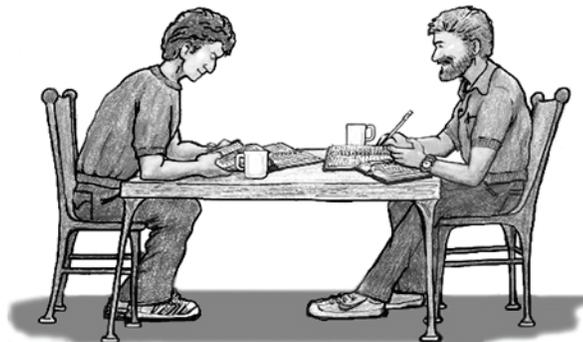




A Tool For Personal Discipleship

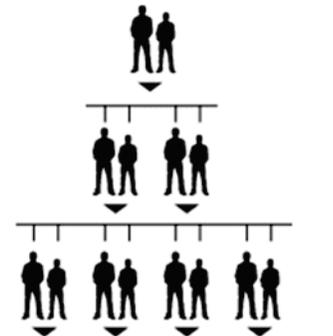
A Guide for Spiritual Mentoring



Spiritual Mentoring / Parenting



Spiritual Fruitfulness



Spiritual Reproduction

Discipler Training International

A non-denominational discipleship ministry providing free discipleship resources for training disciplers (spiritual mentors) to help every Christian grow in spiritual maturity (Colossians 1:28), spiritual fruitfulness (John 15:8) and spiritual reproduction. (2 Timothy 2:2).

www.disciplers.org

About DTI

Our desire is to make these discipleship /spiritual concepts as understandable as possible, especially to newer and immature believers. Please send any comments or suggestions to enhance accuracy or clarity to info@disciplers.org.

I want to thank my wife, Toni, and our ministry co-workers, Frank and Jeannette Meitz, who have provided insights and recommendations to improve this ministry, promote personal discipleship, and help believers toward spiritual maturity, spiritual fruitfulness, and spiritual reproduction. - Art Barkley

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The King James Version present on the Bible Gateway matches the 1987 printing. The KJV is public domain in the United States.

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This core resource can be used:

- In a one-on-one mentoring relationship (or one-on-two)
- In group study
- For personal study and growth
- In training faithful believers to mentor others, helping to identify gaps in spiritual understanding

Visit our website for more tools and information: <https://disciplers.org/>

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Introduction

After a person accepts the gift of salvation, they typically are hungry and open to understanding how to live the abundant Christian life, **but often don't know how or where to begin.**

They may listen to sermons and podcasts, are told to read their Bible but struggle to understand it, and tend to model their behavior after other believers, often leading to wrong conclusions. So they end up wandering in a "spiritual desert" rather than living the abundant life God has promised.

Just as a newborn baby needs immediate and intentional care, we have found that "baby Christians" will flourish with intentional individual attention.



A Tool for Personal Discipleship

(available in .pdf and electronic App format) is intended to help believers discover the answers to the “now what?” question by stimulating conversations between a mentee and their spiritual mentor that encourage spiritual growth and walking in dependence on the Lord under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The workbook lessons are not designed to be given to the mentee with the expectation that they will understand them on their own without personal mentoring. This is not academic material to be studied just to acquire knowledge. Although having Biblical knowledge is important, the goal is for the believer **to KNOW God** and have an intimate relationship with Him – **not just know ABOUT Him.**

Three Phases In The Tool (*curriculum*)

Phase 1—Understanding the Christian Life

- Foundational concepts and principles to be used in the mentoring process, focusing on inward transformation and the heart attitude rather than behavior manipulation.

Phase 2—Mentor Training

- Guidelines for those who want to disciple/mentor other believers

Phase 3—Amplified Discipleship Concepts

- Lessons to deepen understanding of Phase 1 concepts

***A Tool for Personal Discipleship* has proven effective in spiritual formation and is focused on:**

- Cultivating a relationship with the Lord (heart attitude) rather than behavior manipulation
- Learning to trust in God's character
- Understanding how to relate to the personhood of the Holy Spirit
- Allowing God to transform their thinking, resulting in behavior that is pleasing to Him
- Making a decision to recognize and surrender to Him as their Lord, not just as their Savior
- Continual abiding in harmony with and dependence on the Holy Spirit

For long-time believers the DTI process will help identify gaps in spiritual understanding and address spiritual needs in order to strengthen their relationship with the Holy Spirit.

A Tool for Personal Discipleship can be used:

- In a one-on-one mentoring relationship (or one-on-two)
- In group study
- For personal study and growth
- In training faithful believers to mentor others, which will help identify gaps in spiritual understanding and accelerate their growth

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- **Available to download and print** in English, Spanish or Mandarin on our website
- **Available as an App** for mobile devices in English or Spanish on our website. Not available in any App store, only from the DTI web site.
(NOTE that the app is NOT available in KJV, but in HCSB© by Holman Bible Publishers.



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Discipler Training International Free Resources

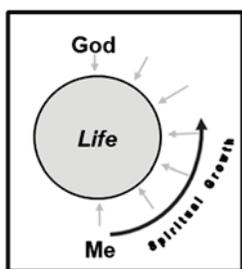
RESOURCES to train and equip faithful men and women (*laity, not just leaders*) as Spiritual Mentors and to implement a discipleship culture in your church.

- “Redefining Discipleship”
 - Discussion on possible reasons why the Church is not having a greater impact, along with potential solutions

Visit our website or scan this code with your phone for this document
- Mentor video training tools
 - Listen to the author teach on each lesson from a live class
 - Video of “Equipping The Saints” live training sessions
 - Additional video snippets / teachings are imbedded in each lesson in the App
- “Facilitation Training Guide”
 - Useful tips for mentoring and for Small Group leaders
- Implementation Guidelines
 - Ideas and tips to effectively establish a disciple making culture in your church
 - Sample forms and agendas for follow-up
- YouVersion Bible App devotionals (*Search for "DTI" in Plans*)
- DTI will consider requests to conduct live remote training or onsite training for pastors and leaders, with a commitment and plan to implement discipleship utilizing DTI.



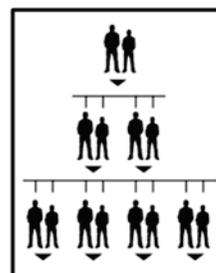
The Purpose and Goal:



Spiritual Maturity



Spiritual Fruitfulness



Spiritual Reproduction

- **Colossians 1:28-29** (Paul wrote) *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may **present every man perfect in Christ Jesus**: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*
- **John 15:8** (Jesus said) *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye **bear much fruit**; so shall ye be my disciples.*
- **2 Timothy 2:2** (Paul wrote) *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, **the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.***

A FEW COMMENTS ABOUT THE MATERIALS:

- This workbook, by design, doesn't use much **jargon or "Christianese."** People who have been around church a long time can often repeat the words without understanding their meaning, and persons with no church background may have no idea what is being discussed!
- The material intentionally does **not get into doctrinal issues** that might divide or cause distractions from the purpose of helping them learn to listen and depend on the Holy Spirit. (The Pastors can clarify doctrinal specifics.)
- **In addition to text**, lessons also contain **diagrams**, since many people learn visually.
 - The lesson point explains the diagram, one element at a time, which should make it clear.
 - When using the App, you may find it **helpful to print an entire larger diagram ahead of time** (for clarification) so you can look at the bigger picture together while you read through each element.
 - If you want more explanation on any diagram, contact us (info@disciplers.org) or watch the training videos in the Mentor Training section on the DTI website, or listen to the explanation video snippets in the App.
- **Scripture** quoted in this version are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.
 - The Bible verses are displayed **to facilitate the conversation** and help to keep you on track.
 - While **Scripture verses are sometimes truncated** to keep the focus on a particular concept being discussed, this is NOT intended to serve as "proof text", or just to prove a point by presenting partial Scripture. When it is appropriate, we encourage you to read the verses in context to the complete passage.

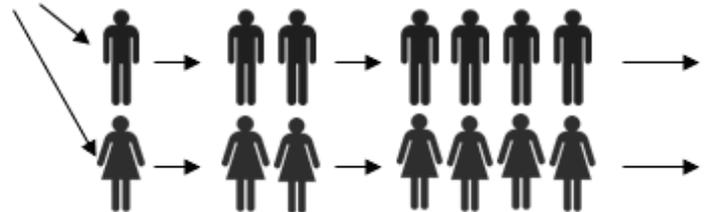
Suggested Timeline for Mentoring

(Preferably one-on-one, but can be in a Corporate Setting with Mentoring Role-Play)

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Purpose:	Understanding the Christian Life	Mentor Training	Amplified Discipleship Concepts
	To focus on the mentee's personal relationship with God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping them to become dependent on the Holy Spirit 	Mentor training with the focus on mentoring others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role play (in class) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review previous concepts Expand understanding Share mentoring experiences
	* Length	6-9 months ±	1-2 months ±

Be available to the Holy Spirit's leading to mentor others
➡ ➡

* Note: Time frames are estimated, not critical, and are calculated on meeting 1 - 1 ½ hour each week.



Important: Preference should be given to using these lessons on a one-to-one basis, although they can also be used effectively in a class setting. However, add role-play for mentoring others so they can envision themselves doing it.

These lessons are not designed to be simply read through like a newspaper, but rather to be personalized by the discipler, and to serve as a means to stimulate dialog and address spiritual issues and concepts that need to be internalized in order for each Christian to become an effective and useful tool in His hands to come alongside others. For most Christians the lessons will be most beneficial through discussion and explanation.

A Note from the Author

We believe there are some foundational **principles** that all believers, especially newer believers, need to understand and internalize. Often Biblical “knowledge” is presented to new Christians rather than **personalized** instruction of Biblical “principles” to **apply** in their lives to help them mature more rapidly.

New believers need to be quickly introduced to a life of walking in **dependence on the Lord**. *(A manual for a car or computer may have the exact specifications and a great description, but to learn to drive a vehicle properly or operate a computer, most people would greatly benefit from individual mentoring.)*

We believe God is pleased by the attitude of a disciple (an apprentice learner), who is concerned about allowing God to use them and minimally interested in defending their personal viewpoints. All our beliefs should be open for Him to alter. Please prayerfully consider the validity of the concepts presented here, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Our passion to help believers grow to spiritual maturity, spiritual fruitfulness, and spiritual reproduction in Christ is knit together with our desire to be true to Scripture. We believe that God has provided provision for every believer to grow from infancy to maturity in Christ so as to become a **spiritual reproducer** (disciple-maker).

We believe that one of the main reasons there is a lack of spiritual vitality in the Christian community is the failure to clearly explain essential Biblical concepts and goals to new converts **initially** so they learn them early in their walk. If such principles are presented early on, new believers will be saved from much unneeded frustration as they seek to understand God’s purpose for their lives.

For most converts the **first few months** are critical. New believers will tend to **adopt** the outlook and value system of those they associate with during the formative part of their Christian walk. This is the time to take advantage of the initial **hunger to learn and grow** that characterizes the normal new believer.

Too often new believers are simply placed in the mainstream (Sunday) services and small groups and expected to somehow **assimilate** Biblical understanding. It is therefore not a surprise to see that many new believers come to the conclusion that Sunday services are the most important spiritual experience of the week, rather than developing a spiritual walk with God that is a 24/7 experience.

Caution: Please do not give these lessons to someone without adequate explanation. We usually tend to assume that others understand more than they actually do. If the disciple grasps and applies the concepts presented in this workbook, the energy and hours you have invested in them will be well worth it.

- Art Barkley



A Tool for Personal Discipleship

PHASE 1

UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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KJV

PHASE 1 CURRICULUM

Understanding the Christian Life

Most believers would greatly benefit from having a personal Spiritual Mentor during this phase but the material can also be used in a class (corporate) setting.

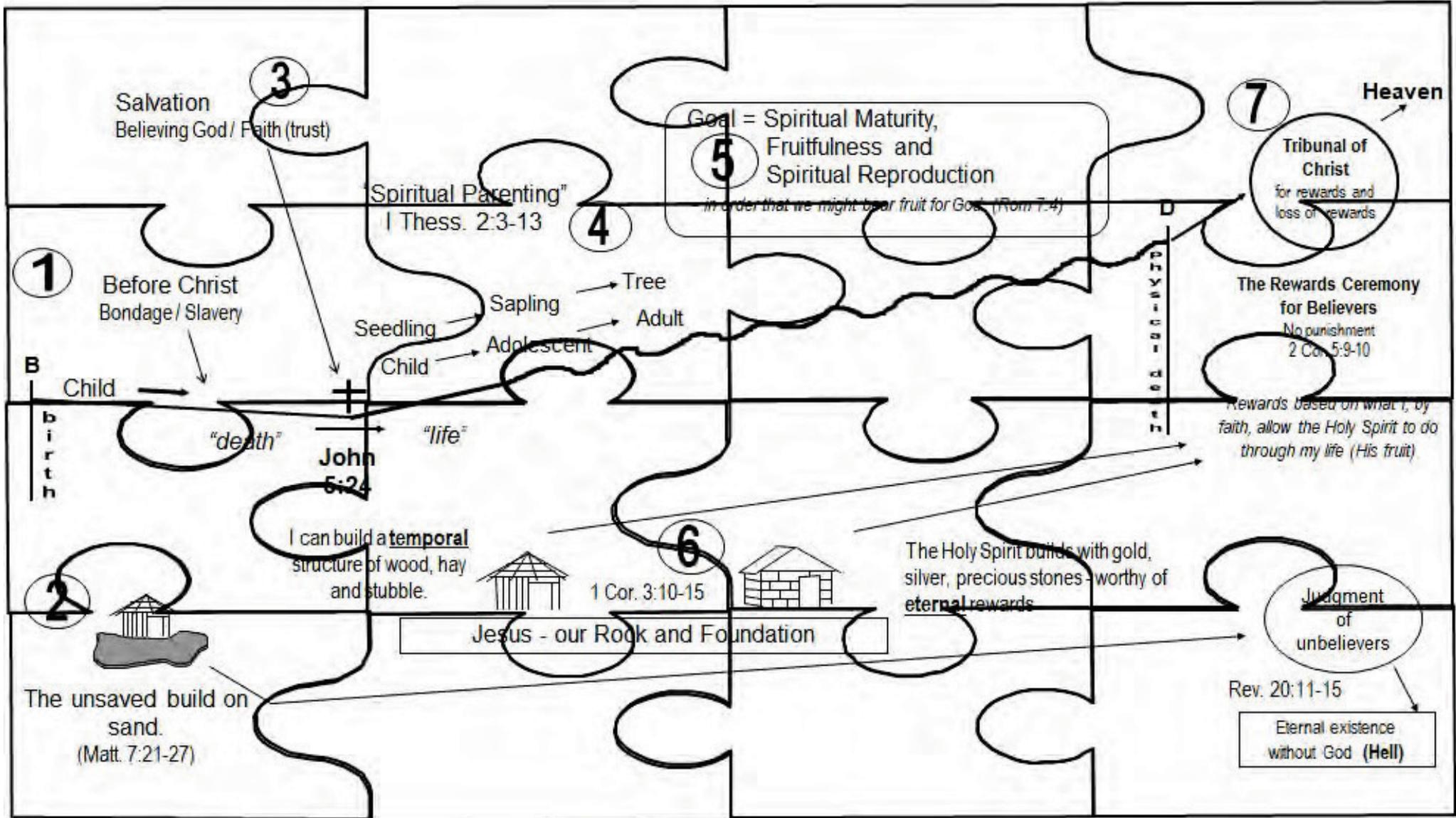
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Notes to the Mentee: It's important that you commit to going through all 16 Lessons. While there will always be unexpected illnesses and/or circumstances, but honor your pledge as much as possible -- just between you and the Lord.

Estimate meeting weekly for 6-9 months for 1-1/2 hours each time.

Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

Imagine the Christian Life as the Boxtop of a “Jigsaw Puzzle”
and portions of Biblical truth are presented as “*pieces of the puzzle*”.



Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

Explanation of the “Jigsaw Puzzle” Diagram

The main purpose of this lesson is to understand a practical overview of the Normal Christian Life. As I acquire Biblical concepts and knowledge I want mentally to connect the pieces to God’s overall plan for my life.



Consider a jigsaw puzzle. Imagine trying to fit together the pieces of a puzzle without being able to refer to the picture boxtop. It is much less frustrating when the boxtop picture is available for reference.

The second diagram (on the next page), the “Abbreviated Overview”, is like the puzzle boxtop, while the pieces represent bits of Biblical knowledge.

Typically, I accumulate information from the Bible, friends, books, sermons, podcasts, conversations, etc. I may have difficulty knowing how this new information fits into my everyday life here on earth, or worse yet, I may arrive at wrong conclusions which can distort my understanding of God and the Christian life.

Some newer Christians become frustrated and return to their secular life style. Some may focus only on behaving correctly and develop a list of “do’s and don’ts”. Others may compartmentalize their life, resulting in a perceived “spiritual life” separate from a “secular life”. They may attempt to live an acceptable spiritual life before others, while at the same time concluding that Biblical principles somehow don’t apply to their secular everyday life.

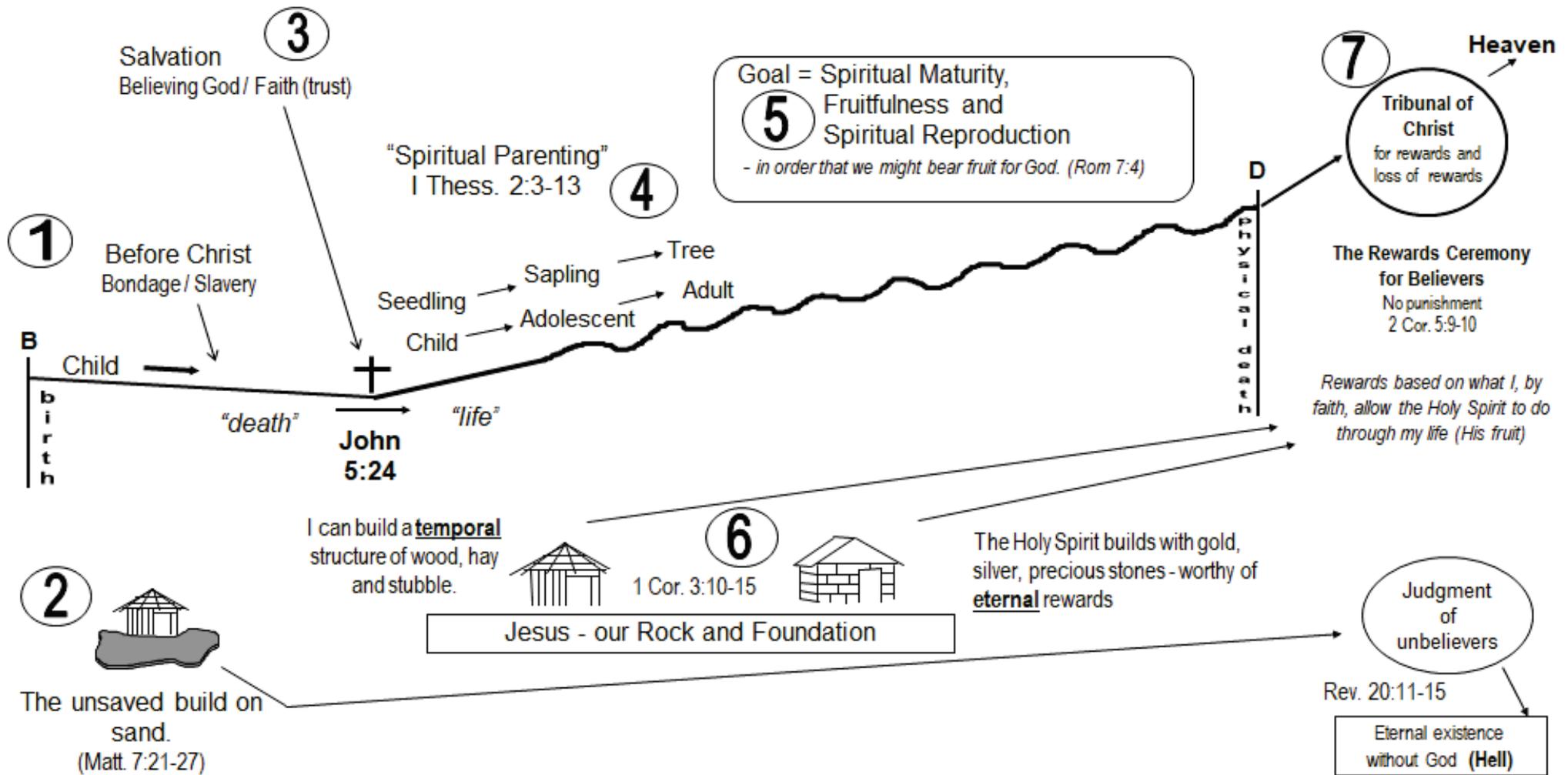
My response should be to view the various components of my everyday life as a unit, and involve God in every aspect of my life.

My goal is to understand how to integrate Biblical knowledge into my daily relationship with God and others, and to protect me from falling into the common practice of simply archiving Biblical information.

As I grow, I will become increasingly more aware of my need to walk continually before the Lord (24/7), seeking His approval, and less dependent on the need for approval from others.



Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life



Jigsaw Puzzle “Boxtop” Guide

Discuss the explanations below for each component of the jigsaw puzzle “boxtop”, all of which will be covered later in more detail in the following lessons.

① **Birth to Rebirth** – We should each be able to easily identify ourselves as having gone through this period, alienated from God, living in spiritual darkness, and without hope.

② If a person rejects Christ and dies during this period, that person who has built their house upon the sand without a foundation, will go to the **judgment of unbelievers** to spend eternity separated from God. It is important to understand that this judgment has **nothing to do with believers**, only unbelievers.

Matt. 7:24-27 (*Jesus said*) “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And **every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it!**”

Rev. 20:11-15 (*The apostle John wrote*) “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was **not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**”

③ **The Cross** – This event is by far the most important happening in my life. From God’s perspective I have passed from “death” (without His life) to “life” (the Lord indwelling), from hopelessness to hopefulness.



John 5:24 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

④ **The New Life** – It is important that I understand that salvation is the **entrance** into a new life with God, prepared by Him to completely meet my every need as I fit into **His** design. I am introduced to the concept of fitting into **God’s plan** for my time here on earth, which is but a small part of His **eternal** plan for me. Two Biblical analogies can illustrate my Christian life: that of a plant growing from a seedling to a tree, and that of a human growing from a baby to an adult. Again, the event of salvation is just the **beginning** of the new life of learning to walk with God. During this period of time it is **very important** for a new believer to be **disciplined** (“**spiritually parented**” / **mentored**”).

1 Thess. 2:7-13 But we were gentle among you, even **as a nurse cherisheth her children** ... we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also **our own souls**, because **ye were dear unto us...** Ye are witnesses, and God also, ...how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, **as a father** doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, **the word of God**, which **effectually worketh also in you** that believe.

⑤ The Intended **Objective** (Goal) – Just as I would expect a healthy sapling to grow into a fruit-bearing tree, and a healthy infant to grow into an adult and become a parent, so God's intention is to make of a healthy spiritual infant a **spiritually mature and fruitful** Christian.



⑥ **God's Foundation** and **My Building Options** – God has laid a Foundation, Jesus Christ, which represents my salvation. This is equally true for **all** believers. However, **each** of us individually has a choice as to how we will build on that Foundation. The buildings represent **the use of my resources (time, energy, possessions)** during my physical life here on earth. If **I allow** the Holy Spirit, as the Master Building Contractor, to use my resources, **He** will use those building materials to **create for me** an **eternal** structure of gold, silver and precious stones. That which **I deny** Him use of will produce a structure of wood, hay and stubble.

1 Cor. 3:10-15 (*Paul wrote*) According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But **let every man take heed** how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation **gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble**; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a **reward**. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall **suffer loss**: but **he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire.

⑦ These verses speak of a future **rewards ceremony** called The Tribunal of Christ (or The Judgment Seat of Christ) at which time each believer will **individually** appear before Jesus Christ to be rewarded (**for eternity**) for what he/she has **allowed** the Holy Spirit to do through their life while living here on earth.

There should be **no fear of punishment** at this event, although I need to be aware of the potential for **loss of eternal rewards**, since all that is wood, hay and stubble will be turned into worthless ashes. It is important to note that **no unbeliever** will be present at this event.

2 Cor. 5:9-10 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be **accepted of him**. For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one** may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Matt. 6:20-21 But lay up for yourselves treasures **in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

Knowing God

1. His Perspective – My Perspective of Life

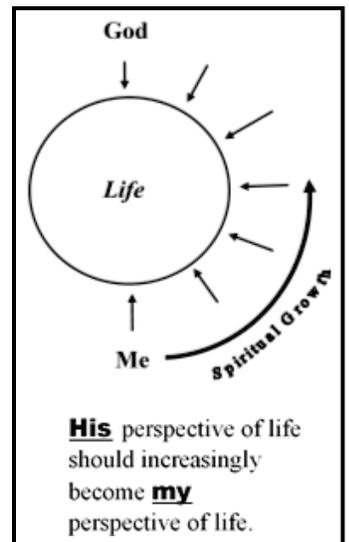
God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him. From birth until I received Christ as my Savior, I formed habits of worldly understanding. Now He wants to gradually **transform my understanding** of Him so that I increasingly view life from **His** perspective. **A godly perspective produces godly behavior.** It does not please God if I simply attempt to change my outward behavior without allowing Him to transform my inward thinking.

If I want my relationship with God to grow, I need to make **conscious choices** to seek Him **wholeheartedly**, in much the same way that a marriage relationship needs to be nurtured.

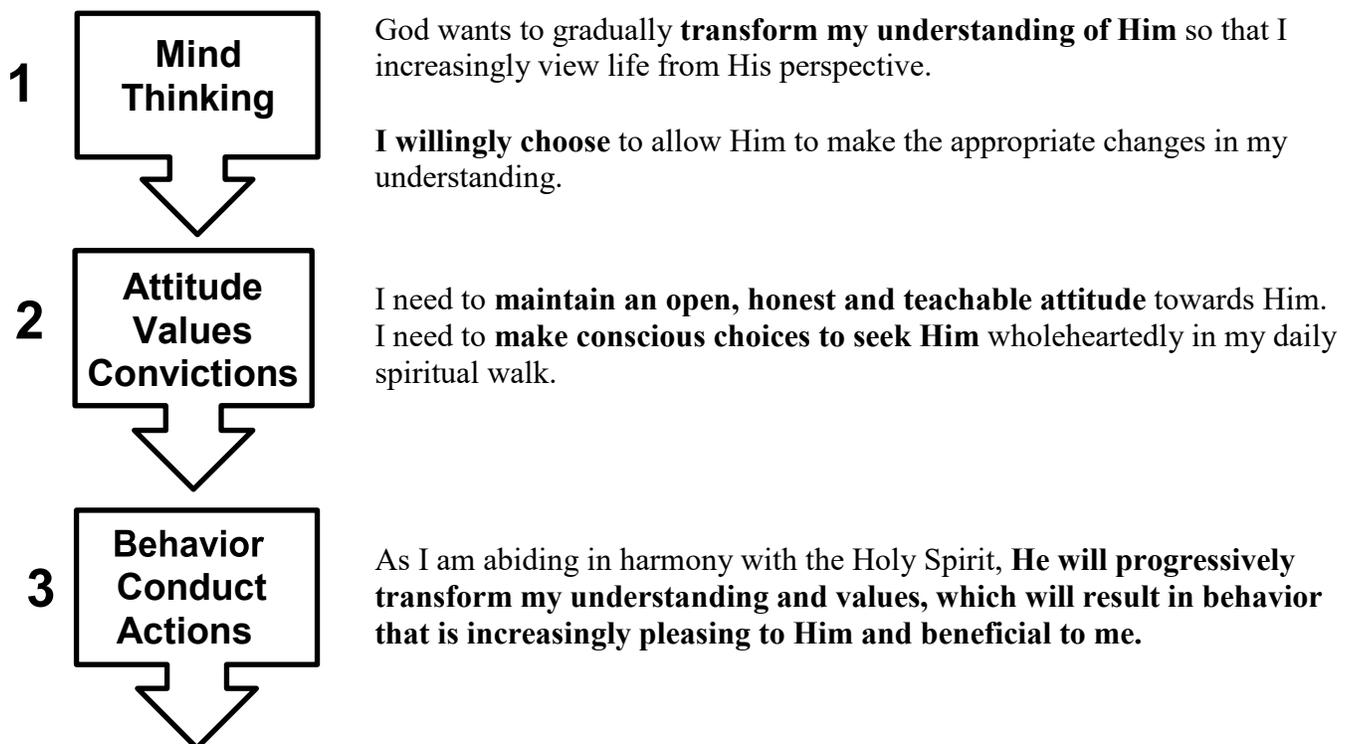
In order not to hinder God’s work in and through me, I need to maintain an **open, honest** and **teachable** attitude towards Him. Since **He alone** really knows me, **my** role is to willingly allow Him to make the appropriate changes in my **understanding**. Jesus is the **visible** picture of God’s character, and the One in whose image God will mold me, **as I allow Him**.

God desires for me to know Him **intimately**, in a way that goes beyond mere knowledge “about” Him.

Romans 12:2 tells me that God wants to transform my thinking so that I increasingly think more like Him. That change will result in an attitude adjustment, resulting (over time) in behavior that is acceptable to Him. *“And be not **conformed** to this world: but be ye **transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**, that ye may **prove** what is that good, and acceptable, and **perfect, will of God.**”*



The following three steps will help me to understand this critical process.



Godly behavior is the natural outcome of His continuing inward transformation of my convictions and values

1 Sam. 16:7... *for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*



2. My attitude

a. God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him, to know His heart.

Jer. 9:23-24 Thus saith the Lord, Let **not** the wise man glory in his **wisdom**, neither let the mighty man glory in his **might**, let not the rich man glory in his **riches**: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he **understandeth and knoweth me**...

John 17:3 (*Jesus said*) And **this** is life eternal, that they might **know thee** the only true God, and **Jesus Christ**, whom thou hast sent.

Rom. 12:2 ... And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may **prove** what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, **are changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Eph. 3:16-19 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit **in the inner man**; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And **to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

The highest goal of learning is to know God!

b. In order to grow I need to actively pursue a closer relationship with Him.

Psa. 63:1 (*David wrote*) ...**early** will I seek thee: my **soul thirsteth for thee** ...

Prov. 2:1-5 (*Solomon wrote*) My son, if thou wilt **receive** my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou **incline thine ear** unto wisdom, and **apply thine heart** to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou **seekest** her as silver, and **searchest** for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and **find the knowledge of God**.

Matt. 7:7-8 (*Jesus said*) "**Ask**, and it shall be given you; **seek**, and ye shall find; **knock**, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh **receiveth**; and he that seeketh **findeth**; and to him that **knocketh it shall be opened**."

1 Peter 2:2-3 As newborn babes, **desire** the sincere milk of the word, **that ye may grow** thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

3. God's Word

Truth does not originate from me, or from any other human, but only from God himself. Therefore, all "perceived truth" must be compared to, and verified by, God's word – the Bible.



a. One way God transforms me is through His Word. His Word is trustworthy.

Psa. 119:89 For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.. (see also 1 Peter 1:25)
Matt. 24:35 (*Jesus said*) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.
John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life..."
John 17:17 (*Jesus said*) Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (see Psa. 119:160)
Rom. 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.
Eph. 4:21 ... the truth is in Jesus.
2 Tim. 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
1 John 5:6 ...And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

b. God's Word should become as essential as food in my daily life.

Deut. 6:5-9 "...And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up... write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."
(See also Deuteronomy 11:18-21)
Job 23:12 (*Job said*) "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."
Psa. 119:16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.
Psa. 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Matt. 4:4 But He (*Jesus*) answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

c. Memorization and meditation on His Word will help me grow.

Psa. 1:1-3 Blessed is the man that ... his delight is in the LORD's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
Psa. 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
Psa. 119:97 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.
Psa. 145:5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.
Prov. 22:17-18 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.
Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Suggestions:

- Record a Bible verse with your phone and play back as you drive or do chores.
- Write a verse on a card and tape it where it is visible or write it on your mirror with a dry erase marker.
- Meditate on that verse during the day.

d. God's Word is like a light shining into my life, disclosing the secrets of my heart and helping me to see myself as God sees me.

Psa. 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
Psa. 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.
Rom. 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
Heb. 4:12-13 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart... all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

e. God alone gives understanding of His Word. Even though some portions may appear difficult to understand, as I am honest and open to Him, He will reveal His Word to me as I have need.

Deut. 29:29 The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.
Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.
1 Cor. 2:12-14 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
2 Pet. 3:15-16 (*Peter wrote*) ... as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood...

f. The following recommendations may be helpful as you consider what Bible translation to use, where to start reading, and some verses to memorize.

Bible Translation: There are several dozen English Bible translations. It may be helpful to consult with a spiritual leader for a recommended version. Different versions can also be seen at www.christianbook.com, www.YouVersion.com and/or www.biblegateway.com. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

Where to Start Reading: John, Luke, Acts and Genesis are good starting points. Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians and Proverbs should also be on your "short list".

Helpful Verses to Memorize: John 3:16-17, Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:28, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 John 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 5:24, Romans 12:1-2 will all be helpful, along with other verses.

4. Prayer - conversing with God



I should think of Prayer as an intimate conversation with my Creator and Master, who is majestic in His creation and control of the universe, while at the same time so loving and caring that He wants to be involved in the most minute details of my life.

I should approach God with a reverent awe, always conscious of the fact that His accessibility is only due to the merit of His Son, not a result of any goodness on my part. I should count it an extreme privilege to approach the God of all creation.

As in any conversation, listening is a major component. Occasionally my time with God will consist mostly or entirely of contemplating and listening to Him as He speaks to my heart or reveals to me something new. He wants me to look to Him with expectation.

One way of honoring God and giving Him His rightful recognition in my heart is by actively seeking and accepting His priorities. This will necessitate forming the habit of not giving Him the leftovers of my time, energy and possessions, but rather offering Him the best of my resources.

a. **Conversation with God will be enhanced by a heart preparation, an honest assessment of my priorities, and an awareness of His majesty.**

Psa. 5:3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

Psa. 37:7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him:...

Psa. 119:147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Isa. 50:4 ... he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

Matt. 6:31-34 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Luke 10:38-42 ... He (*Jesus*) entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Eph. 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Col. 3:2-3 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Heb. 4:15-16 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

b. Prayer includes adoration, thanksgiving (gratitude), and praise.

Psa. 145:2-3 (*David wrote*) Every day will I bless thee; and **I will praise thy name for ever and ever.** Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

Psa. 146:1- Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord: **I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.**

Daniel 6:10 ... Daniel ... went into his house ... his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and **gave thanks** before his God, as he did aforetime.

Eph. 5:19-20 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing **and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks** always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Phil. 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Col. 4:2-4 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same **with thanksgiving...**

1 Thess. 5:16-18 Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. **In every thing give thanks:** for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

c. Prayer includes confession, reconciliation and forgiveness of others.

Psa. 32:5 **I acknowledge** my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity **have I not hid.** I said, I will **confess** my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. (*See Psa.66:18*)

Prov. 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso **confesseth** and **forsaketh** them shall have mercy.

Matt. 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath **ought against thee;** Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; **first be reconciled** to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, **forgive, if ye have ought against any:** that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Rom. 12:18 **If it be possible,** as much as **lieth in you,** live peaceably with **all men.**

1 John 1:9-10 If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

d. Prayer includes supplications, requests for my personal needs.

Prov. 2:6 For the Lord giveth **wisdom:** out of his mouth cometh **knowledge** and **understanding.**

Matt. 6:5-8 ... But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in **secret;** and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.... for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, **before** ye ask him.

Matt. 6:25-34 ... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and **all** these things shall be added unto you...

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him **ask** of God, that giveth to all men **liberally,** and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

e. Prayer – Battle in “The Secret Place

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

—Matthew 6:6

Jesus did not say, "Dream about your Father who is in the secret place," but He said, ". . . **pray** to your Father who is in the secret place . . ." Prayer is an effort of the will. After we have entered our secret place and shut the door, the most difficult thing to do is to pray. We cannot seem to get our minds into good working order, and the first thing we have to fight is wandering thoughts. The great battle in private prayer is overcoming this problem of our idle and wandering thinking. We have to learn to discipline our minds and concentrate on willful, deliberate prayer.

We must have a specially selected place for prayer, but once we get there this plague of wandering thoughts begins, as we begin to think to ourselves, "This needs to be done, and I have to do that today."

Jesus says to "shut your door." Having a secret stillness before God means deliberately shutting the door on our emotions and remembering Him. God is in secret, and He sees us from "the secret place"—He does not see us as other people do, or as we see ourselves. When we truly live in "the secret place," it becomes impossible for us to doubt God. We become more sure of Him than of anyone or anything else. Enter into "the secret place," and you will find that God was right in the middle of your everyday circumstances all the time. Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless you learn to open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day, you will be working on the wrong level throughout the day. But if you will swing the door of your life fully open and "pray to your Father who is in the secret place," every public thing in your life will be marked with the lasting imprint of the presence of God.

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Suggestion: To minimize distractions when you meet alone with the Lord, have a notepad handy to write down any thoughts that you may need to act upon later.

f. Prayer includes intercession, requests for the needs of others.

2 Cor. 1:8-11 (*Paul wrote of his afflictions in Asia*) ... we despaired even of life:....God ... Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also **helping together by prayer for us**, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Eph. 6:18-20 (*Paul wrote*) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication **for all saints**; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Col. 4:12 (*Paul wrote of Epaphras*) ... always **labouring** fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

g. Prayer is continual, anytime, but should also include, as possible, regular daily special times set apart. It pleases God when I seek His direction for appropriate times and places.

Psa. 55:17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, ... and he shall hear my voice.
Psa. 119:62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.
Psa. 119:164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.
Daniel 6:10 ... Daniel ... kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.
Rom. 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;.
1 Thess. 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

Note on 1 Thess. 5:17 "Continual prayer is not prayer that prevails without any interruption, but prayer that continues whenever possible. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken." (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.)

h. Our Daily Bread (September 19, 2004)

Informing God

We cannot tell God anything He doesn't already know. When we pray, we simply put into words what He's been aware of all along.

That doesn't make prayer unnecessary; rather, it encourages us to pray. We find relief in talking to Someone who knows us and our situation fully. It's a comfort to know that God's response arises not from information we give Him, but from His perfect knowledge of our circumstances. He knows all conditions—past, present, future—that bear on our well-being.

"Your Father knows," Jesus said in Matthew 6:8. He knows our thoughts, our intentions, our desires. He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). He knows the anguish of our heart, the strain of continual frustration, the enemies inside and outside that war against our souls.

So, can we presume to dictate the time and terms of our deliverance from trials or adversity? Can we say our way is better, more likely to develop our soul? No, we cannot teach God anything. He alone knows the way to bring us to glory. Out of all possible paths, He has chosen the best, the route most adapted to who we are and what He has in store for us.

We cannot teach God knowledge, but we can love and trust Him. That's all He asks of us.
—David Roper

*The answer God may choose for me
Is sure to be the best,
So may I always thankful be,
And in His goodness rest. —D. De Haan*

God knows the end from the beginning, so we can trust Him with everything between.

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5. I must make it a priority to gather together with other believers on a regular basis, for teaching, prayer, Bible study, accountability and encouragement.

As I ask God, He will lead me to or confirm the Church body where I can be used by Him in service to others and participate with other believers in the fellowship that I need, continuing to learn and grow through teaching, praying and worshipping together.

Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Heb. 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Acts 16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.



CONCLUSION: As I trust God, I can always be assured of His love, knowing He will only act toward me in my best interest, even though at times it may not appear that way. For Him to do otherwise would be contrary to His character.

Psa. 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

Psa. 37:4-5 Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Psa. 86:5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Psa. 145:18-19 The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

Jer. 10:23 O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

1 John 5:14-15 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

*Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. **Whom have I in heaven but thee?** and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

(Psalm 73:23-26)

Salvation Principles

Like physical birth, spiritual birth is the entrance into a new life. The purpose of this lesson is to explain some things that happen to a believer at conversion. Obviously there are other principles and truths that can be added.

1. Mercy & Grace

“*Mercy*” = When I am not given what I deserve.

“*Grace*” = When I am given what I don’t deserve.

Illustration of Speeding Ticket -

“*Good fortune*” - if you’re not caught.

“*Justice*” - if you’re caught and given a ticket.

“*Mercy*” - if you’re caught, but not given a ticket.

“*Grace*” - if you’re caught, given a ticket, but the officer pays the fine.



2. The Apostle Paul describes what I was like before God saved me, and what God has done for me. (discuss terminology as needed.)

Rom. 3:10-12 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Rom. 5:6-10 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ... But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Eph. 2:1-9 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Eph. 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ ... having no hope, and without God in the world:

Eph. 4:17-19 ... Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God,.....

NOTE: God does not judge us “on the curve”. We tend to evaluate ourselves as compared to others, whereas God compares us to Himself.”

3. God's principle of substitution

a. God's grace was evident even when Adam and Eve first disobeyed Him.

Genesis 2:15-17 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely **die**.

2:25 And they were both **naked**, the man and his wife, and were **not ashamed**.

3:6-7 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; **and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons**.



3:8-12 And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife **hid themselves** from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was **naked**; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, **The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat**.

3:13 And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And **the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat**.

3:21-24 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them..

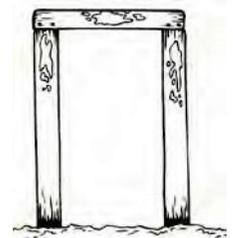
Adam & Eve were given **one** commandment, which they disobeyed. Then **they tried to make themselves acceptable to God** - represented by **the fig leaf cover-up**. **They each blamed someone else**. They got what they deserved - **Justice**. Then God gave them what they didn't deserve - **Grace** - represented by **His animal substitute**. An innocent animal's life was sacrificed as a result of their sin. This substitutionary animal sacrifice was a representation of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sin of the entire human race.

b. The Passover - another picture of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice.

Exodus 12:1 **And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying,**

12:12-13 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and **when I see the blood, I will pass over you**, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

12:21-22 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and **kill the passover**. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the **lintel and the two side posts** with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.



12:23 For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

12:24-27 And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons **for ever**.

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

12:29-30 And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold **the Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world.

1 Cor. 5:7 ... For even **Christ our passover** is sacrificed for us

The Israelites were in **slavery** to the Egyptians. A lamb was killed as a **substitute**.

Wherever there was **blood** the inhabitants of the house were spared from God's judgment.

When the Lord saw blood on a doorpost, He could say, "**Judgment has already been here**".

c. Jesus Christ's sacrifice as our "Substitute" was God's plan for our salvation.

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely **he hath borne our griefs**, and **carried our sorrows**: yet ... he was **wounded for our transgressions**, he was **bruised for our iniquities**: the **chastisement of our peace was upon him**; and **with his stripes we are healed**. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**.

2 Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him **to be sin** for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [viewed as being in] the righteousness of God in him [acceptable and in a right relationship with Him, by His goodness].

Gal. 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse [doom] of the law [and its condemnation], being [Himself] **made a curse for us**: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree [is crucified]:

1 Peter 3:18 or Christ also hath once suffered for sins, **the just** for the unjust [the innocent for the guilty], that he might bring us to God...



4. I have been saved by His love, not because I am deserving.

I need to clearly understand that "salvation" is God's work, start to finish. I have been accepted as a child of God, not based on any merit on my part, but only by the "grace" and "mercy" of God (as explained in Point #1). The expected result of a correct understanding should be "a thankful heart" for the great gift I have freely received.

Secondly, and of significant importance, this correct understanding will strengthen me whenever the enemy attempts to condemn and deceive me to focus on my own unworthiness and lack of godliness, which can cause me to question and doubt the validity of my salvation.

John 6:37 (*Jesus said*) **All that the Father giveth me** shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

John 6:44 (*Jesus said*) **No man can come to me, except** the Father which hath sent me **draw him**; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Rom. 3:10-12 As it is written, ... There is **none that seeketh after God**...

Rom. 4:4-8 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness **without works**, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are **forgiven**, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord **will not impute sin**.

Eph. 1:3-8 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as **he hath chosen us** in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath **made us accepted** in the beloved. In whom we have **redemption** through his blood, the **forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of **his grace**; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Titus 3:3-8 For we ourselves also were sometimes **foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving** divers lusts and pleasures, **living in** malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the **kindness and love of God** our Saviour toward man appeared, **Not by works of righteousness** which we have done, but according to **his mercy** he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by **his grace**, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying,...



5. What is the difference between “religion” and “Christianity”?

“Religion” worldwide teaches that there is something **you** can do to make yourself acceptable before God. “True Christianity” teaches that only **what Christ has done on your behalf** makes you acceptable before God.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man** cometh unto the Father, but by **me**.

Acts 4:12 **Neither** is there salvation in **any other**: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

6. Jesus gave an overview of salvation. (John 5:24 - great to memorize)



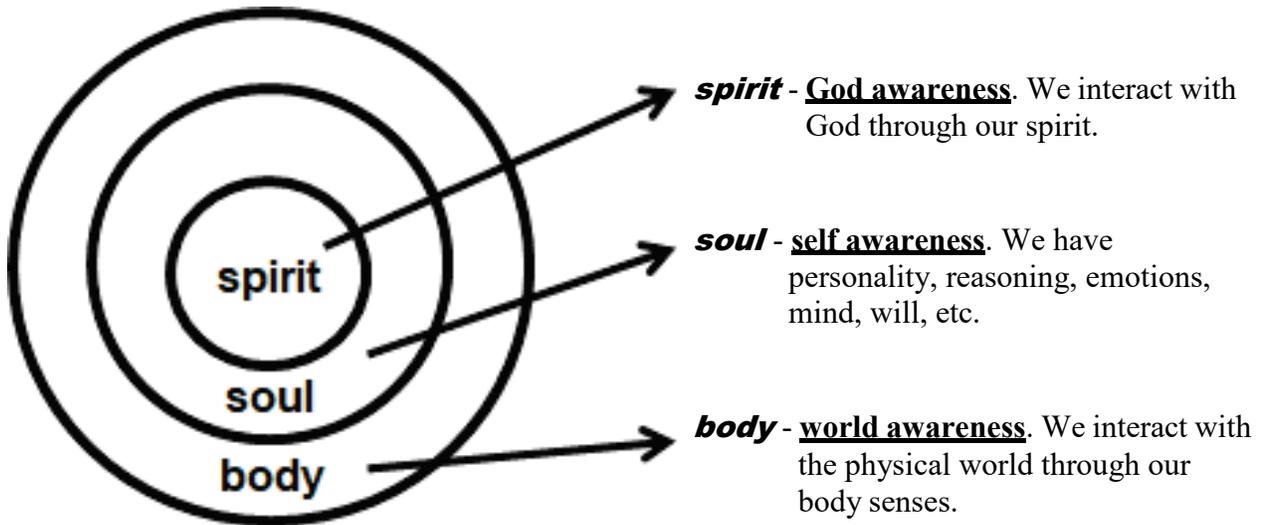
(Jesus said) “I assure you: Anyone who **hears My word and believes Him** who sent Me **has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.**”

Eternal life is **not an object**, but rather an endless quality of existence with God.

The Spiritual Anatomy of a Christian

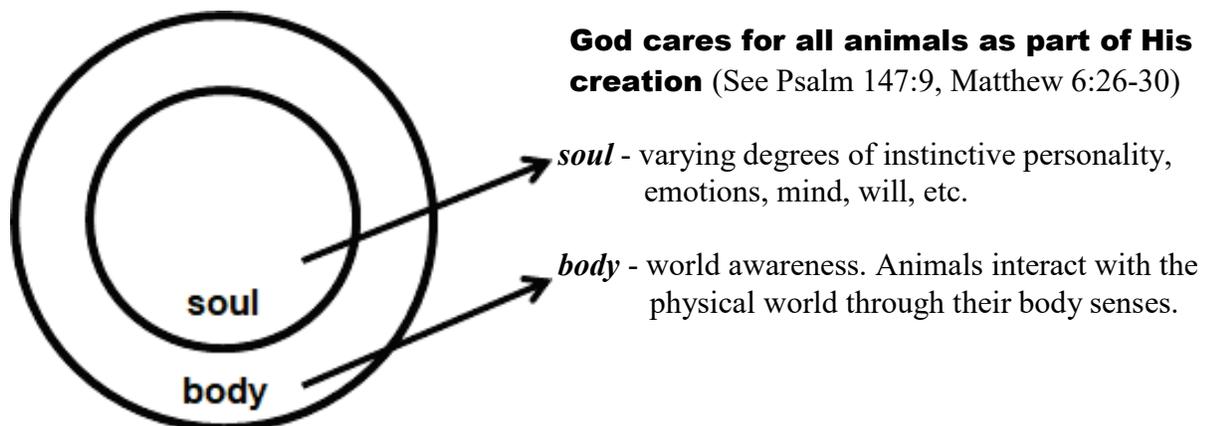
1. Mankind is a unique creation of God, set apart from the rest of His creation. People alone have been given a “spirit”, through which they can know God.

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

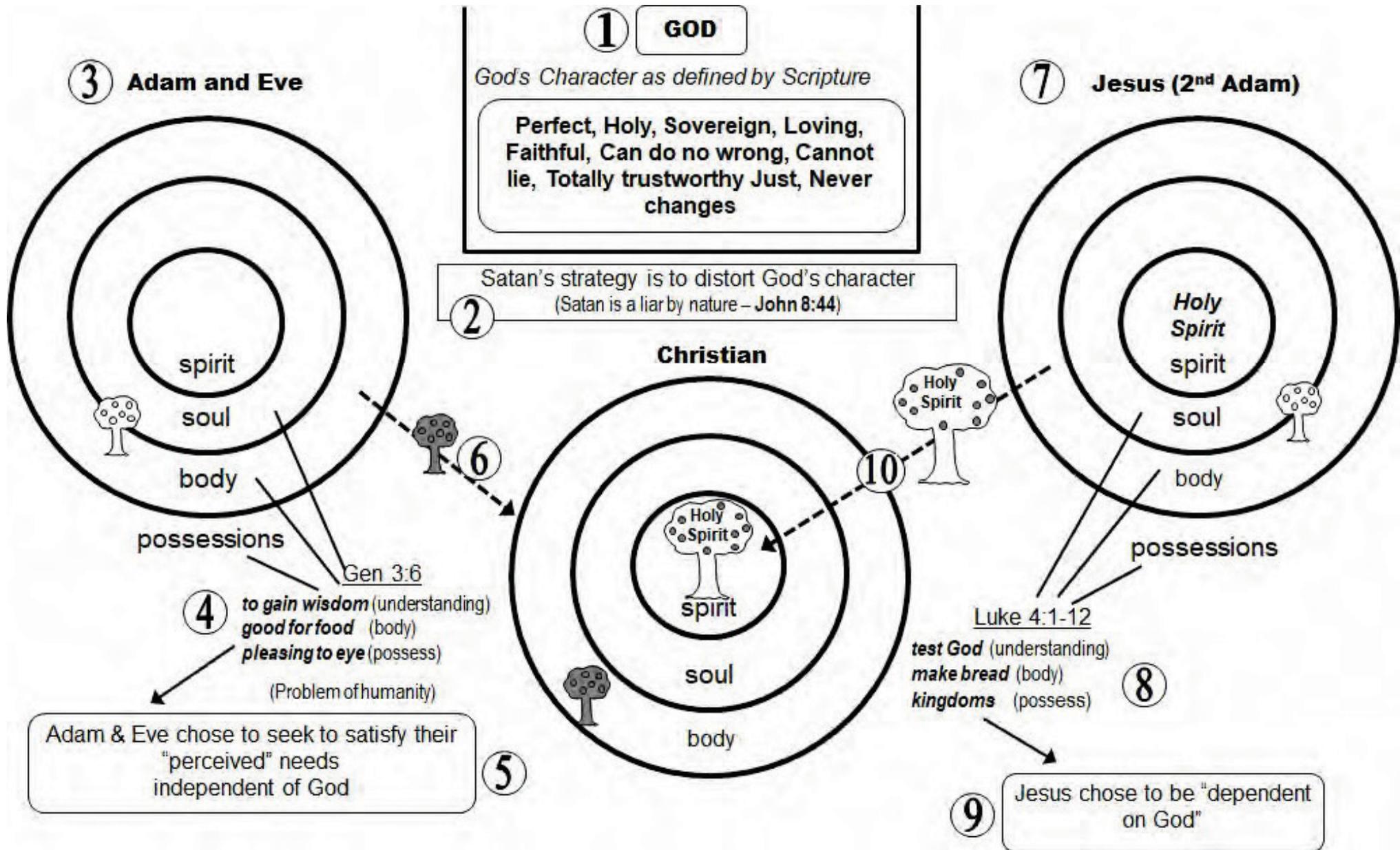


1 Thess. 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 Rom. 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.
 1 Cor. 14:15 (Paul wrote) ... I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

2. The entire animal kingdom was created by God. (Gen 1:20-25) However, the animal kingdom is limited in scope, and without a “spirit”. (In Genesis 2:7, God breathed into man alone His “breath of life.”)



God's Divine Nature (His Character) and My Human Nature



God's Divine Nature (His Character) and My Human Nature - Guide

The main purpose of this lesson is to help clarify the events which have led to my present condition as **a believer having two natures**. A number of foundational Biblical principles will be introduced which should help me to more easily understand other truths as they are presented in subsequent lessons.

① **The Character of God** --- It is important to understand the significance of Biblical terms that describe His attributes. His attributes will be reinforced, as I allow the Holy Spirit to speak to me **through His written Word**.

IMPORTANT: The main purpose of presenting the attributes of God's character is to demonstrate how reasonable it is to trust Him. As an unbeliever I was accustomed to trusting in myself, but as a believer I need to form the habit of trusting God in my daily decisions. I must reason out that if God's character is as portrayed in the Bible, then it is very **logical** to trust Him completely, and very **illogical** not to trust Him. There is **no** reasonable logic for not yielding to Him.

A major reason for distrusting God is my tendency to impute to God **my** character. If God were like me then it would be quite **reasonable** to distrust Him.

A Sampling of Verses Related to God's Character

Take some time now to read (aloud if possible) the following verses on God's character.

GOD IS LOVE

1 John 4:16 ... **God is love**,...

Rom. 5:8 **But God commendeth his love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 3:16 **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...**

1 John 3:16 **Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:** ...

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Job 34:14-15 If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; **All flesh shall perish** together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

Prov. 21:30 There is **no** wisdom **nor** understanding **nor** counsel against the Lord.

Isa. 46:11 ... yea, **I** have spoken it, **I will** also bring it to pass; **I** have purposed it, **I will** also do it.

Dan. 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed **as nothing**: and **he doeth according to his will** in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none** can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Acts 4:24 ... they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, **thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:**

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS, HOLY AND PURE. HE CANNOT LIE, HE CAN DO NO WRONG

Deut. 32:3-4 ... ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for **all his ways are judgment**: a God of **truth and without iniquity, just and right is he**.
Lev. 19:2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for **I the Lord your God am holy**.
Job 34:10 **far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.**
Psa. 18:30 As for God, his way is **perfect**:...
Isa. 57:15 the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, **whose name is Holy**:...
Hab. 1:13 **Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity**:...
Luke 1:49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and **holy is his name**.
Heb. 6:18 ... **it is impossible for God to lie**,...
Rom. 3:25-26 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins... **To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness**: that he might be **just**, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

GOD IS PERFECT

Deut. 32:3-4 ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is **perfect**...
2 Sam. 22:31 God, **his way is perfect**; the word of the Lord is tried...:
Matt. 5:48 ... **your Father which is in heaven is perfect**.

GOD NEVER CHANGES

Psa. 102:25- Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but **thou shalt endure**: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: **But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.**
Malachi 3:6 For **I am the Lord, I change not**;...
James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, **with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning**.

GOD IS FAITHFUL, TOTALLY TRUSTWORTHY AND DEPENDABLE

Deut. 32:3-4 ... ascribe ye greatness unto our God. ... **a God of truth and without iniquity**...
Psa. 33:18-21 Behold, **the eye of the Lord is upon them** that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; **o deliver** their soul from death, and **to keep them alive** in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is **our help and our shield**. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.
Psa. 34:4-8 I (*David*) sought the LORD, and he heard me, and **delivered me from all** my fears.... This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and **saved him out of all** his troubles. **The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them** that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that **trusteth** in him.
Psa. 36:5 **Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.**
Psa. 86:15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of **compassion**, and **gracious, long suffering**, and **plenteous in mercy and truth**.

Jer. 29:11 For I know the **thoughts that I think toward you**, saith the Lord, thoughts of **peace**, and not of evil, to give you an **expected end**.

Rom. 8:28 We know that **all** things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.

1 Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but **God is faithful, who will not suffer** you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make **a way to escape**, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Thess. 5:24 **Faithful is he that calleth you**, who also will do it.

2 Thess. 3:3 But **the Lord is faithful**;

2 Tim. 2:13 If we believe not, **yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself**.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer **according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator**.

- ② **Satan's strategy** --- is to persuade me that God is **not trustworthy**, by undermining my confidence in **God's character**. **Example**: In Genesis 3:1-5 he sought to instill doubt, insinuating that God is a liar, suggesting that God did not have their best interest at heart, and implying that He was withholding that which in some way would be good for them. If God did not love them, how then could He be trusted?

Gen. 3:1- Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, **Yea, hath God said**, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die**: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened**, and ye shall **be as gods**, knowing good and evil.

- ③ When Adam and Eve were created they were made **perfect**, as was all creation. They were complete and **totally** satisfied, not lacking in any way. Everything they did was in total harmony with God's character. **Death did not exist before that time**.

Rom. 5:12 Wherefore, as **by one man** sin entered into the world, and **death by sin**; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

1 Cor. 15:21-22 For since by man came **death**... **in Adam all die**,...

- ④⑤ Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie about God's character and ate the fruit, choosing to pursue self-satisfaction "**independent**" of God. The choice to live independent from God was evident in **three areas**:

1. The **human understanding** (desirable for obtaining wisdom)
2. The **appetites of the body** (good for food), and
3. **Possessions** (delightful to look at).

(Temptations also fall into one of these three areas.) It is important to see this my "**predisposition toward independence**" as **the "root" problem of humanity** and one of the driving forces behind the global and individual resistance to God.

Gen. 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

- ⑥ Every person born into the human race inherits the sinful human nature (*pictured as a dark tree*) of Adam, through their biological father. Consequently, every human is born with a disposition of resistance toward God.

Gen. 5:3 ... Adam ... begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image..
Gal. 5:16-23 ... For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,...

- ⑦ Jesus was born into the human race, but without a sinful human father. As the second Adam, He was born with the same sinless human nature that Adam had before he fell. The righteous character of Jesus, as seen in His life, is what God had originally intended for Adam.

1 Cor. 15:45-46 ... The first man was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickenning spirit....

Rom. 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

- ⑧⑨ Jesus was tempted in the same three areas as Adam, but Jesus chose to entrust Himself into God's care instead of believing Satan's enticement to seek to live independent of God.

- ⑩ Upon believing, I as a new believer was born into the spiritual race, and received the divine nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Important: The sinful human nature can never be improved. (See Gal. 5:17 below.)

John 3:3, 6 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Rom. 7:14-25 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Gal. 5:16-23 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance...

3. He is the seal (deposit, guarantee, evidence) that I am God's child.

The Holy Spirit is **God's evidence** of my salvation. I should **actively** seek after the Holy Spirit and be open to His guidance and instruction. As a disciple I should grow **increasingly more dependent** on the Holy Spirit and increasingly less dependent on a discipler (mentor). I should **increasingly recognize** the Holy Spirit's promptings in my everyday life.

Rom. 8:9, 14-16 ... **if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his**.... For as many as are **led by** the Spirit of God, they **are** the sons of God.... The Spirit itself **bearth witness with our spirit**, that we are the children of God.

2 Cor. 1:21-22 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; **Who hath also sealed us**, and given **the earnest** of the Spirit in our hearts. (See also 2 Cor. 5:5)

Gal. 4:6 And **because ye are sons**, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,...

Eph. 1:13-14 ... after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the **earnest (pledge, guarantee, deposit)** of our inheritance...

1 John 3:24 ... And hereby we know that he abideth in us, **by the Spirit** which he hath given us. (See also 1 John 4:13)

4. He has a plan for every day of my life. He wants me to learn to follow and obey Him. He does not expect to follow my plan.

Psalms 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book **all** my members were written, which in continuance **were fashioned**, when as yet there was none of them.

Jer. 10:23 O Lord, I know that the way of man is **not in himself**: it is **not in man** that walketh to **direct his steps**.

Jer. 29:11 "For I know the **thoughts that I think toward you**"—this is the Lord's declaration—"thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

John 14:16-17 (*Jesus said*) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may abide with you **for ever**...

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall **teach you** all things, and bring all things to **your remembrance**, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 16:13-15 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you** into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will **shew you** things to come. **He shall glorify me**: for he shall receive of mine, and shall **shew it unto you**....

1 Cor. 2:9-14 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But **God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit**:... Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; **that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God**.

I need to fit into **God's plan** for my life. God wants me **to follow** Him, He does not want me to view Him as **my Servant**, fitting into **my** plans and assisting me whenever **I** determine I need His help. I should feel free to make **tentative** daily and future plans, while always being mindful that He may want to change my plans.

5. He intercedes to the Father for me and teaches me to pray.

Rom. 8:26-27 Likewise **the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities**: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but **the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us** with groanings which cannot be uttered.... he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Eph. 2:18 For through him (*Jesus*) we both have access **by one Spirit unto the Father**.

Eph. 6:17-18 ... **Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Jude 20 But ye, beloved,... **praying in the Holy Ghost**,

I need to maintain **a continual active** communication with the Lord, through conversational prayer, reading and studying the Word, listening to teachings, etc.

6. He baptized me into the universal body of Christ, with all true believers (refers to “spiritual” baptism, not to water baptism).

Matt. 3:11 (*John the Baptist said*) “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, ... he shall baptize you with **the Holy Ghost**, and with fire:”

1 Cor. 12:12-13 For as the body is **one**, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are **one** body: so also is Christ. For by **one** Spirit are we all baptized into **one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been **all** made to drink into **one** Spirit.

I need to understand my **oneness with all** members of the universal Body of Christ, the **one** and **only** true Church, bonded together by the Holy Spirit. There are some doctrinal and cultural differences between Christians that should not create divisions or resentments.

NOTE: **Water baptism** for a Christian speaks of “identification with” Christ. While water baptism has no merit before God for salvation, it is to be taken seriously as an **outward witness** of what He has already done inwardly in my life. I am expressing to others that I have died with Christ and died to myself, and that I want to live a new life in obedience to Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within me. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10:47-48; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3;) Recommendation: talk with your Pastor if you have questions on baptism.

7. He wants to use me to testify about Jesus to unbelievers.

Mark 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for **it is not ye** that speak, but **the Holy Ghost**. (*See also Matt. 10:19 / Luke 12:11*)

John 15:26 “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, **he shall testify of me**:”

John 16:8-11 “And when he (*the Holy Spirit*) is come, **he will reprove the world** of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”

Acts 1:8 “But ye shall receive power, **after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you**: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

God desires to use me **to attract unbelievers** to a believing faith in Jesus Christ. This should be through **spoken words** as well as the **example** of my life yielded to Him.

St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying – “preach the gospel – and if necessary use words.”

8. He wants to use the spiritual gift(s) He has given me for others.

Mark 9:35 ... And he ... saith unto them, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."

Rom. 12:4-8 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor. 12:4, 7-11 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ... the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.... But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Phil. 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

1 Peter 4:10-11 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.



Each disciple is unique in the plan and purposes of God. He wants to produce interaction and involvement between believers. (*Jesus said*, "By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35) He wants to minister to other believers through me. He doesn't want me to simply focus on how others can meet my needs.

How am I investing my resources (time, energy, possessions) in other believers to help them toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness (spiritual reproduction)?

Important: In the physical human body each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members.

9. He alone can produce spiritual life in and through me.

John 6:63 (*Jesus said*) "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

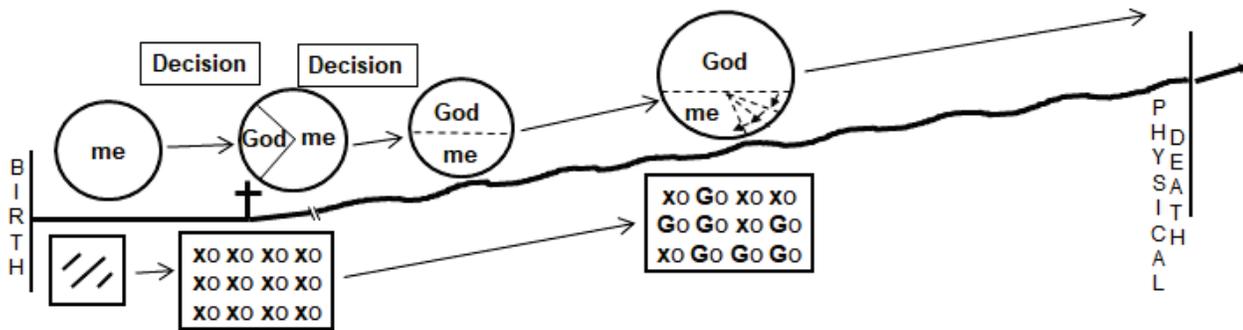
2 Cor. 3:6 ... for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Eccl. 3:14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Anything of eternal value must have its origin in the Holy Spirit. I am, and will continue to be, tempted to rely on myself until I leave this body. I need to be aware of this tendency, and not think of it as abnormal.

Lordship and Surrender

The Normal Progressive Development of a Christian



This diagram presents the Lordship decision as an event, which preferably takes place at conversion, followed by the growth process in which God’s perspective of life is increasingly becoming my perspective.



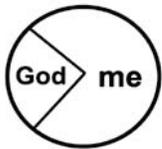
This circle represents me as an unbeliever.



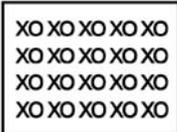
At birth my mind was like an empty whiteboard.



Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I must recognize my hopelessness, and make a “decision” to call out to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation.



As a new believer I receive eternal life (an event) and the Lord begins to dwell in me as the Person of the Holy Spirit. During this phase it is natural for me to be focused on “external behavior.”



This graphic represents my understanding about life, values, etc. that has been acquired from birth to conversion as a result of the influence and learning from my parents, peers, media, culture, etc. That understanding (my worldview) does not disappear at salvation. I now need to learn to walk with the Holy Spirit as a habit. The function of discipleship is to facilitate that process.

Note: Much of this understanding is contrary to God, but He alone can correctly manage the process of transformation.

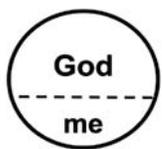
Note: X = Understanding that is contrary to God

O = Understanding that is not necessarily contrary to God.



In order for spiritual growth to continue, I need to come to an agreement with the Lord as to who is best capable of managing the growth process. Preferably this takes place at conversion, but often is not understood and accepted until later, unfortunately.

Typically, there are three motivators that will help me make the decision to surrender and accept the Biblical Master-servant relationship. They are: 1) Persecution, 2) Crisis, and 3) Personal discipleship.



This graphic represents me, having made the decision to yield up my independence, and have acknowledged His rightful Lordship of Christ over my life. I understand that God alone is capable of overseeing my life.

CONSIDER: Surrender consists of two parts.

1. First I make the Lordship **decision** to surrender my **will** (an acknowledgment of His ownership of my life and the obvious implications of the Master-servant relationship.)
2. This decision is then followed by the **daily process** of yielding up areas of my understanding. The Holy Spirit seeks my cooperation in allowing Him to transform me into an increasingly mature and fruitful Christian.



CONSIDER: A **one-time surrender** of the “will” precedes a **progressive yielding up** of “behavior.”

from Oswald Chambers

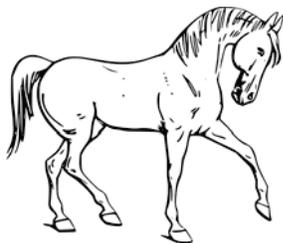
“True surrender is not simply surrender of **our external life** but surrender of **our will** - and once that is done, surrender is **complete**. The **greatest crisis** we ever face is the surrender of our will. Yet **God never forces** a person's will into surrender, and **He never begs**. He patiently waits until that person **willingly yields** to Him. And once that battle has been fought, **it never needs to be fought again.**”

Jesus says, "If you want to be My disciple, **you must give up your right to yourself to Me.**"

“And after you surrender - then what? Your entire life should be characterized by an eagerness **to maintain unbroken fellowship** and oneness with God.”

(Taken from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers – Sep. 13. (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

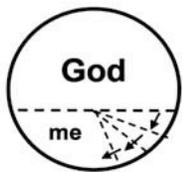
CONSIDER: “**Inward transformation**” will produce “**outward behavior changes.**”



To make a wild horse useful, there are 2 steps:

- 1) Break the horse's will
- 2) Train him to be useful

Metamorphosis is a natural example of inward transformation



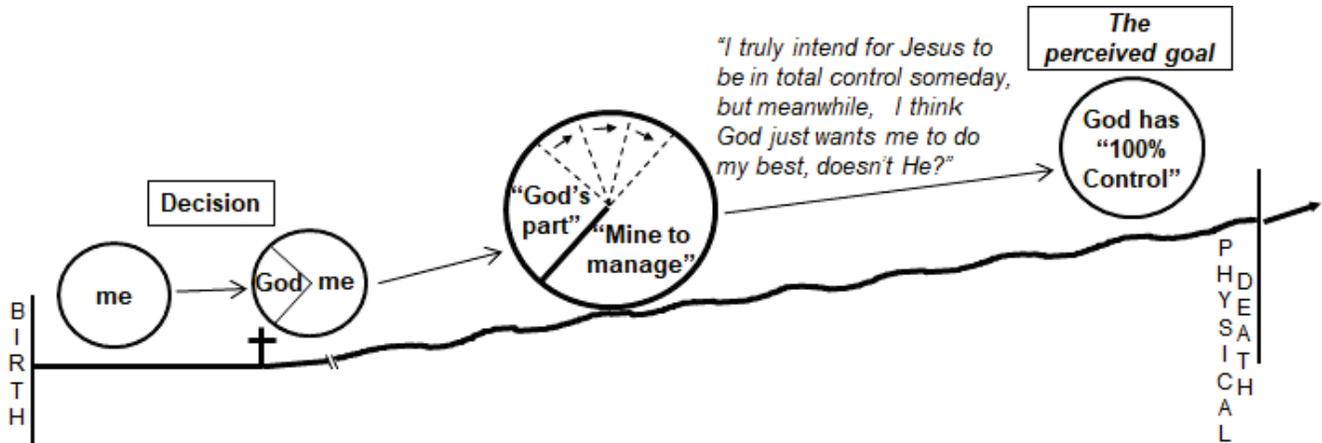
THE GROWTH PROCESS: As I allow Him, God will use His Word and circumstances to gradually illuminate areas of my understanding that He wants to alter. This process is called “Sanctification” (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24) “**Spiritual growth is the process in which God's perspective of life is increasingly becoming my perspective.**” God does not want me to be a mindless robot, but rather a servant companion who increasingly enjoys fellowship with Him.

XO GO XO XO XO
XO GO XO GO XO
XO GO XO GO XO
XO GO GO XO GO

“As a Christian is **transformed in his mind** and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

Note: The **G's** represent areas of my understanding that God has changed to **His** perspective.

The Common Misconception of “Progressive” Surrender



What is the important difference between this diagram and the previous one depicting the Normal Christian life?

The Lordship decision is missing from this Christian’s life, resulting in a perceived partnership relationship with the Lord, with the goal that “one day God will have 100% control of my life”. This diagram represents the **abnormal** development of a Christian.

This view of the Christian life usually results from a lack of personal spiritual mentoring and/or an unwillingness to surrender their will to His Lordship.

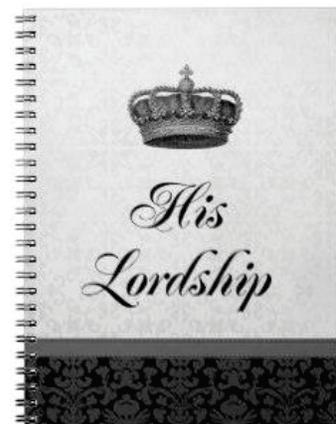
CONSIDER: If I view my relationship with God as depicted here, a critical error is to attribute to God, authority (Lordship) over only certain designated parts of my life, as if He had not bought **all** of me.

CONSIDER: If “Lordship” is presented as incremental surrender of my behavior, then I can conclude that the logical evidence of my “total surrender” (Lordship) is when I am **totally obedient**.

If I am **in charge** of this process, it can lead to cycles of frustration and discouragement, since I never see myself as being **totally** obedient.

CONSIDER: Since tithes and offerings are “God’s share,” doesn’t that imply that I have the **right to manage** the rest of my material wealth? (Read Malachi 3:7-10; 2 Corinthians 9:7-9; Mark 12:41-44; Proverbs 3:9-10; Matthew 6:19-33; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 17-19).

If “my time” at church on Sunday, reading my Bible daily, praying, etc. is understood to be God’s part (spiritual), doesn’t that imply that I have the **right to manage** the remaining hours in my day?



Additional Problems Associated with Progressive Surrender :

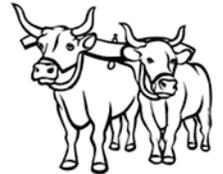
1. It tends to result in my asking, “will God take advantage of me?” such as:

- a. “What will He ask me to do that I can’t do, or don’t want to do?”
- b. “What will He keep me from doing that I want to do?”
- c. “What will He take away that I hold dear?”
- d. “Will God fail me if I entrust “this” to Him?”

2. I view myself as being in charge of the process of spiritual growth, making the determination as to what can and should be yielded up to the Lord. In other words, I set down the rules and limits. This perception is typically based on **pride**, an inflated view of my own discernment and capabilities, and **a distorted understanding of God’s character**. (If needed, review the Scripture verses related to “God’s Character” in Lesson 1-5.)

CONSIDER: **There is no reasonable logic for rejecting His yoke of Lordship.** A lack of acceptance is typically based on: 1) a fear of the unknown, 2) an unwillingness to relinquish perceived control, 3) an unwillingness to leave a comfort zone, or 4) an over-estimation of my own capabilities to determine and manage my future.

Jesus said: “Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**. **Take my yoke** upon you and **learn of me**, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find **rest** for your souls. For my yoke is **easy** and my burden is **light**.” (Matthew 11:28-30)



Jesus did not say, “learn about Me, and **if** you like how I do things, **then** take My yoke!”

CONSIDER: The real question: **Is God trustworthy?** If God were like you or me, we would have good reason to be fearful. Ask: Does God love me? If God’s character is as described in the Bible, and if He promises to do only that which is in my best interest, what do I have to fear?

Did He design me? Did He give me life? Does He maintain my very existence? Who besides God knows what will really satisfy me? Does He alone know what is best for me? Does He alone know how to shape my life and use me for His eternal purposes?

CONSIDER: God’s **ownership** of me is a factual truth, which is **not** dependent on my acknowledgment of it. **I do not bestow ownership**, I can only **acknowledge** and **act upon** what He states to be already true. **New** believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because **they don’t have preconceived ideas** of God’s expectations. In contrast, **older** believers tend to **accept this truth intellectually**, but be resistant to the implications.

What are the **implications** of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership? Do I acknowledge that I live in a spiritual “**kingdom**”, not a spiritual democracy? What is the difference?

What? Know ye not that your body is **the temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in you, which ye have of God, and **you are not your own**? For ye are **bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

***If God’s intention is to harm or mistreat me,
do I honestly think He needs to wait for my permission?***

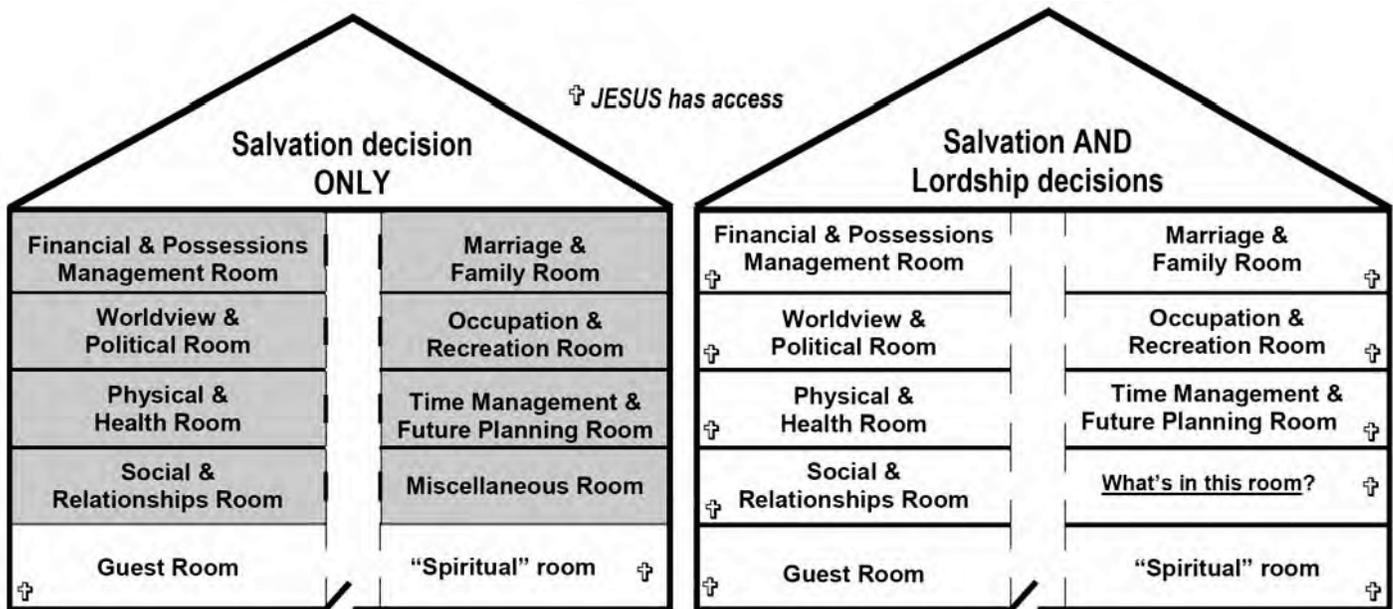
Analogy: The Rooms of My “House”

✝ Does Jesus have access to all the rooms of my house?

A story of two believers...

When Jesus knocked at the front door of their hearts (Rev. 3:20) and asked permission to enter, both of these persons gladly received Him, realizing that His absence had been the reason for the emptiness they had always sensed (**the Salvation decision**).

As new believers each was overjoyed that Jesus was in their house and that their sins were forgiven. Each had a new happiness and an assurance of going to heaven. Jesus was allowed to occupy the “Guest Room” – which was always kept clean and presentable for visitors – and He was also allowed to reside in the “spiritual” room – where the believer went to church services, prayed and read the Bible.



But one day soon Jesus asked each of them for permission to make some changes in other areas of their houses, such as adopting new management procedures, rearranging items, throwing out worthless things, and bringing in some new items.

Jesus asked for access to every “room”. **Each believer had a different response.**

Salvation decision ONLY

The believer in the house on the left was reluctant to grant Jesus' request on the grounds that he was not yet prepared for major changes. However, he would thoughtfully consider any suggestions, and might allow some minor changes that wouldn't seriously disrupt his lifestyle and future plans.

Jesus informed him that He (Jesus) is the only One who is really capable of making the correct decisions as to the above changes, since He alone knows what is needed to make the house into a suitable dwelling for God, one that would be usable for His eternal purposes. Jesus clearly explained His good intentions, even guaranteeing that the believer would be more than totally satisfied with the finished product.

The believer replied that while the offer sounded very attractive, he considered himself to be a good judge of the appropriateness and non-disruptive pace of any changes, based on his past experience. He expressed his appreciation for Jesus' presence and blessings, and his desire to make the Guest Room as comfortable as possible for Him.

He assured Jesus that as time went on, he would certainly give Him access to other rooms.

"Jesus, I'm thankful You live in my house! I'm really happy to know that I can count on You to be there whenever I find circumstances too difficult to manage on my own."

Salvation AND Lordship decisions

The believer in the house on the right was also reluctant to grant Jesus' request on the grounds that he was not yet prepared for major changes. However, he was aware that he had been **bought** at a great price and therefore Jesus was **the rightful Owner**.

He reasoned, "If Jesus owns me, how can I deny Him access to every room of His house?" (the Lordship decision to acknowledge Jesus as **Master of his life**).

The believer was somewhat apprehensive, as he didn't understand how this decision would impact his future. **But he reasoned that since Jesus had done so much for him already, it seemed logical that He was trustworthy to continue doing what was in his best interest.**

"Jesus, I certainly don't know what You have planned for my life, and to be honest **I have some fears**, but I do understand that You own me, and that I cannot possibly make the best decisions for my life since I don't know what You want to make of me, nor what is involved in that process. I'm thankful that You do know, and I want to trust You alone to make the necessary changes. Thank you for letting me be part of Your plans. Wow!"

*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and **you are not your own**? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*
(1 Cor. 6:19-20)

While making the Lordship decision gives the Lord access to all the rooms in my house, He alone decides what needs to be changed. The Holy Spirit will manage these changes as He determines best. This is part of the continuing growth process.

WHAT ROOMS ARE IN MY HOUSE? Can I trust God with ALL the rooms? I should prayerfully consider which "rooms" I have given Jesus access to – **after all, He owns "my house."**

Note: Use the "Rooms of My House" blank diagram on the next page to complete your own "personal inventory".

Upon viewing the finished product, nobody will ever regret having made the decision to choose Him as the Master of their life.



What Rooms are in MY House?

Use this “Rooms of My House” blank diagram to complete your personal inventory.

Guest Room <i>Jesus</i>	Spiritual Room <i>Jesus</i>

WHAT ROOMS ARE IN MY HOUSE? Can I trust God with ALL the rooms?

I need to think carefully and prayerfully if Jesus has access to my entire house – after all, He owns it! Are the doors open or closed to all the rooms? Is there a “closet” in one room that I deny Him access to?

I need to pray honestly and sincerely about giving Jesus access to ALL areas of my life.

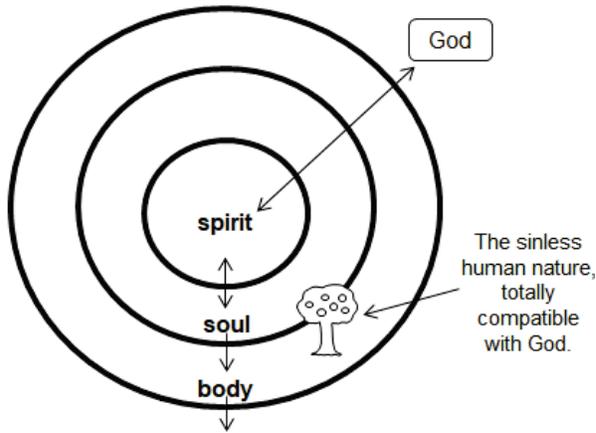
Review of My Two Natures

This lesson builds on the discussion of my two natures introduced in lesson 1-5. Understanding how my two natures interact will lay the groundwork for studying abiding in the next several lessons.

1. The following three diagrams depict three spiritual conditions.

Diagram A portrays Adam as God intended (before he sinned) and Jesus while He was on earth (never sinned). Jesus was called the second Adam, because Jesus, a life-giving Spirit, was God's plan for saving mankind due to Adam's sin. (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

A. Adam (before he sinned) and Jesus (while He was on earth)



All behavior was in total harmony with God's character, totally pleasing to God



= The sinless human nature, totally compatible with God

Gen 1:27 So God created man in **his own image**...

Gen 2:7 And the Lord God ... breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a **living** soul. (*only said of man*)

Gen 1:31 And God saw **every thing** that he had made, and, behold, it was **very good**.... (*no imperfections, nothing lacking*)

Rom 5:14 ... Adam's... who is **the figure** of him that was to come.

1 Cor 15:45 ... The **first** man Adam was made a living soul; the **last** Adam (*Jesus*) was made a quickening spirit.

Phil 2:5-7 ... Christ Jesus:... took upon him the form of a servant, and **was made in the likeness of men**:

Heb 4:15 (*Jesus*) ... was in all points tempted **like as we are**, yet without sin.

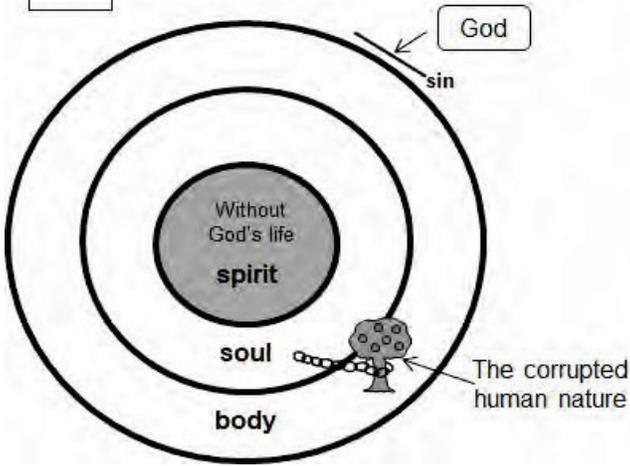
Adam made the decision to sin against God and fulfill his perceived needs independent of God. Jesus chose to remain dependent on God and not sin. Because we are from the race of Adam and because Adam sinned, everybody who was born in the lineage of Adam is like **Diagram B**.

Diagram B depicts the unbeliever who was born as a descendent of Adam and is dead spiritually, represented by the dark circle in the middle, indicating the spirit without God.

The dark tree represents the corrupted human nature, and the chain extending from the tree illustrates this person is in bondage to the sinful nature.

As an unbeliever, my sin nature is a barrier that separates me from God. God's purpose for showing us sin is so we recognize it, acknowledge it before Him, and let Him forgive it so that He can make us into the image of His Son. He continually woos and calls the unbeliever to come to Him.

B. All Unbelievers



Rom 3:23 For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;
 Rom 3:10-12 ... There is **none** righteous, **no, not one**:... there is **none** that seeketh after God. ... there is **none** that doeth good, **no, not one**.
 1 Cor 15:22 For as in Adam **all die**,...
 Eph 2:12 ... **having no hope**, and **without God** in the world:

Thought: God can only accept that which is **perfect (100%, without blemish)**. **Nothing** that originates from the human nature has that quality. The unbeliever is devoid of His life. **Only God alone can produce anything of eternal value.**

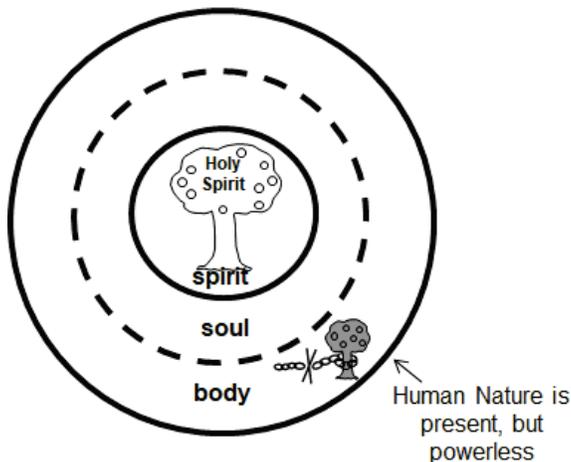
Their works (fruit) have **no life** (eternal), are **imperfect** (flawed), and therefore **unacceptable** to God.



= The sinful human nature is **incapable** of producing "perfect" eternal fruit.

Diagram C depicts me as a believer who has put my faith in Christ as my Savior, and in that moment the Holy Spirit came into my life and resides in my spirit. While the Holy Spirit resides in me, so does the sinful nature, which is not improved, changed or renovated and on its own cannot produce fruit that is acceptable and pleasing to God. However, as I walk in the Spirit, I will not carry out the desires of my flesh or sinful human nature.

C. Me, as a believer



Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts...
 Gal. 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

All that is **not** motivated by the Holy Spirit is **temporal**, without His life and **not** rewardable (wood, hay, stubble).

2. God uses trees and plants to contrast the two natures.



The Divine Nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Jer. 17:7-8 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall **be as a tree planted by the waters**, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but **her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.**

Psa. 1:3 And He (*a righteous man*) shall be **like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**

Matt. 7:17-18 Even so **every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.**...

Gal. 5:22-23 ... But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

2 Pet. 1:4 ... Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these **ye might be partakers of the divine nature,**...

... Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Gal 5:16



The corrupted sinful human nature from the 1st Adam

Jer. 17:5-6 Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that **trusteth** in man, and maketh **flesh** his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be **like the heath in the desert**, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a **salt land and not inhabited.**

Matt 7:17-18 ... but a **corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.**... **neither** can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Gal. 5:17-21 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, ... Now the **works of the flesh are manifest**, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:...



3. James compares the human nature to a “salt water” spring and the divine nature of the Holy Spirit to a spring of “living water.”

James 3:9-12 ... Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs? **Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.**

John 7:37-39 ... Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have **streams of living water flow from deep within him.**” **He said this about the Spirit.**... (See John 4:13-14)

4. In Romans, Paul contrasts how we were before salvation, and how we are now as believers.

NOTE: In the following verses, “*death*” refers to “absence of life”, that is, devoid of life originating from God. (for example, a salt water spring).

a. As an unbeliever I was dominated by my sinful nature, which resides in my physical body.

Rom 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (absence of life).

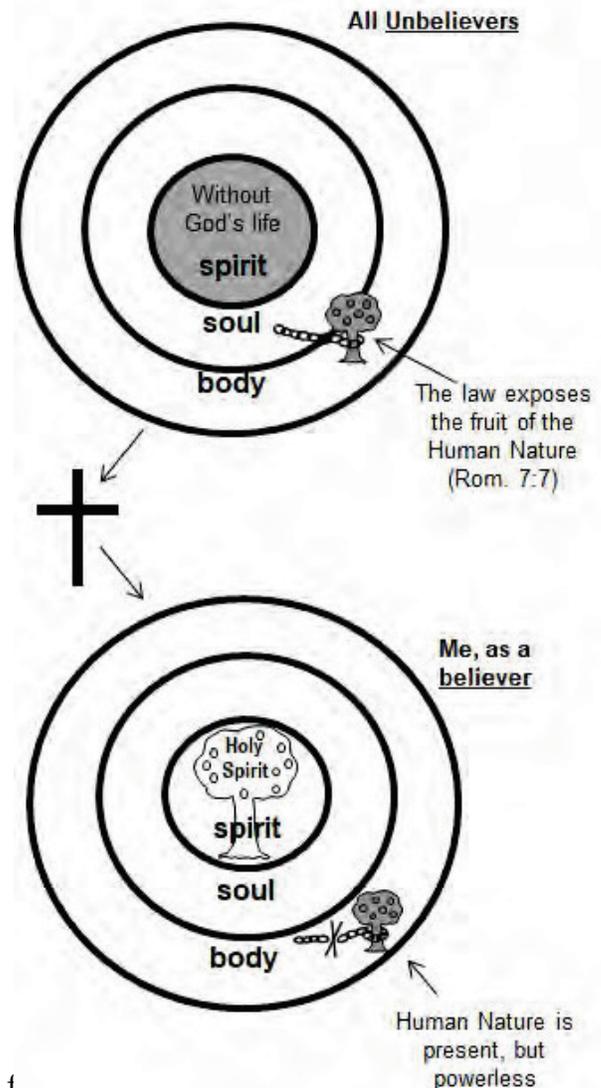
b. Now, as a believer, I have been freed from bondage to the sinful nature.

Rom 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

c. From God’s perspective I have “died to” (freed from) the sinful nature, and have been joined to Christ.

Rom 6:18, 22 ...and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. ... you have been liberated from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the end is eternal life!

Rom 7:4 ... ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.



The fact is, Christians died to sin. The Greek past tense 1 when the action occurred, at salvation. Death, whether physical or spiritual, means separation, not extinction (Rom. 6:6-7, 14). Death to sin is separation from sin’s power, not the extinction of sin.

Being dead to sin means being “set free from sin” (Rom. 6:18, 22 above). That being true, Paul asked, “How can they live in it any longer?” Obviously believers cannot *live* in sin if they *died* to it.”

Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Pub., Inc.) 1983

Abiding

Maintaining Continual Fellowship with the Lord

Introduction

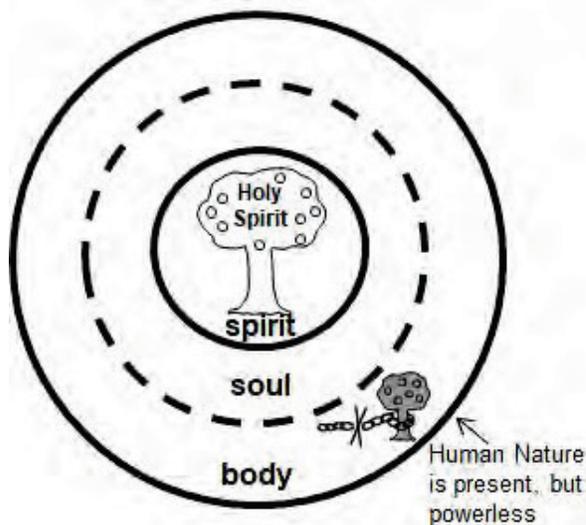
“To Abide” simply refers to the moment-by-moment experience of walking in harmony (communion, fellowship) with the Holy Spirit; that is, without any “unresolved offenses” that are disrupting that communion.

The two diagrams below represent a snapshot of the same believer at two different points in time.

Condition of “Abiding”

The normal Christian Life
“walking in the Spirit”

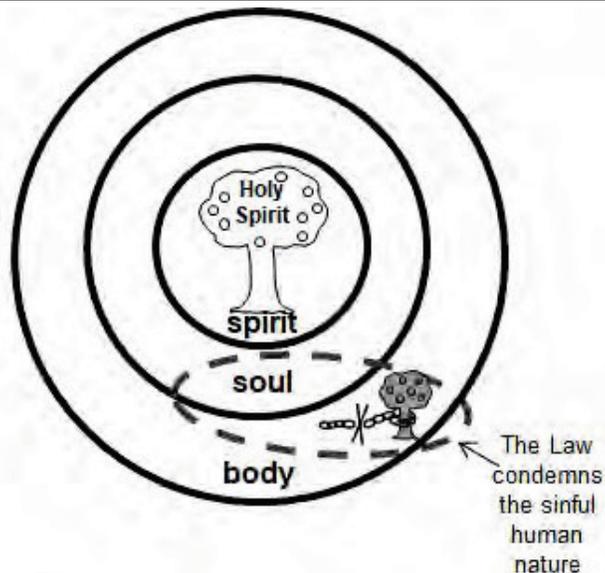
All that I allow the Holy Spirit to do through me is eternal and rewardable at the Tribunal of Christ (judgment seat) (gold, silver, precious stones). 1 Corinthians 3:10-15



Condition of “Not Abiding”

Having unresolved issues(s) with the Holy Spirit
“walking in the flesh”

All that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is temporal, without His life and not rewardable. (wood, hay, stubble.) 1 Corinthians 3:10-15



NOTE: the circular dotted line represents the “conditional” aspect of abiding.

Explanation of the Conditional Aspect of Abiding: Although I am a believer, I still have the sinful human nature and I can choose at any given moment to remove myself from fellowship with the Holy Spirit by allowing an unresolved issue(s) to come between the Holy Spirit and me.

While the Holy Spirit does not change, my relationship with Him is “conditional” upon my choosing to walk in harmony with the Holy Spirit rather than walk in the flesh.

Abiding Principles

1. Why is it so important for me to abide?

- a. God is looking for **available vessels (instruments)**. God has eternal purposes that He wants to complete in and through my life. While I am abiding in fellowship, the Holy Spirit is free to produce His fruit through me as a **usable vessel (conduit)**.

At any given moment I can **allow** myself to become **unusable** through my unwillingness to remain in fellowship with Him. I should picture myself as an instrument, a vessel, a water glass, etc. A vessel's main function is to be **available** and **usable** by its owner, not to perform on its own. Is God as the Potter free to use me **at any moment as He chooses**? (Rom. 6:13,19; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; 2 Tim 2:20-21)

- b. We tend to focus on **performance**, but this lesson is not about **doing**, but rather about **being**. What I do is a **result** of what I am being. What is the function of a branch? To **be**, or to **do**? (Jesus said) *"I am the vine; **you are the branches**. The one who remains (abides) in Me and I in him **produces** much fruit, because you can do **nothing** without Me."* (John 15:5)
... *For the mouth speaks **from the overflow of the heart**.* (Matt. 12:34)
- c. It will help to look at this lesson as if it were entitled "**How To Live In Continual Harmony With My Spouse or Close Friend**," because this is the clearest **model** God designed and gave us. Examining the husband - wife model (or a close friendship) will give me many insights into my relationship with the Lord.

2. It may help to think of abiding as having three dimensions:

W

Width could refer to the "**daily**" aspect of abiding. I should view my relationship of abiding in fellowship with the Lord as only encompassing "**TODAY**." Yesterday's issues **should have already been dealt with**, and I need to believe God's promises that His grace will take care of **tomorrow's issues**, when they become "today's" issues. (discussed further in Lesson 1-11)

a. The Lord promises to meet my "**daily**" needs.

Matt. 6:8-11 ... Give us this day our **daily** bread.
Exodus 16:4-30 Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather **a certain rate every day**,.. he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack...
Psalm 68:19 Blessed be the Lord, who **daily** loadeth us with benefits,...

b. Jesus said to take up my cross **daily**, anything greater can be **overwhelming**.

Luke 9:23 ... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily**, and follow me.

c. Thoughts to consider.

I must pursue the habit of keeping “**short accounts**” with the Holy Spirit, in other words, to consciously choose to acknowledge (confess) **quickly** any unresolved conflict when I have offended Him. The missionary Hudson Taylor stated, “*We should **never** be conscious of **not** abiding in Christ*” (*Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*). The same holds true for fellowship with my spouse, or a close friend. We are told in Eph. 4:26-27: ... **do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity**. Paul stated in Acts. 24:16: ... *I also do my best **to maintain always a blameless conscience** both before God and before men.*

Important: The **Holy Spirit alone** determines when I am being held accountable for offending Him, **not me**. Likewise, **listening** to the offended spouse (or friend) is usually the quickest first step to restoring fellowship.

During the time I am walking out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit I am **forfeiting His intended blessings** (eternal fruit), **and** will probably reap **unintended consequences**. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (worthless fruit),...* Gal. 6:7-8

God promises to meet my needs (Matt. 6:19-21, 25-34). Being prudent and responsible toward the future is appropriate. But if I allow that “concern” to negatively affect my relationship with the Lord, then “worry and anxiety” can easily become sin. He wants His peace to reign in my heart. *Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop,...* Prov. 12:25 (see also Col. 3:15)

H

Height could refer to “**an open line of vertical communication**” between God and me. I should jealously guard our fellowship by monitoring our communication **moment by moment**, being vigilant **not to allow** anything to disrupt it. **I need to form the habit** of not just waiting to check in from time to time at my personal convenience. It is a 24-hour per day, 7-day per week relationship.

a. Thoughts to consider.

I am told to **pray continually**. *Rejoice always; **pray without ceasing**; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thess. 5:16-18) “Continual” prayer is not necessarily conversation without any interruptions, but prayer that continues whenever possible. The adverb for “**continually**” was used in Greek to describe a hacking cough. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken. (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

The **husband-wife (or other close) relationship** will also deteriorate unless it is **consciously nurtured**. (Ephesians 5:25-32)

Caution: Busyness can easily be a trap, **causing me to neglect** the Lord. Both the Holy Spirit and my spouse or close friend will be offended if I carelessly disregard or ignore them. Neglect often conveys unimportance. If I will ask Him, **the Holy Spirit will always be faithful to reveal to me any unresolved problems between us**. I should never allow what I am **doing** to become more important than my fellowship with Him.

D

Depth could refer to my deepening relationship with the Lord, getting to know Him, as in a marriage or close friendship. The concept of “**spiritual growth**” and the “**maturing process**” imply that there are things presently in my life that are displeasing to God. Even though the Lord is aware of those displeasing aspects of my character, He only holds me accountable for those issues that He wants to deal with **today** as He matures me.

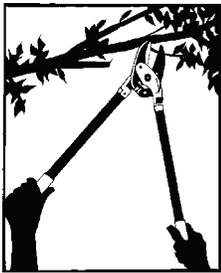
a. Illustration.

If I look at the air in a room, it looks relatively pure (my perspective). If a ray of light appears, many dust particles would suddenly be visible (God's perspective). Even though my sinful human nature is totally corrupted and unholy as compared to His holiness, He sees me "in Christ," and He only holds me accountable for the issues (dust particles) that He is presently bringing to my attention. The dust particles existed, even though I was not yet conscious of their existence. My responsibility is to be attentive to the Holy Spirit so that He can easily show me what areas of my understanding and/or behavior He wants to change. He will never burden me with more than I can handle.



God deals with me according to my maturity level (just as good parents do with their children) and my willingness to learn from Him. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins,... he remembereth that we are dust.* (Psa. 103:10, 14)

b. As I allow Him, God prunes me so that I will bear more eternal fruit.



God's process of making my life more fruitful is described as "pruning." ... *every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.* (John 15:2) Pruning is usually not enjoyable, but always results in more fruitfulness if I allow God to finish His project. An area of my life that appears to me to be beneficial or harmless, may from God's perspective be distracting or harmful, and a hindrance to what He wants to do in my life. God determines what needs to be pruned. My responsibility is to be teachable and attentive to Him, careful not to allow my "good" things to rob me of God's "best." (e.g. Martha – Luke 10:38-42)

c. Caution: I should not be surprised by the sinfulness of my human nature.

As I grow spiritually, I will increasingly see my human nature as God sees it. Flaws become more visible as they are more exposed to light. The closer I am to God the more repulsive my human nature will become to me. (...*all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light,...* Eph. 5:13)

3. How do I know if I am not abiding – or out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Ask the Holy Spirit if there are any unresolved issues.

Even though I am walking in fellowship with the Lord and have no unresolved issues, not all that I do is motivated by Him, or is even pleasing to Him. As I allow Him to grow and mature me, He will increasingly have more freedom to bear His fruit.

If I find myself out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, it is by my choice. I do not need to be out of fellowship with the Lord any longer than I choose to be. Restoration to the condition of abiding fellowship will take place immediately upon confession of the offense(s) for which the Holy Spirit is holding me accountable.

How can I know if I'm out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Usually symptoms indicate an ailing body. Similarly look for on-going spiritual symptoms of the sinful nature, such as:

- stumbling
- impatience
- frustration
- dissatisfaction
- worry
- striving
- lack of peace
- sense of defeat
- complaining
- anxiety
- anger
- irritability
- addictive behavior
- critical or judgmental attitude
- other on-going symptoms?

4. Common misconceptions about the condition of abiding.

- a. **Misconception:** As a believer I can keep myself in the condition of abiding through my own efforts. **Reality:** At salvation I was put into the conditional state of abiding fellowship with the Lord as a result of what Jesus did on the cross, not because I deserve it. My goal should be to please Him, and be sensitive to Him so that any issues He brings to my attention do not remain unresolved. Those unresolved issues can disrupt my fellowship with Him, just as in human relationships.
- b. **Misconception:** God's greatest concern about my sin is the degree to which it falls short of His standard of righteousness, and "avoiding sin" should be the primary focus of my Christian walk. **Reality:** God is most concerned with the disruption sin causes in His continual abiding fellowship (communion) with me, and that it consequently hinders Him from accomplishing His purposes in and through me. The writer of Hebrews tells us: *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, ...* (Heb. 12:1-2)
- c. **Misconception:** The condition of abiding is somehow "attained to." **Reality:** Abiding is the birthright of every child of God; it is not about achieving a certain level of maturity. Does a child have to earn the privilege of being in fellowship with their parents? God has made provision for every Christian to live consistently in harmony with Him without extended periods of being out of fellowship.
- d. **Misconception:** Abiding is restricted by my lack of knowledge, past experiences, or personal limitations. **Reality:** What hinders God from blessing and using me as He desires is only my choice(s) and unwillingness to acknowledge and confess unresolved issue(s). The Biblical "normal" Christian life is one of habitually abiding; not to abide is abnormal. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
- e. **Misconception:** Since my natural tendency is to categorize or classify "acts of behavior" and build mental lists of "do's and don'ts," it is easier to follow "my list" of perceived expectations. **Reality:** As the Holy Spirit leads me moment by moment, I will increasingly form the habit of carefully looking at each choice, judging or discerning if it is pleasing to Him. What I tend to consider "insignificant" may be very significant to Him. It will help me to consider "sin" as "anything that is displeasing to God."



Example: Do you think reading the Bible can ever be sinful? Imagine you are resting on a riverbank reading your Bible. You notice a child struggling against the current, being swept downriver. You faithfully continue reading. Suddenly, a mother appears frantically asking if you've seen her child. You tell her that you would have saved the child if you hadn't been reading God's Word. Imagine her response (and God's)! This example may seem extreme, but it illustrates the danger of categorizing acts of behavior because what God deems "correct" today may be "incorrect" in a similar situation tomorrow.

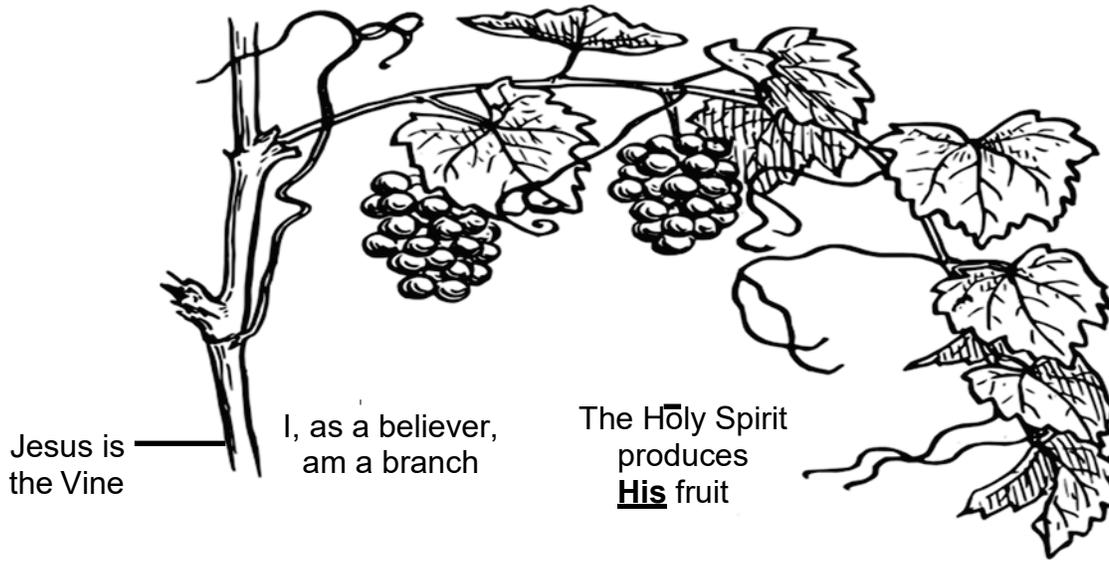
John 5:30 (*Jesus said*) ... I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

2 Cor. 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that... we may be accepted of him.

Eph. 5:8-10 ... walk as children of light:... Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Romans 14:23 ... whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Abiding Verses and Illustrations



1. As I am “abiding” I am depicted as a fruit-bearing branch on a tree.

NOTE: in some versions of the Bible "abide" is translated "remain".

John 15:1-6 (*Jesus said*) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. [Vineyard Keeper]. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away [prunes] and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. “Abide in me, and I in you.”

Just as the branch cannot produce fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in Me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because **apart from Me you can do nothing.** Unless a person abides in Me, he is thrown away like a pruned branch and dries up. People gather such branches, throw them into a fire, and they are burned up. (Note: see Lesson 3-10 for a more detailed explanation of John 15)

:7-11 “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. **Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;** so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: **continue ye in my love.** If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

:12-17“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. **Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,** and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth **fruit, and that your fruit should remain;** that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

Galatians 5:22-23 But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

NOTE: "To abide" simply refers to the moment-by-moment experience of walking in harmony(communion, fellowship) with the Holy Spirit; that is, without any "unresolved offenses" that are disrupting that harmony (communion, fellowship).

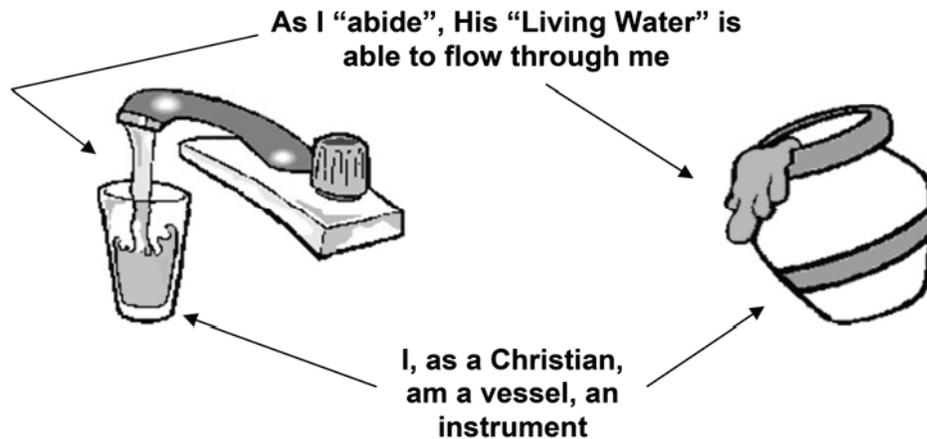
Does the branch produce the fruit, or is the branch simply a conduit (instrument, vessel) through which the life of the Vine flows?

2. Abiding Illustrations

a. As I am “abiding” I am depicted as a vessel, an instrument.

2 Tim. 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a **vessel unto honour**, sanctified, and **meet** for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

A **faucet** with “living” water can be a useful illustration. Although the water pressure is always constant, the “on-off” feature has to be maintained in the “On” position for the water to freely flow. During the time I am not in abiding in harmony (fellowship) with the Lord the on-off feature is in the “Off” position.



b. As I am “abiding”, I allow God’s “living water” to flow through me as through a container or a serving vessel. (see also Ezek. 47:1-12)

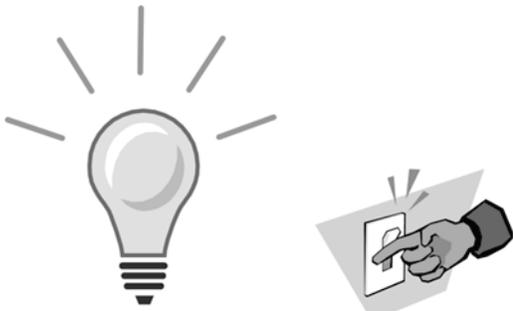
Jer. 2:13 “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me **the fountain (Spring) of living waters**, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”... (see also Jer. 17:13)

John 4:14 (*Jesus said*) “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him **a well of water springing up** into everlasting life.”

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** (But this spake he of **the Spirit**, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

James 3:8-12 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

c. As I am “abiding”, I am depicted as a conduit or vessel through which God’s light is able to shine.



The *electricity* represents **GOD’S LIFE** flowing through me.

The *bulb* represents **ME** as a Christian

The *light* that is given off represents **the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

As I remain in harmony (fellowship) with the Holy Spirit (*connected, light switch “On”*), I am allowing His life (*electricity*) to increasingly flow through me (*bulb*), which He will then use to influence and attract others (*light*).

Matt 5:14-16 (*Jesus said*) “**Ye are the light of the world.** A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. **Let** your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** which is in heaven.”

2 Cor 4:6-7 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be **of God, and not of us.**

Phil. 2:15 ... That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom **ye shine as lights in the world;**

d. As I am abiding, I am walking in the light of God’s presence.

1John 1:5-10 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we **walk in the light**, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship one with another**, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful** and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.



1 John 2:8-11 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. **He that loveth his brother abideth in the light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but **shall have the light of life**

3. God has designed the on-going healthy harmony (communion) between a Christian husband and wife to be a picture of the on-going harmony (communion) between the Lord and a Christian.

One of the purposes of a God-centered Christian marriage is meant to be a demonstration to others of how He can bring about a consistent harmonious relationship between two unique individuals that are surrendered to Him.

If I am in doubt as to how I should relate to the Lord, I can ask myself, "how should I relate to a spouse (or to a close friend)?"



Eph. 5:21-33 ... **Submitting yourselves one to another** in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the

church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and **they two shall be one flesh**. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so **love his wife even as himself**; and the **wife see that she reverence her husband**.

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me,

John 17:21-22 That **they all may be one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **ye are all one in Christ Jesus**.

Gen. 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and **they shall be one flesh**.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is **one spirit**.

Col. 3:18-19 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

1 Peter 2:18 – 3:7 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but **also to the froward**. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering **wrongfully**. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even **hereunto were ye called**: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us **an example, that ye should follow his steps**: Who did no sin, **neither was guile** found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:.... **Likewise**, ye wives, **be in subjection to your own husbands**.... **Likewise**, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, **giving honour** unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; **that your prayers be not hindered**.

Marriage consists of an **event** (a ceremony, **a covenant**), followed by a **process**. The ceremony represents a **relinquishment of my right to make independent decisions**, in favor of being joined (yoked together) with another.

The marriage process is designed to be a growing relationship, learning to live and walk in harmony with a spouse. This process represents the manner in which a Christian learns to live and walk in harmony with the Lord.

Malachi 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

Abiding Today - The Present - This Moment

God wants me to be free from the burden of “unresolved issues” of the PAST or the FUTURE, allowing Him freedom to produce His fruit through my life.

PAST

- Do I need to resolve issues from my past?
- Do I need to forgive or reconcile with someone, or confess a wrong to someone?
- Do I need to make restitution for harm done? (physical, financial, etc.)
- Do I need to confess any sins to the Lord?

PRESENT

“Am I in fellowship with (“abiding with”) the Lord at this moment?”

IF NOT, WHY NOT?

FUTURE

- Do I have worries about the future disrupting my fellowship with the Lord?
- Do I need to acknowledge my worry or anxiety as sin?



1. Issues related to others - in the past, or at this moment.

- a. **If I think I can maintain good fellowship with God, and at the same time disregard relationships with others, I am deceiving myself.**

1 John 2:9-11 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth (*see note*) his brother, **is in darkness** even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth (*see note*) his brother is in darkness, and **walketh in darkness**, and knoweth not whither he goeth, **because that darkness hath blinded his eyes**.

1 John 4:20-21 If a man say, I love God, and hateth (*see note*) his brother, he is a liar: for he that **loveth not** his brother whom he hath seen, **how can he love** God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

NOTE: “Love” is a choice “to do what is best for someone.” That is not necessarily the same as “doing what is pleasing to someone” (see also Heb. 12:6,11). I do not have to “feel affectionate” toward someone, but I do have to “love” them. In this context, don’t equate “hate” to “hostility” or “intense dislike”, but rather as “not doing what is in someone’s best interest.” (the absence of love or not loving).

- b. **My unwillingness to forgive someone can limit my availability and usefulness to God, and can thus affect His fruit through my life.**

Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, **forgive**, if ye have **ought** against **any**: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses..

Col. 3:12-13 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and **forgiving one another**, if any man have a quarrel against **any**: **even as** Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

c. Does the Holy Spirit want me to apologize to someone I have offended? It is my responsibility to pursue restoration of fellowship.

Matt. 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

d. Does the Holy Spirit want me to pursue reconciliation with someone who has offended me? It is my responsibility to pursue restoration of fellowship.

Matt. 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

e. Does the Holy Spirit want me to make restitution to someone to whom I have caused loss? (Repay a debt? A loan? Taxes owed?)

Num. 5:5-7 And the Lord spake ... When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty; Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof,... unto him against whom he hath trespassed.
Rom. 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another...

f. I am not responsible for someone else's unwillingness to love or forgive me, but God does hold me accountable for loving and forgiving others.

Rom. 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
Rom. 12:16-18 ... Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
Rom. 12:20-21 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.
Phil. 2:1-4 ... Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

NOTE: Remember – “Love” is a choice “to do what is in someone’s best interest.”

2. Personal issues - just between the Lord and me.

a. Is there an unresolved personal issue(s) that the Holy Spirit wants me to acknowledge and confess to Him?

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

b. Important points to contemplate:

1) Accountability - Most Christians subconsciously reason that God leaves it up to them to determine when there is a problem between them and God that needs to be resolved. That is wrong! I am **not** the one who decides for what I am being held accountable. The Holy Spirit **alone** makes that determination. In a parent-child relationship, the parent's responsibility is to **explain** to the child the nature of the problem. The child's responsibility is to **attentively listen** and **respond**.

2) Disagreements - Newlyweds often have many differing opinions. Hopefully, as they nurture their relationship, many of those differences will diminish. Some will not. Some differences of opinion will remain until death. That is okay; we are each designed with a unique personality, and we should respect that difference in others. Do I really want everyone to think as I do? My goal should be to live in harmony (fellowship) with others, not to pressure everyone to hold my views. That is true of my spouse and my children as well as others.

I need to ask myself: Am I bothered by my spouse's (or friend's) behavior, or views, because it's not the way "I" do things, or the way "I" think? Does God say their behavior or view is displeasing (sin) to Him? If I am bothered or offended by another's beliefs or behavior, yet God does not say it is sin, then I may need to examine my own heart. Maybe I'm judgmental. Maybe God is trying to show **me** an area He wants to change in **my** life. It is perfectly normal to hold different opinions and yet maintain mutual respect and fellowship.

3) Growth - Having no unresolved issues for which I am being held accountable does **not** mean that everything I am now doing is pleasing to God. What does the concept of growth mean? We grow "**to**" something and "**from**" something. As we grow physically, we are advancing **from** a level of weakness **to** a level of increased physical capability. Likewise, as we grow spiritually, we are advancing from a level of reliance on **self** to a level of increasing reliance on **God**.



I need to understand that spiritual strength is not what **I** can do, but rather what God is able to do through me. There is only one thing that hinders the Lord from using my life, unconfessed sin (anything that displeases the Lord) for which He is holding me accountable. The term "**growth**" implies then that there are things in my life today that are displeasing to the Lord, hence the need "to grow." Thankfully He does not hold me accountable for all that displeases Him. In fact, I am not even aware of all that He would like to change. If I am growing spiritually, I will become increasingly more sensitive to His voice. He wants me to learn to hear His whisper without having to shout at me.

Consider this age-appropriate growth example: My 6-month old baby messes in his diaper. Am I shocked? Do I scold him or spank him? Do I find it pleasing that he ruined his diaper? Of course not! I know that he does not yet understand. However, if he does the same thing when he is 6 years old, it will be quite different. That is the same way the Holy Spirit trains me, except that He is more patient and gentle than we tend to be.

Again, what I need to remember is that the Holy Spirit is the **only One** who is able to determine what is displeasing to Him. He is not waiting for me to make those determinations. Do you expect your baby to tell you the rules by which he will live in harmony with you? That would be ridiculous. Neither does the Holy Spirit expect **me** to tell Him what is acceptable!

3. Issues related to the future. God does not want me to be weighed down by either the past or the future.

a. It is good to be “concerned” about the future, but concern can become worry, and worry can become anxiety. I need to be careful to not allow those emotions to become a pretext for not trusting in God’s care for me.

CONCERN ➡ WORRY ➡ ANXIETY ➡ PANIC

b. It is okay to be concerned (wise, prudent) and to plan and prepare for the future. Paul’s “concern” for the welfare of the believers was correct.

2 Cor. 11:28-29 (*Paul said*) ... 2 Cor. 11:28-29 (*Paul said*) ... that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?
Prov. 10:5 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

c. But I am told to “not worry” about the future. I should not regard that instruction as just a “suggestion.” Worry and anxiety about the future can be the evidence of an unwillingness to trust God, and can become sinful.

Matt. 6:31-34 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ... your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.
Phil. 4:6 Be careful for nothing;...

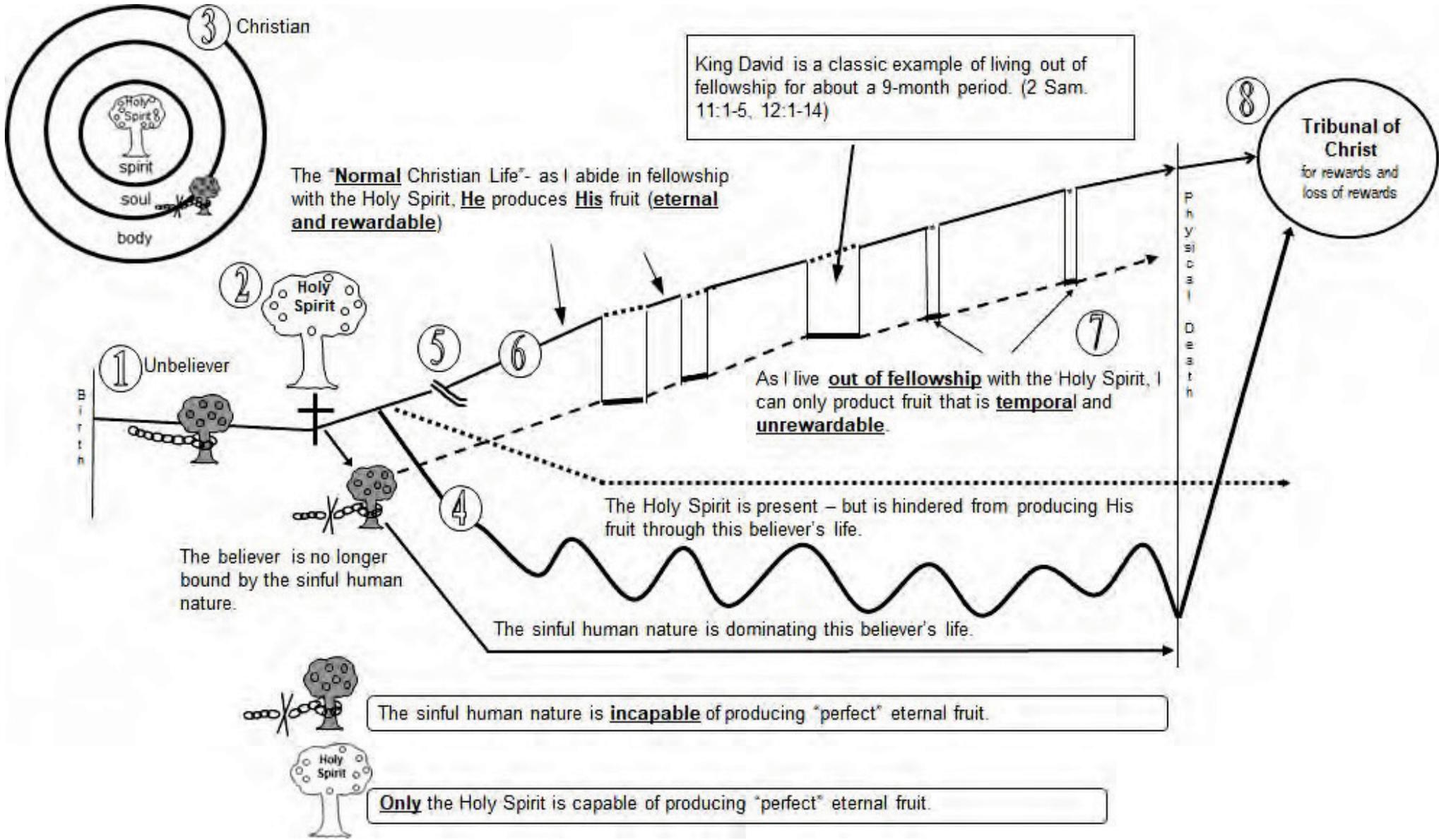
d. I can count on the Lord to faithfully and lovingly take care of my need.

Phil. 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

e. I am told to “follow” Him, even though it is always tempting to “lead.” He wants me to allow Him to be intimately involved in all my future plans.

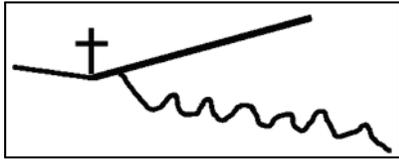
Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
Luke 9:23-24 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me....”
James 4:13-17 Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.... For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Living Daily In (or out of) Fellowship with The Lord



Living Daily In (or out of) Fellowship with the Lord

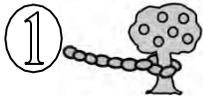
This lesson is an overview of concepts previously covered. This lesson should help me understand my continual interaction with my two competing natures, and how that impacts my daily abiding relationship with the Lord.



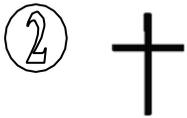
After Salvation there are two paths for the new believer. Note that both of these paths represent believers.

1. One line gradually goes upward and into the "spiritual Promised Land." This upper path represents a believer who sees the Lord as his **Master**, that is, the One who oversees and manages his life.

2. The lower path leads into a "spiritual desert." This lower path represents the believer who, either out of ignorance or choice, **has not acknowledged** the Lordship of Christ over his life.



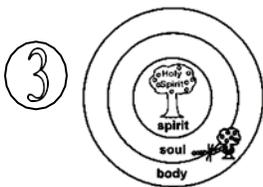
① Before salvation, I was an unbeliever, bound to the sinful human nature (represented by the chain around the darkened tree).



② At the cross I was delivered from the "penalty" of sin (represented by the "broken chain" around the darkened tree). During this life, from the cross until death, I am being delivered from the "power" of sin. And at physical death I will be delivered from the "presence" of sin.

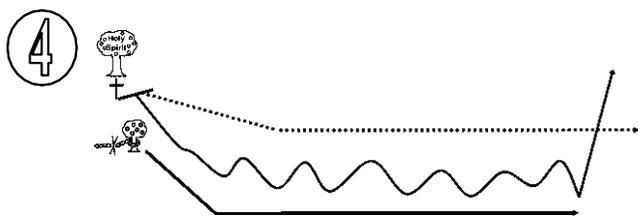
At the moment of salvation, I was freed from the mastery of the sinful human nature, and received the Holy Spirit, Who indwells the believer from that time forward. I started the Christian life abiding in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and choose to take one of two paths: (#4 or #5/6)

It is important to note that while **the believer has been set free from bondage to the sinful human nature, the sinful nature does not cease to exist and will continue in me until physical death occurs**, at which time I will be freed from the presence of the sinful nature.



③ Upon believing, I was born into the spiritual race, and received God's divine nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit. I am **no longer bound** to the sinful nature, although it is still present. Paul wrote: : *Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, ... that henceforth we should **not serve sin**. For he that is dead is **freed from sin**.* (Romans 6:6-7)

The unbeliever has no option but to be mastered or dominated by the sinful nature, producing **only flawed** fruit. However, the believer is only dominated by the sinful nature **by choice**.



The lower wandering line represents the "abnormal" Christian life. If not spiritually mentored and instructed on **how to follow the Holy Spirit**, many believers find themselves modeling their behavior after other believers, rather than following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The typical result is that

the believer will at some specific time ignore or discount the leading of the Holy Spirit, choosing rather to follow the example of peers.

As a result of spiritual ignorance, or by willful disobedience, if I am unwilling to allow the Holy Spirit to manage my life, I will find myself in a "desert" experience – never quite being able to gain victory over the pull of the sinful nature.

These believers typically see God as their "**Junior Partner**," rather than their Master. They conclude that "He is always there when they can't cope and **they determine** He is needed to deliver them out of circumstances." They typically consider their own goals and aspirations to be of greater importance than those of God. They desire for God to fit into **their** plans, rather than fitting into **His** plan. Their lives are characterized by a "**disposition of self-dependence**." (As illustrated by King Saul – see Lesson 3-3)

Note that the Holy Spirit (His presence is represented by the dotted line just above the wavy line) is constantly wooing the believer to yield to Christ as Lord and Master of his life. The Holy Spirit is not the dominant force in this believer's life. As a consequence He doesn't have the freedom to produce His fruit through the believer, who is **forfeiting God's intended fruitful Christian life**.

The solid line at the bottom represents the dominance of the sinful human nature. This believer typically relies on his own understanding to make decisions. By not allowing the Lord to rule in his life, the human nature is allowed to rule. Submission to the human nature will cause problems for the believer, and hopefully he will become so dissatisfied and frustrated (usually through a crisis) that he will finally make a decision to acknowledge Christ's Lordship over his life.

These believers are described in the parable of *The Sower* (Matthew 13 & Luke 8) as being **distracted, not maturing**, resulting in **not bearing eternal rewardable fruit**, until they choose to acknowledge His authority over their life, and begin to "abide." Although saved, they can potentially lose all rewards. *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* (1 Corinthians 3:15)

To believers that have habitually lived in a desert experience, often for years, the thought of consistently abiding in fellowship with the Lord seems unrealistic and "super spiritual." Such a biblical relationship with the Lord is often perceived as idealistic and beyond the attainment of the average believer. The simple truth is that it is not a matter of attaining to, but rather by faith taking advantage of what God has already made provision for.

If a believer simply understands the need to let the Lord manage his life (Lordship) and learns how to consistently abide in harmony, he will experience God's designed normal Christian life. It's not something you "attain to," it is yours through spiritual birth. **Every Christian has a right to live in the spiritual Promised Land. For many believers this desert experience could have been avoided, or significantly shortened, had they been personally mentored ("spiritually parented," "personally disciplined") when they first believed in Christ.**

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The short parallel lines, located at the fork in the believer's life, represent the "spiritual Jordan river" and the believer's choice to acknowledge His Lordship and enter the "spiritual Promised Land." This indicates the "event" in the believer's life to "choose" to let the Lord control and manage his life.

This is not a decision to "try my best," or to "behave better in my own strength," but rather a decision to surrender my "will," accept His yoke, and allow Him to live His life through me.

(Jesus said) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Mathew 11:28-30)

(Paul wrote) ... yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians. 2:20)

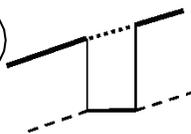
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Once the believer makes the Lordship decision, then the normal Christian life is one of consistently "abiding in fellowship (harmony)" with the Lord.

The solid line at the top represents the time in which the believer is in fellowship with the Holy Spirit ("walking in the Spirit"). The presence of the sinful nature in the spiritual believer is represented by a dashed line.

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Notice that there are breaks in the line, which represent periods of time during which the believer is out of fellowship (not abiding) with the Holy Spirit.

The third dip depicts the example of King David. When King David climbed up to the roof of his house he may or may not have been in fellowship with the Lord.

When he chose to commit adultery and murder, he was clearly out of fellowship. He remained out of fellowship with the Lord for approximately a nine-month period. Fellowship was not restored until just before the baby was born, when David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. As soon as David confessed his sin to the Lord he was immediately restored, even for murder and adultery. Yes, he suffered consequences through the rest of his life, but as far as God's forgiveness was concerned, he was immediately forgiven and restored into fellowship. Being restored into fellowship does not mean that there are no consequences, but it does mean that there is complete forgiveness.

As shown above, the acceptance of Christ's Lordship over one's life is no guarantee of continual unbroken spiritual fellowship. Abiding fellowship is conditional. At any time the believer may allow his fellowship with the Holy Spirit to be disrupted, and find himself "walking in the flesh" (submitted to the sinful nature). At any given moment we are either submitted to the Holy Spirit or we are submitted to the sinful nature. We are either "walking in the Spirit" or "walking in the flesh."

God has made provision for every believer to consistently "walk in the Spirit" (the "normal" Christian life). A believer may excuse sin using the pretext of "that's just the way I am," or cite verses from Romans 7, where Paul describes his struggle with the sinful nature. It should be noted however that Paul's spiritual life was better characterized by Romans 8. Certainly every believer will be out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit at times, but such periods should be the exception, not the rule. And those times of being out of fellowship (walking in the flesh, dominated by the sinful nature) should diminish in both frequency and duration as the believer matures.

The Holy Spirit **will** produce His fruit as we abide in Christ. Our part is **not to strive** to produce fruit. Or worry about it. Our part is to **abide in fellowship** with Him, and the fruit will come **naturally**. The Holy Spirit will only produce **good** fruit. I should not assume that everything I do while I am abiding is pleasing to God. He will only hold me accountable according to my maturity level, just as loving parents train their children. *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* (Hebrews 12:10)

During periods when we are out of fellowship (when we're not abiding) the Holy Spirit is not free to produce His fruit through our lives. *It is the spirit that quickeneth; **the flesh profiteth nothing**: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* (John 6:63)

⑧ God wants to reward every believer. He is preparing eternal rewards that cannot be compared with the things of this world. Jesus commanded us to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven, not here on earth. The treasures in heaven are so wonderful, they will make everything in this world that we're familiar with pale in comparison. Each believer has to decide if he wants to lay up **eternal** treasures in heaven or **temporary** treasures here on earth. Jesus said: *But **collect for yourselves treasures in heaven**, ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matt. 6:20-21)

1 Cor. 3:10-15 speaks of potential "loss" at the Rewards Ceremony for believers. It is important to distinguish between "loss" and "punishment." **Loss is not punishment**. Consider a graduation ceremony as an example. You may go to a graduation where you receive a diploma. Others may receive accolades and awards in addition to their diploma. Because you only received a diploma it would not be correct to view yourself as being "punished." Those who have received special awards were honored because of their priority decisions. You could also have received special awards had you not chosen to forfeit them in favor of other priorities that you considered to be more important.

The believer who is walking in the flesh can do "good" things (from the human perspective), just as an unbeliever can. Anything, however small, that is motivated by the Holy Spirit is **eternal** and **rewardable**. Anything, regardless of outward appearance, that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is **flawed**, less than perfect, and of **no** eternal or rewardable value.

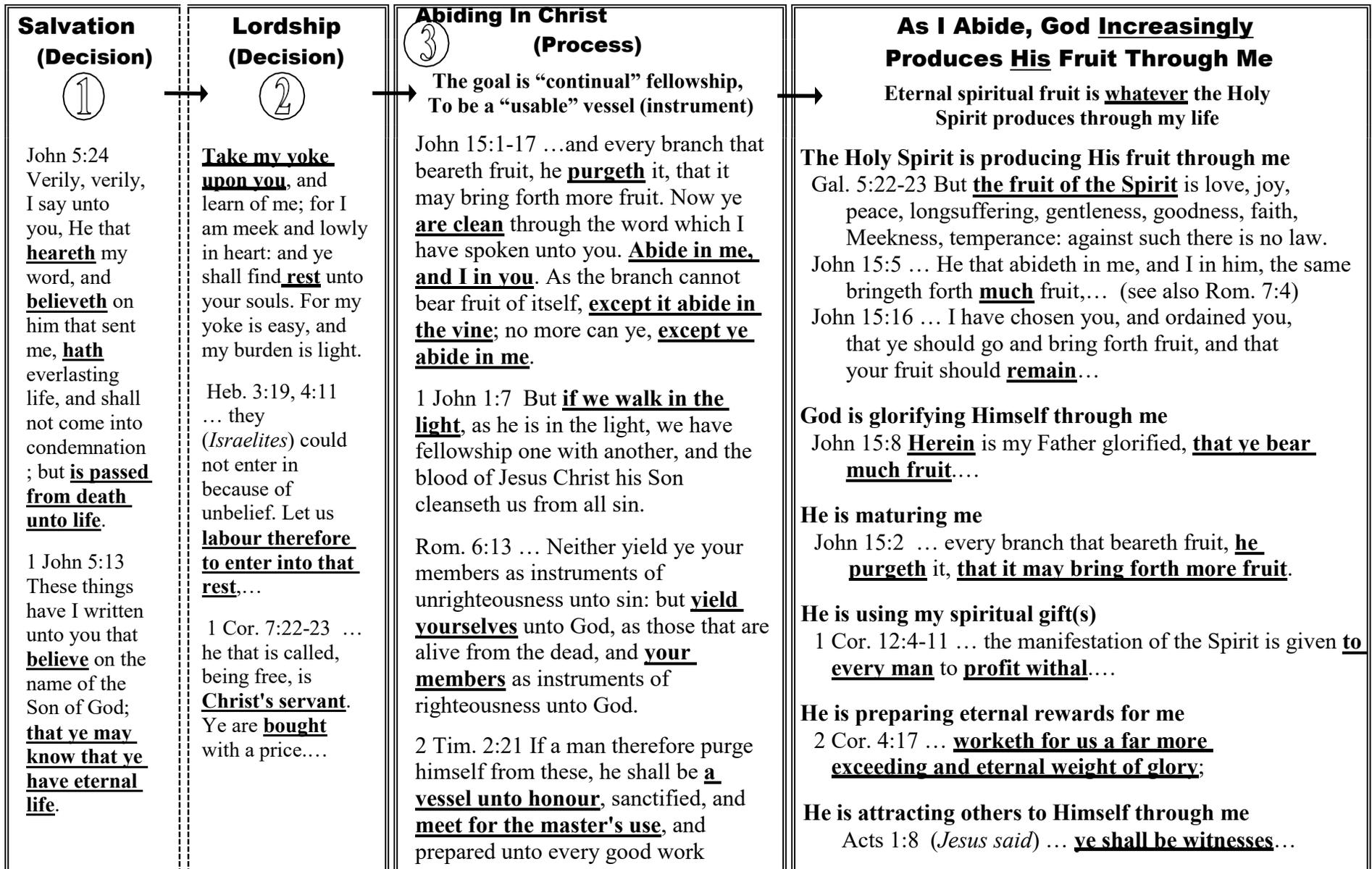
Paul warns us: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am **nothing**. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, **it profiteth me nothing**.* (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Only that which is produced by the Holy Spirit is perfect and can enter into eternity. Only the Holy Spirit can produce perfect fruit. It is not what I do "for" God that is important, but rather what I allow the Holy Spirit to produce through me. (see Eccl. 3:14)

The issue is not one of fruit or no fruit that we have to be concerned about. What we need to be concerned about is **where does the fruit originate**. As we abide in harmony with the Holy Spirit, He **will** bear **His** fruit through our life. It's as simple as that!

(Jesus said) **"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing"** (John 15:5)

The Normal Healthy Christian's Primary Spiritual Development



The following true story about “Vera”, illustrates the 3 Major Phases of the Christian life

- 1) Even though a Lordship decision should be made at conversion, sometimes it is not made until years later.
- 2) A true surrender of the will is followed by changes in behavior. (review lesson 1-7, if needed)

(This testimony is segmented to better demonstrate the major phases of the Christian life.)

<p>① Salvation (Decision)</p> <p>Christ as “Savior”</p> <p>Vera recalls <u>her conversion</u> in a little church in Kansas: "When the invitation to receive Christ as Savior was given, I knew I should go forward. But my feet seemed glued to the floor. Finally on the last verse of 'Almost Persuaded,' I went and made my confession of faith."</p> <p><i>This new believer should have been personally discipled at this critical time, which probably would have averted the following years of desert experience.</i></p>	<p>Desert Experience</p> <p><u>After graduating</u> from high school, Vera <u>taught</u> in an elementary school. Her teaching career ended when she <u>married</u>.</p>	<p>② Lordship (Decision)</p> <p>Christ as “Lord”</p> <p><i>(After some years of wandering)</i></p> <p>Vera relates. "I had been married <u>several years</u> when the Lord got my attention," "At home one day, I came under deep conviction, and knew I had to ask Jesus to be <u>the Lord of my life</u>."</p>	<p>③ Abiding In Christ (Process)</p> <p>Changed behavior brought about by the Holy Spirit’s transforming power</p> <p><u>“Changes came that I can’t explain</u>, except that I know it was <u>the Lord’s work in me</u>.”</p> <p>Vera <u>contacted</u> people she felt she might have wronged and <u>apologized</u> to them. She developed <u>a hunger</u> for Bible study. "As a child I'd learned John 3:16 and Psalm 23, but I hadn't been interested in learning anything else," she confesses. "<u>Now I wanted to learn</u> everything."</p> <p>To further <u>her search</u> for understanding of God's Word, she tuned in to Gospel programs on her radio. And she began to make <u>prayer</u> a part of her daily routine.</p> <p><u>Through the years</u>, as she helped with farming and raising their son, Vera continued <u>to study the Bible</u> and <u>maintain her prayer regimen</u>. When Vera and her husband decided to retire, they moved and joined a Bible-teaching church, where Vera was soon recognized for her Bible knowledge and <u>her faithfulness</u> in prayer.</p> <p>She didn't plan it, nor is her intercession organized, yet through telephone or personal visits she has <u>encouraged many lives</u>. Seekers have been <u>counseled</u> as Vera <u>shares spiritual truths</u> from <u>a lifetime relationship</u> with the Lord.</p>
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Hardships, Suffering and God's Sovereignty

Jesus clearly tells me that I cannot be His disciple unless I make the commitment to follow Him. Quite regularly, as I follow Him, He will allow me to encounter circumstances that I will perceive as unpleasant and often beyond my human ability to cope.

The purpose of this lesson is to help me understand the process in which every circumstance, even those that appear insignificant, whether good or bad, pass through God's permissive will. He uses every circumstance in His process of transforming me into a holy and useful vessel through which He can accomplish His eternal purposes. In other words, I may not know in my lifetime on earth why He allowed a given circumstance.

A Christian who does not understand the significance of God's sovereign control over all circumstances will typically respond with complaining, blaming, self-pity, anger or bitterness, because these events may appear to be random. It pleases God when I choose to cooperate with Him by acknowledging to Him my acceptance of what He allows, and seek His direction for the appropriate and godly response, as well as for any lessons He may want me to learn.

- 1. Is God in absolute control over all that happens in the universe and on earth? Does there exist some person or force that can somehow affect God's sovereign power? Does He always do what is right? Can God do wrong? Can He make mistakes? Is He totally trustworthy?**

Deut 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.
Psa 18:30 God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried....
Prov 21:30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord.
Job 34:12-16 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment....
Isa 46:11 ... yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

- 2. Is God in absolute control over all the circumstances and details of my life? (Read and contemplate Psalm 139.)**

Acts 17:25 ... he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
Jer 10:23 O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.
Jer 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."
Matt 6:25-27,34 "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Rom 8:28 And we know that **all things work together for good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose..

1 Cor 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but **God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;** but **will with the temptation also make a way to escape,** that ye may be able to bear it

3. The Bible tells me that I should consider hardships and suffering a normal part of my Christian life here on earth.

I should not assume that experiencing hardships and suffering is an indication of God's displeasure. Nor can I assume that His blessings always imply my faithfulness. He is a loving God, and loves me even when I grieve Him.

Note: Consider hardships and sufferings [difficulties] as “anything that **I** personally find unpleasant.” We all understand physical suffering as undesirable. However, because of our diverse personalities, we may have different reactions to difficulties. In other words, one person may watch or participate in a sporting event or other activity and find it exhilarating, while another would view it as a totally unpleasant experience.

a. Here is one example of a believer who was suffering poverty from the world's perspective, but was rich before God. She was not being punished but was temporarily poor so God could make her eternally rich.

Mark 12:41-44 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came **a certain poor widow,** and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but **she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.**””



b. The apostle Paul did not view hardships as something unusual. In fact, this long list of hardships happened while Paul was in the center of God's will, seeking to please Him as His servant.

Acts 9:15-16 (*God said of Paul*) “... for he is **a chosen vessel unto me,** to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him **how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.**”

2 Cor 6:4-10 (*Paul wrote*) But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much **patience,** in **afflictions,** in **necessities,** in **distresses,** In **stripes,** in **imprisonments,** in **tumults,** in **labours,** in **watchings,** in **fastings;** By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and **dishonour,** by **evil report** and good report: as **deceivers,** and yet true; **As unknown,** and yet well known; **as dying,** and, behold, we live; as **chastened,** and not killed; As **sorrowful,** yet alway rejoicing; **as poor,** yet making many rich; **as having nothing,** and yet possessing all things.

2 Cor 11:23-27 ... in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.



Phil 3:7-11 ... I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,...

Phil 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2 Cor 1:7-9 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

c. Neither did the other apostles find hardships and suffering to be unusual.

Acts 5:40-41 when they (*Jewish leaders*) had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

1 Cor 4:9-13 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, ... we are weak, ... we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

Rev 1:9 I John, who also am your ... companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

d. Neither should I find it unusual when I encounter hardships and suffering.

John 15:18-21 (*Jesus said*) "... because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore **the world hateth you**. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, **they will also persecute you**; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But **all these things will they do unto you** for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, **that in me ye might have peace**. In the world **ye shall have tribulation**: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Acts 14 ...we must through **much tribulation** enter into the kingdom of God.."

Phil 1:29 For **unto you it is given** in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also **to suffer for his sake**;

2 Tim 1:8 ... be thou partaker of the **afflictions** of the gospel according to the power of God;

2 Tim 3:12 Yea, and **all** that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution**.

1 Peter 4:12-16 Beloved, **think it not strange** concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, **as though some strange thing happened unto you**; But **rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. **If ye be reproached** for the name of Christ, **happy are ye**; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: ... Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, **after that ye have suffered a while**.

Rom 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall **tribulation**, or **distress**, or **persecution**, or **famine**, or **nakedness**, or **peril**, or **sword**? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us..

4. God typically allows suffering for one or more of the following:

- a. To build character into my life**
- b. As a consequence of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness**
- c. To be "cast on the Lord" and not rely on myself**
- d. To help me understand the needs of others**
- e. To use my life to be a blessing to others**

- a. God uses hardships and suffering to build character into my life and to shape me into a usable and holy vessel. He alone knows what influences and circumstances will best enable Him to bless me and use me for the purposes that He has designed for my remaining time here on earth.**

Rom 5:3-4 ... we glory in tribulations also: knowing that **tribulation** worketh **patience**; And patience, **experience**; and experience, **hope**:

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers **temptations**; Knowing this, that the **trying of your faith worketh patience**. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be **perfect** and **entire**, wanting nothing.

Heb 5:8-9 (*speaking of Jesus*) Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience by the things which he suffered**;...

1 Peter 4:12-16 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is **to try you**, as though some strange thing happened unto you:...

- b. I may suffer the consequences of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness. Even then, God is faithful and loving and may use my situation as a teaching experience to discipline me. For example, if I am careless with my diet, I may as a result experience physical discomfort or suffering.**

1 Cor 11:27-34 (*Paul wrote*) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ... For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. **For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep**. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are **chastened of the Lord**, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation....

Heb 12:6-11 For **whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth**, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ... we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; **but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness**. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth **the peaceable fruit of righteousness** unto them which are **exercised** thereby.

- c. Sometimes God allows me to suffer, so I learn to depend on His faithfulness, power, and sufficiency, and not on myself, (Proverbs 3:5-6) and recognize my personal weaknesses. (If you are never in a battle, you can't experience a victory.)**

2 Cor 1:8-9 (*Paul wrote*) For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, **above strength**, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, **that we should not trust in ourselves**, but in God which raiseth the dead:

2 Cor 12:7-10 ... there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, **lest I should be exalted above measure**. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect **in weakness**. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in **infirmities**, in **reproaches**, in **necessities**, in **persecutions**, in **distresses** for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

d. Sometimes God uses suffering to help me identify with the suffering of others in order to be able, with sincere compassion to be helpful to them.

2 Cor 1:3-5 (*Paul wrote*) ... God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, **that we may be able to comfort them** which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, **so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.**

Heb 2:10, 17-18 ... For it became him, ... to make the captain of their salvation (*Jesus*) perfect through sufferings. Wherefore **in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest** in things pertaining to God, ... For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour them that are tempted.**

1 Peter 5:9-10 (*Peter wrote*) Whom resist (*the Devil*) stedfast in the faith, knowing that **the same afflictions** are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, ... after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

e. Sometimes God allows me to pass through hardships in order for Him to shine through my life in a greater way so that others see Him through me. (A light is most visible and significant in the darkness.)

Matt 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. ... **Let your light so shine** before men, that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** which is in heaven.

John 9:1-3 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was **blind from his birth.** And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: **but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.**

Acts 16:22-34 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to **beat** them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they **cast them into prison,** charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and **made their feet fast in the stocks.** And at midnight Paul and Silas **prayed,** and **sang praises unto God:** and **the prisoners heard** them. And suddenly there was a great **earthquake,** so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?** And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake **unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.** And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, **he and all his,** straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and **rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.**

5. God will sometimes require me to re-prioritize the things I hold dear [my idols] so He can replace them with His best, which will have eternal benefits for me and others (e.g. contentment, material possessions, friendships, health, etc.).

Matt 5:11-12 (*Jesus said*) Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. **Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven:** for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Acts 4:32-35 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: **neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own;** but they had all things common. ... as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Rom 8:17-18 (*Paul wrote*) ... if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that **the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared** with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Heb 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, **offered up Isaac...**

1 Peter 1:6-7 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though **now for a season,** if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold **temptations:** That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.**

6. My responses to His designed circumstances are an indicator of my willingness to accept what He has planned for me and to entrust myself into His care.

a. Jesus showed me by example what my attitude and response should be.

Matt 26:51-53 ... one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: ... **Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?**

John 19:9-11 (*Pilate*) saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? **Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above...**

Heb 12:2 ... **Looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross,** despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

1 Peter 2:19-23 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God **endure grief, suffering wrongfully.** ... but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, **ye take it patiently,** this is acceptable with God. For **even hereunto were ye called:** because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us **an example, that ye should follow his steps:** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, **reviled not again;** when he suffered, **he threatened not;** but **committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.**

b. The apostle Paul chose to entrust himself into God's loving care.

Acts 20:22-24 ... I (*Paul*) am on my way to Jerusalem, bound in my spirit, **not knowing what I will encounter** there, except that in town after town the Holy Spirit testifies to me that **chains and afflictions are waiting for me**. But **I count my life of no value to myself**, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus,...

2 Cor 12:7-10 ... He (*God*) said to me (*Paul*), "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly **boast all the more about my weaknesses**, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I **take pleasure** in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Phil 4:12 I (*Paul*) know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. **In any and all circumstances** I have learned **the secret** of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need Acts 20:22-24 ... I (*Paul*) go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, **not knowing the things that shall befall me** there: Save that the Holy Ghost

c. Consider Job's response to losing almost all he possessed (Job 1:1-19), including his children, and then his physical health (Job 2:1-8). Job's response pleased God.

Job 1:20-22 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and **worshipped**, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; **blessed** be the name of the Lord. **In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.**

Job 2:10 ... shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? **In all this did not Job sin with his lips.**

d. Consider Joseph's response to the hardships that God allowed.

- His jealous brothers **hated him and sold him into slavery to foreign traders, who took him to Egypt (Gen. 37:3-36).**
- Then he was **falsely accused of attempted rape and innocently suffered in prison (Gen. 39:1-40:23 and Psa. 105:17-19).**

In these verses, Joseph spoke of God's faithfulness and sovereignty to his brothers.

Gen 41:52 ... For **God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.**

Gen 45:5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, **that ye sold me hither:** for **God did send me** before you to preserve life.

Gen 45:8 So now it was **not you** that sent me hither, **but God.**

Gen 50:15, 19-20 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will **certainly requite us all the evil** which we did unto him. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, **ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good,** to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

7. Our Daily Bread (March 21, 2005) – A Bumpy Road

When people tell me life is hard, I always reply, "Of course it is." I find that answer more satisfying than anything else I can say. Writer Charles Williams said, "The world is painful in any case; but it is quite unbearable if anybody gives us the idea that we are meant to be liking it."

The path by which God takes us often seems to lead away from what we perceive as our good, causing us to believe we've missed a turn and taken the wrong road. That's because most of us have been taught to believe that if we're on the right track God's goodness will always translate into a life free of trouble.

But that's a pipe dream far removed from the biblical perspective. God's love often leads us down roads where earthly comforts fail us. Paul said, "To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). When we come to the end of all our dark valleys, we'll understand that every circumstance has been allowed for our ultimate good.

"No other route would have been as safe and as certain as the one by which we came," Bible teacher F. B. Meyer said. "If only we could see the path as God has always seen it, we would have selected it as well." —David Roper

*If some darker lot be good,
Lord, teach us to endure
The sorrow, pain, or solitude
That makes the spirit pure. —Irons*

No trial would cause us to despair if we knew God's reason for allowing it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY Go to <http://www.rbc.org/rtb/4rsn/>
"10 Reasons To Believe In A God Who Allows Suffering"

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8. Wisdom from Oswald Chambers – The Surrendered Life

We are not fundamentally free; external circumstances are not in our hands, they are in God's hands, the one thing in which we are free is in our personal relationship to God. We are not responsible for the circumstances we are in, but we are responsible for the way we allow those circumstances to affect us; we can either allow them to get on top of us, or we can allow them to transform us into what God wants us to be.

CONCLUSION: God is worthy of my trust. I can always count on Him to do what is in my best interest.

When I stand before Him in heaven, and understand what He was doing in my life here on earth, I will have no regrets for the times when I trusted Him fully.

He does not desire for me to look at hardships with solemn resignation, neither to pursue suffering for its own sake, but rather with childlike faith to accept what comes from a Father who loves me beyond human understanding.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Psalms 33:18-21 Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

Psalms 34:4-8 I (*David*) sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. ... This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

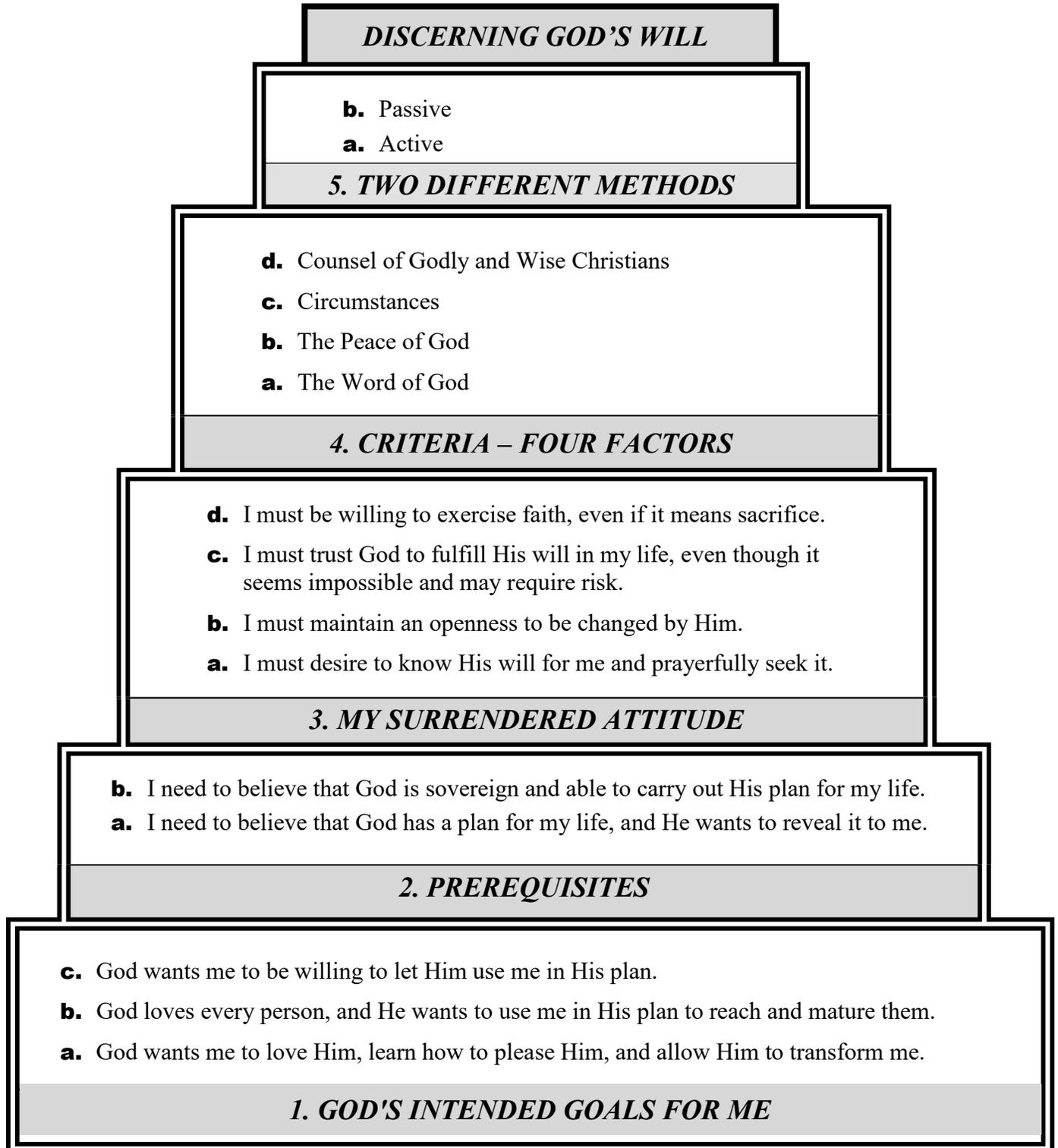
Rom 8:31-32 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Making Right Choices, Discerning God's Will

I can look at making choices as a pyramid. As a believer, God has intended **goals** for me, and as I make decisions, certain **prerequisites** need to be in place. My **attitude** should be surrendered to Him and then **criteria** helps me discern His will. Then consider the two different **methods**.

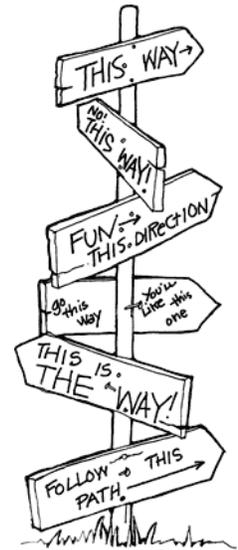
Read from the bottom to the top for an overview of this lesson before we dig deeper into each section.



***"God will always give the very best
to those who leave the choice with Him"***

1. God's goals for my life serve as foundational guidelines:

- a. God's desire for me is to love Him (demonstrated by my willingness to trust in His character and to surrender and obey Him), to grow in my understanding of how to please Him, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform me into the image of His Son
- b. God loves every person in the world, and He wants to use me in His plan to reach unbelievers with the good news of salvation and to bring believers to maturity in Christ.
- c. God wants me to be willing to let Him use me in His plan, resulting in my being blessed both here on earth as well as eternally in heaven.



2. Prerequisites for understanding God's will.

a. I need to believe that God has His tailor made plan for my life.

Psalm 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book **all my members** were written, which **in continuance were fashioned**, when as yet there was none of them.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but **the Lord directeth his steps**.

Proverbs 20:24 Man's goings are **of the Lord**; how can a man then understand his own way?

Jeremiah 10:23 ... the way of man is **not in himself**: it is **not in man that walketh to direct his steps**.

Acts 13:36 For David, after he had served his own generation **by the will of God**, fell on sleep (*died*), and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

b. God wants me to know His will for me, He doesn't want to hide it from me. He may not give me as much evidence as I want, but He gives me enough to intelligently follow Him by faith.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God**.

Ephesians 5:17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but **understanding what the will of the Lord is**.

Colossians 1:9-10 ... since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with **the knowledge of his will** in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God**;

c. God is sovereign and perfectly able to carry out His will.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that, **whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever**: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.
Proverbs 19:21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless **the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand**.
Isaiah 46:9-10 ... I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and **I will do all my pleasure**:
Daniel 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed **as nothing**: and **he doeth according to his will** in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none** can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?
Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all **life**, and **breath**, and **all things**;

3. I must have a surrendered attitude to Him.

a. I must honestly desire to allow God to fulfill His will in my life, and prayerfully seek His will for me.

Jeremiah 29:13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with **all your heart**.
Proverbs 2:1-6 My son, if thou wilt **receive** my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou **incline thine ear** unto wisdom, and **apply thine heart** to understanding; Yea, if thou **criest after** knowledge, and **lifest up thy voice** for understanding; If thou **seekest** her as silver, and **searchest** for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For **the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth** cometh knowledge and understanding.
James 1:5-8 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him **ask in faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. **A double minded man is unstable** in all his ways.
Luke 6:12-13 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and **continued all night in prayer to God**. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve....

CONSIDER: If Jesus prayed all night before making this important decision, shouldn't I also pray about my decisions?

b. I need to choose to humble myself before God with a submissive attitude, "allowing" Him to teach me and change my priorities, as He deems best.

Psalms 25:9 **The meek will he guide** in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.
Psalms 32:8-9 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. **Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule**, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.
Acts 13:22 ... he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave their testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, **which shall fulfil all my will**.'

c. The choices I make that have eternal rewards (that is, motivated by the Holy Spirit) always require a measure of faith, and include a perception of risk. Someone has said, “Don’t ask if something is possible, but rather ask, ‘Is it God’s will?’, because if it is God’s will, He will make it possible”.

2 Cor 4:16-we faint not... For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; **While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:** for the things which are seen are temporal; but **the things which are not seen are eternal.**

Gal 3:11 ... The just shall **live by faith.**

Heb 11:6 ... **But without faith it is impossible to please him (God)...**

1 Peter 1:6-7 ... though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: **That the trial of your faith,** being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

d. Choices based on faith may result in sacrifice and/or suffering. There is a price for obedience to His will. Trials ought not to be viewed as an enemy.

Luke 21:1-4 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but **she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.**

Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;**

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Knowing this, that **the trying of your faith worketh patience.** But let patience have her perfect work, **that ye may be perfect and entire,** wanting nothing.

4. Criteria - Four factors to consider in making right choices:

a. The Word of God: Does the Bible say something specific about the matter, or present principles related to it?



Psalms 119:105 Thy word is **a lamp** unto my feet, and **a light** unto my path.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable **for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction** in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for **this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**

1 Thess 4:3-5 For **this is the will of God,** even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and **is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

b. The Peace of God: Do I have God's peace?

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God **rule in your hearts**, (*that is: "act as anumpire"*) ... and be ye thankful.

Philippians 4:6-7 **Be careful for nothing**; but **in every thing** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And **the peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, **shall keep your hearts and minds** through Christ Jesus..

CAUTION: "Feelings" and "desires" may be deceptive. My natural tendency is to be independent rather than to follow His direction. I must be honest with myself! It is often helpful to ask myself (and God), "Would this be pleasing to God?"

Proverbs 16:2 **All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes**; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

Proverbs 28:26 **He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool**: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Jeremiah 17:9 **The heart** is **deceitful** above all things, and **desperately wicked**: who can know it?

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and **these are contrary the one to the other**: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

CAUTION: I need to confess any known sin.

Psalms 66:18 **If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me**:

Proverbs 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, **even his prayer shall be abomination**.

Proverbs 28:13 **He that covereth his sins shall not prosper**: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, **because ye ask amiss**, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

1 John 1:5-10 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and **in him is no darkness at all**. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us

c. Circumstances:

- God wants every believer to be aware that He alone is sovereign over ALL circumstances, and He orchestrates them in such a way to mold our character and strengthen our faith in Him.

The Undetected Sacredness of Circumstances

By Oswald Chambers

The circumstances of a saint's life are ordained of God. In the life of a saint there is no such thing as chance. God by His providence brings you into circumstances that you can't understand at all, but the

Spirit of God understands. God brings you to places, among people, and into certain conditions to accomplish a definite purpose through the intercession of the Spirit in you. Never put yourself in front of your circumstances and say, "I'm going to be my own providence here; I will watch this closely, or protect myself from that." All your circumstances are in the hand of God, and therefore you don't ever have to think they are unnatural or unique....

Oswald Chambers, The Love of God—The Message of Invincible Consolation, 674 R

The fiery furnaces are there by God's direct permission. It is misleading to imagine that we are developed in spite of our circumstances; we are developed because of them. It is mastery in circumstances that is needed, not mastery over them.

- **Finances?** (Caution: If not used carefully, credit cards (and debt) can be a hindrance to God's freedom to use finances as a tool to guide me.)
- **Is the obstacle (problems) I am experiencing a "Trial" or a "Direction?"**

The path of least resistance may not be God's will. Difficulties or suffering do not necessarily prove that I am not in the center of God's will any more than material and comfort blessings prove that I am in the center of His will.

2 Cor 1:8-9 (*Paul*) ... we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, **that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God** which raiseth the dead:

2 Cor 11:24-28 (*Paul, in the center of God's will*) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

**d. Spiritual counsel: I should seek godly and wise counsel.
(My spouse may also "balance" me.)**



Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Proverbs 19:20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

CAUTION: Counsel can be wrong.

Job 2:9 Then said his (*Job's*) wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

Job 42:7 ... the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

(See also: 1 Kings 13:1-26)

5. Making Right Choices: Two different methods.

- a. **"Active" - Unless otherwise directed I cautiously move ahead in what honestly appears to be the best direction, consciously trusting God to confirm or to restrain, by either opening or shutting doors.**

(You can't steer a parked car, or a boat that's tied to the dock.)

Note: This is usually the way we seek a spouse or a job, buy a house or a car; that is, things we desire.

Psalms 37:23-24 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Isaiah 30:21 ... And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

Acts 16:6-10 Now when they (*Paul and team*) had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

b. “Passive” - I wait for God to do something “special” to confirm His guidance.

I can often find myself using this method regarding **things I may not desire to do**. I am told to “wait” on the Lord, but I need to be careful that I don’t use that as an excuse not to move forward in obedience, especially if I already understand what I should do, but am reluctant to trust.

We need to be honest with ourselves. Someone has said, “God will give us enough evidence to act upon, but usually not enough to convince”.

Exodus 14:14 The Lord shall fight for you, and **ye shall hold your peace**.

Psalms 27:14 **Wait** on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:

wait, I say, on the Lord.

Psalms 37:7 **Rest** in the Lord, and **wait patiently** for him:...

Questions to ask myself:

- If I could choose one course for my life, would it be one of my choosing or one of God's selection?
- Do I prefer to know God's plan and purpose for my daily life while I'm still here on earth and am able to act upon it, or would I rather wait until I stand before Christ at the Tribunal of Christ? (2 Cor. 5:10)

It seems reasonable that each of us is going to become aware of His purpose and plan for our life, either here on earth -- or there.

Christian Maturity – A Summary

My level of spiritual maturity is the degree to which God's perspective of life has become my perspective.

1. What does Growth in Spiritual Maturity refer to?

Growing in Spiritual Maturity refers to the process in which the Holy Spirit transforms my spiritual understanding (values, priorities) in order to increase the flow of His life (His Living Water) through me. As more of His life is free to flow through me, there will be an ever-increasing measure of His spiritual fruit in my life.



ABIDING FELLOWSHIP with the Holy Spirit has to do with whether or not His life is able to flow through me at any given moment.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY has to do with how much of His life is able to flow through me at any given moment (in the context of abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit).

2. Spiritual Maturity does not necessarily speak of how much Biblical knowledge I possess, but rather of how willing I have been to allow the Holy Spirit to transform my understanding of Him, and of life.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ... But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me ... for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

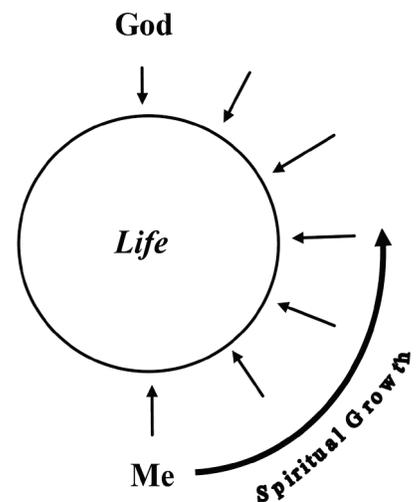
John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee...

Rom. 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Peter 1:5-8 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 1:10 That ye might walk ... being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

2 Peter 3:17-18 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.....



His perspective of life should increasingly become my perspective of life.

3. I can limit the flow of His life through me by focusing on my perceived personal capabilities or limitations.

My natural tendency is to limit God according to my personal understanding of Him and how He acts. As He trains me, He will speak to me about different areas of my understanding that are restricting the free flow of His life in and through me. I need to continually maintain the attitude of a disciple (an apprentice learner), a child (eager to listen and believe), so as to minimize the time that the Holy Spirit has to expend teaching me in any given area of understanding. I need to consciously allow Him access to any area of my life, aware that He will never make any changes except what is in my eternal best interest.

Look at how we limit the Lord by only remembering what we have allowed Him to do for us in the past. We say, "I always failed there, and I always will." Consequently, we don't ask for what we want. Instead, we think, "It is ridiculous to ask God to do this." If it is an impossibility, it is the very thing for which we have to ask. (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 29 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

As I grow spiritually, my focus will shift from my capabilities to His capabilities.

CAUTION: It is an unyielding “strength to resist” that hinders God, not weakness.

2 Cor. 12:9-10 (*Jesus told Paul*) My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.... for when I am weak, then am I strong.

To honestly recognize my own capabilities is okay, but to limit God's power to my perceived personal capabilities is an insult to Him.

4. Spiritual growth (learning process) should continue until I move on to heaven.



A trap that awaits me as I grow is the illusion that I will somehow arrive at a spiritual plateau after which spiritual growth will continue with minimal discomfort. God wants to exercise my faith and increase my understanding of how He thinks and acts, in order for me to increasingly think like Him, and to bear more eternal fruit. Even though every step of faith involves a “perceived” risk, I can rest in the assurance that I am never out of God's sovereign oversight and care, and He will never allow me to suffer beyond His sufficient provision of grace to sustain me. The process will continue until I leave this earth and step into God's presence. Growing believers find that their life is a constant warfare. There are no plateaus, just “rest stops.” Be aware of a tendency to be complacent and satisfied with your level of spiritual growth. We resist change.

Romans 5:3-5 ... but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
1 Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

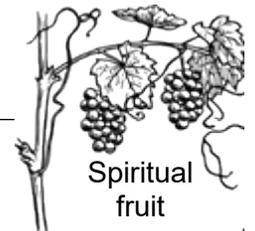
5. Biblical illustrations of the maturing process:

a. Rivers of Living Water: A trickle becomes a stream, which becomes a river.

John 7:38-39 (*Jesus said*) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, ... (Seealso John 4:14)

As I live in abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit His “Living Water” is free to flow through my life. The volume of His Living Water that is able to flow depends on my spiritual maturity.

b. A Branch on a Vine: A twig becomes a branch. Obviously, as the branch grows (matures), more fruit can be produced through it.



John 15:1-2, 8, 16 (*Jesus said*) am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ... and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: ...
Romans 7:4 (*Paul wrote*) ... ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

c. The Growth / Maturing Process: An infant (baby, child) becomes an adolescent, who becomes an adult.

Characteristics of an infant / baby: (1) hungry, (2) dependent on others, (3) self-centered.

Stages of growth: The immature Christian tends to focus on self needs, then as they grow, the needs of others become the focus, and as they mature, God Himself becomes the main focus.

Psalms 73:25 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.*

➤ **Infants / Babies / Children:**

1 Cor. 13:11 (*Paul writes*) When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: ...
1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: ...
1 John 2:12-14 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. ... I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.
1 Thess. 2:6-7 when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:
1 Cor. 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: ...
Heb. 5:12-13 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.
1 Cor. 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

➤ **Young Adults:**

1 John 2:14 (*John writes*) ... I have written unto you, **young men**, because ye are **strong**, and the word of God **abideth in you**, and ye have **overcome** the wicked one.



➤ **Adults:**

1 Cor. 13:11 (*Paul writes*) ... when I became a **man**, **I put away childish things**.
1 Cor. 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be **men**.
Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of **full age**, even those who by reason of use have their senses **exercised** to discern both good and evil.
1 John 2:13-14 (*John writes*) I write unto you, fathers, because ye have **known him** that is from the beginning....

➤ **All Believers (the Church):**

Col. 1:28-29 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching **every man** in all wisdom; that we may present **every man** perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.
Eph. 4:11-15 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, **for the edifying** of the body of Christ: Till we all **come in** the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto **a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we **henceforth be no more children**, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may **grow up** into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:
Rom. 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to **the image of his Son**.

➤ **The Spiritual Growth of Jesus: (Note: His spiritual growth had nothing to do with sin. He was never disobedient or less than perfect.)**

Luke 2:40 And the child **grew**, and waxed strong in spirit, **filled with wisdom**: and the grace of God was upon him.
Luke 2:42, 46-52 And when he was **twelve years old** ... they (*Joseph and Mary*) found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at **his understanding** and answers.... And Jesus **increased** in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.
Heb. 2:10 It was entirely appropriate that God, ... should make the source of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**.
Heb. 5:8-9 Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience** by the things which he suffered; And being **made perfect**, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Congratulations on your continuing choice to grow in the Lord! However, Phase 1 is not the end of your spiritual growth but only a stepping stone to even more.

Prayerfully consider who the Lord would have you mentor / disciple and go through Phase 1 with that believer. To assist you, review the guidelines found in Phase 2 - Mentor Training.

