right now, I don't feel saved or assured of my salvation.**

This is normal. There are times when a Christian does not feel saved. Our emotions are affected by the environment around us, and we may in fact feel very alone, and at times even deserted by God. There are going to be days when you will sin and you will have to deal with the subsequent guilt. There will even be days where you will do rather well, but will still deal with guilt! This is because we still live in a sinful world in our mortal bodies.

There are some helpful approaches to this predicament.

**1. You must remember that Christ's death and resurrection is an objective reality** - it has nothing to do with your feelings. Jesus really did die and really was raised, and his Word declares you righteous because of your faith in Him, whether you feel it or not. He has said it, so it is true. Romans 8:1 plainly says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We must, with maturity, tell ourselves to believe the Word of God.

**2. We will find that often our sins will make us question whether we are saved. But we must always remember that we were saved because of God's mercy and because of Jesus, not because of anything we did.** This doesn't change! The Christian life is one of growing in our faith and trust in Jesus, not becoming victors over sin by our own willpower and strength. We continue to live in repentance and faith and never graduate from God's mercy and grace, trusting Jesus for forgiveness and deliverance. You must put your faith in Christ, not your own ability or how good you feel about yourself! This

can grow your faith - although that doesn't mean we should live a life of sin! "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1.) As you put more faith in Christ you will become more like Jesus, and love as he loved, but this is done by faith in Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by your own strength and effort.

**3. But none of this means the Christian life is just exercising faith with no experience.** You can expect to feel and experience emotions which assure you that you are, in fact, a child of God. It will come. Some days will be better than others, but you can expect it. The Bible clearly points out that the Holy Spirit can bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16.) This experience will involve our emotions.

The emotions and feelings which are the product of faith are in fact a bonus; an extra; "the cream on the pudding". They are not to become the basis of our faith, nor are they to become our main objective and goal. They come as we seek to obey the Word of God, but they will come, and we can expect to experience feelings of excitement, peace and well-being.

## CHAPTER 5:

### OUR HOPE - CONFIDENT IN GOD AND HIS PROMISES

#### **1 Peter 1:3-5**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

As Christians we have tremendous hope. We don't mean wishful thinking or a vague desire, like when you say "I *hope* I will win the lottery." Instead, what we mean is a sure *confidence* and *expectation* - we know that we know that God is faithful and will always do what he promises. We know that, despite how things might look or play out today, God will always come and put things right. The world may be in chaos but God is in control. We can face death knowing that we will have eternal life with God, so we echo 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

This kind of hope is a significant part of our salvation, because it is about faith. There is so much we have a confident hope for in our lives. It's not just about death and the life to come, but also promises we are walking in now.

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- We're confident we'll grow in godliness and glory, being brought more fully into God's very own righteousness and holiness.
- We're confident we'll grow in love. Love to God, love to others, and even love to ourselves.
- We're confident we will rely more on the Holy Spirit and live and abide with God more and more. We know that God will treat us as sons, and that his discipline is in love toward us, and we will grow through all he does (Hebrews 12:7).
- We're confident we'll enjoy God more and more, being filled with his very joy (Galatians 5:22; Psalm 16:11).
- We're confident that God will continue to give us "everything to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17) - which means all the good things he gives us like family, relationships, and so on. Our Christian life is not about pursuing the good things of this earth but is also not about depriving ourselves of good things. Rather, it's about being content in what God has provided and will continue to richly provide to us.
- We're confident God will continue to use us, call us, gift us, and give us purpose throughout our lives - regardless of our

age or situation in life.

- We're confident that God will bless our marriages, our families, our businesses and ministries, our relationships, in his perfect wisdom and purposes. Our Christianity is not a stagnant, same-old, same-old thing every day, but is full of surprise and purpose and *life*. We celebrate God's creation and enjoy our life and all he has given us, knowing there is always more in God.
- We're confident that our suffering has meaning and that there will be joy in our suffering. While we know God will bless us, we also know that it's not all roses. There will be suffering in our life. But he is with us in it. We may never know, in this life, why we went through what we did, but we will know that God is good and his purposes are always good. Life is never random but God's purposes will always work out.
- We're confident that the good news (gospel) of God's Kingdom will be preached to all the nations, and we have a part to play in that, before the end comes (Matthew 24:14).
- We're confident that the suffering of this world is not forever. We don't hold on for dear life and wish to die so we can be away from the frustrations of our world, but we rather seek God to show us what it is he is doing in our suffering, and how he wants to use it for his purposes. This also makes us look

even more confidently to the new heavens and new earth to come. Our final confidence is that, one day, God will put everything right.

## What is heaven about?

Hollywood and bestselling books have frequently painted a picture of heaven that is, quite frankly, weird. Our many strange traditional and cultural ideas of heaven are also usually all wrong. Perhaps you've often wondered to yourself, "Why would I even want to go to heaven? It seems boring being a spirit and playing a harp, hanging in the clouds."

## Eternal life is now

God has given us eternal life already, which is defined as knowing God in John 17:5. We live with the Holy Spirit today, and get to enjoy the 'resurrected life' in the Spirit. He is our joy, our helper, our comforter, our friend, who guides us into all truth, makes us confident in God, and will never leave us as orphans. Our salvation is the most wonderful and significant experience and event in our lives, as part of it includes the Holy Spirit dwelling in and with us. We are saved out of a life of sin and separation from God and into a new life of relationship and purpose with God – a life which He has prepared in advance for us.

But we don't experience this eternal life in its complete fullness. God gives the Spirit without measure (John 3:34) yet there is still more for us. The Christian life is often made up of 'already, but not yet' principles. We have a taste or glimpse of heaven here on earth, but we

don't get it all. We'll get it all when Jesus physically returns to earth, which is called the "second coming".

### **John 14:1-3**

*"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me (Jesus). In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."*

When he comes, he will take us with him. But the scriptures do not say that we will live on some ethereal plain with Jesus forever as ghostly spirits, but rather that God's ultimate plan is to make a "new heavens and a new earth" and give us new bodies (2 Corinthians 5). From the beginning, it has always been God's plan to dwell with mankind on earth. The ultimate picture painted in Revelation 21 is one where heaven and earth are joined, and mankind and God dwell together, forever.

### **Revelation 21:**

*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death*



*shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

*5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."*

## **The new heavens and earth is our home**

The Bible tells us that the Kingdom of Heaven is that place where God lives and rules, and that we are citizens of this Kingdom. We get to taste the future, now. We also get to live the future out, now, in the way we live and the way we love other people. One day there will be no more tears or pain. Part of our purpose - the good works God has for us to do - is to bring that to the world.

We will reign with Jesus in a new heavens and new earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the ruler of all creation and has been given all authority in creation. This is expressed in Ephesians 1:20-23:

*"... Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*

Our relationship with Jesus is so intimate that we are described as

being "in Christ" (See Ephesians 1:3-13 and Colossians 3:3.) We live now as "aliens" on earth though our home is heaven (Philippians 3:20). Our future is to know God and to enjoy Him forever.

## So what happens when I die?

### **Hebrews 9:27,28**

*"And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."*

We only live once. We do not get re-incarnated as fish or birds or other people. We don't become the universe or become assimilated into Nirvana.

When a believer dies his earthly body ceases to function as his spirit leaves and is immediately present with God (2 Corinthians 5:4-8). What this means, exactly, is unknown. But we know that death for a believer is not annihilation or ceasing to exist, but living forever in the presence of the Lord (Matthew 22:31-32). That's why "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).

But one day we will also receive our new body when God creates the new heavens and new earth. This is called our physical resurrection, or our glorification, in the scriptures. At the resurrection our bodies will be changed and raised up as incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). God will supernaturally reassemble our matter into a glorious new eternal

body.

### **Philippians 3: 20,21**

*"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."*

When Jesus was raised from the dead, it's clear that there was something different about his body, even though it was the same body. His disciples never immediately recognised him when he was in his new body (see John 20:15, John 21:4, Luke 24:13-35). Jesus' resurrection is significant, and separates Jesus from all the false messiahs and prophets, for none of them have been resurrected from the dead (Romans 1:4). We see clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 that Jesus is both the pioneer and forerunner of all believers, who will all be resurrected like He was.

### **Will all people be resurrected from the dead?**

There will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (Acts 24:14-16; 1 Peter 1:3-5). John 5:28-29 says, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

This is vitally important for our faith as it gives us an eternal perspective of life. It is our hope! When we are suffering we know this

life is not all there is, but that God has eternal plans and that his plans and purposes and calling on our lives fits in with these amazing plans. You don't just get to change people's lives with the Gospel for the now, but for *eternity*.

## PART 2: CHRIST IN US

### **Ephesians 3:16-19**

*I pray that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

## CHAPTER 6

### THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### **Matthew 3:11**

*I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*

To become a Christian you don't need to go through several steps, jump through hoops, or prove yourself worthy. Instead you simply repent, believe in Jesus, and you are saved (Acts 16:31).

But God wants to do more in you and through you and with you and for you. He has a calling and purpose he has for you to fulfil. He wants you to be able to enjoy your salvation to its fullest and mature in it. He wants to enrich your relationship with him, empower you with gifts, give you daily nourishment and joy, and make you fruitful in your call. He wants to give you everything you need for "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), all that you need for combating sin and the influence of the devil in your life. He wants to use you to accomplish his Kingdom purposes – to tear down the darkness of this world and bring in his light. All this, and more, is accomplished through God giving us the Holy Spirit.

## Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. Most people struggle at the idea of the "Trinity" - how can God be three persons but yet one? It's a mystery. There are some analogies that might help, but they very easily break down and have too many limitations. One example that may help is marriage. Think of how a married couple are two distinct people yet 'one' **in unity**. Their marriage makes them 'one'. But even this has limitations in fully helping us to grasp the infinite God! The reality is our relationship to the Triune God is more experienced than logically understood, and in an experiential sense it's actually not difficult to grasp.

The main point here is to note that the Holy Spirit is a *person*. He is not an impersonal force or merely the power of God operative in the world. He is not "the universe" or *karma*. He is not an "it" but a "Him". He is not subordinate to God or God's servant, but is God.

The Bible shows him possessing the characteristics of a person (intelligence and thought, speech and language, as well as feelings and emotions) and performing the actions of a person (leading, guiding, working, giving, fellowshiping, convicting, teaching, comforting, counselling, and even praying for us [Romans 8:26,27]). We see the Holy Spirit also possesses the attributes of God (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience and immortality) and he performs or shares in the works of God (creation, revelation, conviction, regeneration, sanctification and resurrection).

If the Holy Spirit is a person, we can have a relationship with him, just like we do with the Father and Jesus. Just as to know Jesus is to know the Father (John 14:7-9), so to know the Spirit is to know Jesus (and vice versa).

## What does it mean to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit? Why is it important?

### **John 14:16-18**

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

When depicting the Holy Spirit, the scriptures sometimes use the pictures of fire, wind, oil, and a dove. This is picture language to describe what the Spirit does and how we experience Him. Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to the Church, which means the corporate body (all of us, together) and each of us as individuals. As part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is involved in all the works of God.

- He played a special role in creation, revelation, God's dealings with Israel and the incarnation of Christ.
- He is involved in the Church: He indwells it, unifies it, gives gifts to its members for the edifying of the body, ordains and equips its leaders, and stirs us to our mission.
- He always glorifies Jesus and points to Jesus.

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- Even before we put our faith in Christ, it is the Spirit who convicts a person and draws them to Christ (John 6:44, John 16:8-11).
- The Holy Spirit works with, and is, the Word of God – and this Word creates faith (Romans 10:17, John 6:63).
- At the moment of conversion it is the Spirit that regenerates a person's spirit and causes them to be born again (John 3:5-8, Titus 3:5).
- From that moment on, therefore, every believer is indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8:9) and thereby also sealed by Him: the indwelling is like a deposit guaranteeing the full payment (of salvation) at Christ's return (Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30, 2 Corinthians 1:22).
- For the rest of our lives the Spirit walks with us - assuring, sanctifying, fellowshiping with, leading, guiding, teaching, inspiring and giving gifts to us.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to fulfill Jesus commands to us and imparts gifts to us to enable us to complete what we are called to do. He produces his fruit within and through us (Galatians 5:22).
- The giving of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the coming Kingdom (Luke 11:20, Acts 1:4-8).

## How can I have a relationship with the Holy Spirit?

It's simple: pray and ask Jesus to make it so. When you do that, there are a few things you can expect.



## 1. A baptism in the Spirit

We have already seen that every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the moment of coming to faith in Jesus (regeneration/rebirth). But the testimony of both scripture and millions of believers is that there is an experience of empowering in the Holy Spirit subsequent to first coming to faith.

- Jesus was surely indwelt by the Holy Spirit from birth, yet he needed to be anointed by the Spirit (to receive Him in a fuller and different way) before he began His public ministry. In Matthew 3:16 we see this happen - "And when Jesus was baptised, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him."
- The disciples seemed to receive the Holy Spirit before Jesus ascended (John 20:22) and yet had to wait in Jerusalem for a subsequent powerful baptism of the Holy Spirit before embarking on their public ministry (See Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1-4).
- The Samaritans believed when Philip preached to them and were therefore, from that moment, indwelt by the Spirit (Acts 8:12). Yet Peter and John still found it necessary to pray for them to "receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them" with a subsequent infilling

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and empowering (Acts 8:14-17).

- Paul (Acts 9:17) and possibly Apollos (Acts 18:24-26) and the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:1-6) also experienced a filling subsequent to conversion.

John prophesied that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, John 1:33) and Jesus clearly identified this subsequent powerful anointing (a 'pouring over') as the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). He stated in Luke 24:49 that we would be "clothed" with "power from on high." In most occasions this is mentioned in scripture there is experiential language used, such as 'fire', linked to this event.

"Baptism" (which means "immersion") is picture language. In water baptism we are literally immersed in water. The picture is relevant for Spirit baptism as well. In Spirit baptism the experience is often so overwhelming and transforming that we speak of being "immersed" in the Holy Spirit. Some may also speak of the Spirit being "released" through us in power to the world.

## 2. God's presence and power in a bigger way

### **Acts 2:1-13**

*1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with*

*the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

*5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."*

Here we see that the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled the believers with *tongues* (verse 4), which acted as a sign to the unbelievers that God was doing something. It got their attention. While not quoted above, the narrative continues from verse 14 with Peter preaching to a crowd of thousands, and many believing in Jesus. Peter seems to be a very different person than before with a new boldness and ability. The Holy Spirit empowered them all in a new way.

There is then, beyond the indwelling of the Spirit in every believer after coming to faith in Jesus, a definite and tangible occasion in which

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the Holy Spirit comes upon us and fills us - anointing, empowering and equipping us both for life (to be able to live the life God wants us to live) and ministry (to be able to do the things he wants us to do). The baptism of the Holy Spirit brings a totally new dimension of God's presence, person and power into our lives. We will find that we truly experience God in new and tangible ways, and we find that we grow in our anointing and empowering and experience.

For some of us, our initial baptism in the Spirit might not be as dramatic as others, but nevertheless we should begin to experience God and hear his voice much more clearly and distinctively. We cannot fulfil the Christian life or the specific call God has for us without the Holy Spirit. He will provide us with power over sin, as well as gifts, guiding us as we go along, and anointing us more for the call he has for us.

### 3. A continual immersion

"Immersion" means to "go in and stay in". In water baptism we go under the water and come out, in Spirit baptism we go in and stay in. Yet the Spirit is effectively the one who empowers us to live the "resurrected life" - depicted in water baptism when we come out (see Romans 6-8). The "resurrected life" is us living the new life in power and perfect love, in God's presence and leading.

To be baptised in the Spirit, therefore, is not a once-off event but is also a *continuous* event which we grow in and enjoy and live in as we mature in Christ. Nothing in the Christian life is static. There is always more in God! Therefore, if you have experienced a baptism in the

Spirit, trust God for more "infillings" and more "release" of the Spirit through you to others – more of what he has given you, more of him. Our Christian life is one where we look back and thank God for his amazing gifts, and look forward trusting him for even more.

#### 4. A fruitful life

Life with the Holy Spirit is a life of fruitfulness. Specifically, the Holy Spirit produces the kind of fruit in our lives that transform us into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Galatians 5:22 lists the fruit of the Spirit: *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."* As we grow in faith in Christ, God forms us into people possessing these fruits. What an amazing promise!

With the Holy Spirit we participate in the life of God, who is love (1 John 4:8). Perfect, joyous, never-ending, love. It is all ours through faith in Jesus and keeping in step with the Spirit, living by him, listening to him, fellowshiping with him, living out his mission of perfect love to the world, and enjoying him.

#### 5. The Kingdom working through you

The giving of the Spirit to the Church is the inauguration, sign and guarantee of the coming Kingdom. The Kingdom of God can be defined as wherever the rule and reign of God is. Revelation 21:4 tells us that when Jesus comes back and establishes the fullness of his Kingdom, he will wipe away all tears and *"death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* The rule and reign of God brings peace, joy, life in its fullness, contentment, abundance, and the end of

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sickness, death and emotional pain.

Jesus links the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit together throughout his ministry in the gospel accounts. (For example, Matthew 3:2-12; Luke 11:20; and also Acts 1:2-8). The giving of the Spirit is a promise for all who are called (Acts 2:39).

Believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit have a “foretaste” of the Kingdom of God in their own lives. Christians are also, therefore, able to expect the Kingdom of God to manifest in powerful ways in and through their lives and ministries, just like it did through Jesus, which we see in the many healings, miracles and casting out of demons he performed. In Luke 11:20, Jesus notes that the casting out of demons is because the Kingdom of God has come. Healings and miracles take place when God decides to demonstrate the future Kingdom, where death and sickness is no more, right now in our time.

Jesus therefore empowers us to bring his Kingdom rule and therefore substantial change wherever we are. Sometimes he will demonstrate the Kingdom through us by our character, our love, our compassion, our creativity, and our ability to suffer with others. Sometimes he will demonstrate the Kingdom through us by healings, miracles, and signs and wonders. We are to expect all of this because the Spirit empowers us to lead lives of Kingdom love and power into a broken and lost world.

### How do I receive all this?

Once again, simply ask God. If you have faith in Jesus, you don't need

to wait or graduate in some way to be baptised by the Spirit, but can receive this baptism *today*. (See Acts 10:44.)

Trust and believe that God will do it. Surrender to him and thirst for him. (See John 7:37-39.) Relax and receive from Him. He is faithful and will do what he says.

### **Does someone have to pray for me to get all this?**

It can be helpful to have people encouraging, guiding and praying for us, but this is by no means obligatory. Those ministering may exercise the laying on of hands (this is a scriptural pattern for imparting the Spirit) but again this is not a prerequisite. Any Christian can administer the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:10, Acts 9:17) as long as they are sincere (Acts 8:21). They need not be leaders. But those ministering are always merely a channel: Jesus is the One who baptises, He asks the Father for the Holy Spirit and pours him out on us.

There are many ways the Spirit pours out on people and the way people respond (John 3:8). He comes as a mighty wind but also as a gentle breeze, as a powerful wave but also as gentle dew. That there is often a marked spiritual, emotional, mental or even physical impact when the Spirit comes upon us should not surprise us: our finite being is being encountered and filled by the infinite God! But the response differs from person to person: some laugh, others cry; some are quiet, others are boisterous; some testify particularly to joy, others to peace, love or freedom. The experience is so obvious to outsiders in certain instances that they might even think you are drunk, as they did in Acts 2:13! Peter then had to say, "These people are not drunk, as you

suppose." (Acts 2:15.)

In some way we will know that we have been touched by God. Thus, while we can believe in faith that God has heard and answered our request to be baptised in the Holy Spirit, and should not get into a crisis when "nothing happens" immediately, we always encourage people to persevere in their thirsting and asking until there is a definite breakthrough. When the Holy Spirit fills us it's unmistakable!

### **What is speaking in tongues?**

This gift often gets a lot of airtime and there are so many misunderstandings of it. It's also often been abused and incorrectly used. For this reason we need to touch on it here.

Various spiritual gifts may be given to the believer when they are baptised in the Holy Spirit, and normally these are only discovered later. However, people often begin to speak in tongues at the time of being baptised (Acts 2:4, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 19:6). What is important to remember is that all spiritual gifts, while exercised by the individual, are given for the strengthening of the body - the Church. (1 Corinthians 12 expounds on this.) Tongues is a part-exception: while it has public use and benefit, there is also a private use and benefit. It edifies the believer (1 Corinthians 14:2, 1 Corinthians 14:4) and greatly heightens both our worship (John 4:24) and our intercession (Romans 8:26).

Tongues is essentially a heavenly language (1 Corinthians 13:1) or an earthly language that you don't actually know how to speak (Acts 2:4).



In Acts 2:1-13 we see an example of it being an earthly language, and the reason for the gift was quite practical: it got the attention of those around it who heard the believers telling them in their "own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11.) It amazed and perplexed them, and they said to one another "What does this mean?" (verse 12.) Therefore, it functioned as a tool for evangelism.

Tongues is also a sign of God reversing what occurred at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). There, the outcome was the division of mankind; now, the outcome is the unity of mankind under Christ. It is a sign showing that the Church is made up of "every tribe and tongue" (Revelation 7:9) and that the gospel destroys the barriers that are between us (Ephesians 2:14) bringing peace and unity between culture, ethnicity, socio-economic groups, and so on.

As a 'heavenly language' it is quite practical, too. Often we may not know what to pray, so God gives us the words. 1 Corinthians 14:2 says, "For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit." These words don't have to be in our own language. Prayer is important to God and he wants us to talk to him and ask him and praise him. There may be an urgency, a reason why we must pray, that is beyond our understanding or ability to actually express. So God enables us to pray.

### **Does everyone have to speak in tongues?**

Scripture does not record (as some have alleged) that people spoke in tongues on every occasion that they were baptised in the Spirit. So we

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cannot insist (as some have) that people must speak in tongues to be baptised in the Spirit or, conversely, that they have not been baptised in the Spirit unless they speak in tongues. Scripture clearly states that not every Christian must or will speak in tongues.

But we believe that every Christian can speak in tongues. Paul said he spoke in tongues and wished that all would speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18; 14:5): he would not have said this if it were not possible.

## CHAPTER 7

### HOLINESS

#### **2 Peter 1:3-4**

*“His divine power has granted to us **all things** that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become **partakers of the divine nature**, having **escaped** from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”*

#### **Romans 8:29**

*“...those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed** to the image of his Son.”*

#### **2 Corinthians 3:17,18**

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image** from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*

These three scriptures highlight one of God's most amazing promises in the Bible: *that he is transforming us into people who are like Jesus,*

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*in word and deed, thought and heart.* This ongoing transformation process is called *sanctification* or *holiness*. This is a work done by God's Spirit, with us participating in his work.

### Set free from sin

God has completely and utterly saved you by his grace and not by any of your righteous works. He has justified you freely. And then, even more, he has set you free from sin. It's not only that you are forgiven for your sins, or that you can ask for forgiveness when you sin and receive it freely, but that God is actually setting you free from sin for good. Before you came to Christ you were a slave to sin. Then, when you came to Christ, God set you free and made you a slave to righteousness.

#### **Romans 6:17, 18**

*"Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."*

#### **Titus 3:3-5**

*"For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of*

*regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”*

What is it like being a slave to righteousness? This is strong language. Perhaps you can remember what it was like being a slave to sin. Did sin have tremendous power and influence over you and your thoughts and your actions? Well, those days are now gone! **Righteousness now holds even more power over you!** Righteousness has tremendous power and influence over your thoughts and actions. This was achieved by God's power and not your own. It is all God's work and not your own. He has done this already and is working out the reality of it in your life. He has set you free and is setting you more free from sin every day, so long as you remain in faith and let him do it, participating in obedience to his Spirit.

## Set apart by God for God

### 1 Corinthians 6:11

*“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

The word 'sanctify' means, literally, 'set apart'. God is holy because he is set apart from our world, in the sense that he is higher, more glorious, and above all. Yet he is not holy in the sense that he is separated from all. In fact, **God shows us that holiness is not about being separated but being actively involved in the world for the sake of love.** This is why Jesus, the Holy One, came to earth as a man and died in our place. Instead of holiness being something where we avoid the world and separate ourselves from it, holiness is about being set apart for God's mission purposes fueled by love – engaging the world

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and bringing the Gospel to it, because this is a world living in physical and spiritual darkness and suffering.

### Be holy

#### **1 Peter 1:14-16**

*14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

The Christian life is a call to holiness. Our personal holiness has a positive effect on the world. We are to be different to this world. We are to act differently, have different ambitions and goals, and see things differently. We are to live righteously before God and toward others. The reality is that our personal holiness is how we push against the darkness of the world and specifically the evil influence of the devil. We cannot make ourselves holy, God is the one who does that, but we can set ourselves apart in a way that gives God the space to do his work. We can be obedient to his work.

We are to look outwards. Righteous living is about love, not our justification (God has taken care of that), and perfect love lived out is the holy life. Our righteousness is found in Christ - he has made us righteous. We live that righteousness out to the world so that the world may come to Christ!

#### **1 John 3: 23, 24**

*23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of*

*his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments [these two – to believe in Jesus and love one another] abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*

God's commandments are simple: believe in Jesus and love others. This is not a complex system of morality, even though it can be difficult to do.

The primary motivation of living a holy life is what God has done for us. A holy life is lived in response to his love, acceptance, forgiveness, and setting us free from sin already. **We do not live a holy life to be set free from sin, but instead God has set us free from sin so that we can live a holy life.** He empowers us by his Spirit to do it, and – so long as we continue to trust in him and participate with him in this work – he fulfils his promise to transform us into becoming more like Jesus.

## So what is holiness?

### Negatively, holiness is not:

- Superiority and Pharisaism
- Niceness (anyone can be nice!)
- Morality (non-Christians can be moral. Holiness is more than that.)
- Mystical wisdom
- Being a hermit, living an ascetic lifestyle

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- A life of avoiding the good things God has created (such as good food, family, music, and so on)
- Harshness
- Exclusiveness

### **Positively, holiness is:**

- A cleansing
- Openness and being teachable
- Christ-likeness
- Dedication to God
- Assurance of faith
- Graciousness to ourselves and others
- Endurance in trial
- Consecration to God's work
- Goodness without self-consciousness
- Open to the Spirit's conviction
- Living in the sight of God
- A purity of heart that leads to a living in God
- Living for God's glory
- Making war against evil
- Transparency
- Ease
- Fearlessness



- Patience
- Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22)

## Participating in the Spirit's work

### **Romans 12:1 (NIV)**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, **in view of God's mercy**, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.*

It's in view of God's mercy and forgiveness and love that we live a holy life. God does the work in us and God does his Kingdom work through us, but we are to *participate* in his work that he does in us and through us. You are not being coerced into God's work, this is a free participation that you can either reject or submit to. The choice is yours. God is setting you free from sin, so why go back to sin when it was your destruction? God is using you for his purposes to make war against evil, through your life - so why make the old deals we used to make with evil and live as we used to live?

### **Romans 6:**

*6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion*

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over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.** 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time

*from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

In view of God's salvation – which includes setting us free from slavery to sin – we are to not allow ourselves to go back to sin. This is not because our salvation can be lost, but because the experience and fruitfulness of our salvation and God's purposes through us will not be experienced or lived out if we continue in sin. Sin is of the devil, you are of God. What business have you to do with the devil? God's intention is to give you all you need to fulfil the good works he has prepared in advance for you to do, so that he can *reward* you for those works. Why go back to death when you have been given life? Why miss out on all the things God wants to give you?

Therefore we are encouraged to add to our faith, to supplement it with certain things, to make our lives more fruitful in the calling of God we have to the world. *Our work for God is not so we can be saved or even sanctified, but so that we can love others as he loves them, fulfilling his Kingdom mission more effectively and enjoying the benefits of our salvation in a greater way.*

## **2 Peter 1:3 - 8**

*“3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his*

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own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement **your faith** with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, **they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God gives us all we need to live lives without sin, even if some sins (like addictive sins) take a great deal of work and time to get rid of. Our freedom does not give us the space to fall into licentiousness and fall back into slavery to sin, but to live in the freedom we have – and live in it all the more as we trust in Jesus and live our Christian life out.

### **Romans 12:2**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

You are to be transformed – in other words, allow this transformation to take place. You are not doing the transforming, he is! But you must submit to his work!

## The danger of legalism

It is usually in the doctrine of sanctification that we can “sneak works in through the back door”. In Romans 6, quoted above, it said we are no longer 'under law'. Christians can sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that Christianity is all about measuring up to rules and regulations and moral laws and codes, even to the degree that we can lose our salvation if we can't measure up. We begin to think it's all about the music you listen to and the movies you watch, and a thousand other things that are actually secondary issues. **This is completely unbiblical.** In fact, it is the heresy of legalism. **Salvation is not a loan that we have to pay back with good works and righteous deeds.** Salvation is freely given simply by trusting (having faith in) Jesus, and putting our trust in his work.

## Jesus fulfilled the law

### Matthew 5: 17 - 20

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.** 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.** 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 **For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**

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Jesus has *fulfilled* the Old Testament law. To fulfil it means to *complete* it. If something is completed, it does not mean that something falls away, only that it has met its purpose, its completion. The reason why the law will never fall away is because God's righteous standard will never fall away – people will always fall short of it and will always need salvation in Christ. But that doesn't mean we are under the Old Testament law as Christians. Note how Jesus says we need to go *beyond* the law (the “righteousness of the Pharisees”). Jesus explains why he says this by showing how much we need to go beyond the law in Matthew 5 - 7, such as showing us that if we harbour anger we are liable to judgement (Matthew 5:20-26) or if we look at someone with lustful intent we are committing adultery in our heart (Matthew 5:28), amidst other examples. The law can never reach the heart, but God's intent has been to change our hearts and deliver us from our evil inclinations – something only he can do. So we put our faith in him to do it.

As Jesus said, the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and the second, “love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37,39). It goes beyond keeping rules to the realm of *love*. The Christian is not under the Old Testament law but is under the 'law' of love. “*The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*” (Galatians 5:14). We live *beyond* the law and morality, because love goes beyond these. We love as Jesus loves. As Romans 13:10 says, “*Love is the fulfillment of the law.*”

## Discipline in love

Love does not mean God affirms everybody's lifestyle and never challenges anyone about the way they are living. You do not love a drug addict by affirming their lifestyle. Therefore, in the way we live out God's love, it doesn't mean we affirm everything people are doing either. Rather, we challenge in love. God knows that a life of sin leads to a life of destruction, so in love he disciplines us and corrects us to come right.

### Hebrews 12

*4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?*

*“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.*

*6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

*7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, **that we may share his holiness.** 11 For the moment all discipline*

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*seems painful rather than pleasant, but **later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.***

*12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint **but rather be healed.** 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

A loving father knows that he must discipline his children so that they will have a good, fruitful life, with the skill to navigate through it better, and that they will be effective in his Kingdom work. God is the same. He does discipline us, but that does not mean he doesn't love us or has rejected us. The very opposite is true! He disciplines in love, having perfect wisdom as to what is going to be a more fruitful life.

In our love to the world we are called to be salt and light. (Matthew 5:13-16.) This means that sometimes we have to say and do things people don't like. Jesus said many things people didn't like and frequently encouraged people to "go and sin no more". His kind of love is the kind of love we must model, and in God's power he is transforming us into people who know how to love people in a way that we correct them in love when they need to be corrected – and in a way when we can take correction when we need to be corrected!



## God promises to do it

Sanctification is God's promise, and is part and parcel of your salvation. If you continue in faith, he *will* complete the work he began in you.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:23,24**

*23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*

## CHAPTER 8

### THE BIBLE

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

This scripture above shows us how we are to use scripture – to be *equipped* for every good work. The Bible, therefore, is a very practical book. It's not full of hidden secrets and esoteric wisdom, but is God's revelation to us about himself and how to live. There is no “Bible Code” to break. It is not a book of rules and laws and information but a book that is used for the purposes of enriching our relationship with Christ. Therefore, we don't approach it in a purely cerebral way, looking to become more clever, but we approach it with an open heart, ready to hear what God says to us, personally and corporately.

The Bible, while being a very practical book, does require consistent study and attention. It is a very layered collection of books, with more and more treasures to uncover the more we get to know it, the more we understand the context each of its books were written in, the more we come to know God and his will and ways. Essentially it goes deeper than just what we read on the surface – especially as it begins to speak to our hearts. And it's our hearts that it works on and changes, transforming us to being more like Christ.

We cannot go into too much detail here on all the questions that arise around this topic, except lay a foundation of what the Bible means to a Christian.

## How the Christian uses the Bible

We view the Bible as a 'living' and 'active' document. We call it the "Word of God" because it is God's living words to us, which speak into our lives here and now. God's living words, through the Bible, have power to change and transform us.

### **Hebrews 4:12**

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Jesus is the Word of God in the flesh. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." It is ultimately the words of Jesus, through the Bible, that pierce to the division of soul and spirit. Jesus warned against making scripture into something purely informational and cerebral, or something that teaches rules and regulations or secret knowledge. This is why he said in **John 5: 39-40** -

*"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."*

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The point of the scriptures is to lead us to Christ, and through the scriptures to know Christ better and live according to his ways, taking up his mission of love to the world. We cannot know what Jesus is like, or access his teachings, and understand and know about his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and his work today, without studying the Bible - which is the recorded, written, inspired Word. We cannot rely on our experiences or prophetic words to understand God's eternal Word and revelation. This very sentence quoted above about Jesus being the point of the Bible comes from the Bible, so we can never use it to justify the Bible not having authority in our lives! Unfortunately there are many Christians who claim they don't need the Bible because Jesus is more important than the Bible. They wouldn't know about Jesus, however, without the Bible!

Equally, there are unfortunately many brilliant theologians and Bible scholars throughout history who never actually had a relationship with Christ because they were not using the scriptures appropriately. It is not about becoming smarter but about *listening* to God and letting him powerfully transform you through the Bible. The Bible is a historical document, providing us with historical facts, and it is a doctrinal book, providing us with doctrinal facts, but in these it is a practical book - a book of *applied theology* - that cuts to our hearts and teaches us God's will and ways, showing and guiding us which way to go, and empowering us to do it. Therefore it's an active 'voice' in our lives, providing personal guidance through its revelation of God, a revelation which we can all read and access and understand, especially if we have the Spirit of God within us. (1 Corinthians 2:14.)

### **Why would God choose letters on a page to reveal himself?**

It's perfectly reasonable and logical that the God of all creation would choose to communicate with us, his creation, in a way that we could understand. God always communicates himself to us through the physical world he created. Jesus, as part of the Trinity, came down to earth as a man and lived in our physical world because God wanted to reach out to us and let us know him.

We also see that God communicates through nature. Psalm 19:1,2 says that, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." So we see that God reveals himself to us in an objective, physical way.

But God also communicates to us in a subjective way – in other words, internally. He communicates through our conscience (Romans 1:32, Romans 2:14-15), speaks to the deepest parts of us by his Holy Spirit, and he speaks to our minds through his written word. The Bible is a physical book that speaks to our physical minds, to help us control our physical bodies in this physical world in a way that glorifies God.

One of the mistakes we can make as Christians is to place emphasis on either God's objective revealing of himself or his subjective revealing of himself. God uses both because God created both. And both of these actually meet in the Bible – it's a book that speaks to our mind, and in so doing, speaks to our heart. God really, truly, speaks through it. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world,

but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” God renews our mind through his written, revealed and inspired words, found in the Bible.

### What do we mean by 'revelation' and 'inspiration'?

The Bible is of extreme importance since it is the surest, clearest and most detailed account of God's revelation to us concerning his character, salvation plan, and other truth. In the words of Nigel Day-Lewis, “The Bible is the divinely inspired, infallible and inerrant record of all God's revelation to mankind, and is our final authority in all matters of life and doctrine. It contains everything we need to know for salvation, and nothing can or must ever be subtracted from or added to it.”

When we speak of 'revelation' and 'inspiration' what we mean is that God, through the Holy Spirit, guided the writers of each of the 66 books of the Bible so that the end result was *his Word in their words*. It is *inspired*, not dictated. But it is very specific revelation. God didn't provide a general inspiration around concepts and left it up to the writers to figure out how to teach those concepts, but was very specific in what topics should be covered and how - usually by using real-life situations that the writers themselves had to deal with.

Essentially, there are five main ideas about the inspiration of scripture and they are as follows:

**1. The Intuition theory** says that the Scriptures were the product of

the natural religious genius of its many human authors.

**2. The Illumination theory** says that the Holy Spirit merely heightened the normal powers of the authors and no special communication of truth was involved.

**3. The Dynamic theory** states that God directed the authors to the concepts he wanted recorded but allowed them their own choice of words.

**4. The Dictation theory** says the God dictated the Bible word for word to human scribes.

**5. The Verbal Plenary theory** states that God directed the writers of Scripture so that their product was His Word in their words and every part of its content is inspired.

It is this last theory that correctly explains what is meant by 'inspiration'.

### What do we mean by inerrancy?

The doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture frequently comes under attack from sceptical quarters who place science above revelation in all matters. 'Inerrant' means that it is incapable of being wrong and it has the highest authority in the believer's life. It is not scripture that is subject to us, but we are subject to scripture.

It's worth noting that Christians should not have a problem with

science at all, and frequently faith and science actually work together very well. There is no reason to worry when scientific theories appear to be contradicting the Bible. It's usually true that either the scientific theory is wrong (sceptics would have us believe science is never wrong, but science itself does not claim to cover every aspect of human experience and knowledge, and science claims to expect that it will change), or the way we have been reading that particular portion of scripture is incorrect – which usually becomes more clear as we study it. The best thing to do is be patient, study the scriptures, get to know the science a bit better, and let God lead you to a reasonable conclusion.

So what is meant by inerrancy?

**1. The scriptures are without error in their *original form*.** Sometimes, translation errors might occur from the original Hebrew or Greek into English or other languages. Translating the meaning of a word from one language into another is often difficult – the Hebrew language is very nuanced, ancient Greek is very basic, and new discoveries in linguistics are happening all the time; plus the English sentence has to make sense to an English reader! Therefore, inerrancy doesn't mean that our English Bibles won't have very minor discrepancies here and there, but often footnotes and study materials are provided for the reader to understand (this is why a Study Bible is a good idea) and the 'problems' are not major doctrinal issues of faith.

In the ancient times, the scriptures were copied by hand in order to preserve them. Sometimes there were copy errors, but they were



minor. This is why, when new ancient manuscripts are found, it's a big deal. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, which are now the oldest copies of the Old Testament we have today, it confirmed how astonishingly reliable the copies of the Old Testament we had up to that time actually were – there were some spelling variations, but no actual variation in basic Bible *doctrine*.

**2. The scriptures are without error taking into account the genre of each book.** For example, Psalms is a book of song and poetry; Proverbs a book of wisdom; Genesis a mix of several genres; Revelation an apocryphal book (it uses picture language). Biblical inerrancy is not Biblical literalism – in other words, not every book is to be taken literally. This means that the beginning of Genesis, for example, is not trying to provide a formula for physics but is conveying to us who God is and why there is sin in the world. We form our *doctrine* from the Genesis account but not necessarily our *science*. Likewise, we don't get our doctrine from science! This doesn't mean science and faith are at odds, only that we know where to go with the right questions.

**3. It is inerrant in revealing God and salvation.** The scriptures are revealing what we need to know about salvation and God. They do not reveal *everything* about the universe and time and space, or even everything about God – only what we need to know. God has left a great deal of exploring and discovering of his created universe up to us because he created us to discover all he created! “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” (Proverbs 25:2.)

Some theologians make a distinction between Biblical inerrancy and Biblical infallibility. However, when it comes down to the finer definitions, they frequently mean the same thing. We say that the Bible is both inerrant and infallible.

### How can we trust the Bible?

This is a huge question and we can't cover it all here. But we will touch on some basics.

Historically speaking, the original text of the Bible is better preserved than many other historical books we take for granted. We have more copies, and older copies, of ancient manuscripts than we do *for any other kind of historical book dating to ancient times*. Most people will not dispute the writings of Aristotle or Plato, but yet we have more evidence for the New Testament than we do for those writings. In fact, we have copies of Mark's Gospel which even date to as far back as the third century - and we have 14,000 copies of it, as opposed to something like *Caesar's Gallic War* where we have 10 copies that only date to 825 AD.

When Christianity began, certain letters from Paul, Peter, and the gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) began to be seen as canonical (which means the 'rule of faith and truth'). These documents encapsulated what the early Church was mainly teaching, and what Christians all agreed on. By the time Christianity was legalised in Rome (313 AD), Christianity in the East and West had accepted the 27 New Testament books we have today as canonical, which was confirmed at

three church councils.

The Old Testament books were copied over generations and thousands of years by scribes who would work under very strict circumstances if they made a copy error. As mentioned above, the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are dated to be from 135 BCE to 73 CE (and some to the eleventh century) were incredibly similar to the younger manuscripts we had before their discovery. The differences were very, very minor! The reasonable conclusion is that what we have today has proven to be astonishingly accurate to what the Hebrews would have had in ancient times.

Rationally speaking, there is very little reason, if any reason, to dispute the reliability of the Bible. There is also, of course, the testimony of Christians throughout history who have found that the teachings in the Bible are true for life – they have been true for all cultures, at all times, and have never become irrelevant or outdated. The Bible still manages to provide a true account of human experience and what ails us, and still manages to speak into that experience and provide a true solution – Christ.

### **What authority does the Bible have?**

Because the Bible is God's inspired and perfect revelation to mankind, we must give it the highest authority in our lives. Writings, prophetic utterances, or spiritual leading that contradict the Bible can't possibly be from God since it differs from God's unchanging truth. Since the Bible has absolute authority in the Christian's life, it follows that we should give priority to studying it as much as we can, so that we may

access the thoughts, the emotions, the truth, and even the very heart of God.

## SEVEN REASONS TO STUDY THE BIBLE

### 1. It reveals God

There is no easier, better or surer way of getting to know God than through His word. He has revealed His attributes clearly throughout the Bible and only by reading it will we find out what he is really like and be able to show others what he is like.

### 2. It renews our minds

We live in a sin-sick world which is constantly trying to influence us. Our thoughts determine our actions and therefore it is necessary to ensure that we keep filling our minds with God's thoughts. The only way to find God's thoughts is by reading His word (2 Peter 3:1). We can then be part of the process where we renew the minds of others by speaking God's truth, his word, to them.

### 3. It aids spiritual warfare

#### **Ephesians 6:13-18**

*13 Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,*

*which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*

God's word is described as the sword of the Spirit. Thus it is a weapon of warfare against the devil and his schemes, his methods of trying to influence. It sets people free from Satan's captivity where they are slaves to their sin and desire and depression and thought processes, etc. If you know your scriptures you won't be easily led astray to some or other weird idea about God and you can teach the truth to others. You won't wonder whether or not your salvation is secure, or whether or not Jesus holds authority, and whether or not God loves you, and whether or not something is sin, and so on. You can show people, with confidence, that God really wants to rescue them and will rescue them, through simple faith in Jesus.

#### **4. It is a foundation for life**

Behind God's Word is his faithfulness. He always backs up his Word and does what he says he will do. If we live our lives in obedience to God's Word, we will never succumb to the storms of difficult and trying times because God's faithfulness to his word will uphold us through them. The key is not only to hear God's word, but to put it into practice. See Matthew 7:24-27 and James 1:23-25.

#### **5. It equips us for good works**

##### **Ephesians 2:10**

*"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."  
(Ephesians 2:10)*

God has prepared good works for us to do, but unless we are equipped and prepared for them we won't fulfil them! By reading and studying God's word we become equipped to fulfil God's purposes and we participate in his work in this world – to truly free people.

## 6. It reveals our hearts to us

### **Hebrews 4:12**

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

When we read the Word we come to understand the standard of living that God has set and we also become painfully aware of the areas in which we fall short. It's like looking into a mirror to find our appearance is not presentable. This enables us to trust God to transform us, knowing how he wants us to live, and change and adjust our lives in the Spirit's power, so that we can be more effective for his mission.

## 7. It prevents us from sinning

### **Psalms 119:9**

*“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.”*

Not only does God's word reveal our sin and purify us from sin, it also helps prevent us from sinning. If we are fully loaded with God's word and are confronted with temptation we will be far more likely to

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emerge victorious (1 John 2:1). We will know what the stakes are and always remember who we are called to be.

The Bible is the inspired and authoritative revelation from God about Himself. It is our only infallible guide to knowing God, understanding ourselves and living a God-glorifying life. Every Christian should devote regular time to reading and studying God's word. If you're a new Christian, start with the New Testament, because our starting foundation is Jesus.

## CHAPTER 9:

### PRAYER & WORSHIP

#### **Deuteronomy 4:7**

*What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?*

What does it mean to have God near us? One of the most startling claims of Christianity is that God not only can be known, but he chooses to be near us, to walk with us, to be our Lord and also our *friend*. As Jesus says in John 15:15, “I have called you *friends*.” What a compliment! The truth is that God feels the same way about Moses, Abraham and the disciples as he feels towards you. He wants to become our friends. His invitation is open; he expresses his desire for it and his affection towards us as much as he expresses his affection for Jesus (John 17:26). God likes our company and will enjoy as much time as you give him.

It's because of this closeness that prayer and worship is, simply put, talking with God (talking with, not talking to!) and being with God. A dictionary will give you a rather dry definition of prayer and worship, but the Bible gives an epic picture of it being a dynamic communion with the living God – whom Jesus revealed as our loving Father.



### **Jeremiah 9:23**

*Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, **that he understands and knows me**, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”*

So it is that through the Bible, through prayer, and through worship we can come to *know God better*.

### **Why can we pray and be close to God?**

Before we talk about *how* we pray and spend time with God in worship, we need to remember *why* it is we can talk and be with God like we can.

In the Old Testament it was only the High Priest who could enter the Most Holy Place in the Jewish temple – in other words, it was only him who could gain access to the presence of God, and then only once a year after complex ritual requirements had been completed.

In the New Testament, under the New Covenant, Christ’s death gives all who believe in Him direct access to God’s presence. In Matthew 27:51, when Jesus died, it says, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” This is referring to a thick curtain, about this size of a man’s hand, that separated the Most Holy Place in the temple from the people. Hebrews 10:19-22 begins to explain the significance of this event:

### **Hebrews 10:19-22**

*"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through **the curtain, that is, his body**, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith."*

In other words, as Jesus's body was torn, the curtain was torn, tearing down the separation between us and God's presence. Jesus' death made atonement for our sin, which means "making amends for our wrongdoing, reconciling us to God." While we were still sinners God reached out to save us and now, through Jesus, we can access God directly – not through priests or temples or holy places or holy items or rituals or special knowledge, but through and only through God's revelation of himself and the perfect sacrifice – Jesus Christ.

The resurrected Jesus, our great High Priest, now seated at the right hand of the Father, is our mediator between us and God (a mediator is a go-between). He gives us confidence to come boldly to the throne of grace to "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16.)

Having direct access to God means that our prayer is not hindered or tainted in some way. Not even sin can get between us and God! While sin is able to dampen our relationship with him, it's not because God is allergic to sin or because sin has some kind of magic power over our relationship. Rather, it is because we tend to shrink back from God

when there is sin in our lives.

Therefore, when you sin: pray. When you don't sin: pray. When you are feeling down: pray. When you are happy: pray. Spend time with God in worship and prayer, always, no matter how you're doing and no matter what is happening. Yes, maybe you feel guilty: but remember the gospel means there is no condemnation for those in Christ! (Romans 8:1.) Prayer is a constant communication with God, our heavenly father, Lord, and friend, in all circumstances and places of life.

## WORSHIP IS OUR LIFE

### **Psalm 150:3-5**

*Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. (Psalm 150:3-5)*

In church circles, “worship” is often shorthand for the musical aspect of our gatherings. To worship God in song and dance is perfectly scriptural, and there are plenty of references, especially in the Old Testament, that speak about this aspect of worship.

But worship is ultimately about our lives – playing an instrument and singing; serving God by loving others and serving them; praying and reading the scriptures; and even washing the dishes are all examples of worship. We 'do all things unto the Lord' (Colossians 3:23). The very heartbeat of worship is a natural overflow of our relationship with the Father. We like to label and categorise it, but mere definitions cannot

express the fullness of worship as God intends it. In essence, it is an expression of adoration in response to his tender love, a discovering of him as he reveals his wonder to us. We love him and respond to him in worship “because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

### **Romans 12:1**

*“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”*

We can see here that our entire bodies – everything about us – is a living sacrifice, acceptable to God. It is because of Christ's perfect sacrifice, where he offered up his body, that our offering up of our bodies and lives is holy and acceptable to God. It is in view of God's mercies that we respond to God in worship and prayer.

## **The eternally happy, creative God**

God is eternally happy. In the introduction of this course, we mentioned that God does not need anything – he is completely self-sufficient in all things. Yet he invites us to partake and participate in his eternal, bottomless joy. “Come and share your master's happiness!” says Jesus in a parable in Matthew 25:23. “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full [or complete]” says Jesus in John 15:11. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly,” he also states in John 10:10. Therefore, when 2 Peter 1:4 says we “may be partakers of the divine nature” it is including being a partaker of God's very endless joy! Spending time with God in worship and prayer

gives us the space to enjoy God and share in his joy.

## How do we worship God?

God made the world and he called it good. He created art and music and poetry and literature and the creative side of life. Worship is about the creative side of Christianity, where we use these *things* and even our bodies to glorify God and express our love to him. If you're a creative person, you're free to explore the depths of your creativity in expression of love to God.

But this is not only for 'creative people'. This is for everyone. The point is simply this: find ways to express yourself to God and spend time with him, to be in his presence. Perhaps you like to walk through a forest, or sit at a coffee shop studying the Bible, or sing songs with a guitar in your bedroom, or paint. Whatever helps you to be with God, that's what you should do.

Understanding that God uses all of his creation to glorify himself is important in getting to grips with how we can grow in our experiential relationship with God. Every moment of our lives is one spent in his presence, but we have to open our ears, hearts, and minds to really experience him there. Sometimes we need a regular space and time that helps us to open our hearts to him.

## God can be experienced

It is true that much of our Christianity is objective – Jesus died in history and that settles our justification before him. But there is a subjective, experiential part of Christianity – an abiding in Christ that

is full of experienced joy and revelation and peace and contentment, and so on. As Psalm 16:11 says, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

What does all this have to do with worship and prayer? Simply this: worshipping God and speaking to him in prayer is not meant to be a drudgery. It's not boring or some kind of duty we just need to get over with. Rather, it is how we connect to our amazing God who loves us endlessly and has so much he wants to give us. As John Piper says, “The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever.” So, make space in your life to do just that.

## Devotion

Perhaps a more understood word for worship is *devotion* – everything we do is in devotion to God. What this means is that we can worship God wherever we are, and in anything we're doing, except sinning, of course! It's about where our hearts are inclined. If God works through his physical creation, then the mundane and ordinary things of life have a different meaning. You don't have to be in a church service to worship, but can do it right now, even if you're in the middle of changing your child's dirtiest nappy. This is one of the wonders of the Christian life – God is immanent, he is with us, wherever we are.

But this does not mean that God hasn't chosen specific 'meeting points', as it were, for effective worship. These meeting points are often places where we are *sure* to experience his grace – they are points where God promises he will meet us.

### **Acts 2:42**

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching [the scriptures] and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

Each of these things highlight the main form of devotion the Christian life takes, the main forms of worship, as it were. We devote ourselves to breaking bread, to the scriptures, to our church, and to prayer. Each of these are done privately and corporately with the church. We study the scriptures privately, we learn them together in corporate gatherings; we fellowship with friends and with the larger church; we practice the breaking of bread at home and privately, and we practice it in larger gatherings; we pray in our personal capacity, we pray corporately.

Christianity is not “just Jesus and me”, but it is a living, active faith that involves community. But it is not just a community-based faith, but is also a personal relationship. It is not either / or but is both / and.

### **Prayer really changes things**

In Matthew 6:1-5, Jesus firstly speaks about how we are to be generous without bragging or boasting about it, and God will reward us, and how we should pray without boasting about it, and God will reward us. This shows us two things:

1. In the same way that generosity is a good work, prayer is a good work.

2. God rewards for the good work of prayer.

It seems easy to see that generosity is a good work – it's a very practical thing to do, and really helps people, and is obviously contributing to God's mission on earth. But is prayer also practical? Does it really help people? The way Jesus speaks about it the answer must be YES. He sees generosity and prayer as having the same sort of effect. *Prayer really changes things. It really contributes to God's mission on earth.*

As Christians we are not called to be fatalists – believing that 'what must be must be'. Both certain Eastern philosophies and Western Stoic philosophies preach that, but it is not how God made the world. Those philosophies pretend as if true holiness is accepting things as they are and learning to be happy with things as they are. This is not Christian teaching. We are called to make an active difference in this world through love as action, through faith, and through prayer. God really responds to prayer. Prayer really changes us. Through prayer we really receive wisdom. Through prayer we invite God into situations. Through prayer God works in this world. Through prayer we storm the gates of hell.

We might not understand all the complexities of why this is, but we must know: *it's true*. “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” (2 Corinthians 10:4.) Jesus' lifestyle was prayer and he did miracles because of prayer!



### **James 5:16 (NIV)**

*“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”*

### **How to pray**

In Matthew 6:7-8 (which continues from the above), Jesus says: “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

What we can see here is how you look to others, eloquent language, and so on are unimportant to God. Since God is our father and has saved us by grace and not because of our works, how moral you are is unimportant as well. What is important is an awareness that you are speaking to your Father, not to a distant deity. This is a Father who is involved and wants to be involved.

So how do you pray? Well, you just talk to God! You can do it anywhere! Jesus, however, does provide us a helpful pattern for prayer, which continues in Matthew 6-

### **Matthew 6:9-13**

*“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts,*

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*as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.*

Many commentaries have been written that go through this in detail, but for here we should just note a few things:

1. We are speaking to our Father. Seeing God as Father was a radical concept for the people of Christ's day. His use of the Aramaic term of endearment, "Abba," meaning "Daddy," was revolutionary.
2. We are to honour him as our Father ("hallow" means "honour"). We are to see him as a Father.
3. We pray for God's kingdom to come and will to be done in all we're involved in – in our nation, our family, our church, our communities, our world, our hearts. By praying this we are really changing things – really making a difference.
4. We ask God for provision, both physically (our food) and spiritually (refreshment from God). We ask him for the same for others. Note that this prayer says give us our daily bread, not give *me* my daily bread. Prayer always incorporates others – it's not just about our requests!
5. We remember that God is a God who forgives, and we pray about those who have sinned against us, speaking to God about them, forgiving them.

6. We ask God to deliver us from temptation, sin, and the evil one. God gives us all we need against sin and the devil in our lives.

## **Pray anywhere and everywhere**

While we can pray anywhere and everywhere (as we should), it's healthy to also put time aside every day to pray. This helps you in prayer. God will not abandon you if you don't! He won't leave you to figure life out on your own if you don't pray every day! But daily prayer is healthy and nourishing for your soul – and you will find yourself experience a closeness with God that you might otherwise not. Plus you will learn how to start praying constantly all day. And you are doing a good work – you really are changing things.

Jesus prayed every day and sometimes even all day. He often found a way to be alone with his Father. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35). Sometimes, he prayed in the synagogue – the Jewish place of worship and community centre, where prayer took place. Going to the synagogue was “his custom” says Luke 4:16.

He prayed during times he was about to make a big decision – “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles” (Luke 6:12,13). Note, he didn't pray about what to have for lunch or what clothes to wear! But, he did 'give thanks' before meals. (John 6:11.) Everything about his life was soaked in prayer. Therefore, it can be the same for

us.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

## **Lift everything up to God**

### **Philippians 4:6**

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”*

*Everything means everything.* Speak to God about all your troubles, all your victories, all the troubles others are facing, our city and our nation and how we need his Kingdom to come. Open your heart to him. Make your requests known. He will listen! He will answer! Sometimes “no” is also an answer! This is your relationship with God. Check out our resources on prayer at <http://cornerstonechurch.co.za/devote-prayer/> and <http://cornerstonechurch.co.za/let-us-pray/> if you want to delve deeper into this topic.

## **You will be changed**

Prayer will change you. Worship will change you. Because these are two wonderful methods through which God will transform you into the likeness of Christ. Worship, break bread, read the scriptures, pray. You will find yourself changing day by day, little by little. And you will find

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your heart bursting with a newfound mission in life: to bring this gospel to the world!

## PART 3

# CHRIST THROUGH US

### **Colossians 1:9b-12**

*"[I ask] that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."*

## CHAPTER 10

### THE CHURCH

#### **Ephesians 3:10**

*“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”*

The word “church” is a translation of the ancient Greek word, *ecclesia*, which means, literally, “the called-out ones.” It refers to those whom Jesus has called out from fallen humanity: those bought by him, those who belong to him, those he has called to bring his message of the gospel into the world, those he has called to love the unloved. It does not refer to a building or to an organisation but to *people*. So the question is not “What is the Church?” but rather “*Who* is the Church?”

The short answer is: *you*. If you are a believer in Jesus!

The Church has a special origin, identity, and call. The Bible gives us a number of pictures (analogies) of the church, which taken together give us a fuller understanding of the identity and ethos, the structure and leadership, and the mission and mandate of the Church.

#### **Pictures of the Church in the Bible**

In scripture, the church is referred to as:

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1. A body (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12)
2. A nation – think of a people group, families, cultures, languages, or a tribe (Ephesians 2:12-19; 1 Peter 2:9-10)
3. A family – a household (Ephesians 2:19; Romans 8; John 1:12; 1 John 3:2; Galatians 3:26 – 4:7)
4. A bride (Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19: 6-9)
5. A building / temple (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
6. An army (Ephesians 6:10-18; Matthew 12:29, 16:18; 2 Corinthians 10:3 – 5)
7. A priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6)
8. A flock (Acts 20: 28-29; 1 Peter 5: 2-4; Psalm 95:7)

Other pictures of the Church, explicit or implicit, can be found in scripture – for example, the Church as God's field, pilgrim, servant and sacrament – but these will suffice for now.

There is something all of these have in common, which gives us an interesting clue as to how we're meant to function in Christ as the Church. It's that none of these pictures allow for an individual to live in an isolated way. For example, a bride can only be a bride if she has a groom; an army can only be an army if it has soldiers, working together. A brick doesn't make a building, it requires many bricks to make a building; a priesthood is not a solitary priest, it is a picture of many priests; and so on.

In our day and age, it's popular to think of our faith as a personal, individual aspect of our lives that has really nothing to do with anyone



else. Many Christians stop being part of a local church because they feel they can have a personal relationship with Jesus without it. But you cannot love Jesus and not love his Bride, who is the church (Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19: 6-9). You cannot love Jesus and not love his body, who is the church (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12).

When it comes to the Church, we give up a certain part of our own identity in order to become part of something bigger. Our Christian identity as individuals is wrapped up in the identity of the corporate body - the Church. For example, a woman doesn't stop being a woman when she gets married, but she gives up a lot of her independence to become a bride. A soldier doesn't give up his identity as a soldier, but he takes on a bigger corporate identity in an army. A brick continues to be a brick but gives a part of its identity to being part of a bigger whole.

## The church has purpose

There is a second, very important point about these pictures that God has given us for the Church: none of these pictures represent something that is static or without purpose.

A building has a purpose. An army has purpose. And so on. A bride has a call to her husband, so she has a purpose as well, in a different sense. These pictures also represent things that are living and active. A healthy body is one that is active and working. An army must be working. Even a household is active. The picture of a building in scripture is represented as one that is made up of 'living stones' (1 Peter 2: 4 - 6) being 'built' and not remaining static.

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The Church is therefore not just a group of people who worship God together, although that does take place and is important. The Church is essentially a team who are on the same mission together: God's mission of love to the world, through the preaching, teaching, representing of the Gospel and the demonstration of his Kingdom.

### What is the Kingdom of God?

#### **Mark 1:14**

*“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*

The Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus' ministry. It essentially means the “rule” or “reign” of God. Wherever God reigns there is peace, unity, love, joy, rest, flourishing, goodness, life, creativity, and much more. Jesus' ministry revolved around declaring that the Kingdom of God was coming through himself – he is the central figure in the reign (Kingdom) of God, because he is the one who carries all authority and is the one who does the reigning. His work, including his death and resurrection and ascension, established God's kingdom in this world and advances it.

The scriptures, especially the New Testament, repeat the theme that the “whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). We know this is true without needing to be told: there is death, horrible misery, grief, pain, indescribable injustice, and unrelenting darkness in

this world. It is because of our sin, and because we have given into the influence of the evil one. (Genesis 3.) When Jesus came he *demonstrated* the Kingdom - he healed people, he cast out demons, he taught the truth of God, and loved the unloved. He began a rebellion against the darkness of this world and all the rulers of this darkness in the spiritual realms.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

### **Colossians 2:15**

*“He disarmed the [demonic] rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him [some translations: the cross].”*

Jesus' death and resurrection sealed Jesus's victory. Since then, and through the Holy Spirit's work through us as his people, Jesus's Kingdom has been advancing against the evil of this world and ushering in the age to come, where there will be no more death, no more tears, no more sin. Our work is to participate in God's work of advancing his Kingdom. We are pulling the *future* into the *now*. That's why Jesus said:

### **Matthew 16:18**

*“On this rock [the revelation of Jesus being the Son of God] I will build my church, and the gates of hades [death and hell] will not overcome it.”*

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Gates are stationary, protective things. They do not advance. Rather, they are stormed and broken down. Our mission is not to keep ourselves protected and create sheltered communities from the world – but our mission is to storm the gates of death and hell and plunder the devil, taking back people who he has held captive and inflicted and sought to destroy.

Through our personal holiness and the life we live out in this world, and through the things we do together as a local church and churches together, and through our careers, and through anything and everything we do, we align ourselves with God's vision for the world and participate in his mission to save the world from its sin and spiritual darkness. We are either doing that or doing the opposite. There is no middle ground. **We are at war.**

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Jesus has all authority, and this authority is the basis of why we go out and make disciples of all nations. That authority destroys evil and brings life to people. We must understand what it is we are doing.

The Church is not the Kingdom but are the citizens of this Kingdom,

soldiers tasked to bring the gospel to the world that gives people entrance into this Kingdom. By believing the gospel we enter into God's Kingdom, enjoying a relationship with the King, Jesus, and essentially bring the reign of God wherever we are involved – our homes, our families, our workplace, our nation, our communities, our churches, our world.

### Integrated and functioning

The Church is all of God's people, everywhere, for all time. But we integrate and function in a *local* church. A local church is about being connected through accountable relationships. We're all connected to the Head (Jesus) and then we're connected to each other. (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 12 Corinthians 12; Romans 12.) This takes place at a local church and through its different aspects and ministries. Through these aspects we are able to hold meaningful relationships that grow us in our salvation in Christ and team us up together to fulfil our call to the world.

Think of the cross. It has a vertical and horizontal aspect. Horizontal is you and others, vertical is you and God. Sometimes we focus on the vertical and think it's just about God and ourselves; or we leave God out the equation and we think it's all about relationships. Yet both are important.

Scripture says that we are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, so we devote ourselves to the fellowship of saints – to our local church – in our reverence for him.

### **Ephesians 5:20,21**

*[20] [give] thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

The language of 'devotion' comes from Acts 2:42, where it says, "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." We understand that devotion to a local church can be abused. This ultimately comes down to godly leadership or ungodly leadership, which we cover more deeply in our *Heart of Leadership* Equipping Course.

Being involved in a local church is about *integrating* in it and *functioning* in it, not mere *attendance*. The church isn't a conference facility or a venue for motivational speaking. It isn't a worship gathering or a social club. It is a people mobilised for this vision: **to know Christ and to make him known.**

## **How to function in and through the Body**

### **1 Corinthians 12:**

*4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another*

*the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

*12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

*14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body", that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body", that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*

*21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you", nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think*

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*less honourable we bestow the greater honour, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.*

*27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts.*

This long portion of scripture shows us that God gifts us all to function in the Body of Christ in various ways. This list is not exhaustive (also see Romans 12:1-8). The point is to show that not one part of the body is more or less important than the other, and also to show that you ought to use whatever gift you've been given.

### **1 Corinthians 1:3**

*For by the grace given to me I say to every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*



Take your gift seriously, but don't take yourself so seriously. We are called to be a family, so the local church is not a place where you need to worry about performing or being brilliant at everything you do. But God has prepared good works in advance for you to do, so do them! (Ephesians 2:10.)

## Love one another

### John 13:34-35

*34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

The Christian life finds its apex at *living in, living through, and living out the perfect love of Jesus*. This is why we go beyond morality as the Church to something bigger.

This is why we **must work on our relationships in the Church**. If we want to be people of the Bible, we must do what it says – love one another, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21).

### 1 John 4

*7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent*

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*his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*

*13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 **If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.***

We will have disagreements and we must work it out. Sometimes our disagreements will go public. What do we do if someone sins against us? Jesus provides guidance:

## **Matthew 18**

*15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."*

As much as possible, we must deal with our issues with each other directly. This principle also stands true for how we deal with problems in our families, at work, and so on. But if we have been sinned against and those who have sinned against us will not resolve things with us, there may come a time when we need to treat the other party as a 'Gentile' or 'tax collector'.

### **The question is - how does one treat a Gentile or tax collector?**

When we look at Jesus, he befriended tax collectors. He loved Gentiles (who the Jews considered to be out of God's plan for human kind). Therefore, the scripture does not encourage us to snub them, but to pray and work for their restoration - to hope and work in a way so that relationships will be reconciled, including their relationship to God. We are not to write people off but love them, even if we have been hurt badly. After all, Jesus went to the cross but still cried, "Father, forgive them." (Luke 23:34.)

If you would like to do more study on the Church, check out our Devote: Fellowship resource, available at

## THE CHURCH

<http://cornerstonechurch.co.za/devote-fellowship/>

## CHAPTER 11

### YOUR MONEY & YOUR TIME

How we spend our money, our time have just as much to do with the Kingdom as anything else we've covered until now. There are personal disciplines we put into place in our lives that have profound effects and contribute to the advancing of God's kingdom on this earth.

#### MONEY

**What we do with our money will count now and forever.** 'Church and money' is an emotive issue for many, and it's understandable. Many have been abused by incorrect teaching and incorrect practice. It's not a secret that many churches have quite frankly lied about this topic, encouraging congregations to give and give and give, so that pastors can live in luxury and continue to manipulate others.

However, if we can address the heart in this matter, where your money goes will be an easy decision. Our hope is that you will *approach this with innocence* – willing to hear God talk with you afresh despite what your experiences of the past may have been.

#### What does God think about money?

##### **Psalms 2:41**

*"The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all*

*who live in it.”*

**1. God is not owned by money.** Why would he be? He doesn't need it. It isn't a source of security or power or prestige for God.

**2. God owns it all.** So having a lot of money, or a little, means very little to God, even though it may mean an awful lot to us.

**3. God does whatever he wishes with the money that is his.** He gives it, withholds it, and distributes it as he wishes. Behind the mind-bending complexity of the world's economies to the lost ten rand, God knows where each cent is.

Therefore, ***because God owns everything, it's not how much you have that he is concerned with, it's what you do with what you have that counts.***

### **Mark 12:**

*“41 [Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”*

Money is simply something that God uses. It doesn't own him, define him, or hinder him. It can't manipulate, control or tempt Him. Jesus urges us in Matthew 5 to take the same view of money as God does. He tells us not to worry *at all* about material things. He says God will give you whatever you need. There are more important matters than money to God.

## What does God think about *your* money and possessions?

Consider these two verses:

### **3 John 2**

*"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."*

God is the epitome of wholeness and fulfilment. He is working all things in our lives that we would come to a place where we are fulfilled and whole. He wants us content, at peace, and secure. He wants us to win our battles, especially the money battle. He'll take care of us and give us what we need. We can trust him.

### **2 Corinthians 9:8**

*"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed".*

## YOUR MONEY & YOUR TIME

God would have it that you had enough money to use it as he does – for every good deed required. This means sufficiency for yourself and more than enough to do what he asks, always.

**Put positively: God cares about what you have.** He is bringing us to a place of wholeness and contentment where we aren't overly concerned about material things and that we are so thankful for what we do have. He especially wants to give us abundance so we can fulfill every good deed that he prepares for us to do.

### **Luke 12:17**

*“And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ 20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ 21 “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not **rich toward God.**”*

**Put negatively: God doesn't think too much of what you have.** He cares what you do with what you have. You receive no praise from God for being rich and no scorn for being poor. But you do receive praise when you deal with money rightly.

**What does God want you to do with your money?**

### **2 Corinthians 8:7**



*“But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also – giving”.*

**God wants you to grow in learning to give.** He wants you to be more and more free from loving possessions so that you can experience the full joy of being like him – the God that gives and changes situations through generosity. *Generosity actually makes a difference in this world.* It demolishes evil and creates spaces of God's rich goodness.

Here are three principles we can draw from our study thus far:

- When we give, no matter to whom, we are actually giving to Jesus.
- It is appropriate to give physical items when we receive spiritual help. It's okay to receive physical help if you are giving spiritual things.
- God cares deeply about the poor. He does not like to see people suffer financially.
- The Holy Spirit leads us to generosity – we will have to be resisting him if we are not generous and not working towards being generous.
- It is worse off for your finances to be on wrong terms with God than on wrong terms with worldly monetary systems.

- Stingy Christians have nothing in common with the God of the Bible.

### Hebrews 13:5

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

### God wants you to give in this way:

#### 1 Corinthians 16:1

*"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 **On the first day of every week** each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come."*

You can see that giving here was **systematic**. It was not haphazard or open to feelings of 'being led'. So should ours be systematic – weekly or monthly the money is to be put aside and given.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:2

*On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, **as he may prosper**, so that no collections be made when I come.*

Your giving is to be **proportional** (as you prosper). The more you earn the more you are to give. You may here ask, "well, how much?" We aren't told in the New Testament exactly how much. But there are clues in the Bible.

A tenth is a number that comes up in the Old Testament. It was the number commonly used to designate 'the whole thing'. In other words, "my tenth represents the whole thing". One tenth is a good guideline for regular proportional giving. But there are other forms of giving in the Old Testament that can add up to an additional tenth. Over and above these two 'tenths', people gave proceeds from property they sold, dozens of oxen, sheep and goats for their sins to be written off, and some gave to the point at which they lacked. These are examples for us of what a person who loves Jesus more than money can do with it.

Please don't rush from this point. This is a serious matter. *The amount you give does matter, but it is proportional.* Prayerfully and honestly consider you life and your budget right now as you read this. Respond to God, humble yourself, search the Scriptures, and obey God - you'll never be sorry you did.

*That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and **beyond their ability**, they gave of their own accord,*

These two words should describe how you give - **sacrificially and generously**. Sacrificial means that you give so that you can't have everything you ever wanted in life. Generously means *a lot!*

## **2 Corinthians 8:4**

***Begging us with much urging*** for the favour of participation in the support of the saints.

They gave **intentionally**. Again it's not a haphazard, a 'if and when you feel like' it scenario. They planned, calculated, set the money aside and did it.

The lure of riches is strong – if you don't make major intentional moves, its lure may overwhelm your desire to give. You should probably stop again here. Don't read on until you have thought this principle through and decided whether you will take steps to follow God or you will sit in the same place you are.

### **2Corinthians 8:9**

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, **yet for your sake** He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.*

We show we are **motivated by love and care for others**. The people of the church are ours to take care of. It's our church, our body and our people. *When we give to our local church and to translocal ministry we under-write its purposes, its mission, its call, and its people.* We are participating in what it does.

### **2 Corinthians 8:13-14**

*"I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that **as a matter of fairness** <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may*

*supply your need, that there may be fairness.*

They wanted **equality in the church**. They were determined to take care of their poor and needy. Not the lazy but the genuinely poor and needy.

## **2 Corinthians 9:6**

*The point is this: whoever **sows** sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

They gave **so that God would give them more to use**. Have you ever seen this at work in your life? It's exhilarating when things really start to flow and you feel as though God is really using you.

## **2 Corinthians 9:7**

*"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, **for God loves a cheerful giver**".*

They gave **cheerfully**. Giving is a great proof that you are winning over the lure of riches. It's almost proving to yourself that money doesn't own you!

## **2 Corinthians 8:2-3**

*"for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, **of their own accord**."*

They gave **voluntarily**. God won't force you and he doesn't manipulate you. Our accountability is to God. God is offering us the opportunity to win and experience his life as we become more like Jesus. If that's not more exciting than monetary riches you need to approach God in prayer.

### 1 Corinthians 9:14

*"In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel **should get their living by the gospel**".*

They were taught that it was beneficial to all in the church if some of the **leaders** got their living from the church. It freed them up to minister and keep the church healthy with all their time and attention. The primary place where our money goes is to our local church. It is the local church you are part of that God uses to reach the world.

Clearly God cares about how you give. Here are the words again that are supposed to describe how we go about it: **systematic, proportional, generously, sacrificially, intentionally, cheerfully** and **voluntarily**.

## Talking honestly about hindrances

The root of this matter is **trust**. If you really trust in God; if you really believe that he will take care of you; if you are sure that giving means you don't actually lose; it'll show in your behaviour.

A second problem is **confusion**. Many Christians aren't really

convinced that what you do with your money really does reveal how serious you are about God. Are you confused, a little unsure about God and your money? Maybe you haven't realised this statement is true: *it is far more dangerous to be on wrong terms with God than with the world when it comes to money.*

A third problem is **bad experience**. Yes there are terrible Christian examples, and probably many of them. But at some point you'll have to stop talking about bad examples and make sure that you are not one yourself. All too often the people who don't give are the ones who complain the most about others.

A fourth problem is **immaturity**. As harsh as it sounds, stinginess is being a baby in the Kingdom of God. Godliness is maturity. Generosity is godliness. Godliness is hard fought for and wrought by prayer and love for God above worldly treasure.

## The path to getting it right

1. Your deepest motives and trust in God will need to be given honest attention.
2. You'll have to make a practical decision to want praise from God more than storing up money for yourself. This will be a journey of faith. How much to spend on things only you and God will ultimately know.
3. Get working.

4. Get your finances in order. Budget. Ask for help. Go to a finance course. Pay your debts, pay your taxes. Make plans.

*If we don't listen we will always end up wishing we had taken his voice more seriously when we heard it.*

## TIME

### **Genesis 1:**

*26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

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

*28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

### **Genesis 2:**

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in*



*creation.*

*15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

*18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."*

*22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*

These verses above give us a backdrop for God's original intention as to how we should spend our time, and therefore instruct us in what to do as Christians. Of course, there are other scriptures to point out, but this will suffice enough to bring out the main principles.

### **1. You ought to spend time working**

The scriptures above and throughout the Bible reveal that God is a worker. He does not sit around and do nothing, but does things. God himself shows that this is one of the principle differences between him and idols - he actually speaks, talks, and does things.

Being made in his image means we are, therefore, workers. And so we see God commands us to 'work' and 'keep' the garden - subdue the earth and bring order to it. We were created to work.

Work is not a necessary evil but is intrinsic to our make-up as human beings. Work only became frustrating after the fall (Genesis 3:17, 18) as

the earth no longer produces as it should. But yet work is God's plan, his way, and has always been his intention for mankind.

The dream of retiring early and getting a yacht and fishing all day is not God's dream. It's simply laziness. You ought to spend time working.

## **2. You ought to spend time resting**

We see here, though, that God also rests. He blesses rest and sets it aside as special for his purposes (he makes it 'holy'). God is also a God of rest, and man is made to rest. In the Old Testament he commands the Israelites to rest on the seventh day, and it becomes known as the "Sabbath" (which means "desist" and "rest").

But remember, Jesus said, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*" (Mark 2:27.) In other words, you do not turn rest into a religious observance, which makes it into a different kind of work and negates its purpose to actually bless. The *principle* of rest is what God is driving at. Therefore, the principles we can learn from this scripture are the following:

- You ought to rest regularly. "Binge" resting (in other words, holidays) is not the best way of resting - which is why we generally don't feel like we've had a holiday by the first week we get back to work!
- You ought to plan your rest time. Don't expect it just to happen! There's always something to do!
- The Church ought to be a people of rest. In other words, we don't layer people with endless laws and observances, but

represent Jesus as the one who said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28). Jesus actually **is** the Sabbath.

### **3. You ought to spend time together**

We were not made to 'be alone'. This scripture refers directly to marriage, but the principle is clear throughout scripture – God's intention has always been for us to work in *team* (note that the woman is called to work in Genesis 2:18). We are also meant to rest together – having fun together, and so on.

A local church should embody this principle and work together, as a team, and rest together – doing fun things together.

*You also ought to be generous with your time.* As we've seen we should be generous with money, so it is the same with our time. People need our time. It is not good to always be so busy with something important. God is always generous with his time, so we should be too.

### **4. You ought to spend time with God**

The idea of the “Sabbath” throughout scripture shows that it is a 'holy' day which God puts aside for his purposes, and we put aside for God. As Christians we now have permanent access to God and can spend time with him anytime, anywhere. Therefore we go beyond a single holy day and now live in the very presence of the Holy One, all the time.

The principle, however, is that we ought to **schedule** and **plan** time

## YOUR MONEY & YOUR TIME

with God. Therefore – a daily time of prayer, study, and worship is appropriate to the Christian life. It connects us to Jesus in a closer way, who is the one who gives rest, who **is** the Sabbath. *It's out of this rest in Jesus that we work.*

## CHAPTER 12

### JOINING THE MISSION

Throughout this course we've highlighted, at various places, that God has called each and every one of us, as the Church, to his mission of love to the world, encapsulated by the preaching of the gospel that establishes and advances the Kingdom of Jesus on this earth.

#### How do we fulfil the mission of God?

##### **2 Corinthians 5:**

*17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

God's kingdom is about bringing reconciliation, peace, love, joy, unity, holiness, and much more to the world. Wherever God reigns, these things exist and are experienced. Wherever God is rejected, these things are rejected, because these things are the very character of God. After all, God is love.

God has entrusted his message of reconciliation to us. To you. He is making his appeal to others, through you. Isn't it amazing that God has chosen to use us for his mission for mankind? We are ambassadors of Christ! Therefore, we must live as such.

One day evil will no longer exist and God will wipe every tear from our eyes. We will live in the new heavens and new earth, enjoying God's presence forever, and enjoying the life he has given us forever. We are, essentially, pulling that future into the now. By co-operating with God, participating in his work on this earth, we are representing Christ and advancing his Kingdom, his reign, in every sphere of our lives: our personal life, our work life, our home life, our church life, our life in society - where we live, play, talk, sit, eat - in anything and everything.

**Therefore, we fulfil God's mission by:**

1. Really, truly loving people.
2. By preaching the gospel.
3. By forgiving others as we are forgiven, and working on our relationships.
4. By cultivating a life of holiness.
5. By cultivating our relationship with God.
6. By leading in our family, our workplace, our church, our communities.
7. By pioneering new ventures and fulfilling God's mandate to work and rest.
8. By discipling others, and being discipled.
9. Through prayer.

10. Through how we manage our money and time.
11. Through personal discipline.
12. By fulfilling the call on our lives, and encouraging others to do the same, building away from ourselves and towards the Kingdom.
13. By being human. By loving God. By loving others.

Your life is the mission of God. “Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness.” (Matthew 6:33.) That is your new identity. You are a Kingdom person, a Christ-follower, a born-again believer, a Spirit-filled soldier, an alien in this world who no longer lives for themselves but lives for God and others.

## Lost people matter to God

### Matthew 9

*35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”*

In reading through the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) we see Jesus was moved with compassion when he saw people and their predicament. He saw sheep that desperately needed a shepherd. He saw a ripe harvest that was in danger of not being harvested, unless his people rise up and become labourers. He knew just how lost and

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desperate we are. He knew how we are all held captive by the devil and his influence, and how we are inflicted and conflicted. He knew that only he has the power to save. The reason we share our faith is simple: the more we have the heart of Jesus in us, the more we long to see people found by him!

Jesus welcomed, hung out with, and developed friendships with the people you would least expect to find in church. He wasn't impressed by people who claim to be righteous and good and in no need of God because of their own amazing willpower. But he was very interested in those who have come to the place where they realise they are under slavery and need a rescuer. In Luke 15:1 it says that 'The Pharisees muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

**Lost people matter to God.** So they matter to us.

## What is the vision for your life?

Does the Kingdom fit into your life, or do you fit your life into it? Is God someone who you think about on Sundays? Or is everything about your life about him?

### **Matthew 13:3b-9**

*"A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns,*



*and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear.”*

This world with its sin, and Satan himself, are looking to sidetrack you from God's glorious vision, so that your life shrinks to your own selfish ambitions and self-righteousness. Don't get sidetracked. This is why we practice disciplines in the Christian life in the ways we have covered until now – so we don't get sidetracked.

## Preach the gospel

Our call is to preach the gospel to the world. The problem is, however, that too many Christians actually just don't know the gospel. They've either forgotten it or were never taught it in the first place.

Don't forget the gospel. To bring the Kingdom we preach the gospel, just as Jesus did. To preach the gospel means we actually use words and follow our words up with action. There is a popular maxim that says, *“Preach the gospel, if necessary use words.”* This is wrong. We ought to use words!

### **Romans 10:14**

*“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”*

On the other side of the coin, many Christians believe that all we should do is use words and never live up to what we preach. This is

## JOINING THE MISSION

also wrong and severely dangerous for the Kingdom, and those who do this. *Preach the Gospel through your words and life, together!*

God's desire is for the Church to rise up and be a shining witness of His goodness, grace and love to a world that is lost in utter darkness. He wants us to "shine like stars in the universe" as we "hold out the word of life" (Phil 2:15b-16a). Can we resist His challenge to arise and let the light of Christ shine?

### **Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)**

*"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

God is making you a worker in his kingdom. You are the answer to the prayer for labourers for the harvest.

### **Be clear on what evangelism is**

Evangelism is not winning converts but is simply announcing the good news, whatever the results. We are not persuading people to make decisions but proclaiming the good news, calling them to hear, believe, turn and be saved. Practically, this means a few things:

- We are not trying to 'sell' a nicer life or, in fact, anything.
- We are not having to rack our brains for clever stories about what God has done that would make Him seem likeable.

## CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

- We are not engaging in apologetics – arguing for God on a philosophical level. Sometimes this is necessary, but generally this kind of evangelism follows a calling. For most of us, evangelism doesn't have to take place in this realm.
- We are called to make disciples of Christ and not decisions for Christ. We labour not only to bring people to Christ but also to present them mature in Him, reflecting His image with glorious clarity.
- We are called to be witnesses—this means that our lifestyle as well as our words should reflect God's goodness, grace and love.
- We must make disciples of Christ, not disciples of ourselves.
- We are not finding people on the streets and handing out tracts. There's nothing wrong with street evangelism – and it's good to do it – but it's just not the only evangelism there is, and it doesn't define evangelism.
- Remember that Jesus' life has to do with both presence and power. Our evangelism comes with power.
- We are simply stating and explaining and demonstrating what God has revealed to be true.
- The Holy Spirit then opens the mind and clears the eyes to convince (our Bible's say 'convict') people our message is true.
- The Holy Spirit convinces people of the above points. (You will find He won't convince people that God is nice to live with and helps you a lot!)

## Demonstrate the gospel

### 1 Corinthians 4:20

*For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power.*

This Kingdom truly changes lives. It truly overcomes evil. Jesus truly has all authority.

In joining this mission, take risks, be bold, and expect God to use you in unique, powerful ways. This may mean that he will gift you supernaturally – with you laying your hands on people and seeing them healed, with you speaking prophetically into people's lives, with you displaying amazing wisdom, with you able to really get at the heart of what people are going through. **You should expect the miraculous to take place through your life.** Trust God to use you in these ways. The Church is meant to truly demonstrate God's loving power in this world.

It also may mean that he will use your natural gifts for his purposes – your ability to conduct fair business; your ability to see the problem in a company or pioneer in a field; your musical, writing, or artistic ability; your scientific mind; your natural gift for compassion; your ability to organise events; your passion for social upliftment; and whatever else you can think of.

Demonstrate the gospel through every area of your life. It will take time to learn how, but as long as you are on board, you can do it. And remember: you are called to truly love others.