

Final Instructions

A discipleship study guide based on the Lord's final instructions to His disciples on the day He was betrayed and crucified

By

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Dedication

This Bible study guide is dedicated to my wife, Peggy, whose love and prayers were instrumental in bringing me to Christ, and who maintains me there in that same way every day of my life.

The author's introduction:

I have been concerned for many years about the divisiveness and religious in-fighting of the professing church of Jesus Christ. It should be evident that our contentious separatism from others in the body of Christ is proof that we are not following the Lord's directions in that regard, and our pitiful witness to the world must grieve Him.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, ... (Why?)... so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, ... (Why?)... so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. John 17:20-23 NASB (emphasis and inserts are the author's)

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:10 ESV (emphasis is the author's)

Our defensive excuse for dividing ourselves from others in the body is, of course, that "we" are right and "they" are wrong, and, though we maintain somewhat of an ecumenical spirit regarding the primary tenets of our faith, we are truly divided in regard to various conflicting doctrines, practices, and interpretations of scripture.

It is impossible not to acknowledge our situation, but we cannot compromise what we believe to be "truth", either.

But what can we do, and what is the cause of all this division?

Consider this: the Holy Spirit authored all scripture, and, as the Spirit of Truth, He does not guide us into contradictory truth. Therefore, if any two disagree concerning doctrine, practice or the interpretation of scripture, one must be wrong, and, possibly, both are wrong.

But who is to say which ones are right and which ones are wrong? Who or what is the authority that can unite us? I cannot personally accept the Pope as my authority on matters of doctrine, practice, and the interpretation of scripture, and I cannot accept any other denominational, ministry, or expert authority, either.

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Yet, according to most in the church, prophets, pastors, and teachers, most of whom adhere closely to the doctrines and truths they themselves have been taught to believe in seminary, in their denomination, or elsewhere, are supposedly the disciple's authority in all theological matters. But what does the Spirit of Truth have to say about that? Who is our teacher? Whom are we to believe? And how can we finally arrive at a knowledge of the truth when there are so many authoritative voices clamoring to be believed?

“But you are not to be called rabbi ... (teacher) ..., for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.” Matthew 23:8-11 ESV (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

In this passage the Lord specifically contradicts authoritarian human control over what Christians are to believe, such as the Pope's authority over Roman Catholic Christians or the Southern Baptist Convention's control over what will or will not be taught in Southern Baptist Sunday Schools, in spite of their insistence that they believe in the doctrine of the priesthood of believers.

What the Lord tells us is that we, individually and corporately, are to receive truth (instruction) and commands from Him through the process that He explained to His disciples in **John 13-17**, and is now explaining to us.

Therefore, if the disciple is asked, “What is your authority (source) for believing this doctrine or that doctrine or this interpretation or that interpretation or following this practice or that practice?”, there is only one correct answer.

It is not “the Pope.” It is not “my pastor.” It is not “the prophet.” It is not “my denomination.” And it is not “the Holy Bible.”

The only correct answer is, “My authority is the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Spirit of Truth and my Counselor, and who speaks His living word into my heart as I rightly divide the scriptures by thorough inductive study (*exegesis*) and meditation, waiting on Him to guide me into all truth appropriately as He pleases.”

All else is hearsay, and, sometimes, heresy.

The problem for many, who may earnestly desire to know the truth, even if it earns them the left hand of fellowship from the denomination they currently belong to, is that they find the Bible difficult to understand.

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An easy solution for them is to lean on the Bible “experts”, their pastors, or study Bibles (all of whom, along with the author, have at least some erroneous bias and unconfirmed assumptive beliefs).

This “solution” is in reality a problem. By encouraging believers to lean on these “teachers” for their understanding we are telling disciples what to believe without teaching them how, not only understand what the written text is actually saying, but also how to receive supernaturally revealed truth from the Spirit of Truth.

It is important for those in the body of Christ who fill the offices of prophet, pastor, or teacher, and all elders and mature disciples who teach other disciples to obey everything He has commanded us to obey, to not do so in an authoritarian manner, but to do so in a manner that inspires those being taught to receive truth directly from the Teacher.

To do otherwise inspires the same Phariseeical attitude of religiosity that opposed the Lord in His earthly ministry and divides the church today.

Matthew 23:8-11 does not negate the four-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers, but those whom we call “teacher” and “instructor” are, at best, good facilitators of His gift, and, at worst, teaching divisive, erroneous, assumed doctrines, even, doctrines of demons.

The purpose of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, according to Ephesians 4:11-14, is to prepare God’s people for works of service, and this not by dictating doctrine, practice, and interpretation of scripture, but by teaching them how to hear the voice of the Lord that they may glorify Him through living works of faith.

The result, then, would be the body being built up (not in numbers but in stature) ***until we all reach unity in the faith*** and in our relationship knowledge of the Son of God and become mature (as opposed to our current immaturity evidenced by “winds of doctrine”) ***attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***

Therefore, the format and purpose of this Bible study guide is deliberately different from most Bible studies. It is not divided into “bite-sized” daily lessons, which is the format most of us have been trained to expect. I didn’t invent the format used in this Bible study, either. If it was up to me, I would have used the same types of formats used by the popular Bible study guides on the shelves of Christian bookstores today.

But, because there is no way to determine how long it will take for an individual disciple, engaged with the Teacher, to work through a particular area of study, meditation, and prayer, there is no specific time allotted

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or suggested amount of material to be covered in the disciple's daily application.

One of the home groups using the pre-publication draft of this Bible study took seven months to complete material, that, in some other format, could easily have been completed in twelve weekly sessions or less (but with much less impact).

The purpose of this Bible study is to engage the disciple in receiving and responding to (“hearing” and “obeying”) the voice of the Lord (His truth, promises, and commands), rather than focusing on the outward tasks of discipleship, which is the usual approach. As such, the disciple is encouraged not to watch the clock, or jump ahead in the excitement of discovery, but to relish and savor the process, which is a time of spiritual intimacy with the Lord Himself during which He promises to make Himself “real” to the disciple.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. John 14:21 (KJV)
(emphasis is the author's)

May each one who uses this Bible study guide be blessed with a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and may you learn to “hear” more clearly with your spiritual ears and “see” more clearly with the eyes of your hearts what the Spirit, who is the Lord, is saying, as you correctly divide the word of truth.

May you find unity in the faith with others who also “hear” and “see” what the Lord, who is our Teacher, reveals concerning His truth, His promises, and His commands, and may the Lord be glorified by the manifestation of His love and His life through your obedient faith responses just as He intended and prophesied, even for you.

So be it.

John 13 -17 – Final Instructions – a discipleship study guide based on the Lord’s final instructions to His disciples on the day He was betrayed and crucified

Preface:

On the day He was betrayed and crucified, just after the Passover meal, the Lord, who is our Passover, instructed His disciples about how they would continue to follow Him by faith after He was resurrected. Up to that point they had known Him as a man (the word made flesh), and their assumption, when He gave them notice of his impending crucifixion and death, was one of loss.

What He revealed, though, was that the coming of the Holy Spirit would be to their benefit, empowering them by grace through faith to continue His works. He also revealed that the indwelling Holy Spirit would produce a supernatural spiritual intimacy with Him that would surpass anything they had experienced with Him in the flesh as they participated in His divine nature through active faith.

This active faith would come as the disciples received and obeyed the Truth, promises, and commands of the Lord as revealed by the Holy Spirit, just as the Lord had received and obeyed the revealed will of the Father while in the body.

These are also our instructions, and it is the author’s prayer that the Holy Spirit will reveal them to each person who uses this guide as though they were coming directly from the Lord Himself, which, in truth, they are.

* * *

Preparation:

This Bible study guide provides appropriate places for writing down your questions, thoughts, and prayers, but the most important tool you will ever have as a disciple, other than your Bible, is a journal. A spiritual journal is a personal record of your journey with the Lord as His disciple. A simple spiral notebook with dividers for prayer requests and answers, teaching and preaching notes, and specific Bible study questions and notes is adequate, or you can use one of the many formats available in most Bible book stores. Once you begin this practice, you will discover your own reasons for continuing.

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Imagine going to the board meeting of your corporation where your job description and your specific assignments and goals are going to be covered. Would you go without being prepared to ask questions and take notes?

Is your relationship with the Lord less important than that?

Definitions:

Assumptive beliefs – are those things we believe about the written word, doctrines, and religious practices and preferences that are based on cultural assimilation, denominational indoctrination, our chosen Bible “experts”, and numerous other sources rather than being based on personal, non-prejudicial, in-depth Bible study and meditation.

Assumptive beliefs, even if they are correct, are hearsay, and all disciples, including the author, have some assumptive beliefs. But consistent, inductive Bible study will position the disciple to gradually increase the amount of Spirit-confirmed belief (i.e. believing in the heart) that leads to active faith and glorifies the Lord.

The power of assumptive beliefs, promoted by authoritative denominational leaders, pastors, teachers and others, to hinder and inhibit the revelation of truth to the individual disciple is shocking, and the author of this Bible study, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is still in the process of discovering his own incorrect doctrines and teachings fostered by the assumption of beliefs and practices from various authoritative sources in the past, even trusted sources.

Assumptive beliefs and practices are the very things that hindered the religious Jews from receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ and led to their insistence that He be crucified.

The first thing any new disciple should be taught is how to conduct an inductive study of the Bible and how to “hear” and obey the voice of the Lord. But most new disciples today are taught what to believe and what to do (religious rules and the expectations of men), which hinders them from experiencing an active faith life and from experiencing unity with the body of Christ at large.

Inductive Bible study – allowing the facts found in the written text to lead us to a Spirit-confirmed conclusion. The opposite of inductive Bible study would be “deductive” Bible study in which one searches the Bible for texts to support a pre-existing conclusion.

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This deductive method (*eisogesis*) reads meaning into the scriptures instead of extracting meaning from the scriptures. I call this deductive method the “square peg in the round hole” method of Bible study, because scripture is often forced unnaturally into place in order to fit some preconceived doctrine or interpretation.

Assumptive beliefs naturally result in a deductive approach to Bible study, because our motivation is to defend what we already believe rather than to learn truth.

The fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, is an example of an investigator who uses the inductive approach of gathering all the facts and then allowing the facts to present a conclusion vs. an investigator who has already come to a conclusion and then uses a deductive approach for finding additional “proof” that backs up the conclusion already drawn.

The purpose of an inductive Bible study is to clearly and accurately understand the meaning of the text in order to position ourselves to be “guided” by the Spirit of Truth into all truth (or to the fully expanded truth thus revealed through scripture, which fits perfectly with all other fully expanded truth in scripture). Misunderstanding the actual meaning of the text or the disciple’s adoption of interpretations of the text from other sources without personal study and meditation makes this process of Holy Spirit guidance (illumination, confirmation, and application) more difficult.

It should be noted that most political points of view are strongly deductive in their interpretation of world events, political systems, and pet concerns, ignoring completely any evidence contrary to their particular point of view.

Of the two methods, inductive and deductive, which Bible study method do you think would be most likely lead to Truth (deliberate capital “T”)?

The greatest barrier to “Truth”, then, is the assumption that we already have it.

Please note: In this Bible study, in spite of promoting and demonstrating inductive methodology, the author does lead the disciple towards certain conclusions. In that sense this is not a true inductive Bible study guide. For that reason, the author warns the disciple not to adopt his conclusions on any basis other than Holy Spirit confirmation of the disciple’s thorough inductive understanding and meditation on the written text.

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The author strongly suggests that the disciple who has not already had extensive inductive Bible study training should review the author's brief outline of the inductive method in the Appendix of this Bible study before proceeding. A seminary level inductive study of the text is not required in order to receive truth from the written word, but every believer should put as many inductive techniques into practice as possible without becoming legalistic about the process.

* * *

One of the most important tools to be used consistently in any examination of scripture is a word study. If we do not have a deep and thorough understanding of the words being used, including the original Hebrew or Greek words from which our English translations come, we may miss the true meaning of a passage or concept. And, if we don't understand or grasp the true meaning of the English translation, we are likely to miss the revelation that the Spirit wants to give us.

Hebrew and Greek Lexicons are tremendously helpful in this regard. (Lexicons and most other Bible study aids are available at no cost online.)

Paying attention to what is actually being said, and understanding the literal meaning of the text takes some work, but the rewards for the work involved are far greater than the effort it takes.

If the disciple is not willing to work at understanding what the text is actually saying, and not what he/she already believes it is saying, he/she will continue to have difficulty understanding the literal meaning of scripture, which, in turn, leads to difficulty in receiving supernatural illumination and specific applications from the Spirit of Truth who was sent to guide us into all truth.

This would be a good place to meditate and pray about your personal willingness to work at understanding the written text and, consequently, doing whatever is necessary to "hear" the voice of the Lord.

Our first word study then is going to be **revelation**. This word, and the religious connotations it carries, is treated by some in the church today as

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though it was exclusive to certain prophets and apostles of old. But, as we will see, no one comes to Christ or walks by faith without it.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians to be granted a spirit of wisdom (knowledge of God's will) and revelation, and the author of this Bible study has prayed that everyone who uses it will be granted a spirit of wisdom and revelation.

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.
Ephesians 1:17 (NASB)

Word Study

Revelation (*apokalypsis* – Strong's #602) is nothing more or less than God communicating His word and His will to us through our spirits. Revelation sometimes comes in the presence of great glory like that of Moses on the mountain receiving the ten commandments, Saul of Tarsus being confronted by the Lord on the road to Damascus, or Peter, James, and John witnessing the transfiguration of Christ. But for us it comes primarily through personal Bible study, prayer, the gifts of the Spirit operating in others, the gifts of the Spirit operating in us, and, particularly, through the still small voice of the Spirit, our spiritual conscience.

Revelation is not a word to avoid as though in spiritual pride we are laying claim to something extraordinary for believers. Revelation is the first gift all born again believers receive from God, and without it no one can "hear" and obey the commands of the Lord.

Caution: Although revelation is an essential part of knowing and obeying the will of the Lord, I am compelled to add a word of caution. Believers can be misled by spiritual "deception" or by "presumption" into thinking that they have received revelation from God when they haven't.

Definitions

Presumption is to act as if we have a revelation of the truth or the will of God when we do not. Norman Vincent Peale's teachings on "positive thinking" were and are, in reality, presumption, and not faith. Some of the teaching in certain Charismatic circles sometimes falls into this category as well. The problem with presumption is that it may lead to disillusionment, and it circumvents the Lord's will in regard to "hearing" and obeying His commands.

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Testimony

Pastor Cho, the senior pastor of the largest church in South Korea, testifies that he was prompted by the Spirit one Sunday to call twenty-five deaf people sitting in a section immediately in front of the pulpit, to the front for prayer. Pastor Cho was not accustomed to pray with authority for healing, but he obeyed the Lord's command.

All twenty-five were healed instantaneously, and a huge stir of excitement followed. But the next week, when Pastor Cho called down more than one hundred deaf people sitting at the front for their healing, none were healed.

In his prayer closet, embarrassed and ashamed, Pastor Cho asked the Lord what had happened, and he distinctly heard the Lord speak into his spirit, "I did not command you to call them forward for healing."

In this, Pastor Cho, learned a valuable lesson about presumption, and, through his testimony, we, too, are instructed.

Deception is a more difficult, and a more dangerous, problem. All of us, to some degree, are, or have been, impacted, directly or indirectly, by deception. Satan, the Father of Lies, is the original author of all deception, even though he may not be energizing all of the ongoing impact of his original deceptions. False prophets, false teachers, and false doctrine are all associated with deception, but there are many more subtle aspects of deception that may usurp the place of genuine revelation from the Holy Spirit.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
Galatians 1:8 (NASB)

Learning to correctly divide the word of truth so that we can "hear", confirm, and "obey" the voice of the Lord for ourselves is the antidote against deception in all its complex forms.

He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God. John 8:47 (NASB)

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:27 (NASB)

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A succinct definition of the inductive method of scripture study is to think of the written text as a large jig-saw puzzle. The basic tenets of the faith are like the outside framework pieces that are relatively easy to identify, because they have a straight edge on one side, and the corners, the most important pieces of all, have straight edges on two sides.

Then as we build on the important outside framework of our understanding and our faith, we begin to work inward, one piece at a time.

In this process, if we attempt to force a piece into the puzzle where it does not actually belong (i.e. in our attempt to “prove” an assumed doctrine or concept), we hinder the process and pervert the truth.

* * *

The first thing to address in any Bible study is the context of the passage or passages being studied. Who wrote it? When did it take place? Where did it take place? Who does it involve? What is the primary event of the passage?

Most study Bibles will provide this information, and, when studying the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), it is helpful to have A Harmony of the Gospels on hand to see how the particular passage being studied fits into the timeline and content of the other gospels.

In our case the discourse of John 13-16 and the prayer of John 17 do not occur in any other gospels, but by examining A Harmony of the Gospels as well as the passages in John 13-17, we can establish both the timeline and context of the passages being studied.

The author will provide you with this timeline as an example.

Keep in mind that the Jewish day begins at 6pm and ends at 6pm of the following day. (**events included in this Bible study are in bold.**)

- 1) Jesus partakes of the Passover meal with His disciples after 6pm.
- 2) Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. (Only in John)
- 3) Jesus identifies Judas as the one who will betray him.
- 4) Jesus warns the disciples against desertion.
- 5) Jesus institutes the covenant ordinance of “the Lord’s supper”.

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- 6) **Jesus gives them the upper room discourse, explaining how they will continue to “hear” (have) and “obey” His commands after He is gone. (Only in John)**
- 7) **Jesus continues the discourse on the way to Gethsemane. (Only in John)**
- 8) **Jesus intercedes in prayer for His disciples, including the disciples now working this Bible study. (Only in John)**
- 9) Jesus in the agony of prayer in a garden on Mount Olivet.
- 10) Jesus is betrayed, arrested, and forsaken.
- 11) Jesus is examined by Annas, the ex-high priest.
- 12) Jesus is tried and mocked by Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.
- 13) Peter denies Christ.
- 14) After dawn Jesus is formally condemned by the Sanhedrin.
- 15) Judas commits suicide.
- 16) Jesus is taken before Pontius Pilate the first time.
- 17) Jesus is taken before Herod Antipas the Tetrarch.
- 18) Jesus is taken before Pontius Pilate the second time and condemned to be crucified.
- 19) Jesus carries his own cross on the way to Golgotha.
- 20) The Roman soldiers mock Jesus on the cross.
- 21) Jesus suffers and dies on the cross before 6pm.

You will notice, particularly in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that there are some parallel witnesses to the same event. What is the benefit to us of receiving multiple witnesses of the same event?

Just as multiple witnesses in a courtroom reporting the same event from slightly different perspectives confirms the event for a jury, so multiple witnesses help to confirm and flesh out the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth for us. What is the benefit, then, of a unique witness like the one we are about to study in John 13-17?

There is one assumption that we can make about this passage. John was deliberately chosen to record the details of this event. What aspect of

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John's character are we most aware of, and how might this relate to the Holy Spirit's choice of John as the unique scribe for this event?

Note: Unless you have already considered and meditated on this or any other question posed in this Bible study guide, do not always expect an immediate answer. As a serious student of the Bible you will learn to appreciate questions that are not quickly and easily answered, because they motivate us to thoroughly examine and meditate on scripture. The end result, though, is extremely rewarding. If nothing comes to mind, leave the question unanswered, and return to it on your review.

Our specific study of the text begins with the Lord's announcement and His primary command as issued in this discourse. (This, in itself, should be a hint concerning the previous two questions.)

Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you: Where I am going, you cannot come.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:33,34 (NASB) (emphasis is the author's)

Put yourself in the place of the disciples. What questions would you have asked the Lord upon His announcement of a "new" commandment?

Compare this "new" commandment to the first two commandments of the ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-4), and write down your observations.

You are probably surprised that the Lord added a "new" commandment, but there are other surprises for those who have not already made an inductive study of this subject. Compare the "new" commandment and the

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first two of the ten commandments with what Jesus said were the two most important commandments (Matthew 22:36-40). What are your observations? (See also Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 to discover the source of the Lord's answer.)

Does it surprise you that the two “greatest” commandments are an addition or expansion of the original ten commandments?

How does the new command. “love one another”, differ from the command to “love your neighbor as yourself”? (Ask yourself, “Who is being commanded, and who are they being commanded to love?”)

This should be intuitively clear, but if it is not clear to you, don't be concerned. It will ultimately become clear as you complete this Bible study. However, you should note that most of us assume that the two greatest commandments came from the original ten commandments and not some later expansion of God's original commandments. And you may never have noticed that the Lord gave His disciples a “new” commandment specific to New Covenant believers.

* * *

Word Study

Love (*agape* – Strong's #25) in this passage is the selfless love of God. This type of love is not natural to man. It comes from God and it is only by grace through faith that agape love is expressed by man. The familiar “love” passage found in 1 Corinthians 13, for example, uses *agape* exclusively throughout the chapter. When He commands the disciples (and us) to love one another He used *agape*.

A question you might ask of the text regarding the Lord's “new command” at this point could be: “If agape love is something man is incapable of expressing without the grace empowerment of God, am I really responsible

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for obeying the command in John 13:33, 34? Or, for that matter, Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18, or Exodus 20:1-17?

If you studied the entire context of the events specifically being studied in this Bible study you would have noticed the unique experience of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Do you think He meant this as an ordinance or as a metaphor and illustration of the "new command"?

Get used to asking questions like the one above. The Holy Spirit uses our questions and frequently prompts and inspires our questions in order to ultimately illuminate and reveal truth to us.

Read John 13: 36-38:

What was Peter's response to the Lord's message that He was going away to a place where they could not come?

What was the Lord's response to Peter's vow that Peter would selflessly lay down his life for the Lord? (The Lord revealed later how they will "lay down" their lives).

The best "love" response man is capable of on his/her own is an exalted form of *phileo* (brotherly) love, such as the love of a parent for his/her child or the love in a strong bond of friendship. Peter's intention was good, but his good intention was, in reality, a rejection of the revealed will of the Lord.

Read John 21:15-17 and use a Greek Lexicon (available online) to interpret the exact meaning of each use of the words translated "love" in this passage, and note both your new understanding of this passage and the questions your new understanding provokes.

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Read John 13: 35:

Why do you think all men will know we are His disciples if we *agape* one another (which is what we are commanded to do)? _____

Read John 14:1-7:

The Lord acknowledged the disciples' concern about what He was telling them about going away to prepare a place for them and coming back to take them to be with Him. Then he said, "You know the way to the place where I am going."

This puzzled the disciples, and Thomas spoke out loud, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen him. John 14:6, 7 (NASB)

In John 14:6, 7 what is the primary implication of Jesus' statement, "I am the way"?

Word study

Truth (*aletheia* – Strong's #227 & 228) in this passage (John 14:6, 7) is the ultimate reality lying at the basis of what can be discerned naturally. In this Bible study the author will use "truth" (lower case "t") to indicate truth that can be discerned by the intellect alone, such as mathematical truth, and "Truth" (capital "T") to indicate the ultimate Truth of God that is only discernible as it is revealed through our spirits to our souls (mind, emotions, will) by the Spirit of Truth. (See John 16:13)

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Paraphrasing is a powerful Bible study tool. By paraphrasing a passage we demonstrate to ourselves whether we understand the passage or need additional study and meditation on the passage.

Paraphrase what you believe Jesus meant when he said, “I am...the truth...”

There are three Greek words for “life” (*zoe*, *bios*, *psuche*). Use your lexicon, Bible dictionary, or study Bible as you attempt to understand the distinctions, and then re-write your paraphrase of what you think Jesus meant when he said, “I am...the life...”

Note: Do not be concerned if you do not “get” the answer to some particular question or some particular passage after a time of reasonable study and meditation. This is a study “guide”, not a test, and the author, although inspired, is not perfect in his framing of the questions. Some questions do take considerable time, meditation, and study before answering, but, in most cases, the author will let you know when significant time needs to be devoted to the answer. And, remember, the questions are not tasks. They are prompts to help you evaluate and understand the meaning of the text. A quick answer (to accomplish the task) without study and meditation cuts this process short and inhibits your understanding. Eventually, if the disciple is doing it right, the Holy Spirit will prompt a great many more questions than the author has prompted.

Word study

Numerous Greek words are used to indicate various kinds of knowledge. The Greek word *ginosko* (Strong’s #1097) as used in John 14:7 means to **know** completely in the sense of realizing or coming progressively to a full and complete knowledge. The word also implies a relationship with the object known. The author frequently refers to the use of this word simply as “relationship knowledge” such as used by evangelical

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Christians when they talk about having a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ”.

What was Jesus telling the disciples when He said, “From now on you do *ginosko* Him...(God)...and have seen Him?”

As a prompt concerning the types of questions that should come to your mind when examining the scripture passages in depth, I will offer some questions that should come to your mind on the basis of this simple passage alone:

Did the disciples not have genuine relationship knowledge of God prior to this moment? Prior to this time, were they unaware that Jesus was the manifestation of God’s persona? What was it about this event (...the last supper...) in their lives that was different from before?

Suggestion: Although the disciple can become bogged down in trying to answer every question prompted by an inductive study of the text, he/she should become aware of the questions, writing them out for eventual study, but immediately pursuing only those burning questions that need to be answered before we can receive Truth from the passage.

The temptation for disciples is to seek the answer to questions we cannot answer immediately from an outside source, a teacher, Bible scholar, pastor, study Bible, etc. as a shortcut to Truth. All of these sources can be used to obtain information about the passage, but, even when the disciple’s favorite outside resource gives him/her the correct answer, it is not Truth, unless it is confirmed to the disciple by the way it fits into the entirety of the accepted canon of scripture as well as an inner confirmation from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

(This subject will be expanded during the course of this Bible study.)

For many born again believers the Lord is like some distant king that we pay homage to, or like a distant rich relative that we only call when we need money. For others He is an impersonal taskmaster who makes demands on those for whom He has provided eternal security and blessing. For these believers using the term “personal relationship” to describe their

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connection to the Lord, though technically correct, would be a stretch if we consider all that the term implies.

For others He is like a parent providing love, comfort, direction, and, when necessary, discipline. For a fortunate few He is both Lord and friend, as He reveals Himself in them and through them by grace through faith. These are the ones who truly *ginosko* Him.

Examine the following heartfelt confession by Paul.

...that I may know...(ginosko)... Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Phillipians 3:10,11 (NASB) (inserts are the author's)

Questions and observations concerning this complex text:

Testimony

I am reminded of the testimony of a well known television preacher who, as a new believer, was confused by the conversations of men who referred to the Lord as if he was a friend who spoke to them directly on a day to day, moment by moment basis.

His opinion at the time was that they were faking it, and when he prayed about it, asking the Lord why he was not having that same experience of intimacy with Him, he said he heard the voice of the Lord in his spirit clearly for the first time as the Lord said, "...because you're not that much fun to be with."

The implication in this somewhat humorous testimony is not that the Lord deserts us during those times when we're laying around on the couches of the world entertaining the flesh, but that our awareness of His presence is

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only keenly felt when we are following His lead through active faith, responding to His “voice” by grace through faith.

Testimony

Another amazing example comes from a secular documentary film, Bill, in which Mickey Rooney plays the part of an old, mentally challenged janitor who was befriended by a young girl at the elementary school where he worked.

The parents of the girl, learning of this friendship, and assuming the worst, demanded that the principal of the school prevent Bill from continuing his conversations and friendship with their daughter.

When the young girl contracted spinal meningitis and was not expected to live, Bill showed up at the hospital. The parents would not allow Bill to visit the girl who was now in a coma in an oxygen tent, but when Bill spent the next sixteen hours in the waiting room the doctor finally prevailed upon the parents to allow Bill to visit the girl’s room under their supervision.

As Bill entered the room he uttered this simple prayer, “Jesus, heal my little friend.”

The next scene in this documentary film was at the little girl’s next birthday party where she was completely healed.

What was vividly portrayed here, without explanation or expansion, was that Bill, who would never be a great Bible scholar or theologian, was intimately acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ and obedient to the Lord’s commands, revealing the glory of the Lord and His *agape* love by grace through faith, just as all of His disciples are commanded to do.

Would that all of us had this child-like faith.

Take the time now to meditate on how well you know the Lord, not know about Him or about your denomination’s dogma, but truly *ginosko* Him through interaction. And, before you leave your time of meditation and prayer, confess your own heartfelt desire to Him. Take the time to write out your prayer either here in this study guide or in your spiritual journal.

(meditation and prayer pause)

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Answer the following questions about Paul's confession in Phillipians 3:10, 11 and your response:

How motivated is Paul, and, by comparison, how motivated are you? (You do not need to write your answer, but you should answer it in your own heart and mind.)

How does Paul view the connection between the power of God in our lives and our intimate communion with the Lord?

Just as hanging out with worldly friends is likely to encourage our own worldliness, what does Paul say hanging out with the Lord will produce?

Assuming that it may not be God's will for us to be literally crucified, what "sufferings" is Paul referring to? A quick scan of the following passages will give you the idea: Mt 5:11,12; 10:22; 24:9; Mk. 4:17; 13:13; Luke 6:22; John 5:16; **John 15:18-20; 16:33; 17:14:**

(brief study pause)

Our sufferings include:

Do not write down your answer to the following questions, because you will be tempted to be untruthful:

- 1) Do you believe that it is possible for current day believers to experience the kind of intimacy and power that Paul describes?

- 2) If your answer was, "yes", are you willing to experience suffering and loss in terms of the world and the flesh (natural desires, drives, and fulfillment) in order to experience the kind of intimacy and

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power that Paul is describing? (This discussion will come up again when we deal with “temptation” beginning on page 53 and following)
The author cannot possibly overemphasize the importance of the disciple’s answer to this question.

(meditation and prayer pause)

Read John 14:8-14:

Phillip asked the Lord to reveal the Father to them, and the Lord responded by telling the disciples that the Father was revealed in who He was (review John 14:21) and what He did, and then He made the astonishing statement that He would be revealed in who they were and what they did in His name. Meditate here for a moment until the impact of this statement hits you between the eyes. Then write out what you received by meditating on this passage.

Word study

Glory (*doxa* – Strong’s #1391) – as opposed to “vain-glory” or boasting. The glory and glorification of both God the Father and God the Son are the honor and reverential awe that result from God’s self-manifestation whether in nature, in the person of Jesus Christ, or in the believer’s obedient faith responses. In this passage the Lord is saying that God the Father is self-manifested in the Son through the Son’s faithful obedience to the revealed will of the Father, and that the Son will be self-manifested in the disciples, glorifying both the Father and the Son by our obedient faith responses to the revealed will of the Lord.

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Read the following and examine what Jesus said about His own works:

The words I say to you are not my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. John 14:10 (NIV)

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." John 4:34 (NASB)

...I do nothing on my own but speak just what my Father has taught me. John 8:28 (NIV)

...The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me. John 10:25 (NIV)

Whose will was Jesus manifesting, His own sovereign will or the will of the Father? _____

Whose work was being manifested through the words, acts, and miracles of Jesus? _____

What did Jesus say was the source of His spoken words, His own sovereign will or the will of the Father? _____

When He said He did "nothing" on his own, what might that include other than His words? _____

What is the significance of Jesus saying "the miracles I do **in my Father's name...**" as opposed to "the miracles I do" (which He did not say)?

In the passages we just examined, the Lord told the disciples that the proof that the Father is living in Him and that He is living in the Father was the miracles they witnessed.

This is very different from the idea that Jesus Christ manifested the miracles through His own sovereign will and divine prerogative as God.

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An assumptive belief held by the world and by some in the church is that Jesus performed miracles and works in His own power and volition as proof that He was the Son of God.

What does the text in these passages concerning the proof of His deity and His identity as the Son of God seem to suggest? Does it suggest that the proof of Jesus's deity and identity as the Son of God is based on His own sovereign, self-manifested words, acts, and miracles or on the words, acts, and miracles produced by God, the Father, through the Son's obedient faith responses? Why? _____

Remember that paraphrasing is a powerful way to consolidate and organize the concepts we are receiving. In your own words paraphrase what you think the passages above seem to be saying. _____

Now compare these passages and your paraphrased understanding with the entire passage of John 5:17-30. Focus on John 5:19, 20 and John 5:30. The Amplified Bible may provide even more insight concerning this important passage. See also John 15:10, Phillipians 2:5-7 and Acts 10:38 (Be like the "noble Bereans" here, and examine the scriptures to see if they support what is being said.) This is one of those areas where the author is suggesting that the disciple should spend significant time in study, meditation, and prayer.

Begin by reading all of the suggested passages.

John 5:17-30

John 15:10

Phillipians 2:5-7

Acts 10:38

Follow up by asking as many questions as possible of the suggested texts. The author has already prompted some questions, but the disciple should be prompted by his/her own questions and by those questions brought to

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If you did not fill up the space provided, even overflowing onto additional pages, with questions, you may not have been as diligent as necessary to come to grips with this Truth. The author will suggest a few questions that should have come to the disciple's attention.

In John 5:19, 20 to whom does Jesus ascribe His works?

In John 5:30 to whom does Jesus ascribe His judgment?

In John 15:10, why is it important that Jesus, as the Son of Man, was required to obey the Father's commandments?

In Phillipians 2:5-7 what does the term "emptied Himself" refer to?

The term "emptied Himself" is also sometimes translated as "stripped Himself". What does this tell you about the source of the Lord's wisdom and power? Was it entirely self-contained (i.e. His divine prerogative), or was it relative to His mystical and intimate communion with the Father?

In Acts 10:38 why did Jesus need to be "anointed" with the Holy Spirit and Power? (Ask your own questions of this passage before answering the author's question.) _____

In Acts 10:38 what is the meaning of "and God was with Him."?

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These questions and the disciple's own questions concerning the text we have examined raise even more questions than can be successfully concluded in the context of this Bible study, but it would be impossible for me to overemphasize the importance of the process. I do not know of one Holy Spirit inspired facilitator and expounder of the word that does not constantly have this process going on, and the danger of short-cutting this process by seeking the answers directly from other sources is that all such assumptive knowledge is "hearsay" until it is confirmed by our own Spirit-inspired study and meditation on the scriptures.

In this regard, some disciples, especially those who have been trained to conform, without question, to the religious rules and doctrines of denominational authorities, will have difficulty with those passages that challenge their assumptive beliefs. (Note that I did not say, "challenge their faith".) This is an essential part of the process, learning to seek and to trust what our Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, who is the Lord, reveals to us rather than leaning on others to tell us what the Lord is saying.

The grace-empowered gift of "teaching" is not about telling disciples what to believe and how to conform outwardly to the will of God. It is about facilitating the process of "hearing" and "obeying" the voice of the Lord Himself, which is the subject of this Bible study. As a Bible teacher I would be appalled if a disciple simply accepted what I taught without question, study, and confirmation by the Spirit of Truth. Even if a disciple is correct in what he or she believes, it is not "Truth" until the light of the Holy Spirit confirms it.

The author's conclusion: Keep in mind that the name of the Lord is "Jesus of Nazareth", and "Christ" (Messiah), meaning "the anointed one", is His title. We believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man, but in His earthly ministry, as revealed in Phillipians 2:5-7, scripture suggests that He deliberately laid His godly powers and authority aside in order to receive the anointing of God as the Son of Man. This was necessary in order for Jesus to walk perfectly in the law and the prophets (the old covenant) as a "man" and thus be qualified as the "Lamb of God" to become a sacrifice for the sins of all men. (For a more complete understanding, the disciple should go to the author's commentary, "Mysteries of the Virgin Birth Revealed", provided in the appendix.)

Jump ahead to the parable of the vine and the branches in John 15:1-9. We will examine this parable in detail later in this Bible study, but for now

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quickly compare this parable with the passages we have been studying about how the Father produced His works through the obedient faith responses of the Son and how Jesus says He will produce His works through us.

Do you see a similarity?

Write your comparative observations here:

(study, meditation and prayer pause)

Note: At times, when the disciple is experiencing the illumination of the scriptures by the Holy Spirit or certain intuitive spiritual insights from the “still small voice of the Spirit”, the disciple wants to jump forward to the next similar experience without meditating on what he/she has just received or implementing it through prayer and obedience. To do so is a **mistake**. A common error made by many disciples is to seek the “thrill” of anointed teaching, preaching, miracle working, etc. without making the appropriate response to Truth and to the commands of the Lord thus revealed.

Take your time during the study, meditation and prayer pauses. Linger and fully incorporate whatever you are receiving from the Lord because it is from the Lord. You will be blessed in this, and you will not be guilty of “spilling” your blessing by rushing forward into the next “thrill” without completely incorporating that which you have already received.

Read John 14:12-14:

Now comes the most astonishing statement of all, so astonishing that many Bible teachers feel compelled to explain it away, because, for many, it is a condemnation of the spiritual impoverishment common in much of the church today.

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Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these will he do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father will be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in My name, I will do it. John 14:12-14 (NASB)

If we believe this passage is true, we should be struck by the awesome possibilities it promises, and, being struck by the awesome possibilities, we should be willing to meditate on it and pray about it until it becomes a living word of faith in our hearts and a reality in our lives.

Let's ask some questions about this passage. As we have already seen, asking the right questions is one of the keys to our eventual inductive understanding. And, remember, our Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, has been sent to guide us into all Truth. If the eyes of our hearts are open and we have "ears to hear", we will receive Truth from this passage. However, as I have already said, at times the greatest hindrance to this process is our dependency on our own experiences, on Bible teachers and commentators and on various denominational traditions, assumptions, and prejudices imparted to us in the past.

(prayer pause)

In John 14:12-14 what are "these" works? _____

Since the purpose of the words, acts, and miracles done by Jesus (Review John 14:10; 8:28; 4:34) were to glorify (self-manifest) the Father, what does the Lord say is the purpose of His disciples doing "even greater works than these"? _____

Some interpret "greater" to mean more numerous in this passage, rather than more spectacular, but, even if that is the meaning here, is there any indication that the "anyone" is restricted to the original disciples? _____

Then who is the "anyone" in this passage? _____

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If you answered that “anyone” means all born again believers, including yourself, write down some questions that this brings to mind. These questions will not be answered immediately, but asking the questions and expecting to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit is part of the process of learning to “hear” with spiritual ears.

The primary question I and most disciples would ask of this text is, “Why aren’t we experiencing this in the body of Christ at large?” or “Lord, why am I not experiencing this?” There is an answer to this question, and it is the author’s prayer that every disciple who uses this study guide will continue to seek the answer until it is received.

Be patient, and trust the Spirit to guide you into “all” Truth in time if you diligently seek it. If there is a paradox between what scripture clearly promises and what is being experienced, that is not evidence that we have misunderstood the promise.

If there is a paradox between what the written text of scripture is clearly saying and our own experience or belief, that only means that the paradox, thus discovered, is the diligent disciple’s opportunity to receive life-changing Truth from the Spirit of Truth.

What does the Lord say is the purpose of answered prayer?

Compare what the Lord said about where His words, actions, and miracles came from and correlate that to where our words, actions, and miracles are to come from. _____

Because believers doing works of faith that include miracles is not commonly experienced or taught in most denominations and fellowships, or, perhaps, taught incorrectly, does that somehow make this passage invalid? _____

Truth will never be determined by our experience. Truth is determined by the Holy Spirit's illumination of scripture. Truth may, however, be confirmed by our experience.

Asking in His name:

Our covenant relationship with the Father is through Jesus Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant. Because of our mystical union with the Lord that came as a result of our initial faith in Him, we now have covenant access to the throne of grace in His name.

A human example would be a married woman's covenant access to her husband's name and resources.

Our confident approach to the throne of grace in His name also implies our heart knowledge of His will, or, when wisdom is being requested, the heart knowledge and expectation that He will impart His will to us in the circumstance.

Therefore, asking in His name is not just saying, "in the name of Jesus Christ." It is our request to the Covenant Father on the basis of the authority, confidence, and expectation imparted to us through our heart knowledge of the Lord's specific will in the circumstances.

We will examine this more completely later in this Bible study, but the following are some passages you can explore to confirm what is being said here: Mark 16:17, 18; Luke 10:17-20; John 10:24-28; John 15:16,17; John 16:23-27; Acts 3:16; Acts 4:27-31; James 5:13-18. **Do not short circuit what the Lord wants to reveal to you in this regard.** Examine these scripture passages as if your spiritual life depends on it, because it does.

(study pause)

* * *

Questions and observations:

Final Instructions

Do not be overwhelmed by the possibilities unleashed by your new understanding of John 14:12-14 or by your questions and concern about the process. What we need to receive and believe at this point, in spite of what we might have been taught in the past, is that this passage applies to us and that it is God's purpose to self-manifest (glorify) the Son, our Lord, through His body, the church.

This self-manifestation (glory) of the Lord was not intended to be revealed through a few chosen "special" believers, "apostles", "prophets", and famous televangelists. This self-manifestation of the Lord is intended to be revealed through you and me *by grace through faith*.

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:25-27 (NASB)

We understand Christ "in" you as being the indwelling Holy Spirit, but why is Christ in us our "hope of glory" and what are the "riches" of this glory referred to by this passage?

The Amplified version uses the phrase "the hope of realizing the glory". What understanding does the Amplified version's addition of "realizing" (the glory) add to this verse, and what clues do you see to indicate whether this passage is about our future in heaven or about here and now?

Begin with these two helpful questions:

What earthly benefit would Christ in us be if our hope of "realizing" the glory is only in heaven?

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The “mystery” of Christ being in us individually and among us as the body of Christ as a whole did not occur until the Day of Pentecost. If this passage was about “realizing” the glory in heaven wouldn’t it include Old Testament saints who were not included in this mystery?

Because of the importance of this concept we will evaluate one additional passage in 2 Corinthians.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed...(metamorphoo)... into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17-19 (NASB) (inserts are the author’s)

Word Study

Transformed or **transfigured** (*metamorphoo* – Strong’s #3339) where we get our word “metamorphosis”, is a word used in Romans 12:2, and in 2 Corinthians 3:17-19 to indicate an essential change that has already taken place in the spirit of a born again believer and is the source or “seed” of a change in the soul of that same believer (also known as progressive sanctification) as that believer follows the Lord by hearing and obeying His commands.

This passage (2 Corinthians 3:17-19) will require some study and meditation before it is opened up completely to you, but we will ask some questions to begin the process. Take your time, and expect the mysterious language of this passage to become clear to you with the help of the Counselor.

Examine the context of this passage from 2 Corinthians 3: 12-19 by reading the entire chapter. What does our faces being “unveiled” convey?

Final Instructions

Why does Paul say that looking on the glory of the Lord as it is revealed in the word of God is like looking in a mirror?

“...are being transformed into the same image...” (of Christ) is a present tense process that is supposed to take place in this life, not just in heaven. Exactly how does this passage say this process takes place?

Testimony:

My wife and I attended a “How to Teach Your Children About Sex” class taught by our pastor. He prefaced the class by telling us that our children would not be restrained from immoral sex acts by fear of disease, pregnancy, or discovery, because the pressures of the world and the flesh are more powerful than these inhibitions.

Then he said, “Only a strong, faith-filled identification of who He is and who they are in Him will prevent your children from yielding to the pressures of the world and the flesh.”

It is the same for all believers of any age through all stages of life.

2 Corinthians 3:17-19 is about the development of our heart knowledge concerning who He is and who we are in Him as revealed by the Holy Spirit through the written word of God so that our faith-filled identification with who He is and who we are in Him will empower us, ***by grace through faith***, to manifest the glory of Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions just as He manifested the glory of God the Father in His thoughts, words, and actions.

In what ways does 2 Corinthians 3:17-19 expand our understanding of Colossians 1:25-27? (Read Colossians 1:25-27 again before answering)

Final Instructions

Now go back to John 14: 12-14 and ask the Lord to reveal to you how this passage applies specifically to you as His disciple, and thank Him for the expectation that your walk with him, no matter how glorious it has already been, is about to be revolutionized.

(meditation and prayer pause)

John 14:15

A personal testimony: As a new believer who had been delivered at the age of thirty-eight from seven years of involvement in New Age occult practices, I fed ravenously on the word of God, and one morning I woke up to the sound of my name being called. As I sat up in bed I saw **John 14:15** written across my mind's eye. I was completely awake with my eyes wide open, but I could see John 14:15 as if it was a holographic projection.

I woke my wife, Peggy, in great excitement saying, "I've been given a scripture. I've been given a scripture."

I had not, yet, been taught all the ways in which disciples can receive "a word from the Lord", but there was no doubt in my mind that this was, indeed, "a word from the Lord."

As I opened my Bible I read the verse out loud, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

I had hoped for some great call on my life, and I remember feeling disappointed with what I read.

"Maybe it was John 15:14," I said to my wife who just nodded sleepily at her strange husband who had been getting up at all hours of the night for the past few weeks to pray and weep and praise the Lord.

When I read John 15:14, "You are my friends if you do what I command", I recognized with chagrin the emphasis that the Lord was making, and I eventually realized that John 14:15 **was** the great call on my life and that Jesus intended for me to be, not only a disciple, but a "friend".

As a disciple and follower of Christ, John 14:15 is also the great call on your life.

If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Final Instructions

Meditate on this verse and ask the Lord to make it as real to you as it was and still is to me.

(meditation and prayer pause)

We know something is **really, really** important when the Lord repeats it more than once. Scan John 13-17 and write down how many times “obedience” is addressed, either directly or indirectly in these passages.

Word study

Keep or obey (*tereo* Strong’s #5083). Sometimes modern usage of a word distorts the meaning of the original language. “Obeying” in the scriptural sense is not merely observing the outward letter of the law. The original Hebrew word for “obey” is *samar*, and it literally means to “guard”. It also implies the full attention and action required to fulfill a covenant obligation. Likewise, the original Hebrew word for “disobey” is *parar*, and that literally means to “trample underfoot.”

The Greek word *tereo* as used in John 14:15 is most often translated as “keep”. To “keep” the Lord’s commands is also more than merely obeying them. It includes the intensely watchful and thorough pursuit of His commands, even a militaristic obedience of His commands, and, in this sense, any compromise would be to deliberately trample them underfoot.

Have you ever known a child or an employee who was passive-aggressive? Their response to authority is not direct disobedience, and, yet, by obeying only the letter of the command, they resist being completely obedient to the authority.

In the Lord’s eyes this “passive resistance” to His living word is not merely passive aggressive behavior, but a deliberate trampling underfoot of His revealed will.

True obedience or the “keeping” of the Lord’s commands implies total, deliberate, passionate, proactive compliance without reserve, not mere outward observance of the letter of the law (i.e. obeying religious rules and the expectations of men).

Read John 14:16-19:

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I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. John 14:16-19 (NASB)

Examine the promises for those who will believe in Him, and then list them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Examine these promises in context. Is there any part of this passage that was a promise to the original disciples only? _____

When He refers to the “world” (*kosmos*) in this passage, what does this seem to mean? (Look up the word in your lexicon if you cannot guess the meaning). _____

As the Lord revealed that He was sending the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, to be with His disciples forever he said, *you know him for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:10 (NASB)*

What does this passage say about who the Counselor and the Spirit of Truth is? (i.e. “I will come to you.”) _____

What part of that passage belongs exclusively to the disciples who were with Him at the time, and what part belongs to us today?

Final Instructions

My vision of the Lord's supper is quite different from the one conveyed by Leonardi DaVinci in his painting. In my mind I see John hurriedly taking notes on his legal pad while all the other disciples stare in amazement with their mouths open. "Uh, Lord, would you repeat that please. Did we hear you say that you're going to be in us?"

We refer to the incredible passage in verse 20 as the reciprocal indwelling of Christ and the believer, but giving it a name does not de-mystify this amazing spiritual reality. Take time now to meditate on this verse and to pray that the Lord will give you a real sense of your participation in this great covenant mystery. Jump ahead to John 17:22, 23 as you meditate on what this means. If you truly meditate on this passage, instead of merely reading it, the Lord will speak a profound understanding to your heart. This is the supernatural voice of the Lord that we call "revelation". Do not be afraid of this word. Even the promptings of your spiritual conscience are "revelations" of His will. This is not to be confused with the special revelation given to certain prophets and disciples for the purpose of writing scripture, but it is the same voice, His voice. And it is His intention that you and I (His sheep) hear His voice. ("My sheep hear my voice.")

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you.

(meditation and prayer pause)

Read John 14:21

One of the many turning points in my life as a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ was the absolute Spirit-confirmed Truth that I was mystically united with Christ and, through Christ, with the Father. The full implication struck me, and I understood, as I had never understood before, why my yielding to the desires and affections of the flesh and to the pressures and influences of Satan and the world systems under Satan's control "grieved" the Spirit, who is the Lord.

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What followed the Lord's teaching about the reciprocal indwelling of Christ and the believer is one of the key passages in this entire discourse.

He who has My commandments...(as a living word in his heart)...
and keeps them...(makes an obedient faith response to the living word)...
is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I, too, will love him and will disclose Myself to him. John 14:21 (NASB) (inserts are the author's)

The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me, and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father. And I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him – I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him. John 14:21 (Amplified)

As you meditate on this passage, remember that the Lord is referring to the disciples “having” and “obeying” His commands after He comes to them in the form of the Holy Spirit just as we are to “have” and “obey” His commands today. **This process of walking by active faith is exactly the same for us today as it was for them.** Our possession of a complete and established canon of scripture does not change this fact or this process. We do not now “hear” and “obey” the Lord through our mere intellectual interpretations of scripture (like the Pharisees of Jesus' day). Our possession of a complete and established canon of scripture makes us even more accountable for “hearing” and “obeying” His commands than ever before, but substituting religious rules, doctrines and practices devoid of active faith for the supernatural revelation of His will to us individually is to deliberately trample underfoot the command of John 14:15 and 14:21.

Write down all the questions that come to your mind concerning these passages. Do not treat this as a task to be completed as quickly and easily as possible. This is a process through which the Holy Spirit will reveal Truth. Treat it as such, and learn to cherish the time in which you are thus engaged with the Spirit of Truth.

(meditation and prayer pause)

Questions and observations:

Final Instructions

Identify the specific promises of John 14:21:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why do you think the Lord made a distinction between our experience of the Father's love and our experience of the Lord's love?

In regard to the promise of experiencing the love of God we are taught in the scriptures that God's *agape* love is the same for all, and that His *hesed* (Hebrew for covenant love) is the same for all who are in a covenant relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. What does the Lord mean, then, when He says, ***My Father will love him and I, too, will love him...***? Is this a promise of love based on merit?

God's *agape* and His *hesed* (covenant love) is the same for all of His covenant children, but our experience of that love is different. If we passionately pursue His presence and His will in our lives in order to participate in His divine nature by grace through faith, we will *ginosko* the love of God. We will not just know about it. We will experience the love of God being poured out in us and flowing through us, like a river of living water, to touch the lives of others.

Consider the love of a parent for his/her children. A disobedient child is not loved less than the obedient one, but the obedient one experiences that love while the disobedient one does not.

For in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through...(agape)...love. Galatians 5:6 (NASB) (inserts are the author's)

What does "circumcision" represent in this passage? If you are not sure, read the entire passage of Galatians 5:1-12.

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Since *agape* love and, by assumption, *hesed* (covenant) love, are the only thing that counts with God or means anything to God, what do you think the commands of the Lord will produce when we “have” and “obey” (keep) His commands by grace through faith? (If you have any doubts go back to the prime command of John 13:34.)

After meditating on the meaning of Galatians 5:6, write out your own expanded paraphrase as you understand it.

The author’s paraphrase of Galatians 5:6 would be: “Nothing counts with God or pleases God except His own *agape* and *hesed* love being manifested through the obedient faith responses of His children, which glorifies (or reveals) the Lord.”

When the Lord says He will “reveal himself” or “make himself real” (John 14:21) what do you think that might include? Keep in mind that the glory (self-manifestation) of God is Jesus, and that the glory of the Lord is the self-manifestation of Jesus Christ in and through His disciples with whom He is mystically united.

Some may think that it is relatively unimportant for the Lord to be manifested to us so that we are conscious of Him as a living Lord, but when we discuss “obedience” in detail we will discover that it is our acute awareness of His presence that empowers us to overcome and to minister in His name.

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Later in this Bible study we will examine in detail the many ways the Lord reveals His commands to us, but, for the time being, it is important for us to realize that He does reveal or “self-manifest” His character, Truth, promises, and commands to us in numerous ways.

The promises we see in John 14:21 are that the Lord will reveal Himself to his disciples in numerous and sometimes exquisitely intimate ways, and that the love of God, including God’s covenant favor, will flow to and through any disciple whose obedience to the revealed will of the Lord demonstrates his/her genuine love for the Lord.

What we have just described is what we should mean when we say that we have a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ”. Unfortunately many born again believers have a supernatural relationship with the Lord through the baptism of the Spirit, but they have not, yet, realized the promises of John 14:21 resulting in an intimate “personal relationship” with the Lord, much less the promise of “friendship” that we will examine later in John 15:14.

Now let us examine the conditions for receiving the promises of John 14:21, which are to “have” and “obey” (keep) the Lord’s commands.

Using our inductive skills we must assume that having and obeying the commands of the Lord is not something we do apart from active faith. Nor is the observance of religious rules and conformance to the expectations of men what is meant by “having” and “obeying.”

Definitions

Passive faith - is our continuing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, or in some other area of obedience that does not require additional Truth, promises, or commands in order for us to obey. An example might be tithing. Once we have received Holy Spirit confirmation as a living word of faith that we are to tithe we do not have to have continuous Holy Spirit prompting to tithe in the future. We may, however, experience active faith in regard to where and how the tithe is given or in regard to the specific amount of our tithe.

Active faith - is our obedience to the specific, Holy Spirit revealed will of God on a day to day, minute by minute, circumstance by circumstance basis.

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Examine the classic scripture that demonstrates the act of active faith that results in our ongoing passive faith.

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”, that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:8-10 (NASB)

Word Study

There are two primary Greek words for **word** that we need to be concerned with. *Logos* (Strong’s #3056) is the full embodiment or essential nature of the word as in John 1:1 as one of the names of the Lord, but *rhema* (Strong’s #4487), as used in the passage above, is the spoken word emanating from the *logos*. Thus the *Logos*, Christ, is the author of *rhema*, which is the living word of God as it is spoken into our hearts as a command, promise, Truth, etc.

You may have noticed that it is my personal preference, not a rule, to capitalize “Word” when it is being used as a title for Jesus Christ (the *Logos*) and “word” when I am referring to the written or spoken word of God (the *rhema*).

In the well known verse concerning faith, Hebrews 10:17, “rhema” is used.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word...(rhema)... of Christ. (NASB)

The Amplified version does a good job of expressing the exact meaning of this passage.

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

My own paraphrase of this passage would be:

“Faith comes by hearing with spiritual ears what the living word of the Lord is saying to us as it is preached by the anointed messenger of the Lord.”

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Now read Romans 10:8-10 again, knowing that “word” in this passage is *rhema*.

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth... (in the form of a confession of faith)... and in your heart”... (as the living word of the Lord)..., that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

If you were drawing a parallel between Romans 10:8,9 and “having” and “obeying”, what part of the passage above would you use to describe “have” and which to describe “obey”? Use a single word for your answer to each.

Have = _____

Obey = _____

There are two other passages that we need to examine in order to fully understand what it means to “have” and “obey” the Lord’s commands.

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality – faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses. Hebrews 11:1 (Amplified)

Anyone, whether a “born again” believer or not, can know and outwardly “obey” the basic, tenets of God’s moral law as logically understood from scripture, but Jesus revealed the inadequacy of attempting to obey a purely intellectual understanding of the written word when He taught His disciples that the commandment, ***You shall not commit adultery***, included having lust in the heart, even though the outward physical act is never carried out.

You have heard it said, “You shall not commit adultery”, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:27,28 (NASB)

Why is having lust in the heart (man’s unique spirit-mind connection) considered by the Lord to be the same as committing the physical act of adultery? _____

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We have the Lord's particular instruction in this hidden meaning of "You shall not commit adultery", but is it possible to intellectually discern from the written word of God, even in the original languages, the specific will of God concerning all matters? (Hint: religious Jews have been attempting to do just that for thousands of years without success.) _____ Paul made it clear that it is not possible to "have" the specific will of God in our hearts on the basis of intellectual understanding alone.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (NASB) (emphasis is the author's)

Read the underlined portion of this passage as a single sentence. What is meant by "spiritually appraised"? _____

Does the term "natural man" include religious Jews today who not only know the written word of God in the original language but have developed thousands of books and rules defining what they believe God intends concerning every possible detail of life? _____

Can those of us who are now "born again" and have received the indwelling Holy Spirit do any better than the religious Jews of all ages in determining the specific will of God on the basis of intellect alone? Why or why not?

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If you said that the Spirit of Truth guides us in our intellectual understanding of the written word of God or “illuminates” our intellectual understanding so that we “have” it as a living, spiritually expanded (“spiritually appraised”) word in our hearts, you are correct. But why, then, is the body of Christ, the “church”, split up into hundreds of denominations with widely varying opinions about the truth, promises and commands of God as they are revealed in the Bible?

Meditate on this question for a moment and write out a succinct answer.

The answer to this question should be apparent. Christ is not divided, and the Spirit of Truth does not reveal contradictory information to the church. Therefore, all such divisions and disagreements about doctrine, practice, and specific interpretations of scripture are not of God. (But, of course, “we” are right, and “they” are wrong.)

(meditation pause)

The greatest opposition that the Lord received to His earthly ministry was from the religious Jews, and this problem, sometimes referred to as “Phariseeism” or “legalism”, exists in the church today.

The picture we should have in our minds right now is the difference between attempting to obey our intellectual understanding of rules handed down by church tradition or even written on tablets of stone with that of being in the Lord’s presence as He speaks his Truth, promises, and commands directly into our hearts.

Like the Pharisees of Jesus’ time, many believers attempt to obey Jesus by conforming to their intellectual understanding of religious rules and the expectations of men rather than “having” and “obeying” as meant in John 14:21, and they miss the amazing and empowering spiritual intimacy of “hearing” directly from the Lord on a day by day, hour by hour, minute by

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minute basis, and knowing (*ginosko*) the Lord in a very real and “personal” sense.

Learning to have “ears to hear” and “eyes to see” is the most important skill a disciple can have.

Questions and observations:

* * *

Word study

Grace (*charis* – Strong’s #5485)) is most often interpreted as the unmerited favor of God. However, a phrase like “full of grace” in reference to the Lord and to the disciples after the Day of Pentecost includes the inference of power. To say that someone is “graceful” in the way that they act or speak is literally saying that they are filled with the empowerment of God to act or speak.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Acts 6:8 (NIV)

It might help your understanding to substitute “unmerited favor of God” for “grace” in these passages and see how much sense they make.

Would it be accurate to say that Jesus was full of unmerited favor?

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Our use of phrases such as “full of grace” or “by grace through faith” sometimes become religious expressions devoid of soul-stirring power, because we use it inaccurately.

It is not wrong to interpret “grace” as the unmerited favor of God, but we need to recognize that this only describes God’s *hesed* (covenant love) motivation and the fact that we receive God’s power acting on our behalf, manifested in us, and manifested through us as a result of our mystical union with Jesus Christ or, in specific instances, as a result of our faith.

The phrase “by grace through faith”, that I use frequently in this Bible study, should clearly indicate to the disciple that the favor of God and the power of God flow to and through the disciple as we make obedient faith responses to the specific, revealed will of God that we have “heard” with spiritual ears and now “have” as a living *rhema* word in our hearts.

The author’s expanded paraphrase of “by grace through faith” would be: By the power of God released in us and through us because of our obedient response to His specific will as it is revealed to us through our spirits. (i.e. Having “ears to hear” and seeing with the “eyes of our hearts”). A shorter version might be, “by the power of God as it is manifested through our faith.”

Thus to be “full of grace” is to be filled with the empowerment of God to think, speak, and act, which results in the glory of the Lord being manifested in our thoughts, words, and acts. Review 2 Corinthians 3:17-19 and write down any new insights or questions you may have.

In a time of meditation and prayer, ask the Lord to give you remembrance as you make one list of the various occasions in which you acted in obedience to religious rules and the expectations of men. Then make another list of various occasions in which you know you responded in obedience to the revealed will of the Lord by faith. The temptation here will be to hurriedly put down two or three items in each list, but the more diligently you approach this exercise the more acute will be your understanding.

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Obedience to religious rules and the expectations of men:

Obedience to the revealed will of the Lord by faith:

Did you notice that you had some actions that were the same in both lists? An example might be witnessing to the lost. At one time you may have witnessed to the lost out of a sense of responsibility to conform to the religious expectations of men, and, later, you began to witness freely in response to the Holy Spirit's prompting.

Examine the list of those occasions when you responded in obedience to the Holy Spirit revealed will of the Lord, and ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Was there an experience of joy in your obedience?
- 2) Was Jesus in some way manifested through your obedience?
- 3) Was the selfless love of God manifested in some way through your obedience?

Now ask yourself the same question concerning the list of those occasions in which you were merely obedient to religious rules and the expectations of men?

- 1) Was there an experience of joy in your obedience?
- 2) Was Jesus in some way manifested through your obedience?
- 3) Was the selfless love of God manifested in some way through your obedience?

If you were doing it just one way or the other, instead of a mixture of both like most of us are doing, which list would ultimately result in "burn out"? Which list would not result in "burn out"? Why?

Read Luke 10:40-42

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It is obviously not wrong to serve in our local fellowship of believers, but one way to determine whether or not our service is the result of active faith or merely out of a sense of religious obligation is to examine our attitude in service.

What was Martha's attitude concerning the fact that she was doing all the work? _____

What was the Lord's response?

Joy in your fellowship with the Lord (hearing and responding to His voice) and joy in your fellowship with other believers during works of service is proof that your service is a manifestation of His life in you.

Resentment and judgement of others for not performing works of service as you believe they should is proof that we are acting out of a sense of obligation and our expectation that others should do the same.

Paraphrase what you think Jesus meant when He said that Mary was doing the one thing that was necessary: _____

Having and obeying or having and "keeping" the commands of the Lord is the supernatural activity of faith in which the Holy Spirit imparts specific knowledge of the Lord's will by various means so that we receive it as from the Lord himself (*...faith perceiving as real fact what cannot be revealed to the senses*), and then acting on what we have received in obedience.

List as many ways as you can think of in which the Holy Spirit, our Counselor, reveals the Truth, promises, and commands of the Lord to us so that we "hear" His voice and have a living word of faith in our hearts, and then check it against the author's list. (Don't cheat. Reflect on your own

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experience and on what you have read in the Bible before examining the author's list.) Be as complete as possible as you meditate on your answer.

Some of the ways (and this is not an exhaustive list) in which the Holy Spirit, our Counselor, reveals the Truth, commands, and promises of the Lord to us (so that we “hear” His voice with spiritual ears and “see” with the eyes of our hearts) include the illumination of scripture, inspired thoughts as we meditate on scripture, answered prayer, inspired preaching resulting in a “living” word from the Lord, inspired teaching resulting in a “living” word from the Lord, inspired spiritual songs and hymns that prompt and promote our faith, the various gifts of the Spirit operating in and through other believers, various gifts of the Spirit operating in and through us, certain kinds of circumstances (such as specific answers to prayer) that reveal the Lord's presence and will, spiritual dreams, spiritual visions, and the still, small voice of the Spirit, our spiritual conscience.

Meditate on this list, and ask the Lord, your Counselor, to expand your conscious knowledge of His supernatural communications with you so that having “ears to hear” and having the “eyes of your heart” opened becomes a common rather than a rare experience.

(meditation and prayer pause)

* * *

Now, let's examine the primary means, apart from scripture, by which the Holy Spirit communicates His Truth, promises, and commands to all believers, even from the moment of regeneration.

Read John 14:26

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But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. John 14:26 (NASB)

Word study

The word in these passages translated “**Counselor**” in the NIV, “**Comforter**” in the KJV, and “**Helper**” in the NASB, is the Greek word (*parakletos* - Strong’s #3875). This word is used to describe an advocate or one who gives aid and defends. Jesus used this word to describe the indwelling Holy Spirit that the apostles received after He arose from the tomb and the other disciples would receive on the Day of Pentecost, but we need to understand that Christ was a *parakletos* for His original disciples, and when He told them that the Father would send them a “Helper” (the Holy Spirit) He was telling them that He would continue to be present with them as their *parakletos* in the form of the Holy Spirit.

Thus He is also present with us in the form of the indwelling Holy Spirit, our *parakletos*, and the still, small voice of the Spirit is the Lord speaking His Truth, promises, and commands (His will) to us even as our spiritual conscience.

Take a moment to meditate on this, and allow this Truth to be firmly implanted in your heart. That inner prompting that caused you to experience grief and regret when you inadvertently gossiped about someone in your fellowship and that feeling of joy and victory when you woke up in the middle of the night to pray in agreement with the revealed will of God for someone who suddenly came to your mind...was the Lord, and your response, whether in repentance and brokenness or in joy and victory was, in fact, active FAITH.

The Spirit is not, then, an anonymous third party whom we can ignore, quench, and grieve with impunity. The Spirit is the Lord, sometimes comforting, sometimes revealing Truth in the written scriptures, sometimes cautioning, sometimes disciplining, sometimes prompting an act of agape love, sometimes prompting repentance, sometimes self-manifesting as a gift of the Spirit, sometimes communicating with us through dreams and visions, and our obedient faith responses to the will of the Lord thus revealed is “having” and “obeying” as conveyed in John 14:21. This is also a part of “walking by faith” or “walking in the Spirit” as conveyed by Peter, Paul, and John in their Spirit-breathed letters.

Final Instructions

At times when we are walking close to the Lord our obedience is prompt and without hesitation. At other times our knowledge of the Lord's will conflicts with that area of our minds that has not, yet, been "transformed" to be like His, and we experience a trial or temptation to "trample underfoot" the revealed will of the Lord. Will we walk in obedience to the revealed will of the Lord, or will we balk because of pressures from the flesh, the world, or even direct demonic influence?

This struggle is classically demonstrated in Romans 7 and 8, and the disciple should read, study, and meditate on these passages frequently, but, for the purpose of this Bible study, we will examine only a few key passages.

Before we examine the key passages in Romans 7 and 8 we need to establish some basic understanding of the makeup of man. Man was created as a spiritual being who will live for eternity, though he will not live for eternity in the natural body, and he will ultimately experience eternity in condemnation or eternity in glory. As a spiritual being, the physical body is that part of man capable of sensing and responding to the natural world, the spirit is that part of man capable of sensing and responding to the spirit world, and the soul (mind, emotions, will) is that part of man capable of receiving from both the spirit and the soul and CHOOSING a response to either.

The biblical reference to the heart of a man is a reference to the unique spirit-soul connection, sometimes referred to as the "inner man" or "innermost parts". In Genesis we find that Adam became a "living soul" when God breathed life into him. A "living" soul is a soul connected to spirit and capable of sensing and responding to spirit. Animals, for instance, have souls (mind, emotions, will), but they do not have "living" souls with a spiritual connection. (They can be controlled by spirit beings, but that is a subject for another Bible study.)

When Adam was created as a "living soul" we say that he was a GENERATED being. As such he was innocent of sin and capable of open communion with the Father. Adam's soul (mind, emotions, will), in this condition, was completely free of conflict or contamination, but when Adam "sinned" (knowingly violated the covenant command of the Father) he became a DEGENERATED man, that is, he lost his heart connection to the Father. His spirit didn't die. He just lost his open communion with the Father, and his soul became contaminated by sin. Man, as a degenerated

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being, is still capable of sensing and responding to spiritual stimuli (especially demonic stimuli), but his body and his soul are contaminated by sin and he does not have free and open communion with God.

When man is “born again”, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, he becomes a REGENERATED being who now has free and open communion with God again. His body and his soul are still contaminated by sin, but, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, our *parakletos*, he now has the ability to CHOOSE to be obedient to the influence of Christ in his spirit or the influence of his sin-trained, sin-influenced soul.

You have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin (seed, sperm), but from... (the seed of)... one that is immortal... (Jesus Christ)... by the ever living and lasting Word of God ... (Jesus Christ)... 1 Peter 1:23 (Amplified) (inserts are the author's)

I explain the indwelling presence (seed) of Christ as the believer now having the spiritual DNA of Christ in his heart or innermost being, thus changing his true nature from that of a “sinner” with the spiritual DNA of Adam in his heart to that of a “saint” with the spiritual DNA of Christ in his heart.

Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (Amplified)

(prayer and meditation pause)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:13,14 (NIV)

Paul refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our spirits as a “pledge” or “deposit” (the sanctification of our spirits) guaranteeing the ultimate sanctification of our souls and our physical bodies.

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It is the Lord's intention that this instantaneous change in a man's nature, through the baptism of the Spirit, sanctifying our spirits, to be "worked out" in our souls (mind, emotions, will) to the maximum extent possible, even while in the body. And along with the new ability to choose to respond to either the influence of our own sin-trained souls or the influence of Christ in our spirits is the beginning of a process, a process of progressive sanctification or the renewing (transforming) of our minds (souls), as we choose to respond to the influence of the Spirit rather than the influence of Satan, the world systems under Satan's control, and our own sin-trained "flesh". Thus Paul's warning in Phillipians 2:12.

...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Obviously Paul is not using the word "salvation" to indicate that the believer is required to work out his own regeneration experience. So, what does he mean by this statement? _____

Why is the believer instructed to pursue this progressive sanctification with "fear and trembling"? (Read Colossians 1:15-20 before answering)

We are still examining what it means to "have" and "obey" the Lord's commands so that we can experience the covenant love and favor of the Father and the agape love of the Lord being expressed in us and through us.

The role of the Holy Spirit as our "Comforter" and our *parakletos*

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...Romans 2:14,15 (NASB) (emphasis is the author's)

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Remember that the biblical use of the word “heart” refers to man’s unique spirit-mind or spirit-soul connection, and the phrase “written in their hearts” simply refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit, our Counselor or *parakletos* energizing our new spiritual conscience.

...their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...

Paul uses the term “bearing witness” to describe the inner voice of the Holy Spirit who lets us know, not only when something is contrary to the specific will of the Lord, but also when we need to act in some positive way ***by grace through faith*** in response to the specific will of the Lord.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God. Romans 8:16 (NIV)

Notice how the Spirit “testifies” with us. Is it with our “mind” or with our “spirits”? _____

The communication between the Holy Spirit (who is the Lord) and our conscious mind and will is through our spirits. The state of our mind-spirit connection with the Holy Spirit, then, is key to how well we hear what the Spirit is saying. Biblically this is referred to as “having ears to hear.” The Bible is not, as many presume, a religious rule book imposed on those who have been included in the New Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ, but a holy God cannot freely commune (or communicate) with those whose “hearing” and “seeing” is inhibited by gross sin. Therefore, it is His desire to transform us (sanctify us through and through) by grace through faith so that we may freely commune (communicate) with Him and experience the fullness of our covenant relationship with Him in Christ.

The following three passages illustrate the three primary reasons a believer may be dull of (spiritual) hearing. Write your own paraphrase of each.

Hebrews 3:14-15 and Hebrews 5:11-14

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Mark 7:8,9

Matthew 13:22

Take time now to meditate and pray about any issues with “hearing” that your *parakletos*, who is the Lord, has brought to your attention through your reading and paraphrasing of these passages.

(meditation and prayer pause)

Word study

The literal meaning of the word **sin** (*hamartia* – Strong’s #266) is “to miss the mark” or to fail to live up to God’s righteous covenant requirements. We use the word commonly to describe moral failure, but **sin**, for the born again believer, is to think, speak, or act in a manner that is not in harmony with our nature as re-generated new creations in Christ, including not doing what we have already been commanded to do.

Therefore, to act in obedience to the revelation of the Lord’s will in our lives is “faith”, and to act in knowing disobedience to the revelation of the Lord’s will in our lives is “sin”.

Temptation is the pressure we experience from various sources: primarily Satan, the world systems under Satan’s control, and any part of our mind (soul) that has not been renewed (transformed) in His image.

The ensuing struggle we experience is the testing of our faith. We will either yield to this pressure, which is “sin”, or we will make an obedient response to the Lord’s will, which is “obedience” resulting in active faith.

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Therefore, an important part of experiencing victory in the testing of our faith is to “work out” our salvation (our re-generation as “new creations”) by maintaining a constant sense of awesome respect for who He is and who we have been chosen to be in Him.

The conscious heart knowledge of who He is and who we are in Him empowers us to overcome when we are tempted to trample underfoot the revealed will of the Lord.

Note: It is the author’s suggestion that the disciple memorize and continually meditate on certain passages that remind the disciple of who He (the Lord) is and who we are in Him. It is also helpful to memorize and continually meditate on certain passages that help us remember the keys to overcoming in our struggle with sin. The author has his own list, but the disciple should allow his Counselor to reveal appropriate and meaningful passages. As they come to you, write them down in a special place in your journal, and then memorize them and meditate on them regularly. The Lord will speak His living *rhema* to you through these passages, and this is particularly important during a time of need when it may be too late to try to find an appropriate scripture.

Overcoming:

Each disciple is given the ability to overcome the pressure of each temptation, but the specific means is not always the same for each disciple or for each circumstance.

And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; Romans 8:26 (NASB)

There are numerous scriptural examples of means that the Holy Spirit provides to equip us ***by grace through faith*** to overcome in our trials of faith and our temptations to trample underfoot the revealed commands of

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the Lord. Make your own list of the means the Counselor has used in the past to help you overcome during a trial of faith or a temptation:

Testimonies

I know one believer who, when struggling in a trial, frequently hears or remembers a spiritual song or hymn. He does not search his memory for this reinforcement. The Spirit simply causes it to happen.

Another believer struggled for years with smoking. He had the conviction of the Spirit in that regard, but his various attempts to obey the Lord through nicotine gum, the patch, hypnosis, etc. all ended in failure.

Ultimately, in a moment of meditative prayer, a passage that he had known since his youth came to his conscious mind.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Phillipians 4:13 (NASB)

At that moment he knew that he was through with smoking. As he threw away the carton of cigarettes he had recently purchased, his wife said, “What? Again?”

“This time it’s for real,” he answered, “because the Lord spoke His promise into my heart, and I can finally quit trying to do it myself.”

By the grace (power) of God, he not only quit smoking but he experienced no lingering temptation.

The difference for him was that after he exhausted the strong arm of the flesh he finally “heard” that passage as a living word from the Lord so that he believed in his heart and then acted on what he believed, which is active faith.

I have had warning dreams in which I am shown the true nature of some sin I am struggling with, and this supernatural revelation of the true nature of my sin causes me to respond with the seriousness and brokenness it deserves.

On another occasion I was approached by an elderly woman in a Bible book store who handed me a book, saying, “This is the book you’re looking for.” When confronted with the gift of the Spirit operating in another believer and by the appropriateness of the book she handed me, I was willing to crucify the flesh in the circumstance.

The means by which Romans 8:26 becomes a reality to us are innumerable. These are just a few examples.

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Remember: The Lord is merciful. According to 1 John 1:9 He will forgive us and cleanse our unrighteousness, but besetting or “revolving door” sins are a sign that we are in desperate need.

Scripture instructs us that there are three sins that we need to flee from.

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18 (NASB)

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 1 Corinthians 10:14 (NASB)

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. 1 Timothy 6: 9-11 (NASB)

1 Corinthians 6:18 (See also 2 Timothy 2:22) – the command is to flee

1 Corinthians 10:14 – the command is to flee _____

1 Timothy 6:9-11 – the command is to flee _____

As you meditate on these passages allow your Counselor to suggest the specific scope of these sins as it relates to your life. If you do not want to write them out here out of fear that your spouse or someone else may discover them, you should, at least, address them in prayer. (1 John 1:9)

An entire Bible study could be written just to cover these three areas of sin, but for the moment what does it mean to you as a disciple that the Lord is instructing you to “flee” from these specific areas of sin?

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What does our parakletos tell us is the **strategy** for overcoming these sins:

1. His initial strategy is to: _____

2. His follow up strategy (2 Timothy 6:11) is to: _____

Strategizing against sin (deliberately planning actions to overcome sin) is extremely important in our struggle against sin.

In a time of meditation and prayer list some specific strategies that you may need to implement. (i.e. specific ways you may need to flee, and specific ways you may need to pursue *righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.*

Whenever I am counseling a brother who is struggling with sin I always ask, “If Jesus appeared at your door tomorrow morning and said that He would be spending the next twenty-four hours with you, would you have any problem overcoming that particular sin or area of unbelief during those twenty-four hours?”

The answer is always, “No, of course not.”

One of the promises of John 14:21 is that the Lord will make Himself real or manifest Himself to the one who loves Him (as demonstrated by “having” and “obeying” His commands), and Colossians 1:15-20 is one passage I have memorized for the purpose of allowing the Spirit to remind me of who He is and who I am in Him. Psalms 103 is also one that I read in those circumstances, but there are many others. We tend to be guided by what other people think are the important scriptures for us to memorize for various reasons, such as witnessing to non-believers, but these days I allow

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the Lord to reveal those passages I need to memorize in order to trigger a living word of active faith in the circumstances He knows I will be facing.

Read and meditate on Colossians 1:15-20 and Psalm 103.

(meditation pause)

Most of us have prayed at one time or another for the Lord to simply remove a particular sin or temptation from us, but we need to remember Paul's example of the thorn in the flesh.

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness " 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NASB)

There has been much speculation about what Paul's particular "thorn in the flesh" was, but the key to understanding this passage and its possible application to our lives is that the "thorn" was a demonic influence (a messenger of Satan) that the Lord allowed to remain in Paul's life for the purpose of making him dependent on the grace of God.

It would be helpful for the disciple to read and meditate on Ephesians 6:12-18 at this point in order to fully realize that Satan and his demons are actively opposing the will of God in our lives directly and indirectly through various kinds of deceptions and pressures **which we cannot overcome through obedience to religious rules or through mere will power.**

Why does the Lord say that power (His power) is perfected (or "fully realized") in our "weakness" (inability to overcome)?

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Our most common response to the revelation knowledge of the Lord's will is to accomplish it with our own power (ability) like the testimony of the man who tried to quit smoking. In this we short circuit the Lord's intention of manifesting Himself in our circumstances ***by grace through faith.***

In a moment of private, prayerful meditation think of some besetting sin in your life that you may have overcome numerous times in the past but that continues to be a temptation.

(meditation break)

Now, meditate on the Lord's answer to Paul: ***“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”***

The Lord is not saying that He will simply step in and automatically deal with the temptation for you. If so, none of us would experience besetting sins.

I will offer no additional explanation here, because it is important for the Holy Spirit to reveal this Truth to you individually. Therefore, it is important for you to stay in prayer and meditation until you “hear” what the Spirit is saying.

My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.

Remember: Satan, “the father of lies”, uses deception directly and indirectly (as he did with Eve) to tempt us into unbelief or direct disobedience.

(prayer and meditation break)

Personal insight:

What is the opposite of “deception” or lies?
(see John 14:6)_____

How did Jesus oppose the temptation of Satan? (see Luke 4:1-13)

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What does that suggest to you in regard to dealing with temptation?

Faith is our obedient response to Truth as Truth is directly applied by the Holy Spirit (i.e. the revealed will of the Lord).

The struggle with sin (temptation to act in unbelief or to disobey and trample underfoot the revealed will of the Lord) is perfectly described by the following passage:

...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death... (or to an act of death). James 1: 13-15 (NIV) (insert is the author's)

In Romans 7 Paul describes the struggle between the new nature of Christ in our spirits and the old nature of our sin-trained souls, resulting in the exclamation, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who will rescue me from this body of death?"

All of us, without exception, have cried out in some similar fashion during a struggle with sin, and all of us, without exception, need to pay particular attention to Paul's answer.

Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Will power does not work. Religious rules do not work. Only the presence of Christ Himself in our spirits and our renewed minds can empower us **by grace through faith** (by the power of God manifested through our obedient response to the supernaturally revealed will of God) to overcome this tendency to trample underfoot the revealed will of the Lord and to manifest the glory of the Lord in our thoughts, words, and actions. Paul reveals the principle as a spiritual law:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1 (NIV)
(emphasis is the author's)

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Is the condemnation Paul is referring to in this passage condemnation to eternal judgment or condemnation to a sin dominated life? Why?

If you struggled with the question above, remember that we have already been forgiven (in the sense of judgment unto eternal condemnation) for all sin, past, present, and future at the moment of our saving faith. Forgiveness as demonstrated in 1 John 1:9 is related to the restoration of our fellowship with the Lord.

A “law” is a principle of operation within a certain system. The law of gravity is a principle of operation within planetary physics resulting in the experience of weight. “Everything that goes up must come down” is an expression of that law, but is that correct? A rocket escaping the earth’s gravitational pull does not have to come down, and a solar powered airplane, like the one that recently circled the globe, does not have to come down as long as the law of aerodynamic lift is in operation. The law of aerodynamic lift overcomes the law of gravity as long as a certain wing shape moves forward through the atmosphere at a certain speed. The law of aerodynamic lift does not destroy or eliminate the law of gravity, it simply overcomes it.

Likewise, the law of the Spirit of life does not destroy or eliminate the law of sin and death, it overcomes it ***by grace through faith***.

Describe a time in your life when you were “flying” by grace through faith and then fell to the ground again (If you don’t want to write it, then think it through long enough to identify the specifics):

No matter what you write in the details described above, it will involve losing your faith-filled sense of the presence of the Lord in your life, because it is impossible to imagine any circumstance in which the presence of the Lord would be unable to prevail over sin or unbelief.

That statement applies to all of us in all circumstances.

The key to overcoming is our conscious awareness of the presence of Christ (i.e. abiding in Christ).

The key to our conscious awareness of the Lord's presence is "hearing" and "obeying" His voice.

We sometimes refer to hearing and obeying as being "in the word" (both *logos* and *rhema*), and that phrase does not mean merely reading and studying the Bible. It means desperately, without compromise, inclining our "ears to hear" and keeping the "eyes of our hearts" open to His revealed will through intensive Bible study, anointed preaching, anointed teaching, anointed music, the gifts of the Spirit operating through other believers, the gifts of the Spirit operating in and through us, and the still, small voice of the Spirit, our spiritual conscience, which is His Spirit and His voice, and then acting on (obeying or "keeping") what we have heard.

Therefore, if you are struggling with unbelief and knowing disobedience, trampling underfoot the revealed will of the Lord,...it is a problem of not being "in the word".

There is no formula here, and it would be inappropriate for me or anyone else to suggest what being "in the word" means for each disciple. But the disciple can be sure of this: if you have been overtaken by sin, whatever you are currently doing to be "in the word" is not enough. Therefore, it is time to go to the Lord in prayer asking Him to reveal the appropriate measures you will need to take to be "in the word".

Spend some time now allowing this Truth to be fully confirmed in your own heart, and, as the Spirit guides, and make the appropriate responses to the Lord. (Do not allow the **temptation** to skip this exercise overtake you.)

(meditation and prayer pause)

The following is a strategy against revolving door or "besetting" sin that the author has used. This is an example only and not a formula. The disciple should allow his/her Counselor to develop a specific strategy for the revolving door or "besetting" sins in his/her life.

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1. Pray that the Lord will reveal the sin as it really is. He will honor that prayer, and it will break your heart so that you are willing to turn away from the sin.
2. Meditate and pray about the sources (doors) of temptation for this specific sin, and make a detailed plan for closing those doors. An example might be not watching certain TV shows, avoiding certain personal relationships altogether, or even averting your eyes from magazine covers at the grocery store check-out. Remember the Lord's own words: *...if your eye offends you, pluck it out.*
3. Do not "entertain" the sin. Do not play with fire. As soon as you recognize that a door has been opened, close it immediately. If you entertain the temptation, you will yield.
4. Seek Christian counseling or accountability with a trusted brother or sister in Christ.
5. Memorize and continually meditate on scripture passages that remind you of who He is and who you are in Him.
6. Do whatever it takes to stay "in the word". No one can give you a formula for what that will require for you, but **no measure is too extreme**. Never, never let up. A "besetting" sin is just that. It will come back if you let up, but His grace (empowerment) is sufficient for you to overcome if abide in Him and His words abide in you
7. As you begin to experience the overcoming *dunomis* power of Christ through your obedient faith responses to His *rhema* (revealed word and will), you should begin to aggressively minister to others who are caught up in that same sin. An example might be drugs or alcohol. As you begin to experience the overcoming power of the law of the Spirit of Life in setting you free from drugs or alcohol, you should begin ministering that same freedom to others who are in bondage in order to make your own freedom secure.

* * *

Read John 14:27

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After reading this passage do you think the Lord is referring to political peace? _____

Is He referring to peace with God as announced to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus? Explain your reasons why or why not.

Do you believe that we receive the peace of the Lord passively as a gift or actively through “hearing” and “obeying”?

And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always]. Colossians 3:15 (Amplified)

Although this passage in context is directly related to peace and unity within the body of Christ it has broader application to all of our relationships and actions. What is suggested by the phrase...*rule as umpire*...in the Amplified version of this passage?

There is a simple rule being expressed here: If it grieves the Spirit, don't do it, don't say it, don't even think it. And, if the Spirit prompts you to act in agape love, do not hesitate or weigh the Lord's command in your mind, and the peace and joy of the Lord will be yours.

That is the promise of John 14:21 and John 14:27. Take time now to ask the Father to make the presence of Christ in you and with you a reality as you diligently pursue being “in the word”.

(prayer pause)

* * *

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There is another aspect of His peace for believers, peace in the midst of trying or dangerous circumstances, as found in Phillipians 4:6-7, but we will examine that aspect of His peace beginning on page 83 and following.

John 15: 1-17– The Parable of the Vine and the Branches

Read the parable and the Lord’s explanation of the parable through from beginning to end, keeping in mind that this, more than any other passage, explains the disciple’s relationship with the Lord. Identify the Father, the Son, and the believer in this parable.

Father = _____

Son = _____

Believer = _____

Identify the purpose of this relationship.

What does “fruit” represent in this parable?

What is the relationship between “fruit”, “works”, and the “glory” of the Lord?

Notice that it is the gardener who trims the branches to produce more fruit, not the vine itself. What does “trimming” the branches represent?

If you have trouble answering, read John 14:12-14 again, and then write the answer.

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If we have not adequately responded to the Lord's positive instructions in order to overcome the sin and disobedience in our lives (i.e. **spiritual complacency**, which is the opposite of aggressively strategizing against sin and disobedience), the Lord will allow **pain** to motivate us.

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our own good that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:7-11 (NIV) (emphasis is the author's)

Is the Father's discipline "punishment" or proof of His love?

Identify the specific word used in the parable of the vine and the branches to describe the Father's discipline. By comparison identify a single word (not in this passage) that could be used to describe His judgment.

Discipline: _____

Judgment: _____

The Father's discipline (refining us like gold through "hardship") is the process by which our progressive sanctification takes place.

Testimony

Early in my Christian life I felt the need to find a different way to make a living, and I found what I thought was a perfect franchise for me. I prayed about it, sought wise counsel from close, Spirit-filled friends, all of whom agreed that it seemed a sound investment.

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On the way to Arizona with a bank check in my pocket I had a two hour layover in the DFW airport. As I was reading my Bible I was prompted to pray.

“Lord, I don’t feel that I have had your specific will revealed to me in regard to this business decision. Give me a sign, Lord, that this is either your specific will or that I should abandon this course of action.”

I do not recommend casting fleeces or asking for signs or the closed door, opened door prayer, but, as a new believer, the Lord apparently allowed it.

Later, when I looked up at the clock it was five minutes after my flight was supposed to leave, but the speakers had never announced the boarding of my flight.

I rushed up to the attendant at the gate and asked about my flight.

“Your flight left the gate five minutes ago.”

“Why wasn’t it announced,” I asked in outrage.

“The entire DFW audio system went down thirty minutes ago and didn’t come back up until a couple of minutes ago, sir. We couldn’t announce the boarding of your flight.”

Instead of recognizing this obvious, miraculous sign from the Lord, I immediately said, “What time does the next flight leave?”

That franchise became a black hole, and I learned a valuable lesson about double-mindedness through the Lord’s discipline, a lesson that would help me overcome the temptation in the future to trust my own understanding even though the Lord has clearly revealed His will.

In that sense His discipline, though painful at the time, was a demonstration of His love, as it always is.

Although the parable of the vine and the branches and its explanation was spoken to the eleven disciples still present after the Passover meal, and has certain historic applications to them alone, the principles, promises, and commands apply to every disciple of every generation. Take time to meditate now on the fact that this parable is being spoken directly to you by the Lord Himself, who is the Spirit, and read it once more as if you were hearing Him speak it out loud with His eyes fixed firmly on you.

(reading and meditation pause)

* * *

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Word Study

Abide (*meno* – Strong’s #3306) as in “Abide in me, and I will abide in you” or “if you abide in me and my words abide in you” is not a word in common usage today. It means to continually and deliberately “dwell” or have your life in Him as He dwells and has His life in you.

“Having” and “obeying” His commands is how we abide in Him and how His words abide or have their life in us, producing or manifesting fruit (His works) **by grace through faith**, which glorifies (reveals) the Lord.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. John 15:7 (NASB)

What is the promise of John 15:7?

Specifically, what does the “whatever you wish” include?

Meditate on this question again, forgetting all other teaching you may have heard about this subject, and allow the Counselor to give you “ears to hear” what the Spirit is saying to you in this passage. Keep in mind that the entire purpose of the believer abiding in Christ with His words abiding in the believer is to produce the works (fruit) of Christ in the world...**not the works of the flesh and not so we can be comfortable and fulfilled in the world systems.**

Now read John 14:12-14 again before you before you spend time in meditation and prayer concerning what the Lord is telling you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. John 14:12-14 (NASB)

Remember: At times the Holy Spirit begins the revelation of wisdom by causing us to ask the right questions. Don’t forget to ask questions of John

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15:7 and John 14:12-14, and trust in the Counselor to eventually answer the questions He has prompted you to ask.

(prayer and meditation pause)

* * *

Questions:

Word Study

Joy (*chara* – Strong’s #5479) is not the same as “happy”. “Happy” is a response to the circumstance. Joy is not “euphoria”, either. “Joy” is a relationship response that expresses an energetic and empowering harmony of purpose and will. Paul and Silas in chains in prison singing hymns and psalms is an example of true joy. They were not “happy” in their circumstance, but they were experiencing joy.

...for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Nehemiah 8:10 (NASB)

The author’s paraphrase would be: “The disciple’s harmony of purpose and will with the Lord in any circumstance allows the Lord’s strength to manifest itself through the disciple in the circumstance.”

Paraphrase in your own words what you believe this passage means.

Testimony:

A young couple in the Bible study I was teaching at the time, reluctantly requested my help in dealing with a problem that they were not

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willing to approach anyone else about. A ghost was appearing to both of them in their house, particularly when they attempted to pray together or to study the Bible. Their children, too, were experiencing nightmares every night. On my way to their house I was filled with so much joy that I began to sing out loud. That joy was the tangible presence of the glory of the Lord, and, of course, after prayer, the demonic presence manifesting as a “ghost” and causing the children to experience night terrors quickly left and never returned. The authority of the Lord Himself was manifested in that circumstance ***by grace through faith***, and my experience of His empowering presence was “joy”.

Read John 15:10,11

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 15:10,11 (NASB)

I will ask some questions about the main components (all of which we have already studied), but there are many more questions that could and should be answered before developing a paraphrase.

1) Why does the Lord compare our obedience to His commands with His obedience to the Father's commands?

2) In both cases, what is the result of obedience?

3) What does “these things” refer to?

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4) What is the relationship between His joy in us and our joy being made full?

5) The language of this passage does not follow a sequential chain of cause and effect or command and promise. See if you can draw a sequential line of cause and effect.

The Lord reveals to us the purpose of “having” and “obeying” or keeping His commands (assuming our obedient faith response) -

(resulting in) > _____
(resulting in) > _____
(resulting in) > _____

Your paraphrase of John 15:10,11:

After telling us that the way we are to live our new life in Him is to “have” His commands as a living word of faith in our hearts and to “obey” or keep the commands ***through faith***, He then reveals his primary command, a “new” command.

Remember: The purpose of “having” and “obeying” the Lord’s commands is to manifest the *agape* love and the *hesed* (covenant) love of God, revealing the glory (or person) of the Lord through our obedient faith responses.

Read John 15: 12-17

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There are many implied commands and many promises contained in the Lord's final instructions on the day of His crucifixion, but, this particular passage is the only spoken command (a "new" command), and it begins and ends with the command to *agape* one another.

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

This I command you, that you love one another. (NASB)

What are the promises to those that the Lord calls "friends" because they *agape* the brothers and have laid down their lives for them (i.e. made natural, psychological and physical self-fulfillment of no importance)?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Is it possible to lay down our lives for our brothers without first laying down our lives for the Lord?

At this point the disciple may be thinking, "I want to be a 'friend' of the Lord", but it is important to know that laying down our lives for the Lord and for the brothers is a process, not a one time decision. The "decision" is to enter into the process. **2 Corinthians 3:15-17** and **Romans 12:1-2** are the two passages specifically related to the believer being "transformed" (becoming Christ-like in thought, word, and action), which is how we lay down our lives for the Lord and for the brothers. Those two passages alone would require a Bible study as long as this one, and it is the author's hope that the disciple will expand what he/she has received from this Bible study by taking up an independent, inductive study of those passages.

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In verse 16 the Lord tells the disciples that they did not choose Him, but He chose them.

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you...

The eleven were not looking for the Lord, but He chose them in person by issuing a command, “come...” Their obedience to His command was the moment that their choosing was fully realized. Read 1 Peter 2:9. Are you also “chosen” by the Lord? _____

How does the fact that He “chose” you with a command, “come...” (not literally but figuratively), as confirmed now in your heart and mind by the Holy Spirit, impact how you should respond to His commands to “go” or “do” in His name? (See Romans 8:16; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 3:12)

Meditate on what it means to know that you have been “chosen” by the Lord of Lords and King of Kings and that He has appointed (and anointed) you for the administration of His life and His love in some particular way or ways. (The temptation here will be to lightly acknowledge the fact of your election, but it is the author’s suggestion that the disciple spend enough time meditating and praying about this amazing fact that it will bring change.)

(meditation and prayer pause)

Notice in v. 16 that the Lord says the Father will give His “friends” whatever they ask in His name. Compare that with John 15:7 and John 14:13, 14. What conclusions can you draw?

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Do you believe that all disciples are called to be “friends” of the Lord with all that the designation implies? Why?

Do you believe that you were called to be a “friend” of the Lord?

(meditation and prayer break)

* * *

Word Study

World (*kosmos* – Strong’s #2889) in the scriptural sense means world systems, or world order, not the created natural world. World systems include government, science, education, economic systems, media, and religion, and from the biblical point of view these world systems are heavily influenced, if not entirely controlled, by Satan, the “god” of this present age.

Read John 15:18-25

What is the general response we should expect from the world?

If we are not, in any way, receiving that response from the world, should we be concerned? (See James 4:4, 2 Corinthians 10:3, and John 16:11 for additional insight) _____

The Lord told His disciples that His “friends” (those who have laid down their lives for Him and for the brothers and who manifest His love and His presence in the world systems) would generally be rejected and persecuted by those same world systems, especially those world systems that are not, in any way, influenced by His “friends” (i.e. kingdom influence).

Just based on your current knowledge and awareness, identify how the following world systems either oppose the true knowledge of God in Christ or support it.

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Education:

Government:

Media:

Banking and economic systems:

Religion (including all denominations of Christianity):

Now, check yourself. Was your response primarily defensive? Many believers today would like to feel at home and secure in the world systems. They have eternal security through their faith in Jesus Christ, and generally they desire to adhere to God's moral law. But "having" and "obeying" the Lord's commands in all things is too extreme for them. "Worldliness" is the word used to describe those believers who are more motivated and compelled to achieve success and security within world systems than they are to fully manifest the love and presence of the Lord in the world.

Response: _____

Most of us want to assume that we have achieved a kind of balance between our faith and our involvement and dependency on world systems, and, yet,

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scripture tells us that we are “aliens” in these same world systems, like soldiers behind enemy lines. “Balance” in this sense, then, is compromise.

In the Lord’s eyes those who have compromised their response to Him because of worldliness are like prisoners of war who are collaborating with the enemy.

Use this time to meditate and pray about your current status, and expect the Lord, our *parakletos* to provide wisdom and insight. Write down your thoughts, questions, and insights, either here or in your spiritual journal. Then identify the specific response(s) that the Lord wants you to make at this time. **Warning:** Skipping over this section will seriously hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, no matter how involved you are in church activity or ministry. Do not move past this step without the prayerful consent of the Holy Spirit.

(prayer and meditation pause)

Read John 15:26, 27

We can identify v. 27 as being restricted to the original disciples because of the words, *for you have been with me from the beginning*.

Read v. 26 carefully, and answer these questions:

Who is sending the Counselor, also called the Spirit of Truth?

From whom does the Counselor or Spirit of Truth come, and what significance does this have?

The Lord tells His original disciples that they will testify about Him, but He also tells them that the Spirit of Truth will testify about Him. We

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understand how the original disciples testified about Him, but how does the Spirit of Truth testify about the Lord?

What is the significance of sometimes referring to the Holy Spirit as the “Counselor” and sometimes referring to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Truth”?

Read John 16:1-6

Is this passage more or less exclusive to the eleven? Why or why not?

In what way does John 16:7 apply specifically to the eleven, and in what way does it have a general application to disciples of all ages?

Read John 16:8-11

We are told that the Counselor, whom we identify as the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in believers, will “convict the world (*kosmos*) of guilt” concerning:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

It is important to note that the activity of the Holy Spirit as the “Counselor” in this passage is through the obedient faith responses of the body of Christ. Now, examine the three tasks.

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1. How does the Counselor convict the world of sin and call it to repentance?

2. How is the standard of God's righteousness revealed through believers? (See Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and Ephesians 4:20-23)

3. How is Christ's judgment and victory over Satan demonstrated through the body of Christ?

The Lord's prayer, as recorded in John 17, has one key passage that the disciple using this study guide should be aware of before examining the details of the entire discourse and prayer found in the remainder of John 16 and the entirety of John 17. The disciple would ultimately make the discovery, but the author is going to highlight it now for the sake of avoiding confusion.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. John 17:20, 21 (NASB)

In this passage it is important for the disciple reading this text today to realize that the general principles the Lord is revealing pertain to all disciples throughout the age, even though certain specific prophetic passages belong only to the eleven disciples who were present on the day He was betrayed and crucified.

The disciple should also note that certain prophetic passages pertaining to the eleven may have ongoing prophetic applications for any disciple, but we should leave the specific application of those passages up to the Spirit of Truth to confirm to the individuals to whom He chooses to reveal them.

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I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. John 16:12-15 (NASB)

If you are still working this Bible study you have undoubtedly been “guided” into some Truth by the Holy Spirit. What does the term “guide” infer about our participation in the process?

When Jesus says that the Spirit of Truth will speak only what He hears, how does that compare with the Lord’s statement that He does nothing on His own but speaks just what the Father has taught Him? (John 8:28)

What conclusions can you draw from the comparison?

In this passage the Lord tells the eleven disciples that the Counselor will not only guide them into all Truth but that He will also tell them what is yet to come. Some theologians, anxious to prove that God does not continue to give prophetic revelation to His covenant people, have concluded that this passage refers only to the disciples who were to write scripture.

Using the list of disciples provided in Matthew 10:2-4, which of the eleven disciples present would write scripture in the future?

Which disciples not present during this discourse and not in the Matthew 10:2-4 list would write scripture in the future?

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Based on these facts, what would be your inductive conclusion?

Place a check mark by any of the following means that the Counselor might use today to reveal things yet to come:

- Our faith that we will spend an eternity in the presence of the Lord;
 A living word of faith concerning Biblical prophecy as yet unfulfilled;
 The still, small voice of the Spirit warning us about some circumstance;
 The peace (assurance) of the Lord concerning some circumstance we have been praying about.

Note: These are not the only means by which the Counselor may reveal what is yet to come to disciples today, but the author wanted to make a point without raising other issues.

He will honor and glorify Me, because He will take of (receive, draw upon) what is Mine and will reveal (declare, disclose, transmit) it to you. Everything that the Father has is Mine. That is what I meant when I said that He [the Spirit] will take the things that are Mine and will reveal (declare, disclose, transmit) it to you. John 16:14,15 (Amplified)

Spend a moment or two meditating on the meaning of this verse in context with the entire passage of John 16:12-15.

At first glance, depending on which translation you are reading, it might seem that John 16:12-15 is merely about the Holy Spirit revealing an expanded awareness of who Jesus is to the disciples (and to us). A closer examination will reveal that this is a covenant passage, almost as if we (disciples) are in the Counselor's office listening to the reading of the will.

What is the purpose of revealing (and "transmitting") the Lord's inheritance in God the Father?

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Now look back at the passage immediately preceding John 16:14,15:

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13 (NASB)

How does the disclosure of what is to come related to the disclosure of the Lord's inheritance in the Father and our inheritance in the Lord?

How does the Spirit's disclosure to us of all that belongs to the Lord glorify the Lord? (See also 2 Corinthians 3:15-18)

John 16:16-33 is a prophetic passage intended primarily for the eleven disciples present. Identify the passages or parts of passages that applied not only to them but still apply to all disciples of all ages:

The author will identify some key passages in John 16:16-33 that apply to disciples of all ages. These are not necessarily all that apply, but these are important enough to require further study and meditation.

In that day...if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. John 16:23 (NASB)

How does the disclosure of the Lord's inheritance in the Father and our inheritance in the Lord apply to asking in the Lord's name? (Review "Asking in His Name" on pages 29-30 of this Bible study guide, if necessary).

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***...ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.
John 16:24 (NASB)***

We have already discussed the fact that “joy” has nothing to do with physical or worldly fulfillment. Joy comes from the tangible presence of the Lord. How, then, does asking and receiving relate to our experience of joy?

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. John 16:33 (NASB)

What are the “these things” that the Lord spoke to them and now to us? (Note that He has said something similar to them already in 16:1 and 16:4. The disciple should trace the entire discourse back to try to find where this final reference begins.)

“Peace” and “tribulation” do not go together under normal circumstances. Is the Lord indicating that we will have peaceful co-existence with the world (*kosmos*) systems?

Is the promise of tribulation in the *kosmos* for the eleven only, or is it for disciples of all ages? Why or why not?

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Does it disturb you to realize that it is not the Lord's purpose or plan for His disciples, individually or corporately, as the church, to be in a state of peaceful co-existence with the *kosmos*?

Write out your concerns. Be honest here. It is important that each disciple acknowledge his/her own real fears about "troubles" in the world and being *strangers in a strange world*:

When the Lord commands us to take courage (in the face of tribulation in the *kosmos*), because He has overcome the *kosmos*, what does that mean to us individually and to the church, corporately?

How can we possibly have true peace of mind and joy in the midst of tribulation (trouble in the world)? (Review John 14:27, if necessary)

A personal testimony:

Our daughter, Becky, was born several months premature, and the doctors were saying that she only had a 50/50 chance of survival. Everyone was gathered in the waiting room as the doctor revealed the prognosis, and the entire family was filled with a spirit of gloom and concern.

My wife's father, Dick, went apart from the group to pray, and later, when he returned to the group, he confidently announced, "She's going to be all right."

The entire group accepted Dick's announcement as if it was a word from the Lord Himself, which, in fact, it was, and the peace and presence of Jesus Christ, quickly filled the room.

Today the proof that his peace and confidence came from the Lord is a beautiful Christian woman with children of her own.

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Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Write down an example of when the peace of the Lord kept you calm and confident, even joyful, in spite of the circumstances, and then write down an example of a time when peace gave way to fear and worry.

Peace: _____

Fear: _____

What caused the difference between those two experiences?

Can you imagine being afraid of anything, including an atomic bomb blast at ground zero, or imagine having any doubt whatsoever that your prayer would be answered, if you **knew**, absolutely... ***faith perceiving as real fact what cannot be revealed to the senses...*** that the Lord of Lords and King of Kings was right there with you in the circumstance?

Boldness, joy, and peace of mind are the hallmark characteristics of any disciple who abides in the Lord by consistently “hearing” and “obeying” the voice of the Lord.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phillipians 4:6,7 (NIV)

Does this passage promise that God will answer your specific prayer requests about “anything” (whatever that is to the disciple), or does it promise “peace” in dealing with the circumstance or concerns?

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This passage is not about a Santa Claus God fulfilling your Christmas list. This passage is about trusting the Lord in every circumstance. We do not fear or engage in debilitating worry about the circumstances, because we remember, with thanksgiving, all the ways in which the Father has provided for us in the past. And, somewhere in the process, we become aware of the Lord's presence and His promises, and we stop fretting, which is true peace.

I have frequently been asked, "When should I stop praying for something?" My answer is that we stop praying for something when we have "peace" in our hearts (i.e. know that He has answered our prayer) through the living word of faith imparted to us by our *parakletos* who has come along side of us to help us in our weakness. What that means practically could be an instantaneous answer, or it may require a "season" of prayer, fasting, and meditation. Our natural inclination, though, is to seek a quick, cheap "fix" for our prayer concerns, especially when it comes to our prayer concerns for others.

What value do you see in "praying through" a concern, even if it means going aside for a time of fasting, prayer, and meditation?

Now review your concerns, and allow the Comforter to address each concern for you. Keep in mind that your concerns will not all be answered instantaneously, but if you request "wisdom" in regard to your concerns, the Comforter will begin to take you through a process that will ultimately result in His peace.

(meditation, questions, and prayer as it relates to our specific concerns about experiencing trouble in this world)

* * *

John 17 – The Lord's prayer

We normally refer to the Lord's instruction of His disciples on how to pray as "The Lord's Prayer", but John 17 is literally the Lord's prayer concerning His work and the continuation of His work through the

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disciples (the church). As such it deserves at least as much attention, study, and meditation as we have given John 13-16.

It is the author's suggestion that those disciples who have been significantly moved by their inductive study of John 13-16 to continue with a similar inductive study of the Lord's prayer for them as revealed in John 17.

We will conclude this Bible study guide by examining a few passages of the Lord's prayer that confirm His final instructions to the eleven and to the body of Christ through all generations, but the author strongly recommends that each disciple spend significant time studying and meditating on this prayer in its entirety.

...I do not ask on behalf of these...(eleven)...alone, but for those who believe in Me through their word. John 17:20 (NASB) (inserts are the author's)

On whose behalf is the Lord asking? The eleven, or disciples of all ages?

Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17 (NASB)

Word Study

Sanctification (*hagiasmos* – Strong's #38) or to **sanctify** (*hagiazō* – Strong's #37) is the act of separation unto God of any person or object for the specific purposes of God. Our sanctification begins with the regeneration of our spirits when we are “born again” and baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, becoming one with Him and with all other believers in our spirits.

The progressive sanctification of our souls (mind, emotions, will) takes place as we deliberately conform our wills to the revealed will (Truth) of God by “hearing” and “obeying” the Lord.

The ultimate and complete sanctification of our souls and our physical bodies will not take place until the resurrection.

A question that occurs to me as I read this passage is, if God's word is truth, what is anything that deviates from God's word?

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Is God's word (the revelation of His will) limited to the Bible (written word or scripture)? Why or why not? (Looking for a short answer here. This is a sticking point for many denominationalists, but the disciple who has worked through this Bible study thus far should have the answer.)

Will God's word (the revelation of His will), regardless of how it comes to us, find confirmation in the accepted canon of scripture? Why or why not?

How are we *sanctified in the truth*...(His word)?

Read John 17:20-23 :

I do not ask on behalf of these...(eleven)...alone, but for all those who also believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they...(all disciples)...may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them...(all disciples)...that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they...(all disciples)...may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, just as You have loved Me. John 17:20-23 (NASB) (inserts are the author's)

We understand that there is a corporate unity in the body of Christ and that all born again, regenerated believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into that one spiritual body, even though we retain our soulish divisions and strife based on denominational traditions and varying interpretations of the scriptures.

Because we do not want to believe that the current status of the body of Christ is not in conformance to the will of God, many Bible commentators

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see this passage as relating only to our spiritual “position” of unity in the body of Christ and not to unity in doctrine and practice.

What does the Lord say (twice in this passage) is the purpose of true, tangible unity in the body of Christ?

Since the purpose of our tangible unity and the manifested glory of the Lord is to be a witness to the world, is this tangible unity and manifested glory of the Lord a hidden “spiritual” event or is it something that the world can see? _____

In your opinion, based solely on your own observations, is the witness of the body of Christ today one of tangible unity and glory?

Some of the questions we should ask are: Was the brief moment of unity and glory in the church in Jerusalem the fulfillment of this prayer? Have there been other outbreaks of unity and glory in the body of Christ, such as the Welsh Revival, that fulfilled this prayer? Is there any hope that this prayer will be fulfilled on a grand scale in the future while we are still in the world, or will we continue to feud and fight in fading glory until He comes to rescue us?

Remember that the Lord said that His obedience to the revealed will of the Father resulted in the manifestation of the glory of God, proving to the world that He was in the Father and the Father was in Him. (John 14:10, 11 and 30,31) Then He made the outrageous prophetic statements of John 14:12, 13.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these will he do; because I go to the Father.

Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. John 14:12,13 (NASB)

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Is there any reason to believe that the “he who believes in Me” is limited to the original eleven disciples present at this discourse? _____

What is the purpose of “he who believes in Me” manifesting the works of Christ? _____

Has this purpose somehow changed? _____

Examine John 17:23 again.

I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me...

Has God’s purpose of perfecting or maturing the body of Christ in unity so that the world may know that Jesus Christ was sent into the world to reconcile the world to Himself changed?

Do you believe that the Lord is grieved by the division and strife present in the body of Christ today? _____

Is this a problem for denominational leaders and church leaders to deal with, or is it your personal response that the Lord desires?

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.
1 Corinthians 1:10 ESV (emphasis is the author’s)

It is important when we find some theme, doctrine, or Truth revealed in one passage to look at other passages that either confirm, expand, or contradict what we believe we have found in the original passage.

Because the Lord’s prayer prophesies a time of tangible unity and glory revealed through the body of Christ as a witness to the world, and because this prophetic prayer is extremely important as it relates to the entire discourse of John 13-17, we need to examine one additional passage,

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written by Paul well after the glory of the first church in Jerusalem had faded.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16 (NASB)

This passage is so rich that it deserves a lengthy, in-depth inductive Bible study of its own, and the author recommends that the disciple using this Bible study guide examine this passage thoroughly. But for the purpose of confirming the message to us found in John 13-17, we will ask only a few pertinent questions.

Examining verses 11-16, the provision of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers is for the equipping the saints -

For the purpose of _____

Until _____

Do we have to even ask whether or not the body of Christ has attained to ***the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ*** or that fullness of the Lord's prayer as seen in John 17:23 has yet to be fulfilled?

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The Author's Conclusion:

We have learned in this discourse that the Lord intends for His disciples to manifest His thoughts, words, and acts *by grace through faith* just as He manifested the Father's thoughts, words and acts.

“Glory” is the manifestation of God (Father and Son) through our obedient faith responses to the revealed will of the Lord, and in order to manifest the words and acts of the Lord we need to “hear” with spiritual ears and “see” with the eyes of our hearts so that we are empowered to “obey” by faith rather than obeying religious rules and the traditions of men, which is not faith and does not glorify (manifest) the Lord.

Division is the result of our dependency on religious rules, the traditions of men, and our dependency on others to interpret scripture for us. Unity is the result of “hearing” and obeying the voice (Truth, promises, and commands) of the Lord.

We are to be “perfected” (sanctified) in unity as a witness to the world that Jesus Christ is alive, not only at the right hand of the throne of God, but in His body, the church, and the sanctification that brings us into true unity comes by “hearing” and “obeying” the Truth, promises, and commands of the Lord.

The Lord has prayed it, commanded it, and prophesied it.

If you love me, you will obey what I command.

This is my command: love one another as I have loved you.
John 14:15 and 15:12

Amen

*For additional commentaries by the author of this Bible study go to the publisher's website at <http://www.logospubco.com> or go to the author's blog site at AwakenGeneration.com

APPENDIX:

Basic Inductive Bible Study

Early in my walk with the Lord I used a King James Version (KJV) of the Bible with interlinear Strong's numbers for key words as my primary study Bible, the New International Version (NIV) as my familiar Bible, and the Amplified Bible as a reference tool for providing quick insight into certain verses.

I was naturally inductive in my approach, which immediately resulted in conflict with certain denominational interpretations of doctrine and scripture. I have even been accused of being anti-authoritarian. That accusation might be true at times in reference to my refusal to unconditionally believe denominational or pastoral interpretations of scripture, doctrine, and practice, but it is not true in regard to my willingness, even obsessive eagerness, to be “guided” into all truth by the Spirit of Truth and to obey the commands of the Lord thus received.

At the seminary level inductive Bible study technique can become quite complicated, but as an individual Bible study technique utilized for the purpose of “hearing” with spiritual ears, even young believers and new Christians can and should incorporate the principles of inductive Bible study.

Definitions:

Hermeneutics is the entire science and methodology for interpreting scripture, but the effectiveness of one's hermeneutics depends on the methodology used.

Exegesis means to draw out. We are to **draw out** the meaning of the text. There is meaning in scripture that is being communicated by the author. We need to draw that out. We should not do Isogesis (Eisegesis) which is to pour our meaning into the text. We must not make the text say what we want it to say but must get at what the original author is communicating.

In Bible study terminology “Exegesis” is synonymous with inductive Bible study methodology. An inductive exegesis starts with an objective examination of the biblical text and then draws conclusions on the basis of objective facts. Inductive Bible study is much more likely to lead to the

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correct understanding of the written text and the conclusion intended by the Holy Spirit, and is, therefore, the preferable technique.

“Isogesis” is synonymous with a deductive Bible study, and it starts with a specific idea or premise. Then it examines biblical text subjectively for support of the pre-existing premise. Deductive Bible study presumes that the truth is already known, and is, therefore, not open to new or different interpretations. I call this the square peg in a round hole method, because many who use this technique alone are attempting to do just that with scripture. (i.e. They have to eliminate some contradictory scripture in order to make the square peg fit in the round hole.)

Heresies are interpretations of the Bible that are contrary to the revelation of God in scriptural text. This most often takes place where authority becomes more important than what scripture says. This authority becomes interested only in perpetuating its own authority, not in what scripture really says. Some common forms of authority that hinder truth are:

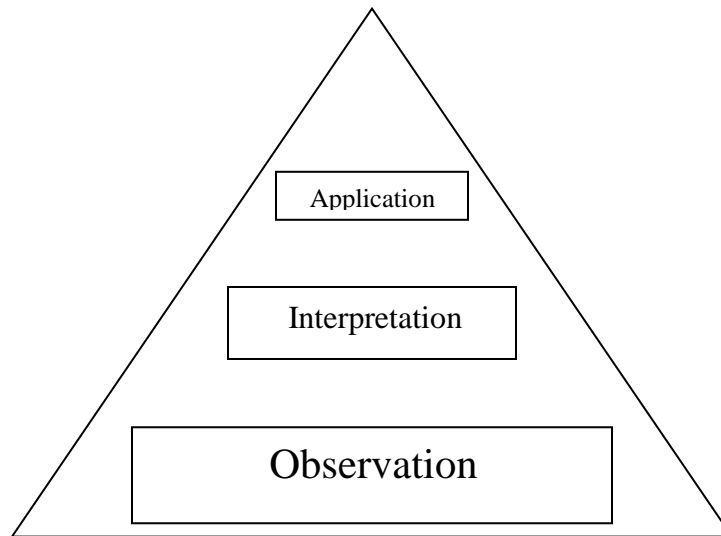
- Believing, by assumption, what is taught by a denomination, or what the church (we are familiar with) has historically believed, what the ministry leader is promoting, or what has been accepted due to tradition;
- The authority of one’s own natural logic;
- The authority of one’s own experience.

Warning: It is possible to become legalistic even about the methodology of inductive Bible study, but there should be no mistake about the object of the inductive method. It is to bring the disciple into direct interaction with God through a clear understanding of the scriptural text for the purpose of experiencing life-change. **Knowledge is not the sufficient end of any study of the Bible.** The goal is not just to know about God. The goal is to “hear” from God and then incorporate what we have heard by obeying the living word of faith thus imparted to our hearts.

The three steps of an inductive Bible study:

1. observation
2. interpretation
3. application

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The pyramid reveals that initial observations are the foundation that ultimately leads to specific interpretations and applications.

Observation: (“Nothing but the facts, ma’am” – Sgt. Joe Friday)

Make no conclusions except those obviously revealed by the text. As soon as you make a conclusion, you are conducting a deductive Bible study in regard to the specific area that contains your conclusion. You will eventually apply outside scriptures and inductive conclusions from other areas of biblical text, but try to keep an open mind even though you think you already know the interpretation.

Inductive questions: Who is involved? What viewpoint is the narrator speaking from? What is taking place? When is this taking place? Where is this taking place? How is this taking place? Why is this taking place? What does this word or this phrase actually mean? What other areas of the Bible are related to this passage in some way (i.e. what is the immediate and overall context of the passage?)

What is the role of the Holy Spirit while we are observing the text?

We naturally think that the illuminating role of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of providing answers and applications only, but the most important role of the Holy Spirit’s illumination is to cause us to ask the right questions of the text. The text itself openly suggests many questions, but some of the most important and most profound questions will come from the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

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Example: See how many questions you can come up with just by reading Acts 1:8. If you can only think of ten or less questions, you need to spend more time meditating on this passage. If you can eventually think of fifty or more questions to ask of this passage, you are on the right track.

It's okay to ask questions that you assume the text will not answer. It's also okay for a question to remain a question. Sometimes it will take the Spirit of Truth some time to build up the base of your knowledge before you are able to receive the answer to your question.

Biblical and theological paradoxes, as well as difficult individual passages, are the Holy Spirit's opportunity to reveal the profound mysteries and truths hidden in the written text from those who attempt to understand it on the basis of intellect alone.

There are numerous places where the Bible seems to contradict itself or where it seems to provide evidence for opposing doctrines and interpretations. This is not accidental, and the solution is not a matter of just applying correct exegesis. It is in the paradoxes and in the passages we have the most difficulty understanding that the Spirit of Truth, who was sent to guide us into all truth, can reveal truth that cannot be received on the basis of intellectual understanding alone. It is also here that the disciple who is determined to know Truth, despite what he/she has believed in the past, will be guided by the Spirit, even in the exegesis. Note, however, that it sometimes takes the Spirit of Truth years to build up our base of true knowledge in order to reveal certain passages.

The correct exegesis when thus received will conform with the entire fabric of scripture. And, as it has happened time after time with me, when a correct exegesis, guided by the Spirit, causes us to remove a piece of the puzzle that we forced into place where it didn't belong, the scripture opens up to us in an amazing way.

An illustration of how this goes would be in the working of a jigsaw puzzle. We first build the framework from the pieces that have one straight edge, with the corner pieces that have two straight edges being the most important as we build this framework. As we build inwards from the framework and we place a piece of the puzzle where it does not actually fit by forcing it into place, what we build on that erroneous union will also be

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erroneous. But once that piece is removed and the correct piece is in place, progress is achieved again.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (NASB)

This aspect is dealt with in depth in “Final Instructions”.

What translation of the Bible is the best for inductive Bible study?

There are no perfect translations, and opinions on both the source texts (Hebrew and Greek) and the appropriate translation of texts are hotly debated among Christians. Whatever translation the disciple ultimately chooses as a study Bible should be referenced back to Strong's. Strong's assigns a specific number for all key Hebrew and Greek words used in the biblical text, and a study of the actual Hebrew or Greek word used may significantly change the disciple's understanding.

The word translated “love” in English, for instance, has at least three vastly different source words in Greek and even more in Hebrew. These important nuances in the original scriptures would not be noted without researching the original Hebrew and Greek words.

The King James Bible, The New American Standard Bible and The English Standard Version are generally acknowledged as being the most accurate literal English translations in common use.

The King James Version is probably subject to less bias and error in both source texts and translation, but it is difficult to read as a familiar Bible. Therefore, it is recommended primarily as a study Bible. Be aware, though, that The New King James Bible is not just an updated King James Bible. It is its own translation and is not recommended by the author as a study Bible.

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Truth (deliberate capital “T”) may be discerned from any translation or even from paraphrased versions such as the Amplified Bible or The Living Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Keep in mind that the early Christians did not have the complete canon of scripture that we have today, and, yet, they had a richer faith life than most of us have today with, not only the complete canon of scripture, but an unbelievable amount of Bible study aids available to us. Likewise, there are numerous remote third world believers who have only a new testament or certain books of the new testament translated with varying degrees of accuracy into their native languages, and, yet, many of these third world believers also have a richer faith life than many western believers.

Is it important to use a study Bible?

Study Bibles can be helpful, but beware of falling into the trap of accepting the interpretation offered by the authors of your particular study Bible. All study Bibles have some interpretational bias. The author would advise disciples to avoid the Scofield and Ryrie Study Bibles, in particular, because of a strong and erroneous bias, but most study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, and Bible commentaries can be helpful, if the disciple does not automatically assume that the authors of those Bible study aids are entirely accurate and correct. Listen to those who teach the word, whether individually or through some written commentary like a study Bible, but be like the noble Bereans who studied the scriptures for themselves to confirm what Paul was telling them.

The Spirit of Truth will ultimately confirm His word to those who seek His confirmation and revelation, but those who depend entirely on “experts” to interpret the Bible for them are sometimes drawn into inaccurate deductive conclusions and are thus hindered in their “hearing”.

What about Bible commentaries?

The same precaution applies to Bible commentaries, but Bible commentaries can help the student quickly get a feel for the book being studied. Just beware of adopting the commentator’s evaluation as your own without a thorough, Spirit-guided, inductive study for yourself.

An expanded basic outline of the method:

1. Get an overview of the book to be studied. Who wrote the book? To whom was it written and when? What is the general theme and purpose of the book?
2. Key Words: What key words do you need to examine using a Bible Dictionary or Greek and Hebrew lexicons in order to correctly interpret the text?
3. What questions does the passage provoke you to ask?
4. What questions does the Holy Spirit prompt you to ask?
5. Context. Context. Context. What is the immediate context surrounding this passage, and how does this context fit in with the entire context of the book and of the whole fabric of scripture?
6. What specific passages found elsewhere in the Bible seem to apply to this passage?
7. Key Verse: Select the verse that you believe best captures the truth of the passage being studied. This would be the one verse you would memorize to capture the Truth in your heart.
8. Questions for further study/discussion: make note of things that you would like to study further or discuss with your small group or discipler to clarify the meaning.
9. Paraphrase the passage in your own words. Your paraphrase will reveal whether you have adequately understood the passage or need additional study before understanding the passage.
10. What is the primary principle in the passage as it applies to you?
11. Application: Take time to explore how the primary principle learned applies to your personal life today. You may want to ask if there are any of the following: an example to follow, an error to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim.
12. Prayer: Spend time responding to God, the God who loves you, in prayer. Consider praying 2 Corinthians 10:5 each time you begin a Bible study.

Remember:

All scriptural interpretation must relate to the whole. No scripture passage stands alone or can be interpreted correctly apart from both the immediate and the whole context of scripture. Therefore, apply yourself quickly and with determination, but with humility, to the primary tenets of the faith. Avoid controversies in as much as it is possible, but believe and obey the

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Truth once it is confirmed to you by a thorough inductive study and by the Spirit of Truth who is the Lord.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

Receive the Word with all readiness of mind, but search the Scriptures daily to prove whether those things be so. Acts 17:11 (KJV)

The Importance of the Virgin Birth

The “new” information and so-called “discoveries” about Jesus Christ and the “lost” gospels being promoted on the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, in magazines, and even in movies, are not new. The religious Jews of the Lord’s own day resisted the truth of who He was even as it was played out in front of their very own eyes, and the Gnostics of Paul’s day were constantly attempting to undermine the truth about the Lord’s birth, life, death, and resurrection.

This “new” information is nothing more than a modern day re-discovery of the ancient lies of evil men under the influence of their own god, the father of lies, who opposes God’s plan for mankind by distorting the truth.

And, yet, there are questions that we, who are enabled to receive truth by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, need to be able to answer.

One such truth, concerning the virgin birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, becomes particularly important at that time of each year when we celebrate His birth.

Intelligent men without illumination from the Holy Spirit scoff at the virgin birth as an improbable myth, but, if it is a myth, then Jesus of Nazareth lied about who He is. And we who believe are among the most pitiful of men, because our faith is in vain.

But our faith is not in vain, and, by the Holy Spirit, God has revealed His complex and wondrous plan for the redemption of man and our return to covenant status in Jesus Christ as it is appropriated by grace through faith.

In this we understand that Adam was created as a “living soul”, a spiritual being who inhabited a physical body. Adam’s body of flesh was able to perceive and respond to the natural creation in ways that are similar to those of all living creatures. His “living soul”, his mind, emotions and will, received information from both his natural body and his spirit, and he was able to choose a response to both.

Other creatures have “souls” (mind, emotion, will), but they do not have “living” souls that are connected to both the natural world and to the spiritual.

As a living soul Adam’s relationship with God was through covenant. The original covenant between God and the man, Adam, contained only one prohibition, “you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, and one curse, “for if you eat it, you will surely die.”

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Adam, in his original sinless condition as a “living soul”, communed freely with God, because, in his innocence, he was without shame, fear, or sin. But Adam’s sinless innocence was untested, and, when tested, he failed.

When Adam sinned (missed the mark of the covenant requirements), the covenant was broken, and Adam suffered the curse of the broken covenant. This curse of “death” included his immediate separation from the life and covenant blessings of God and, as a result, his soul and his body became corrupt. As a result, every man and woman born after that time has been born “in Adam” with the sin nature (a corrupt body and soul), separated from the life and covenant blessings of God.

Man is still a spiritual being with a “living soul” who inhabits a physical body, but in the fallen or de-generated state of being he is disconnected from the life and direct spiritual influence of God. He is not, however, disconnected from the influence of other fallen spirit beings such as Satan and his followers.

In this de-generated condition he cannot live up to the righteous requirements of the covenant, no matter how good he is in natural, worldly terms, and his judgment for not living up to the requirements of the covenant is the same as the judgment received by the god he knowingly or unknowingly follows.

(As I write this I am thinking of Bob Dylan’s song, “You’re Going to Serve Someone”).

Every man and woman since Adam are, therefore, condemned to this curse of the broken covenant

From the very beginning God, who created mankind for fellowship with Him, is not willing that any be lost, and He provided a temporary means of atonement through an elaborate and symbolic blood sacrifice system, even providing coverings of skin from innocent animals for Adam and Eve. However, this temporary atonement would not be complete until a permanent and lasting sacrifice could be made.

God’s eternal intent was to redeem fallen mankind by establishing a new covenant through the atoning blood sacrifice of a sinless man who would fulfill all the righteous requirements of the original covenant (“the law”).

In order to qualify, that man had to be born in the flesh, but not born “in Adam” and thus contaminated by the sin nature.

But how could that be accomplished since all men and women since Adam are born “in Adam” and subject to the curse of the original broken covenant?

Bible critics like to point out that there are two different genealogies for Jesus Christ. However, they miss the singular point that the genealogy in

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Matthew 1:1-17 is the legal line from Abraham through Mary's husband, Joseph, and the genealogy in Luke 3:23-38 is the blood line from Adam through Mary. So, we have the genealogies of the legal line through Joseph, the step-father, and the blood line through Mary, the birth mother, both of whom are in the lineage of David and Abraham.

In the legal line, one of Joseph's ancestors is Jehoiachin (also "Jeconiah" or "Coniah") whom Jeremiah prophesied would never sit on the throne of David (Jeremiah 22:24-30).

In verse 30 we see that the curse applies only to his "offspring", and, although Jesus is Joseph's legal heir, He is not his "offspring". Therefore, this curse did not pass down through the blood line.

If it were otherwise, Jesus would not be an heir to the throne of David.

Matthew 1:1-17 Legal Line

Abraham
David
Jeconiah (curse)
Joseph (Mary's husband)

Luke 3:23-38 Blood Line

Adam
Abraham
David
Joseph (Mary's father)
Mary

The greater problem, though, is that in order to fulfill His purpose as the "Son of Man" and the "Lamb of God" Jesus had to be born of the flesh, but without the sin nature. And Mary, like all sons of Adam, inherited the sin (fallen) nature.

That aspect of the holy trinity known as the "Son", Jesus Christ, could not take on the flesh nature simply by inhabiting or possessing the body of a man. He had to be **born** in the flesh by the "seed" of the Holy Spirit quickening Mary's egg. Thus He was born "the Son of Man" through Mary, and, at the same time, "the Son of God" by the Holy Spirit.

It was also necessary that Jesus be born without inheriting the curse of the broken covenant "in Adam", because that which is cursed cannot "become a curse" for us. Nor would He have qualified as the *Lamb of God without spot or blemish* who became sin for us in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Therefore, it was necessary that He be born with only his mother's genetic inheritance.

But how would that prevent Him from being born with a fallen nature?

We understand how Jesus escaped the curse on Joseph's bloodline because Joseph was the step-father and not the biological father, and that is

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instructive for us. But how is it that Jesus also escaped inheriting the sin nature from Mary, who was His biological mother?

The Blood Line Inheritance

God

> Jesus Christ

Adam (curse) > Abraham > David > Mary

In this we have to remember that it is a covenant curse, unlike the bloodline curse God pronounced on Jeconiah, saying that none of his “offspring” would sit on the throne of God.

In Genesis 1:28-30 God defines His covenant with man to both the man and the woman, but in Genesis 2:15-17 it is clear that God commanded the man first and that the covenant prohibition was given to the man, but not repeated in God’s expansion of the covenant to both the man and the woman.

We know that Eve was aware of the covenant prohibition, but she either received that knowledge from Adam or from an unrecorded communication with God. Either way, God’s covenant provisions were given to the man prior to the creation of the woman.

Thus Genesis 1:28-30 actually occurred after Genesis 2:15-17, and the covenant that was originated with Adam in Genesis 2:15-17 was defined and expanded to the covenant man and his partner, the woman, Eve, afterwards.

The reason Satan chose to tempt Eve apart from Adam, was that her spiritual covering was “in Adam”. She had communion with God, the same as Adam, and equality with Adam in dominion over the natural creation. But because she was created out of Adam’s flesh and because God’s original covenant was with Adam as the prototype of man, Eve’s covenant covering was “in Adam”, and our covenant covering at birth is also “in Adam”, meaning that we inherit his curse.

Eve’s covenant relationship with God was not individual, even as ours is not individual. It was **in** Adam just as ours was “in Adam” but is now **in** Christ.

The proof of this is that Eve did not enter into a fallen state immediately upon sinning (missing the mark of the covenant requirements). In Genesis 3:6 Eve ate the fruit first and later gave some to her husband to eat.

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Then...(after Adam sinned)... *the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;* Genesis 3:7 NIV (emphasis and insert is the author's)

In this passage we see that the fall did not occur until Adam ate the fruit, and it occurred simultaneously for both of them. When Eve sinned, she did not experience the immediate consequences of her sin, but when Adam sinned the result was instantaneous. Therefore, the fall is a result of Adam's disobedience and not because of Eve's individual sin, even though she sinned first.

It is also noteworthy that in Genesis 3:21-24 God says, "**The man** has now become like one of us..."; "**He** must not be allowed..."; So the Lord God banished **him**...from the ground from which **he** had been taken...; "After he drove **the man** out..."

In these passages the only consideration is for **the man**, Adam, because Adam was the one originally in covenant with God.

Therefore, Eve suffered his fate because she was "in Adam", and not because she also sinned.

Eve being created from Adam's rib is the physical representation of this spiritual truth. In the beginning she was literally "in Adam" physically just as she was "in Adam" spiritually.

Since Eve did not fall until Adam sinned, even though she sinned first, we can assume that if Adam had sinned first, Eve would have been condemned by his fall, even if she did not sin, because Adam was God's covenant man and Eve was "in Adam".

We also are "in Adam" at birth and inherit the sin nature even though, as infants, we have not sinned.

Eve's sin did not, therefore, condemn mankind. It was not until God's covenant man, Adam, deliberately sinned, that all men "in Adam" were cursed.

Therefore, since it was Adam who broke the covenant, the sin nature is passed down through the blood line of the man, not the woman, and since Jesus was not fathered by man but by the Holy Spirit, He did not inherit the sin nature.

This particular inheritance is unique to Jesus alone. No other man or woman has ever or will ever be born without a man's sperm fertilizing the mother's egg, and no other man or woman has ever or will ever be born without inheriting the sin nature from the blood line of the biological father.

(As an aside, clones are the result of copying the original sperm-egg union, they are not new creations based solely on the mother's egg.)

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This is why Paul called Jesus the “last Adam”. Although Jesus was born in the flesh as the “Son of Man” and was not a created man, He was “generated” at the moment of conception by the Holy Spirit, and He became the last Adam, the covenant man of God through whom all mankind would be blessed.

In His unique conception He became both the *Son of Man* and *the Lamb of God without spot or blemish*. As the Son of Man He fulfilled all of the covenant requirements, known as “the law”, and He fulfilled all the prophecies concerning His conception, birth, life, death, and resurrection.

It is also important to note that He did all this by faith, responding to the revelations of the Father, and not in His own power.

(See John 4:34; 5:19,20; 5:30; 8:28; 10:25; 14:10; Phillipians 2:5-7)

Thus this man was able to take all the sin of man from Adam forward upon Himself, and His sinless blood was shed as an acceptable sacrifice and atonement for all the sins of mankind “in Adam”.

When the sacrifice and atonement was complete, God raised Him from the dead so that all men who believe by faith will also be resurrected from the dead, not only at the appointed time, but even in this life as they are raised up to become “new creations” whose spirits are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.

That is the “good news” that the angels proclaimed to the shepherds at the time of His birth and the good news that we continue to proclaim as a living truth imparted to us by the Holy Spirit.

May you receive this truth with joy and impart it to others with enthusiasm.

The Scriptural Model for the Ministry of Reconciliation

My own conversion experience took place at a Baptist youth camp where I was a counselor. As a New Age occult practitioner I had wrestled with God for months, convicted by the Holy Spirit revealed word of God as it was taught sincerely in a Baptist Sunday school class that I reluctantly attended with my wife.

Seeds of doubt were planted in my soul through the teaching I heard, but I was unwilling to denounce my guru, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, or the amazing spiritual events of the previous seven years.

To settle the question once for all I went back to my meditation group where I consulted the spirits who called themselves “the Universal Mind”.

“Who are you really?” I heard myself asking, almost by surprise.

I did not know at the time that my question had been prompted by the Holy Spirit for my instruction and that my earnest desire to know God had prompted God to move on my behalf even though I was deceived.

An invisible heaviness came over me, pressing me down in the chair.

“I am the one you worship as god,” said the spirit, speaking through a medium, but, instead of settling my doubts, I was deeply troubled. Had it really been God speaking to me, I knew, intuitively, that I would have fallen on my face in fear.

Instead, my mind was clouded with confusion, and I felt as if my heart was being squeezed by an invisible hand.

I didn’t know it at the time, but Satan had revealed himself to me. In later years I even came to believe that the Lord had required Satan to reveal himself as he did. Satan was the one I had been worshipping as god. Satan had been masquerading himself to me as an angel of light, and my doubts, confirmed by Satan’s answer, caused me to seek an answer elsewhere.

At the youth camp I was bunked with two youth ministers and a pastor, and, although I looked a little strange with my long hair and big, bushy beard, they seemed to accept this “Zen Christian” as one of them.

The pastor, though, had the discernment to ask each one of us to give our conversion testimony during the evening Bible study and prayer time in the cabin.

When it came my time I lied by telling them I had been saved during a crusade in the 8th grade, but that, after high school, I stopped attending church and had only recently been going to church again with my wife.

I did not lie about attending a crusade in the 8th grade or going down to the front to be led through a repeat-after-me “confession of faith” and a

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repeat-after-me “sinner’s prayer”, but I knew beyond all doubt that I had not experienced the conversion they had been talking about.

All day the next day I carried a heavy weight around with me and my stomach seemed to be knotted in agony. That night, as the camp pastor walked up and down the aisles singing, “Just As I Am”, I went to my knees with tears streaming down my cheeks just like many of the boys.

This time my conversion was real, and it was accompanied by great brokenness, repentance, and a new kind of joy I had never known before.

My hunger for the written word and for “the” Word, Jesus Christ, became insatiable, and I witnessed enthusiastically as a counselor for the Royal Ambassadors, as an organizer and counselor for Hope Camp (an evangelistic camp for “at risk” boys and girls), as a volunteer for almost any public crusade that came to town, as a Sunday school teacher and home group leader, as a new church planter, and as a vigorous personal witness whenever the opportunity arose.

There were two things that bothered me about many of those who were being “saved”. First, it seemed that many responded to the message with brokenness and tears, but after they were led through a confession of faith and the sinner’s prayer, many seemed to fall away almost immediately. Others seemed to be excited for awhile, but then settled down to a life of obedience to religious traditions and expectations without the kind of fire I felt in my own soul and saw in the Book of Acts.

I also began to wonder why the intense evangelistic efforts of my denomination was not producing a massive harvest of Book of Acts souls. When I read a Billy Graham quote that fewer than 5% of those who made a confession of faith at one of his crusades went on to join a local church, I assumed, as many other church leaders did, that it was merely a lack of organized follow-up.

In recent years I have become concerned by similar shocking statistics about college age youth dropping out of the Christian faith, but, at the time, what got my attention was the seemingly small number percentage of new conversions that produced Book of Acts believers.

As a counselor for Hope Camp one year I had recruited seven boys from the list of “at risk” youth aged eleven to thirteen. On the second night of camp all seven of my boys had gone down to the front during the altar call, and after the service I went back to the cabin with them to confirm their “decision” and answer their questions.

Only one of the seven, though, was animated with enthusiasm. This one literally glowed with joy, and I put my hand on his shoulders a couple of times to see if I could get a dose of what he was experiencing.

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In the weeks after camp I made follow up visits to each boy's home to visit with them and with their parents or guardians, and this one boy was the only one I was certain had been circumcised in the spirit.

Then one Sunday I was led by the Spirit to teach a class on the names of God. After teaching, I asked the class to speak the names of God and of Jesus Christ out loud. They were hesitant at first, but then a spirit of boldness seemed to come over the class as they began to shout out the names of the Lord.

After the class one of the young ladies came forward in tears. She confessed that although she had been a faithful church-goer since childhood, something happened inside her heart as she spoke the Lord's name out loud that day.

"What?" I thought. "No evangelical message? No over-extended altar call? No repeat-after-me confession of faith or repeat-after-me sinner's prayer?"

The proof of her conversion was a life of zeal for the Lord, and I began to study the conversion experiences recorded in the Book of Acts to see what it was about those experiences that was different from the traditional evangelistic models I was familiar with.

Two things stood out immediately as I went from conversion experience to conversion experience in the Book of Acts and later in the gospels and the epistles.

First, I found no place in the Book of Acts, the gospels, or any of the letters where proselytes were led through a repeat-after-me "confession of faith" or a repeat-after-me "sinner's prayer". And, second, the presence or absence of the indwelling Holy Spirit was often apparent to those who ministered to the new believers, and, for some, the laying on of hands was required before they actually received the Holy Spirit.

There is a deliberate paragraph break here, because I can almost feel the shock this statement is causing in some reader's minds. Others have already put this testimony down to go read through the Book of Acts, because, like the noble Bereans, they want to examine the scriptures to see if what I am saying is true.

So, I'll go through the Book of Acts with you:

Acts 2:37,38 – Repent... (from your act of crucifying the Lord in unbelief)... and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (inserts are the author's)

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Three thousand broken-hearted Jews plus family members repented and were baptized that day. No mention of being led in the sinner's prayer. No mention, even, of having hands laid on them.

Acts 8:12-17

The Samaritans, including Simon the Sorcerer, heard Philip preach the gospel. They believed him and were baptized, but it wasn't until Peter and John placed their hands on them that they received the Holy Spirit.

Now, that's interesting. They believed *in their hearts*, and we presume that they confessed their faith, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John laid hands on them.

Don't jump to Charismatic conclusions here. The receiving of the Holy Spirit was the receiving of the indwelling Spirit, which must happen before the conversion experience is complete.

But why did Peter and John have to pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit and then lay hands on them in order for it to happen?

Acts 8:26-39

The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53:7,8 as the Holy Spirit caused Philip to join him, and after Philip revealed Jesus in the scriptures the eunuch said, "Why can't I be baptized?"

As soon as Philip baptized him, the evangelist was carried away by the Spirit.

The lesson here is that God will apparently move evangelists around in the Spirit just to seal one who is earnestly seeking the Lord.

Again, no repeat-after-me sinner's prayer. Just the proclamation of the gospel through the Old Testament, a believer's baptism, and the eunuch entered the kingdom of God.

Acts 9

Saul's conversion experience should have been unique. The Lord revealed himself directly to Saul, and then He blinded him for three days, possibly as a symbol of His own death and resurrection.

As we see in almost all of the conversion experiences in Acts, God directed the sequence of events, with Ananias laying hands on Saul after his three days of blindness.

For three days Saul believed *in his heart*, and then as the prophet laid hands on him he received his sight and the indwelling Holy Spirit simultaneously.

Afterwards he was baptized.

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There is no mention of Ananias leading Saul in the sinner's prayer or a confession of faith.

Acts 10

Cornelius is another who was earnestly seeking God, and God revealed in a vision that he was to seek out Peter.

Peter preached to Cornelius and his household, and the Spirit came on all of them without any mention of the laying on of hands or the sinner's prayer.

Then Cornelius and his household were baptized.

Acts 13:12

The proconsul believed *in his heart* when he saw Elymas, the sorcerer, blinded by Paul's prophecy.

No laying on of hands. No mention of the sinner's prayer.

Acts 16:14-16

Lydia was personally converted and baptized by Paul. No mention of laying on of hands or the sinner's prayer.

Acts 16:25-34

Paul and Silas are in prison when they are freed from their chains by an earthquake. The jailer is in deep trouble if the prisoners escape, but Paul and Silas make no attempt to escape.

The jailer is convicted by their righteousness, and he invites them to his home where they preach the gospel. The jailer and his entire household are saved.

No mention of laying on of hands or the sinner's prayer.

Acts 19

Paul encounters some disciples and asks them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. The disciples said they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. They had been baptized by John's baptism, and when Paul explained the difference, they were then baptized into Jesus. When Paul laid hands on them the indwelling Holy Spirit was given to them as well as manifesting through them in tongues and prophesying.

No mention of the sinner's prayer.

Acts 19:18

Those who heard the gospel *believed in their hearts*, and they responded with acts of repentance.

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No mention of laying on of hands or the sinner's prayer.

The abovementioned examples raise some questions in regard to the role of laying on of hands in receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit for some believers, but one thing is absolutely clear. There is something inherently wrong with the modern evangelical model of leading proselytes in a repeat-after-me "confession of faith" and a repeat-after-me "sinners prayer".

If you are offended by my statement, keep in mind that I came to this conclusion after having spent many years practicing that model the way I was taught, not only by my original denomination, but by almost every other modern evangelical model I have ever come into contact with.

Some were saved in spite of the incorrectness of that model, but how many still remain lost and disillusioned concerning the faith, or, worse, enveloped in a false sense of security, because I did not follow the scriptural model for leading proselytes through a conversion experience?

Examine the classic scripture about saving faith:

*But what does it say? The Word (God's message in Christ) is near you, on your lips and in your heart; that is, the Word (the message, the basis and object) of faith which we preach, because if you acknowledge and confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in, and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **For with the heart a person believes** (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ) **and so is justified** (declared righteous, acceptable to God), **and with the mouth he confesses** (declares openly and speaks out freely his faith) **and confirms [his] salvation.** Romans 10:8-10 Amplified (bold is the author's)*

In the simplest terms possible, a person is justified (made righteous in the sight of God) at the moment he/she **believes in the heart** (spirit or spirit-mind) **that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord.** Period.

In this passage repentance is assumed, but is "the sinner's prayer" required in order for sinners to repent?

Repentance is a change of heart. That change of heart may be expressed in prayer, but the prayer should come directly from the heart of the believer, not from his counselor.

When we lead someone in the sinner's prayer we are attempting to pull something out of their hearts that may or may not be there. If it is not there then making them say the words will not produce it. If it is there, then there is no need to lead them in a sinner's prayer. Pray for them,

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certainly. Allow them to pray as they are led, certainly, but a repeat-after-me “sinner’s prayer” is neither scriptural nor effective.

Repentance in the salvation scenario is not usually repentance from some specific sin as it is for believers when they confess their sins (1 John 1:9). It is a change of heart and turning away from a **life of sin** and separation from God.

If it is repentance from specific sins, what happens if the proselyte forgets to mention some specific sin? And are we saying that that the new believer is not forgiven for all sins, past, present, and future at the moment of regeneration?

I am convinced that the person who has a revelation of Jesus as Savior has a simultaneous revelation of his/her sinfulness and separation from God, and if that revelation is not there a repeat-after-me sinner’s prayer will not produce it. Repentance, brokenness, and faith in Jesus as Savior are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner as the gospel is being proclaimed.

The **true** confession of faith, therefore, assumes repentance from a life in which sin (failure to live up to God’s righteous requirements) of every degree is natural, and in which true righteousness (right standing with God) is unattainable.

Requiring a proselyte to make some kind of vow of repentance through a prayer by rote may actually **inhibit and circumvent the natural response of repentance caused by the Holy Spirit’s conviction.**

*For godly grief and **the pain God is permitted to direct**, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret...2 Corinthians 7:10 Amplified (bold is the author’s)*

In this scripture passage we see that godly sorrow and true repentance are the result of pain that the Holy Spirit provokes in the sinner by a revelation of scripture concerning the sinner’s true state or condition. It could be, but is seldom, provoked or prompted by someone leading them in the sinner’s prayer.

If we lead someone in a sinner’s prayer and a confession of faith whose repentance and whose confession of faith is it? Is it the proselyte’s or the one leading it? If it is the one who is leading it, then there may be some doubt about whether or not the proselyte is making a true confession of faith.

The sinner’s prayer may, or may not, be closure for the repentance that a sinner is already feeling in his heart, and, **unless the one leading the sinner in a prayer of repentance is prompted by the Holy Spirit with a**

direct revelation on how to lead that sinner through the prayer, he may become a stumbling block to him. That one may, then, have a false sense of security as he engages in religious conformity without true faith, or he may develop a hardness of heart against future presentations of the gospel.

Therefore, the only scriptural way to lead a proselyte to experience godly sorrow and true repentance is through the teaching and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the evidence of true repentance is a broken and contrite heart, and, at that point, there is no need for a formal prayer of repentance.

The confession of faith that we traditionally include in the sinner's prayer is also hindered by the repeat-after-me scenario.

One thing that jumped out at me as I examined all of the conversion experiences in the Book of Acts was that **they did not all happen in exactly the same way.** The required elements of repentance from a life of sin and separation from God and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior were there, but the process was quite different from circumstance to circumstance.

The pressure of tradition and protocol is so strong in most denominations and most church settings, including many Charismatic churches, that we are not truly free to respond to the Holy Spirit when leading a sinner to Christ.

If you were a counselor or elder in your local church and someone you didn't know came forward after the message would you be totally free to follow the leading of the Spirit in the administration of salvation?

Even if that meant laying on of hands or casting out demons?

There is safety in following tradition and protocol in spiritual matters, but are we attempting to minister salvation too cheaply in our assumption that the role model we are following is both acceptable to God and effective in ministering salvation to a sinner?

What we see in the Book of Acts is that the disciples were sensitive to and followed the lead of the Holy Spirit in leading others to Christ through a wide variety of circumstances and responses, including leaving an evangelical crusade on a marathon run out of the city just to witness to a single seeker after God.

In soliciting a confession of faith look at the model Jesus presented us with when he asked Peter, "Who do you say I am?"

Peter, who believed in his heart, confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

In his confession of faith Peter was not told what to confess. He confessed what he believed in his heart.

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And I tell you, Whoever declares openly [speaking out freely] and confesses that he is My worshiper and acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man also will declare and confess and acknowledge him before the angels of God. Luke 12:8 Amplified

Therefore, everyone who acknowledges Me before men and confesses Me [out of a state of oneness with Me], I will also acknowledge him before My Father Who is in heaven and confess [that I am abiding in] him. But whoever denies and disowns Me before men, I also will deny and disown him before My Father Who is in heaven. Matthew 10:32,33 Amplified

For years I heard these scriptures taught in relation to our boldness in witnessing, but the exact spiritual context deals with our initial confession of faith, not our boldness in professing our faith before men as witnesses.

Nor does it apply to a confession based on **belief** rather than faith, such as the prayer book confessions of faith found in some traditional denominations, and the repetition of something someone else says, even when we are in agreement, is not necessarily a confession made by faith **even when it is spoken over and over year after year.**

In Luke 12:8 we see that it is the believer who **speaks out freely** (not by following a script, but by confessing what he **believes in his heart**) is the one whom Jesus will confess (as belonging to Him) in heaven.

The statement in Matthew 10:32, if viewed out of context with Matthew 10:33, could be interpreted as a post-salvation confession, but as we see in Romans 10:8-10 it is **believing in our hearts** that saves us and the confession of (acting on) what we **believe in our hearts** that confirms us.

To summarize, then, the scriptural model is simply to present the gospel in such a way that the Holy Spirit can reveal the truth about the sinner's status or condition and Jesus Christ as the Savior.

If there is no true repentance, then, in the mind of the sinner, there is no **need** for a Savior, but the sinner who is convicted by the Spirit will experience brokenness leading to repentance from a life of sin and separation from God. This repentance does **not** have to be openly confessed, although, in some circumstances, the Holy Spirit may require the sinner to openly repent from certain specific sins such as involvements in false worship, witchcraft, sorcery, occultism, drugs, etc.

This type of repentance may also be accompanied by certain acts of repentance such as burning occult books (Acts 19:19) or making restitution. But there is no formula here. The only "formula" we have is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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The Holy Spirit may also require the sinner to be delivered from demonic possession or bondage, and the person or persons administering the deliverance should be guided specifically by the Holy Spirit in this ministry.

Therefore, we should be sensitive to the possibility that the sinner may need to carry out some specific act of repentance, but leading them through a prayer of repentance, **unless specifically directed by the Holy Spirit**, is unnecessary and a potential stumbling block for someone who does need to carry out a specific act of repentance.

The greater stumbling block, though, is leading the sinner through a repeat-after-me confession of faith.

Luke 12:8 and Matthew 10:32,33 are about a confession of faith, but not a repeat-after-me confession of faith. In these scriptures we see that the believer is to speak his faith out freely from a Spirit-given sense of oneness with Christ.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8:16 NIV

Therefore, if we are attempting to lead someone through the conversion experience we should follow the scriptural example by simply asking questions, such as, "I don't want you to tell me what you think I want to hear...but, now that you've heard the gospel, what do you believe about Jesus Christ?"

If the sinner does not have a true revelation concerning the gospel it will be revealed in his answer, and we can continue to present the gospel to that one appropriately.

If, however, we lead them through a confession of faith, and they have not believed in their hearts, how will we know that we need to continue prayerfully with a presentation of the gospel?

Even worse, we will congratulate them on their supposed inclusion in the kingdom, get them baptized, and then wonder later why they fall away from the faith.

Using "the Roman Road" or tracts like "The Four Spiritual Laws" may be helpful in presenting the gospel, but the tendency is for us to rush forward to the close (i.e. the repeat-after-me "sinner's prayer" and repeat-after-me "confession of faith").

I once witnessed daily to a co-worker who was heavily involved in the Masonic Lodge. He was convinced that he was lost and separated from the covenant life and blessings of God, but he could not overcome the heavy burden of "works" that the Masonic Lodge had laid upon him.

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He wept on several occasions in the knowledge that he was lost, and, in earlier days I would have quickly led him through the sinner's prayer and assumed that his repeat-after-me confession of faith was all that was required.

Instead I prayed that the Holy Spirit would reveal the truth to him concerning the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, and I left him in his state of brokenness and doubt as I progressively presented the complete picture of redemption through Jesus Christ.

I was deeply disappointed when he went to work for another company and moved out of town, but two years later the Holy Spirit arranged for us to meet in the Post Office while he was in town visiting his wife's relatives. He almost ran toward me as he threw his arms around me and declared with joy that he was now a born again believer in Jesus Christ and that he had renounced the Masonic Lodge and its teachings.

What that taught me was that everyone has to go through a process in order to ultimately confess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead. That process might take three minutes or it might take thirty years, and it is our responsibility, as faithful witnesses to the life-changing love and reality of Jesus Christ, not to interfere with that process through some spiritually insensitive and artificial attempt to close the deal before the Spirit has finished His work.

There are at least three recognizable phases each person goes through in order to ultimately experience saving faith in Christ.

The first phase is to doubt the certainty of our current beliefs. Although I believe that certain specific "techniques" can be manipulative, Evangelism Explosion, as a "technique", teaches witnesses to do this by confronting the non-believer with a provocative question: "If you died tonight, are you certain that you would go to heaven?"

Even if the non-believer answers, "yes", the witness moves on to ask the non-believer to confirm the source of his/her confidence. This might be something like, "I think I'm a good person...etc." The witness moves on then to reveal the uncertainty of leaving something as important as our eternal security to the hands of chance or to a judgment that we cannot be certain about, and he asks, "Wouldn't you like to know absolutely, with total certainty, that if you died tonight you would be going to heaven?"

The answer has to be, "yes", and then the witness moves on to the second phase, which is knowing with certainty that we are lost and separated from the life and blessings of God because of sin (not just personal sin but also being born "in Adam" separated from the life and

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covenant blessings of God). In some cases it may be possible to take a non-believer through the first phase without the specific intervention of the Holy Spirit, but in my own case it was the Spirit's witness to my heart that caused me to doubt seven years of supernaturally imparted deception and prepared my heart for the second phase, which is to know the truth concerning my separation from the life and blessings of God.

Then, and only then, is the non-believer prepared to receive the truth concerning the redemptive purpose of Christ, which is the third and final phase of the re-generation experience, and that truth must be imparted by the Holy Spirit.

If we attempt closure by leading the proselyte through a repeat-after-me "sinner's prayer" or confession of faith, we may actually short circuit the process.

What I am saying, even pleading, is that we must carry out our priestly duty as ambassadors of Christ with the same sense of urgency and life or death importance that believers in the Book of Acts did.

We cannot afford to continue in traditions that are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, such as leading proselytes through a cheap repeat-after-me sinner's prayer, and we must learn how to be led by the Spirit in the process.

Ask yourself this question. If you had to choose the one and only person who would present the gospel to a member of your family, who would you pick?

Would you pick someone who had been through half a dozen witnessing training programs, but who was, at most, lukewarm in the faith, or would you pick someone who had never been through witnessing training but demonstrated by his life and ministry that he was led by and sensitive to the Spirit?

Now, who would you call if someone you loved was diagnosed with cancer?

My guess is that it would be the same person.

As believers we should all be that person.

The most important "tool" a believer can have for leading others to Christ, other than the gift of evangelism, is the joy of his/her own fellowship with the Lord, not witness training. I am not saying that witness training or specific tools such as "The Roman Road" or "The Four Spiritual Laws" or "Evangelism Explosion" training is not useful in witnessing to the lost, but I am saying that such tools cannot take the place of a witness that flows naturally from the believer's own fellowship with the Lord.

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I heard a recently recorded survey of Christian “leaders” being asked about personal evangelism. Seventeen of the twenty surveyed said they used “lifestyle evangelism”, attracting sinners to the gospel (or to religious conformity) by their lives. Only three of the twenty talked about proclaiming the gospel. My suspicion is that the three were the only ones in the group who routinely led non-believers to saving faith in Christ.

What these surveys reveal is **not** a need for more witness training, new witnessing tools, or even the need for more organized follow up of evangelistic crusades and sermons. What they reveal is that much of the modern church in America has adopted scripturally incorrect models for fulfilling the Great Commission, models that actually hinder the personal evangelism that should flow naturally from the joy of a believers’ fellowship with the Lord. What Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20 is that His disciples (as defined by Luke 9:23) should make disciples and then teach them to obey everything Jesus taught His original disciples.

What Jesus did **not** teach His disciples, as evidenced in the Book of Acts, was to formalize evangelism in a manner that reduces the importance of our sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit or to merely attract sinners to the gospel through “lifestyle evangelism”.

For leaders of Charismatic and non-Charismatic evangelical denominations and fellowships the difficulty comes in determining how, when, and if the laying on of hands becomes appropriate during the conversion process.

This has been dismissed by some as being something only the original apostles had authority to do. However, Ananias, who was not an apostle, is the one who laid hands on Paul.

For traditional denominations the problem is one of disobedience because of a dependency on religious traditions devoid of revelation. For Charismatic denominations and fellowships the problem is the same in regard to following non-scriptural models of utilizing a repeat-after-me sinner’s prayer and confession of faith, but, in the case of laying on of hands, the problem is that the laying on of hands is often too hastily applied and without the specific leading of the Holy Spirit.

Whether we belong to traditional evangelical church fellowships or Charismatic fellowships we are intended to minister salvation to the lost just as we are to seek our own sanctification...with “fear and trembling” and with great sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This word of testimony is, therefore, humbly offered to whomever it was intended.