

Foreword By
TWILAH FOX, M.D.



comfort **or**
commitment

What Christianity Was Meant to Be

Jack Nester, Jr. D.Min.

COMFORT OR COMMITMENT?

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Foreword by Twilah A. Fox, M.D.

Published by Voice of Thanksgiving Publishers
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74136
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Cover design by Neal Nester
Proofreading by Neal Nester
Editing by Cal Easterling, Ph.D.

International Standard Book Number: 0-615-12630-8

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DEDICATION

The one person who through the years has had a quiet but powerful faith has been my wife Joyce. God prepared her regarding my calling years before I responded to the Lord. When it happened, she simply said, "What took you so long?" Then there were the years of schooling, ministry and trials, along with rearing three children who are a blessing. Throughout going back to school for a doctorate at Oral Roberts University, leaving a denominational relationship, constructing a house and beginning a new non-denominational church under God's anointing, she has been faithful in running the race. She continues to be a primary source of encouragement for me to live by faith and to fulfill my potential in the calling of service to the Lord.

It gives me great pleasure to dedicate this book to my help mate, life companion, spiritual partner, friend and wife...

Joyce K. Nester

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Through the years of ministry our children, Brenda, Neal and Eric have said, "Dad, why don't you record that experience and put it in a book to help someone?" Thanks to them for the idea.

I am grateful for the people God has used to encourage me in completing this project. He has through the years used members of the Body of Christ, pastors, friends and family members to support and prod me to completion.

I gratefully acknowledge my son Neal Nester for his meticulous proofreading and for designing the cover. Dr. Cal Easterling (TriumphInChrist@yahoo.com) painstakingly labored over my rough draft and formatted the book into a readable layout.

Thank you.

CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Introduction	3
<u>Part I Orthodox Christianity</u>	6
Chapter 1. No More Snacks	7
A Divine Appointment	8
The Help Meet	9
The Promise	10
His Promise to You	10
Chapter 2. Get Ready to Get Real	13
A Wake-Up Call!	14
Don't Perish	14
Choices, Choices, Choices	15
Actions Speak Louder Than Words	16
Chapter 3. Who is in Control?	19
Deception	19
A Personal Example	22
Authority of the Word	23
Biblical Interpretation	27
Chapter 4. What to Believe?	30
Confusion	30
Major World Religions	31
Cults	41
Chapter 5. A Solid Foundation	49
Christianity Is Not a Religion-It's a Relationship	50
Orthodox Christianity	51
Additional Beliefs/Doctrines Practiced	54
Examples of Beliefs/Doctrines	56
Full Gospel Beliefs/Doctrines	59
Chapter 6. Getting Connected	63
Not Everyone Sees the Need to Be Connected	63
Fourteen Years Is a Long Time to Run	64
Let's Get Started	65
Consider These Things	66
Salvation	68
Components of Salvation	68
Changes	69
Some Common Misconceptions	70

Chapter 7. In His Image	75
A Complete Package	76
Spiritual DNA	76
Specific DNA Characteristics	77
God's Directions for Being Fruitful	80
Heart Not Just Head	81
Chapter 8. Getting Marching Orders	85
God Speaks in the Most Unlikely Places	85
The Need to Hear	86
How God Speaks	87
Preparing to Hear	89
Hearing the Voice of God	90
No Counterfaits	91
How Do I Know It is the Lord?	91
Results of Hearing	92
Chapter 9. What Was That?	95
The Map	95
The Interpretation	96
The Misunderstanding	97
Basic Scriptural Truth	99
The Key	100
The Tools	100
Some Things to Remember	105
Chapter 10. Being Doers of the Word	109
Covenant Relationship	110
Old and New Testament Covenant	112
Under Authority	114
Under Authority By Choice	114
Confess and Do	115
Remain under Authority	115
Obstacles to Being under Authority	116
The Centurion Example	117
Spiritual Authority	117
<u>Part II Pentecostal Christianity</u>	120
Chapter 11. Maturity	121
Definition	122
Hindrances	122
Growth	123
Progress	125

Chapter 12. Empowering	127
Definition	129
Misunderstanding	130
Three Baptisms	130
Pattern	131
Purpose	132
Process	133
Primary Evidence	134
Chapter 13. Tongues	137
What Happened?	137
The Tongue	138
Natural Speech	139
Spiritual Speech	140
Our Attitude	140
Types of Spiritual Tongues	141
Different Experiences	143
Purpose	145
Application	146
Chapter 14. Tools (Gifts)	149
Definition	149
Settling the Debate	150
Priesthood of Believers	152
For All Believers	153
Gifts and Manifestations	153
Receiving and Activating	154
Types and Number	154
Use	156
Accountability	157
Chapter 15. Manifestations in Ministry	161
Being Childlike	162
Resting in the Spirit	163
Biblical References	163
Historically	164
Terms	165
What Happens	165
A Counterfeit	166
Out of Body	166
Healing	167
It Still Happens!	167
Healing Is Biblical	169
Some Basic Healing Scriptures	170
Types of Healing	171
Some Hindrances to Healing	172
Some Keys	173
How to Receive	174

Just Say It	175
The Time Is Now	176
Deliverance	178
What Is Deliverance?	179
Problems and Caution	180
What Scripture Says	180
The Need for Deliverance	182
Once Again, Remember...	184
Determining Need	185
Steps to Deliverance	186
Biblical Authority	187
Retention	187
Open Doors	188
From a Distance	189
All Believers Have Authority	189
Encounters and Response	191
Chapter 16. Other Practices	195
What Are You Doing?	195
Definition	196
Application	198
Prayer Cloths	199
Laying on of Hands	200
Standing-In	201
Footwashing	202
I Have to Do What?	202
Observance	204
Fasting	205
Do What?	205
Defined	206
History	207
Purposes	207
Types of Fasts	208
Fasting that Pleases God	208
Now Is the Time	210
Chapter 17. Staying Filled	213
Glory	214
Anointing	215
Infilling	216
Purpose of Infilling	217
<u>Part III Biblical Christianity</u>	220
Chapter 18. How God Works	221
In His Image	221
His Plan	222
Your Heart's Desire	223

Chapter 19. Manifest Presence of God	225
God Has Not Changed	226
Manifest	227
God Still Comes to Us	228
Do You Really Want His Presence?	229
Chapter 20. Running the Race to Completion	233
Completing the Course	234
What God Expects	235
The Desire of Your Heart	236
Chapter 21. Continuing the Ministry of Jesus	239
Our Calling	240
Greater Things...	241
Preparation	241
Application	242
The Family Name	243
Stepping Up	244
Chapter 22. A Word to Pastors	247
Urgency	247
Opposition	248
Compromise	249
Focus	250
Relationships	251
Family	251
Fulfilling Potential and Calling	252
Being Anchored and Overcoming	253
Conclusion	255
Post Script	259
About the Author	263

FOREWORD

Many believe themselves to be Christians today, and some genuinely are. Many, however, know little of the basic doctrines and their relevance to our daily living with all the complexities of the Twenty-First Century. It is written:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. (Hosea 4:6)

In Pastor Jack Nester's work, we find a volume of sound instruction which would benefit any Christian, as well as the serious seeker of God and His ways. Herein, one may find truths which many Churches never address, such as divine healing, deliverance from the works of the evil one and the miraculous workings of our loving Savior.

This is a complete text in plain language, with Scriptural references and sprinkled with personal experiences. Pastor Jack is acquainted with the difficult valleys of pain, sorrow and disappointments, as well as the heights of joy and victory in his walk with God.

Twilak A. Fox, M.D.

A Note about Twilah Fox

Dr. Fox describes her conversion as a “miraculous and spontaneous baptism in the Holy Spirit.” It was miraculous because she was an agnostic and not even seeking god at the time.

She was a practicing psychiatrist . On her way to her office one morning in the spring of 1976, she had stopped for a red light. Dreading her heavy schedule and weary from the strife in her home, she whispered to herself, “Oh God, how am I ever going to get through this day?” Suddenly she gasped, her lungs filling with air. Upon exhaling, she heard her own voice speaking loudly in a language she did not know. She certainly had not been praying and had no idea what had just occurred.

This just the first of many miracles she has known. The Holy Spirit began His work immediately, inspiring her to obtain a Bible. She began studying it avidly and in its pages she found answers for the emotional ills so many suffer. Her life made a 180° turnaround. The change in her became apparent to all who knew her.

Soon invitations began to come for her to share her testimony. Her prayers resulted in deliverance and healing for numbers of people. She traveled by invitation only, ministering the Word of God and His healing power.

Dr. Fox built a church and pastored for ten years. In 2001 and 2002, she became bedfast with neuro-muscular malfunction that was a real trial of her faith. God miraculously raised her up for His Glory. She is once again active in ministry. All thanks and praise to Him!

INTRODUCTION

God has placed within me an urgency about two things: the time in which we live and our lives as Christians. The urgency of the world situation and the need for Christians to respond to God's anointing and presence is like fire in my bones, so this book is my attempt to put in writing what He has revealed. Hebrews 13:8 says:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

God is ready, willing and able to move with His Spirit today in the hearts and lives of true believers as He did in times past but the Church has become so much like the world that it is hard to tell them apart. Unfortunately, throughout the centuries there has been much compromise and God is calling His people back to Him. We are on the verge of a breakthrough (which starts with us then He breaks through). We must be rooted in the Word and have a vital, living relationship to Jesus and only then will we, the Body of Christ, be able to influence and transform the world. It is time to be radical!

For the most part society views the Christian Church as merely one of many "religions" to be tolerated but not necessarily taken as authority for life. Unfortunately many Christians have accepted this as fact. Others have expressed the view that the Church is just a "dressed up scam to raise money." These opinions have been expressed by individuals based on false teaching and most unfortunately, on personal experience. Society has not seen the Church in power, as God intends it to become,

because sadly, many professed Christians are confused about their faith and have accepted the world view of Christians who do not believe (Matthew 9:24).

God is calling the Church to fulfill the purpose for which it was created and His Spirit is being poured out today as it was promised in Joel 2:28-32. It is time to decide to be a part of the remnant that follows God and to be salt and light. All of this begins within our own lives as we begin to get fresh manna and fulfill the hunger rather than snack on stale, man-made imitation foods. The only hunger you will have is for more of the Lord!

There are countless numbers of people, including people in Church, who are spiritually famished. I pray that this book will be at least an "appetizer" that will give you a taste of the wonderful menu of God's Word and the fact that it is available to you right now!

I have searched for years to satisfy my hunger and tried many worldly things from sports to travel, even religion, theology and Church doctrine. The following material is what I have found to be the basic scriptural truth that satisfies hunger, gives purpose to life, enables victory and sets people free.

Here are a few of the areas to be addressed in this book that will prayerfully begin to satisfy your hunger and lead you to a more intimate walk with the Lord:

1. Christianity is not a religion but a relationship.
2. What does it mean to be a "Christian?"
3. Not all baptized, Church attending tithers are necessarily "saved."
4. Foundations of faith.
5. What are the results of a relationship with Jesus?
6. What God intends for the Church.

7. Being filled and staying filled.
8. Basic Scriptural Truth does not change.
9. Running the race to completion.
10. Orthodox, Pentecostal and Biblical Christianity.
11. A special chapter for pastors.

The fact is that if the Church does not manifest the supernatural power of God with signs and wonders that set people free, it is not fulfilling its purpose.

Years ago, in 1959, I had a dream one night and God told me to “go forth and feed the hungry people.” In obedience, I entered the ministry and have been blessed to share the Lord Jesus through preaching, teaching, short-term missions and evangelism. I have come to realize that these are forms of “feeding the hungry people” with God’s Word. Now He has included a form of feeding I had never envisioned, a book.

If you are hungry, God will fill you with His Holy Spirit and living will be a joy—not just something you have to do. Watch His Kingdom, power and presence come alive in your life. You will have peace and fulfill the potential God has placed within you. It’s not just for pastors, teachers, theologians or scholars. God’s precious Word is for the “ordinary” person to receive and enjoy. Your life can be truly complete.

God has something special for you—FRESH MANNA! He manifests Himself supernaturally in response to hunger! Are you hungry?

It is time to be honest with ourselves and with God about our relationship or lack of one. It is time to accept Scripture as authority for life. It is time to have integrity and not compromise the Word. It is time to know Biblical truth and live in the manifest power of God. Confusion and bondage are of the devil. Freedom and life are from God. Are you ready?

Part I - Orthodox Christianity

Definition:

Orthodox Christianity includes the body of basic standard Christian beliefs from the First Century that are common to all Christians regardless of denominational name or identity and the foundation on which the Christian life is based.

Focus:

The focus of Orthodox Christianity is upon the basic beliefs of the Christian faith (a summary may be found in the Apostle's Creed) and practices of those who have established a personal relationship to Jesus. It is the basis for life eternal and life more abundant.

Emphasis:

The emphasis is on “a personal relationship with Jesus” and is limited to this area of beliefs and practices. This is what some may call “Foundational Christianity” which has been practiced and imparted throughout the generations.

Chapter 1

NO MORE SNACKS

I stepped out of my car one day and stood in my driveway ...everything disappeared! No houses, no cars, no sign of life, except me in the middle of a field...

Have you ever had a hunger for something you couldn't describe or satisfy? I've never wanted pickles and ice cream, but I have eaten until I was stuffed—and still had not satisfied that special “craving.” I've snacked hoping to be fulfilled but what I ate did not actually “fit the bill.”

Your “craving” may not be for food. It could be possessions, positions, power or purpose. Take a look at our world and you can readily see that even with all of the “things” available to us in technology, travel, tools, and toys (hobbies), the satisfaction often still eludes us and is just out of our grasp. We keep snacking on the things of the world but never get full.

Take a look at our society and see the variety of sports, entertainment, clubs, groups, causes and religions from which people attempt to attain self-fulfillment. The search to satisfy the hunger for that special “something” all but consumes people as time, money and energy is expended in a search that ranges from karate to yoga to psychics to religion—all to no avail!

In 1973, I had such a hunger and what I didn't know was that it was about to be filled in a way I would never have imagined.

A Divine Appointment

One day just before I left work, I had the feeling that something was about to change and that I would not be returning to work there much longer. This was odd because no change was planned or required, at least as far as I knew.

The office was locked. It was 4:30 p.m., and as I started the car, the feeling of a change that could not be described or delayed weighed on my mind. What could it be?

I thought, "Oh, well, the day is over so go home, relax and enjoy the family." I crossed the railroad tracks and the main highway...from that point until I was three miles down the road at my turn I didn't remember anything. I thought I had just been daydreaming and continued to drive the last three blocks and watched for my house. I pulled into my driveway, got out of the car, closed the door, AND THEN IT HAPPENED—everything disappeared! No houses, no cars, no signs of life, except for me in the middle of a field.

Looking for something I could recognize, I turned around only to notice a figure walking toward me across the field. As I looked again the figure was directly in front of me and what a shock! It was like looking in a mirror. The figure looked just like me. After a pause that seemed like ages, he spoke and said, "Are you coming?" as he gestured at the peaceful land behind him with a wide sweep of his hand.

Straining to see, all that was visible was a beautiful flat expanse of land with a hill that I could not see over or around. Again the question came, "Are you coming?"

I said, "Just a moment," and turned to look behind me and all I saw was the outline of a large city and what appeared to be a quick glimpse of some beautiful and luxurious places I had traveled in other countries.

As I turned back to look at what was on the other side, I realized that the city and places of travel were familiar to me because they were of the world. What was on the OTHER SIDE to which I was being called? I didn't recognize anything but it seemed so peaceful and then the question came again, "Are you coming?"

As I stood face to face with what seemed to be a mirror image of me or a twin, I sensed a great peace which I did not have before. It was then that God spoke to me. It was audible like it had been on one other occasion. He said, "This is the last time to make a choice, there is no more."

I had to make a choice, rather than delay as I had in the past, and my response was, "Yes, Lord, I'm coming. Will you give me some peace now and get off my case?" The "other me" was reaching out to me as I stepped forward to cross the line into that place of peace, and when I stepped forward we merged into one!

Immediately, everything changed. No longer was I in a field, but standing in the driveway where I had been before. I cried with relief and joy at the peace and knew what the change was.

After years of intentional running, I was about to enter into the most exciting experience of a lifetime—full-time ministry for my Lord and Savior, JESUS!

The Help Meet

Walking through my house and into the backyard, I felt as though a thousand pounds had been taken off of my back and the world looked totally different. I had to tell my wife, Joyce, because the decision I made would affect our family—beginning immediately.

Our daughter and son, Brenda and Neal, were playing in the swimming pool as I tried to explain to Joyce what had happened to me and the decision I had made.

Her response was simple, direct and supportive, "What took you so long?" God had already prepared her and she had been waiting for ten years for me to come into the Kingdom of God!

The Promise

God gave me a Scripture for my life, family and ministry. Psalm 37:5 says:

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.

As we stepped out in faith, standing on the promises of God, many marvelous and miraculous things began to happen. In a short while we were living in another state. I was pastoring two Churches, enrolled in seminary and making less than half the salary I made before.

This was the beginning of a faith walk, by a personal relationship to our living Lord Jesus, that has continued to this day for Joyce and me. All of my needs were met and my hunger was about to be filled in a way I would never dream and this was the first bite!

His Promise to You

A promise unfulfilled is a lie. God does not lie. He fulfills His promises and we need to know that His food is available so that we can quit snacking and have a banquet. Matthew 5:6:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled.

That hunger and craving is for something special: a personal relationship with Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit...and it is available to you today. You can live in joy and fulfill the potential for which God has called you.

Are you are tired of searching?

Are you are tired of being hungry?

Do you want the reality of a living Lord Jesus instead of dead religion?

If you want the presence and power of God in your daily life, they can be yours today.

Continue to read and see what our Heavenly Father's banquet table contains that is available for your growth and intimate relationship with Him.

Summary/Review

1. HUNGER—Today, life is lived at such a fast, self-centered pace that many people do not even realize their hunger because they are too busy with activities, mistaking activity for accomplishment. Even if they recognize there is a hunger they do not know what it is or how to satisfy it other than select from the smorgasbord of worldly solutions.

2. SEARCH—There is a tendency to take the easiest way out or look for a quick fix. A temporary, and usually a worldly solution, is therefore sought to satisfy the hunger.

3. APPOINTMENT—Everyone has a Divine Appointment with God to make a decision about His importance and place in our lives. Recognition of His visitation whether for salvation, maturity, equipping or ministry is of the utmost importance and merits a priority response.

4. PROMISE—God's Word is His promise and will always be fulfilled in His timing. God's promise always has a requirement (on our part) in order to be fulfilled. His promise is personal and available to every person who is willing to respond.

5. RESPONSE—God is more interested in your personal relationship with Him than in what you can do for Him. God expects and requires a response to His Word and call in addition to a simple intellectual agreement or acknowledgment that He has spoken. The response requires a change of heart and attitude, then action.

Additional Reading

Fuchsia Pickett, *God's Dream*, Destiny Publications, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, 1991.

Bottom Line

Everyone of us on Planet Earth has a divine appointment with God to make a decision about His place in our lives.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by taking the easy way out and focusing on worldly activities or even religion, or you can make a commitment by making God the center of your life and by living in His power.

Basic Scriptural Truth

Matthew 5:6 indicates a state of joy (internal), happiness (external) and fulfillment (completeness of potential) for those who desire—more than anything—a right relationship with the Living Lord.

Chapter 2

GET READY TO GET REAL

Dr. Phil McGraw has the title of “Life-Strategist” and is a popular personality who started on the Oprah Winfrey Show and now has his own program. He has a “head-on” approach to solving problems. In an advertisement for his show he said, “If you don't want the truth as I see it, then don't ask me because I am going to tell you.” Then he adds, “Get ready to get real!”

For far too long our society has allowed people to make excuses based on everything from past lifestyles or experiences to a lack of knowledge. It has become popular to “shift the blame” to someone else rather than accept responsibility for our own decisions. Sometimes, we can even get a glimpse of the blame game in Churches when people say:

“I didn't know.”

“No one told me.”

“It's not my fault.”

“I didn't do it.”

“I did what I was told.”

“That's what I understood.”

Some Christians even blame the devil for decisions they have made. We need to get something straight right now—the devil *can't* make you do anything and God *won't* make you do anything, because He is a Gentleman and gives you a choice. Your ability to choose your behavior is called “Free Will.”

A Wake-up Call

God is giving the Church a wake-up call today and judgment is beginning in the house of the Lord. All you have to do is to look around to see the news items about how the Church has compromised the Word. There are countless examples of evil behavior such as sexual abuse, infidelity, bearing false witness, misappropriation of funds, theft and deception, just to name a few. These behaviors hinder the advance of the Kingdom of God. Such behavior represents not only a lack of integrity but disobedience to the Word of God. Only when the Church gets serious about God's Word, repents and returns to intimate fellowship with Him will it become the transforming agent He intended for it to be for the world.

The Church is made up of individuals and that is where the change begins—in the hearts and lives of people. The wake-up call is to get real about God's Word. “Getting Real” includes:

1. Knowing the authority of God's Word.
2. The place or priority the Word of God has in our individual lives.
3. What we commit to do in response to His Word.
4. Coming out of our “comfort zone” and taking action.

Don't Perish

Once there was a young man who was about to have his sixteenth birthday. He lived in a rural area and had never been to town so he asked

his father to take him. He wanted to see the city and the things he had heard about, such as theaters, parks, sporting events and tall buildings.

When the day arrived, the father took his son to town to see the sights and after looking up at a tall building they went inside to look around. While they were standing in the lobby they saw an elderly lady enter an elevator and the doors closed. Soon the elevator came back, the doors opened and out stepped a young good looking woman. The son asked the father about the elevator and how that happened. The father looked puzzled for a moment and then said, “Quick son, go get your mother.”

The point is that limited knowledge can hinder your decisions, relationships, ministry and quality of life. Hosea 4:6 says:

My people perish for lack of knowledge.

Some Christians know enough of the Word of God to be dangerous but not effective, enough to be miserable but not victorious, or enough to know that there is a promise but not enough to know how to receive it.

Choices, Choices, Choices

In *Newsweek* magazine, there was an article about stressed out professionals dropping their careers for lighthearted summer jobs. It went on to say, “People are looking around to see what gives them peace. I was tired of dreaming about ‘over the rainbow.’ I wanted to go over the rainbow.” (*Newsweek*, “Will Work for Fun,” August 19, 2002, p. 13.)

A popular television show was addressing the issue of women having fulfilling lives that included both career and family. The gist of the matter was that some women put their careers first, but also wanted a family, but it was too late based on the biological clock. The feeling expressed was this: they were cheated because “no one told them that the late thirties might be too late.” They were angry with their bodies because they looked good on the outside but didn't quite function like they wanted *when* they wanted. They were angry with their physicians for “not telling them.” They were angry because of what they would miss by not having a family. They were just plain angry, yet they made their own choices, and had to live with the results like we all do.

Suffice it to say that everyone wants to fulfill what they see as their "dream" in life but few ever achieve it because of two things. First, the dream is based on "feelings," rather than spiritual vision from God concerning their purpose and potential in life. Second, these people have almost a complete lack of knowledge of God and His Word. God and His Word are both Source and Direction for life abundant (here and now) and life eternal (life after physical death).

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

There is a story about a young man who wanted to push a wheelbarrow on a tightrope across Niagara Falls with a person in it. After telling several people about his belief that it could be done, he asked if they agreed with him that he could do it. The response from most everyone was a resounding "yes."

Full of confidence, the young man asked for a volunteer to ride in the wheelbarrow. Even though most everyone said they thought he could accomplish the feat, not one person was willing to be the passenger!

In the Church it is exactly the same. There are many professions of faith in the fact that they believe the *Bible* is true and that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), yet many decisions about life are made based on what the world says rather than the Lord Jesus. Know this:

**PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS DO WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN
THEIR HEARTS, NOT NECESSARILY WHAT THEY SAY
THEY BELIEVE.**

Knowing that a fact is true with your head is not the same as having the assurance that you can and should apply it to your life. Until you have this assurance you will not act...regardless of the area of life with which you are dealing.

1. Are you ready to get real and hear spiritual truth?
2. Do you see the need to wake up?

3. Do you realize your need for spiritual knowledge?
4. Are you ready to make a choice?
5. Do your actions match what you say?

Most of us live in our “comfort zone” and it is time to come out of it, face the truth and put it into action. Coming out of the comfort zone means realizing Who is in charge.

Summary/Review

1. **SELF-EXAMINATION**—If you want to fulfill your potential and calling the Lord has given you, it is time to “get ready to get real” by looking at the truth about your life, needs and source of help. You need to accept responsibility for your decisions and actions.

2. **WAKE-UP**—God is speaking to the Body of Christ, which is commonly called the Church (not a denomination or individual group). He is calling for individual and corporate repentance and obedience to His Word. This means getting serious through faith and application. It means having integrity and making Him your priority.

3. **KNOWLEDGE**—God wants every person to have a personal, intimate relationship with Him so we know His ways (His Heart), not just His actions (activities). God's Word is life, so the more we have it in our hearts, the greater will be our victory. Without revelation knowledge (revealed from God), we perish.

4. **CHOICE**—When confronted with God's Word, every person must make a choice whether to be an active follower (disciple) of Jesus. To not make a choice is to make a choice against Him! God is the only One who can bring fulfillment in life, not just spiritually, but literally—because He is our Source.

5. ACTIONS—Remember, people always do what they believe in their heart—not necessarily what they say they believe. Take a look at your life. Do you have integrity? Are you faithful in daily life to practice what you say you believe about the Lord Jesus?

Bottom Line

The reality is that people do what they believe in their heart not always what they say.

Comfort or Commitment?

We can be comfortable by being superficial, or committed by being honest.

Basic Scriptural Truth

Hosea 4:6 says:

My people perish for lack of knowledge.

Chapter 3

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

Years ago my instructor in competitive judo told me to dive over the top rope on the boxing ring and land on my back. I cleared the top rope and landed with a THUD. All the air had gone out of my lungs. I had not done it correctly, but determined right then and there that I would. I would master it and be in control! The story was no different years later when I practiced for the decathlon, ran the marathon or climbed the mountains of Philmont Scout Camp in New Mexico. I still wanted to be in control. If you are truthful, haven't you often wanted to be in control?

Deception

This attitude of being in control of our lives and being as independent as possible is part of our "old nature." We see this in the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3).

The devil tempted Eve by showing her the fruit. Upon her refusal to eat, he asked this question:

Did God say you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

The result was that doubt was placed in Eve's soul. She began to think that the facts she knew made her as knowledgeable as God. She chose to eat the fruit and be in control. Sound familiar? It ought to because every child is born with a desire to please self first and makes every effort to be

in control. What are children trying to produce with their temper tantrums? It is no different with adults except the manner in which we try to get our way. The tools range from deceiving ourselves to distorting facts to even attempting to manipulate God with whiny prayers and promises!

Pride is the foundation of deception. Obadiah verse 3 says:

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.

It all began with satan (Lucifer), who was created as an archangel to lead worship in Heaven, but was not satisfied and wanted God's position. He wanted to be in control! Just as satan wanted the position of God rather than his own, so do we when we attempt to be in control. The result is that we deceive ourselves and do not live the life God intended because we rebel against His authority.

Sharon Daugherty, in her book *Avoiding Deception* (Victory Christian Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1997) gives a list of 18 characteristics of pride that are well worth examining:

1. Pride is self sufficient.
2. Pride feels it can get along without others.
3. Pride wants the glory of being leader but most of the time can't handle responsibility.
4. Pride is unable to receive correction and justifies all its actions.
5. Pride feels it is everyone else who is at fault and needs to change, not him or her.
6. Pride speaks against anyone who tries to lovingly bring corrective help.
7. Pride has a high opinion of self.

8. Pride can't face truth because it makes him or her look bad, even if crumbling apart on the inside.
9. Pride can't see "blind spots."
10. Pride is jealous of others who do well and yet won't look within himself to see what is blocking him from doing better.
11. Pride is insecure.
12. Pride lies when sin is confronted or error is exposed and goes into denial.
13. Pride blames others for failure and won't take any responsibility for it.
14. Pride tries to go on when anointing has lifted as if everything is still the same.
15. Pride does everything for selfish reasons instead of determining what will benefit or be the best for others around them.
16. Pride repents only because caught, but does not have true repentance which will bring God's mercy and grace.
17. Pride seeks other forms of hearing direction since the person is not able to hear from God personally anymore.
18. Pride will not submit to authority because it feels it is the authority.

To come out of deception, we must first deal with the root cause—which is pride—by recognizing authority (God), repenting of our attitude and actions and living in obedience (not legalism). Do not let satan disqualify you from the race of life by distracting you. Recognize authority and willingly submit to it.

A Personal Example

In 1960, I entered college and had some ideas of what I wanted to accomplish or see in life. Along with this I had experienced a "Word" from God that I was to be in some form of ministry. As I observed most of the clergy I knew, there was an outward appearance of piety and platitude which seemed unnatural because they appeared to be trying to "fit a pattern."

The only pastor I knew who seemed "real" had a vibrant faith in a living Lord and a heart to help others. He was Reverend Monte Peterson in Belton, Missouri. (There would be a few others later in my life as God placed me in the path of Spirit-filled and Spirit-led people.)

Reverend Peterson encouraged me to attend college and even went to the point of driving me across the state to a college and helped me enroll. Get this: Never once did he ask me to join his denomination or conform to a lifestyle. He only asked me to promise two things.

First, that I would do my best and not quit college for one year.

Second, that I would be sensitive to listen to Jesus when He spoke.

I gave my promise and was good to my word, but during the year some things happened that I did not expect. During a weekly chapel service God did speak to me and reminded me that He wanted me in full-time ministry. I said "yes" as I went forward to pray.

Shortly afterward, on the way back to class some people who apparently didn't believe what the speaker said began to ridicule my decision about "serving God." The attitude of my heart was that I would rather give them a knuckle sandwich than fold my hands and pray for them (it hurt to have such a serious thing ridiculed although it has happened many times since with no effect at all because I know Him personally and trust Him implicitly). Since I had this "feeling" and did not seem to have the attitude or response of piety that seemed to be "traditional clergy," I told God that He had made a mistake and had the wrong person because I

didn't fit the mold and He could just forget the promise I had made to serve Him full time.

I HAD DECEIVED MYSELF BECAUSE I TRUSTED MY OWN JUDGMENT MORE THAN GOD'S. It would be 14 more years and several encounters with Him before I came to my senses. Years later, when asked to give a statement about what I was most thankful for in life I said, "I am thankful that God never quit on me!"

Authority of the Word

When we respond to God we must know with a certainty, based on our relationship with Him, that His Word is true because He is Lord and the ultimate authority. II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us:

All Scripture is given by the 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.

There must be a basis for your decisions in life. There has to be a foundation for making choices. If it is not the Word of God, then what is it? Is it a philosophy, a teaching, a person or merely a feeling?

If you act wrongly (remember, your actions are the result of what you truly believe) it is because you believe wrongly. If you believe wrongly, it is because your foundational teaching is wrong. Have you noticed how many people "believe they have the truth?" This is reflected in such misguided statements as:

1. After all, truth isn't the same for everyone.
2. Each person has the right to make their own choice on what is truth because there are no absolutes.
3. Whatever works for you is okay.

Remember this: if you are too open-minded, your brains can fall out. We have become so open in our search for truth (which we want to match

what we already believe) that we do not have a solid foundation. The right foundation is Jesus Christ and His Word.

In our world of education and information, we want to believe that knowledge is power but it isn't unless it is truth—absolute truth—which is the Word of God.

It seems that almost everyone wants the “right” to decide whether something is “truth.” That is why there are so many different “interpretations” of the Word. In reality, most are personal preferences or conclusions based on facts taken out of context. An example is the group of scholars, a few years ago, who decided to “color code” the sayings of Jesus. The colors, similar to a numerical scale, indicated whether the scholars believed the recorded sayings of Jesus were actually true. This ridiculous activity was not only egotistical and arrogant but was actually insulting to God because II Timothy 3:16 tells us how the Word came to us and Hebrews 6:18 says:

It is impossible for God to lie.

Absolute truth is rejected by a majority of people, including some Christians, because many people do not believe in absolutes—not even when it comes to God's Word.

Charles Trombley, in a ministry letter (Tulsa, Oklahoma, July, 2002), references George Barna, America's leading pollster:

Among all adults Barna surveyed, only 22% believe truth is absolute while 64% believe truth is determined by personal circumstances. Absolute truth is unvarnished truth. Black is black and that is that. On the other hand, relative truth is determined by conditional circumstances. Truth is never black and white but may be relative or conditional. Here is what disturbed me! Among those who said they were “born again,” only 32% said they believe God's Word is absolute truth. They say they are born again, but they don't actually believe God's Word.

Eighty-eight percent of America's teenagers think moral values depend on circumstances and/or feelings, while only 6% believe in unconditional absolute truth. Only 9% of those who were born again accepted absolute truth, compared to 4% for all teens. This is what they learned in the public school system.

Only 13% of those interviewed and 26% of those who were born again based their ethical and moral decisions on the *Bible*. All others based their conclusions on “Whatever feels right or comfortable.” Moral relativity differed among age groups. Sixty percent of Americans aged 36 or older do not accept moral absolutes while 75% of 18 to 35 year-olds reject absolutes.

These startling statistics reveal that too many believers are not reading and studying the *Bible*. To them, God's Word doesn't really matter. It is a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. My question is: if they doubt one part of the Word how can they be sure of their salvation which is wholly Word-based?

Christians need more than a mental belief in Jesus Christ. They need a life changing encounter in which they hear Jesus say, as in John 15:7:

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

Here are some things you should consider when making a decision about God's Word:

1. The *Bible* is authority because God says so and because it is verified and documented by man in secular records that include history and science .
2. The *Bible* is a collection sixty-six different books and records.
3. It was written (actually, “recorded” is the most appropriate word) by over 40 different men who were directed by the Holy Spirit.

4. This group of individuals included fishermen, kings, teachers, prophets, farmers and even a gentile physician.
5. It was written/recorded over a period of 1500 years by these various "authors" (actually people who recorded God's Divine dictation - God breathed) without any contradictions.
6. It was written in three separate languages: Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic.
7. It includes such subjects as religion, poetry, science, law, biography, history and prophecy.
8. The *Bible* claims Divine authorship in II Timothy 3:16 as well as other places.
9. The *Bible* has 39 books in the Old Testament, which is a record of God's relationship to the Hebrews, His chosen people.
10. There are 29 books in the New Testament, which is a record of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's son and our Lord. It also contains the record of ministry of the early Church.
11. The Apocrypha or "intertestament literature" is literature written between the time of the Old Testament and New Testament. This is sometimes called the 400 silent years when there was no Word from God. The Roman Catholic Church accepts the Apocrypha as scriptural but Protestants do not.
12. The *Bible* is its own best commentary.
13. Basic truths are absolute and never change for any generation.
14. The *Bible* is a self-revelation of God and His will for His creation and His children (those who have a personal relationship with Him through experience as revealed in Scripture).

Biblical Interpretation

Because of the “Priesthood of All Believers,” every Christian, through a personal relationship with Jesus, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and available basic academic materials, can be assured of the accuracy of what the *Bible* contains without being a scholar and without depending upon a particular translation of the *Bible*.

In the Revealed Word, Jesus, (John 1:1, 11, 14 and John 14:9) placed Himself under the authority of the Recorded Word (which was Old Testament for Jesus but both Old and New for us), so should we place ourselves under the authority of the Word of God.

Summary/Review

1. CONTROL—It is basic human nature to want to be “in control.” This desire leads us to believe that our decisions are the best. From childhood on, each has tried to get his/her own way. This ranges from tantrums to manipulation in dealing with people and even trying to manipulate God.

2. DECEPTION—Deception means following the wrong course. It makes no difference whether we believe it is correct or not. It means we have to be under the influence of another who is leading us the wrong direction. Pride is the root cause and must be dealt with through recognizing the authority of God, repenting of wrong attitudes and actions, and willingly submitting to and obeying God. Don't let satan disqualify you by getting you to follow him through logic, reason or any other means.

3. AUTHORITY—Everyone has someone or something that they (whether consciously or not) consider authority, and this is the foundation and authority for all of life's decisions. The foundations should be based on absolute truth which is unchanging and everlasting. The only Source is God through His Son Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the *Bible* which is His Word that He breathed to the individuals who recorded it for all mankind in all generations. Behind the word that is

spoken is the character of the person who speaks it. It is the speaker—through his character, power and position—who determines how people regard the word and respond to it.

4. ABSOLUTE TRUTH—Absolute truth is unvarnished. It does not contain opinion, feeling or tradition—just authoritative and confirmed fact without regard to influence. It is rejected by most people because of assumed self-sufficiency and pride; yet, it is essential for a life that is complete and fulfilled as God intended (John 8:32). Relative truth is what most people accept and practice, including some professed Christians. For those people, truth is based on conditions they experience. This means that for many, God's Word doesn't really matter and this is reflected in their decisions and life-styles. True Christians are not people who give only mental belief to the existence of Jesus, but rather people who have had a life-changing encounter with the Living Lord that determines their life-style.

5. FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE—The *Bible* is the only religious material that claims Divine Authorship which is God-breathed and is confirmed by secular history. It is the self-revelation of Who He is and what He wants for His creation and His children. These basic truths never change and are valid for every generation because it is authority directly from God.

Bottom Line

Everyone wants to be in control but only God *should* be. Yielding to Him comes only by our own choice to submit and obey.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by deceiving yourself (because of pride) that you know best, or you can become committed by following absolute truth which is His Word as revealed by Jesus Christ.

Basic Scriptural Truth

John 6:63 and II Timothy 3:16

Chapter 4

WHAT TO BELIEVE?

Since we live or put into practice our beliefs, it is essential that we know what we believe and why. Many have focused on the soul (mind, emotions, will and intellect) to fill a spiritual void that only God can fill. He does this through a personal relationship to Jesus Christ His Son and the Holy Spirit.

In all of the religions of the world, except for Christianity, the emphasis and focus is man reaching out to God or claiming to be God. In the Christian faith God is reaching out to man.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the element of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:3-5).

For most people, belief is what they have learned as a child and may have put into practice. Usually, the child accepts what is “taught” without question, simply because he or she trusts the teacher. The following is an example of this.

Two family members were discussing cooking and both discovered they cooked ham the same way. They cut off the ends before putting it in a pan. Neither knew "why" they did it except they learned that it was the proper way to cook ham.

To answer the question of why they cut the ends of the ham off before putting it in a pan to cook they asked their mother. She did not know, but suggested they ask their grandmother. Grandmother did not know either, except that was the way she always did it. She suggested they ask their great-grandmother, who was still living. So they did, and she said, "I don't know why *you* cut the ends of the ham off before putting it in a pan to cook, but I did because my pan was too small."

What a revelation! At some time, every person needs to "own" his or her own faith and know what he or she believes and why. This is because each individual must have a personal experience with Jesus, not merely a learned ritual or story about Him.

Confusion

The devil tries to confuse people by doing his best to arrange it so that they get only partial truth. This "partial truth deception" often leads to making a wrong choice.

Another trick of the enemy is this: soon after a person becomes a Christian, satan tries to make him feel disqualified by distraction and false priorities. The battle ground is the same today as it was in the beginning, *in the mind*. The devil does this by causing humans to doubt God and then offering alternative solutions that seem "so logical" and are usually supported by others based on "what seems right" or "feels right." One of the greatest weapons of opposition to God is false religion, which is the spirit of the anti-Christ.

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience (Ephesians 5:6).

In order to determine what to believe, one needs to engage in some serious study and prayer. Comparison of other religions and ideas may cause you to examine what you truly believe; but don't accept just anything without comparing what you hear with the Word of God.

While there are many books available about specific or individual religions or cults, the book entitled, *What's the Difference?* by Fritz Ridenour (Ventura, California, 1979) compares major world religions and some major cults to the Christian faith. It is an excellent capsulized version of basic facts which are enlightening for most people. It will help you recognize Orthodox Christian beliefs (the Word of God) as compared to major world religions and cults. I have used it as a basic source for the purpose of summary but have listed other sources that provide similar, but expanded or amplified material if further study is desired.

Major World Religions

ISLAM—Although Muslims accept most of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible, the Psalms of David and the Gospel of Jesus in the New Testament, their interpretation and understanding is directly opposed to the Christian faith.

The God of Christians is certainly not the same as Allah worshipped by Islam. Muslims believe that God had no son, Jesus was merely a prophet and did not die on the cross for man's sin. "Not a single Muslim in the world can tell you boldly that his sins are forgiven and that he has eternal life... True conviction of sin does not exist in Islam (Rezea F. Safa, *Inside Islam*, Lake Mary, Florida, Charisma House, 1996, p. 81)." In Islam, man earns his salvation and pays for his own sins. The way he earns his place in paradise is through following the pillars of Islam and the ultimate is to die for Allah, which assures a place in Heaven.

HINDUISM—Hindus believe that every man is God, which Christians know is not true. The soul is released or

“reincarnated” to higher levels as it strives to attain the highest relationship with god.

Another way to release the soul is through *yoga* (which means “union” and is one of six major Hindu pathways to becoming one with the Ultimate), a discipline that holds one's physical passions in check so that the *atman* (soul) can escape the cycle of death and rebirth and be joined with the *paramatman* (world soul). (Ridenour, *Ibid.*)

To Hindus, God is formless and without attributes and takes form in lesser gods. According to them, Jesus is merely one among many lesser incarnations and He did not die for your sins. Man justifies himself through good works, devotion and self-control.

Transcendental Meditation—Deceitfully spread as non-religious, Transcendental Meditation is very much a Hindu phenomenon. “Daily meditation focuses on the Source of Creative Intelligence within the individual himself (Keith Brooks, *The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error*, Chicago, Illinois, Moody Press, 1987).” Supposedly, the real nature of man is divine and God is in the heart of everyone.

BUDDHISM—Buddhism denies the *Vedas* (revealed wisdom) of the Aryans who originated Hinduism, but maintains that life is suffering and that it must be escaped. The way to do this is through making an effort yourself. “For Buddha, the Middle Way is a spiritual path of salvation that winds between the complicated religion of the Hindus and the world of sensuality that he had known (Ridenour, *Ibid.*).” It denies the existence of a personal Deity. Even though they acknowledge Jesus as existing, He is not recognized as the source of salvation. Only man causes himself to sin and only man can save himself

CHRISTIANITY—There are three major branches of Christianity:

1. Eastern Orthodox

2. Roman Catholic

3. Protestant

Brief History—The Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic (Western Orthodox) Churches were actually one until the Fourth Century (about 313), when the Roman Emperor Constantine was the first emperor to become Christian and allowed freedom of worship. In addition to this improved legal status, Constantine assured that Christians could own property and that property stolen from them was restored. “Constantine made many gifts to the Christian Church, including huge estates which he gave to the Church in Rome (*World Book*, Chicago, Illinois, 1989, Vol. 4, p. 991).”

Just as Babylon was the center of all false religions and the origination point of many cults, so Jerusalem, which is the apple of God's eye, was the center of the true faith, Christianity. Rome, the ruler of the world empire, was a combination of pagan religion and the Christian faith. According to historical records, Constantine not only returned property to Christians but also turned over pagan buildings and temples to Christians for their use.

In 330, Constantine moved from Rome to what is now Istanbul, Turkey, which became the center for Eastern Orthodox Christianity. “Constantine presided over the first general council of the Christian Church in 325 and assisted in drawing up a statement of essential beliefs called The Nicene Creed (*World Book*, Chicago, Illinois, 1989, p. 991).”

The year 1054 is considered the year when the East and West split or divided. There were, no doubt, political and geographical differences, but the most important were the understanding of the Holy Spirit. The Eastern Orthodox claimed the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and the Western (Roman) Church says the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Roman Church also insists that the Pope has primacy and the

decisions of the Pope are infallible (*World Book*, Chicago, Illinois, 1989, Vol. 6, p. 34)."

The Eastern Orthodox tradition claimed direct descent from Christ and the Apostles. For centuries, Christianity was primarily Eastern in orientation. Of the five patriarchal Sees (geographic centers of Church authority), Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Jerusalem, only the Roman one was in the West... In the year 1054, the bishops of Constantinople and Rome mutually excommunicated each other along with their followers, creating a formal breach in Christianity that has only recently begun to heal (Frank S. Mead & Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 2001, p. 244).

In addition to the differences between East (Greek in speech and attitude) and West (Latin and Roman) there were differences in political, social and intellectual influences. In the Seventh Century, Islam gained control of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. The major Church in Constantinople was converted into a mosque, and Church leaders were forced to give allegiance to Muslim rulers. In addition, the influence of what the *Bible* calls "Mystery Babylon," or the pagan "teachings of Babylon" began to worm their way into Christianity.

These included prayers for the dead, making the sign of the cross, worship of saints and angels, instituting mass, and worship of Mary, which in the Church of Rome was followed by prayers directed to Mary, leading to the 1950 doctrine of her assumption into Heaven and in 1965 to the proclamation that Mary was the Mother of the Church (Tim LaHaye & Jerry Jenkins, *Are We Living in the End Times?*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1999, pp. 173-174).

Eastern Orthodox—The seven mysteries (sacraments) of the Church are the same as those of the Roman Catholic Church, but with a bit of difference in understanding.

They are: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist (Communion), Penance, Extreme Unction (anointing a dying person with oil for healing or salvation), Holy Orders and Matrimony. All Orthodox Churches teach that the bread and wine are the body and Blood of Christ, but this is not described as transubstantiation. Purgatory (a place of cleansing after death and before entry into Heaven) is denied, but prayers are offered for the dead. It is believed that the dead can and do pray for those on earth. Both faith and works are necessary for salvation...The dogma of the Pope as the sole “Vicar (representative) of Christ on Earth” is rejected, together with that of papal infallibility (idea that the Pope cannot make mistakes). Members of Orthodox Churches honor the Virgin Mary but do not subscribe to the dogma of immaculate conception (Mary was completely sinless) and the assumption (Mary bodily ascended into Heaven). They show reverence to the cross, the saints and nine orders of angels, but reject the teaching of the treasury of merits of the saints (the idea that the prayers and good works of Mary and other good Christians can be doled out to us when we are “short on grace”) and the doctrines of indulgences (forgiveness of sin by payment to the Pope or a priest). Icons (consecrated pictures of revered persons and events) are central to Orthodox devotion and opposition to icons is condemned (Frank S. Mead & Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 2001, pp. 246-247).

Candidates for priesthood may marry before ordination but not afterwards.

Roman Catholic Church—The faith and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church are founded upon what the First Vatican Council referred to as “that deposit of faith given to it by Christ and through his apostles, sustained by the *Bible* and by tradition (Frank S. Mead & Samuel

S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 2001, p. 95).”

The creeds (statements of belief) also define a number of beliefs and practices that are more distinctively Catholic. Like the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics stress the sacraments more than do most Protestants; the sacraments are a visible means of receiving God's grace and are thus holy. For Catholics, there are seven sacraments:

1. Baptism.
2. Confirmation.
3. The Eucharist (The Body and Blood of Christ are considered actually present in the Eucharist elements so that the worshipper communes spiritually and physically with the Savior.)
4. Reconciliation (Formerly called Penance: post-baptismal sins are forgiven.)
5. Anointing of the sick.
6. Holy Orders (ordination).
7. Marriage.

Roman Catholics believe that the pope is the “Vicar of Christ on earth and the Visible Head of the Church.” His decisions and authority are supreme in all matters of faith and discipline. Other beliefs include that of Immaculate Conception (Mary was conceived without sin), Assumption (Mary was taken alive directly to Heaven like Enoch or Elijah), calling on the saints to help in prayer, Purgatory (a place of suffering to get rid of sins before getting to Heaven), Limbo (a place for

souls kept from Heaven but where there is not punishment—usually considered to be for children), use of the Rosary in prayer, praying the Twelve Stations of the Cross (commemorating the twelve events in Jerusalem from Jesus' trial to Calvary) and the Novenas, which include 27 days of praying to Mary and 27 days of thanking her for granting the petitions. Candidates for the priesthood may not marry. Salvation comes from having faith in God's grace and doing good works. (Frank S. Mead & Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 2001, pp. 95-96.)

Protestantism—"Protestant" is the name given to those who withdrew from the Church of Rome during the reformation, and thus were protesting many of the tenets of Roman Catholicism. "The Reformation was the 16th century movement leading to separation of Protestant Churches from the Roman Catholic Church (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002)."

The Reformation began with Martin Luther. By 1520, it had spread throughout Northern Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Some reformers of the 1500's, in addition to Luther, include Huldreich Zwingli, John Calvin and John Knox, who influenced people in France, the Netherlands, Scotland and England. The names most easily identified during this period were the Puritans (England) and the Huguenots (French Protestants), both of whom would be called evangelical today. In the 1600's, there were groups called the Congregationalists (actually Puritans who separated from the Anglican Church) and the Baptists (established by John Smyth, an Englishman who believed that only those who were old enough to express their faith should be baptized).

In the 1700's, the emphasis on the need for a personal religious experience, devotion and morality led to what

is called the evangelical faith as expressed in Methodism (which came from an English clergyman named John Wesley, who was trying to reform the Anglican Church (Church of England—in the United States, it is called the Episcopal Church). From his efforts came not only Methodists, but also Pentecostal and Holiness groups.

The emphasis for Protestants (literally “Protesters”) was a call for Christianity to return to the *Bible* as authority. Men like Wycliff and Tyndale, who were what might be called “pre-Protestant” or Reformation leaders, were those who set the foundation for what was to come. They paid with their lives as did approximately 40 million persons in the Middle Ages. If you read *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* you will see that, to the surprise of many, the ultimate price is still being paid today by the faithful.

Some common beliefs of Protestants include:

1. Authority of the *Bible*.
2. The Trinity (One God in three Persons).
3. Salvation by a personal faith in and obedience to Jesus.
4. Acceptance and practice of two sacraments, Baptism and The Lord’s Supper (also known as the Eucharist).

Within Protestantism, there is a wide variety of forms of worship, usually based on the individual group preference or understanding. This includes style and quantity of music, liturgy (style or form of worship), how sacraments are conducted, preaching and ministry. There is also a great variety in structure, forms of government, lines of authority and relationship to a governing body, if there is one, and in interaction with other Christian groups.

Unfortunately, some Protestant groups have begun to focus on differences rather than common bonds in Scripture. Most Protestants have basic Orthodox beliefs in common.

The Apostles' Creed is often accepted as a basic statement of Christian beliefs. It is based upon Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:22-36:

1. Verses 22 and 30—Jesus, Son of God.
2. Verse 23—Crucifixion.
3. Verse 24—Resurrection.
4. Verses 26-28—Believers' hope.
5. Verse 31—Descended into Hell.
6. Verse 32—Witnesses; Communion of saints.
7. Verses 33-34—Right hand of God.
8. Verse 36—Forgiveness and eternal life.

The following is a list of the seventeen statements of the Apostles' Creed with corresponding *Bible* verses:

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth—Genesis 1:1; Nehemiah 9:6; Acts 14:15 and Hebrews 11:3.
2. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord—Matthew 1:21; Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Luke 1:35; John 1:14; 3:18; 9:35; Hebrews 10:29 and I John 4:15.

3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost—Isaiah 3:64; Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:28-35.
4. Born of the Virgin Mary—Matthew 1:23.
5. Suffered under Pontius Pilate—Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 27:2, 13, 24; Mark 15:2, 4, 15; Luke 13:1; 23:4; John 18:35 and 19:1.
6. Was crucified, dead and buried—Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33 and John 19:23.
7. He descended into Hell—Acts 2:32 and I Peter 3:18.
8. The third day He rose again from the dead—Matthew 16:21, 32; Mark 9:9; John 21:19; Acts 4:33; 10:39-41 and Romans 10:9.
9. He ascended into Heaven—Luke 24:51; John 6:62; 20:17; Acts 1:9 and Hebrews 9:24.
10. And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty—Mark 16:19; John 17:5 and I Peter 3:22.
11. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead—Matthew 16:27; 19:28; 25:32; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; I Thessalonians 4:16-17 and Revelation 20:11-13.
12. I believe in the Holy Ghost—Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28; Luke 11:13; John 16:13; 20:21; Acts 1:5-8; 2:4, 38-39; Romans 8:9-11 and I John 2:27.
13. The Holy catholic Church (the universal Christian Church)—Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:23; 4:12; Colossians 1:24 and 2:19.

14. The communion of saints—Acts 2:42; Philippians 1:3-5; Hebrews 12:1 and I John 1:7.
15. The forgiveness of sins—Psalm 103:3-4; Matthew 6:14; Acts 5:31; 13:38; Ephesians 1:7 and I John 1:9.
16. The resurrection of the Body—Daniel 12:12; Psalm 49:15; John 5:25-29; 6:40; 8:51; 10:10-11; 11:25; Acts 24:15; II Corinthians 4:14; I Thessalonians 4:16-17 and Revelation 20:13.
17. And the life everlasting—Matthew 25:46; John 6:27; 10:28; Romans 2:27; 6:22; I Timothy 6:19; Titus 1:2; I John 2:25 and Jude 21.

Cults

A cult is “a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; also a minority religious group holding beliefs regarded as unorthodox or spurious (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002).” The purpose of a cult is to propagate beliefs and practices in opposition to accepted Christian belief.

Most cults usually believe and practice the following:

1. Denial of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost).
2. Denial of Jesus Christ and His atonement on the cross, His precious shed Blood and His resurrection from the dead as the only way to salvation. Cults usually acknowledge His existence, but put Him on a level with other men or prophets, but no more.
3. Many cults claim to believe the *Bible* but misquote it or misuse it in their activities or practices.

4. Deny the authority of the Word of God by adding special revelations, supposedly by divine inspiration, from leadership (either individual or collective).
5. They are "self-serving" in focus and intent.
6. They are humanistic, because they believe that humankind is in charge.
7. They are not theological, which implies an understanding of God, but rather espouse philosophies, which are attempts at understanding by man.
8. Often cults involve deception, on occasion blood oaths or other forms of manipulation, and sometimes cults display demonstrations of the powers of darkness.

The following are brief descriptions of major cults:

1. **WICCA**—This is the Church of witches and depends on the powers of darkness to accomplish goals. Many claim to be "white witches," meaning that they use these powers for good and not evil in an attempt to justify the source of their power, which is satanic, and flies in the face of every teaching of the *Bible*.
2. **MASONRY**—Freemasonry is a religion, although it is viewed by most people as a non-religious organization which claims that its sole purpose is to do good works. "Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion and its teachings are instruction in religion (Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, 1871, p. 213)." Further facts and practices from their basic materials include such things as:
 - a. The first Masonic legislator being none other than Buddha himself.
 - b. Intentional deception, especially of new members.

- c. A combination of religious practices from Eastern Mysticism, such as acceptance of many gods and goddesses.
 - d. Blood oaths.
 - e. Promise to follow the Luciferian doctrine.
 - f. Being baptized.
 - g. Being a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
 - h. Loyalty to Masonry above all else.
3. **UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALISTS**—Unitarians do not accept the Trinity. Their beliefs have been in existence and taught since the Second Century but the group, as known today, began in Colonial New England. Universalism is the belief that all people will eventually be saved. Unitarianism is the foundation for liberal theology. Unitarians and liberal theologians agree on certain key points:
- a. They do not believe the *Bible* is the Word of God.
 - b. They do not think that God is a person.
 - c. They think of Jesus as merely a man—an exceptional man like Moses and Buddha—but no more than a man.
 - d. The idea of Hell insults Unitarians and Universalists. No one will go to Hell, not even abortionists or other murderers.
 - e. They do not believe salvation is necessary.
4. **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**—The teachings of this group go directly against Christianity, and as usual with cults, claim that their teaching are real truth. Watchtower material is usually handed out with visitation. In addition to teaching that the

government is of the devil (which clearly goes against Hebrews 13:5),

- a. They deny the Trinity.
- b. They deny the deity of Jesus.
- c. They deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus.
- d. There is no Hell or eternal punishment.

For additional material on this topic, read Charles Trombley's book entitled, *Kicked out of the Kingdom* (Whitaker House, New Kensington, Pennsylvania, 1985), which gives an account of how God worked a miracle in his life by a physical healing in his family. The result was that he was kicked out of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization and God called him to a special ministry to which he has been faithful. Since then, he has authored many books, has been active in the Charismatic Movement, has a supernatural ministry in Malawi, Africa and continues to minister under the anointing and power of God as he travels with his wife Gladys, doing God's work.

5. **CHRISTIAN SCIENCE**—Founded by Mary Baker Eddy in Boston Massachusetts in 1879, the "Church of Christ, Scientist" believes that God is real because He exists, but everything else, such as a person's body, sin, sickness and death are unreal or actually only illusion. What is real is the Mind because it is God. The Trinity is denied, as are the deity of Jesus and final judgment. Some basic teachings include:
 - a. God is in everything and is everything.
 - b. God is good and all that is good is Mind.
 - c. Because God is Mind (or Spirit), everything that is not Spirit does not exist.

- d. Matter is not Spirit, so it does not exist; therefore, material things such as disease, sin, death and evil do not exist.
 - e. Only that which is good actually exists (Fritz Ridenour, *What's the Difference?*, Ventura, California, 1979, p. 116).
6. **MORMONISM**—The name Joseph Smith gave his organization was “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” but nothing in the teachings aligns with Christianity. The Trinity is not accepted by the Mormons, they do not believe that Jesus was fathered by God, nor that He was Divine. They deny that He is the means of salvation.

The *Book of Mormon* is considered to be a “revelation” to be added to the *Bible*. Its teachings are to be observed by all Mormons. In addition to believing in celestial marriage, which is not Biblical, they believe in spirit children awaiting birth on earth and in being baptized for the dead to assure their salvation. Other Mormon teachings are:

- a. God is material and once was a man as we now are.
- b. There are many gods.
- c. The *Bible* is not the completed revelation of God to man.
- d. Man is progressively becoming a god.
- e. Jesus is not the means of salvation but man reaches it by works.
- f. All men will spend eternity on some level of Heaven, dependent on works (Fritz Ridenour, *What's the Difference?*, Ventura, California, 1979, p. 117).



Summary/Review

1. BELIEF—Once again we are reminded that every person actually puts into practice what they believe regardless of what they profess. The practice indicates that their beliefs meet their needs which is not (in most cases) true. Yet change comes slowly because of pride, comfort and a lack of absolute truth due to apathy or complacency. Acceptance of beliefs usually comes from “trusted” relationships such as parents, siblings, pastors, school or even government. Most of the time the “belief” transmitted is either partially true or accepted without any personal study. At some point in time, every person needs to “own” their belief or faith based on personal experience with absolute truth.

2. CONFUSION—This can come from a partial truth even if well intended. It also comes from truth being taken out of context, reliance on feelings, wrong priorities, pride, deception (including by self), and false religions (whether major religions or cults). Confusion is in the mind and comes from satan regardless of the form it takes. God is not the author of confusion. Confusion can be eliminated by recognizing, accepting and applying absolute truth which is the Word of God. The result is found in Romans 14:17.

3. BELIEF SYSTEMS—These include major religions, and their offshoots whether sects, new religions or cults. Without exception, all of these except Christianity contain all or part of the following which are directly opposed to the Christian faith:

- a. Denial of the Trinity.
- b. Denial of the divinity of Jesus.
- c. Denial of the authority of the *Bible*.
- d. Denial of the means of salvation.

- e. Distorted presentation of the *Bible* that is intended for self-gain and to destroy the Orthodox belief of the Christian faith.

Additional Reading

Anis A. Shorrosh, *Islam Revealed*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988.

Bottom Line

Most people, including professed Christians, do not know what they believe or why.

Comfort or Commitment?

We can be comfortable by following logic, tradition or what others say or we can be committed by following the Word of God.

Basic Scriptural Truth

Isaiah 43:10 says:
God is the only God.

Chapter 5

A SOLID FOUNDATION

A few years ago, at the request of a friend, I went to the psychiatric ward of a hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The purpose was simply to visit my friend's family member, who had a lithium imbalance, and provide some encouragement. I was identified as "clergy" and upon entry to the ward, a small man with a beard in a neatly pressed suit walked up to me. He looked me straight in the eye and said with a rather crisp voice, "What these people do not need is religion. It will drive them crazy." My reply was, "Yes, and Jesus will set them free." With a rather startled look on his face and without another word spoken, he spun on his heel and departed.

My intent was certainly not to talk about "religion" but rather to share the love and healing power of Jesus, which I did. All too often people talk about "religion" which usually translates, at least for most people, to be rules, regulations, rituals and a gathering of people in worship of some form.

Religion is defined as, "A belief in and reverence for a supernatural power accepted as the creator and governor of the universe. It may also be a specific unified system of expression, e.g., Christian religion or Buddhist religion (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002)."

Religion is essentially an organized form of beliefs and expression in God intended to:

1. Answer such questions as:
 - a. "Who is God?"
 - b. "Does He really care about me?"
 - c. "What is the purpose of my life?"
 - d. "How can I accomplish or fulfill my destiny?"
 - e. "How can I have an abundant/successful life?"
 - f. "Is Scripture really true?"
 - g. "If so, how can it help me now?"
 - h. "Is God's power and help really available in a tangible way?"
 - i. "What happens when I die?"
2. Provide guidance/direction in a practical way that affects daily life.
3. Fulfills the inner need to be loved as an individual and to know that we are valuable to God who is watching over us.
4. To have the assurance that there is truly a purpose for our lives and that the Spirit of God will work supernaturally.

Christianity Is Not a Religion—It's a Relationship!

What is needed is not the "dead religion" of man's organization and efforts to "reach God," but a personal relationship with a Living Lord Who has radically and wonderfully transformed our lives through His Word and presence.

The basis for this “relationship” is what is termed “Orthodox Christianity,” which is a set of “right beliefs” as revealed in the *Bible* and confirmed through revelation of the Holy Spirit. This set of right beliefs is essential for all Christians because it is the basis for beginning a relationship with the living Lord and combats heresy. Heresy is “An opinion or doctrine in conflict with established religious beliefs (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002).”

Heresy has a tendency to promote division or dissension. Heresy does not necessarily have to be an outright lie. It can be a partial truth which exaggerates or emphasizes a truth and denies or leaves out another truth all together. This amounts to perversion or pollution of the Gospel and is seen in every false religion and cult, such as the Gnostics or Unitarians.

Orthodox Christianity

Orthodox means:

1. Adhering to the established and traditional faith, especially in religion.
2. Adhering to the Christian faith as set forth in the early Christian ecumenical creeds.
3. Conforming to the accepted standards or established practice (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002).

Orthodox doctrines or beliefs are essential to establishing a relationship with God and are the beginning of a life-long journey of spiritual growth and intimacy with God as He intended. For many people, “orthodox beliefs” are the “beginning and the end” of their relationship to God. This is not Biblical because there is much more that God intends for us.

The following are essential basic Orthodox beliefs/doctrines:

1. Authority of the *Bible*. The *Bible* (Scripture) is the inspired Word of God, a revelation from God to man, the living infallible and everlasting rule of faith and conduct, and is superior to conscience and reason. (II Timothy 3:15-17; I Peter 1:23-25; Hebrews 4:12) This is the Recorded Word of God on which everything else is determined and is the standard by which all things are judged.
2. The Triune Godhead. The Godhead is comprised of three separate and distinct personalities. The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit, who are eternally self-existent, self-revealed and function as one entity. Jesus, who is God manifested in the flesh, is the second member of the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is God manifested in the believer, is the third member of the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Jesus the Son. (John 1:1-5, 10-14; Matthew 28:18-20; Genesis 1:1-2; John 17:5; John 16:13) Without acceptance of the Trinity it is impossible to be Christian because the only way to the Father is through the Son and this is done by the leading of the Holy Spirit.
3. Man needs Redemption. Man was created good and upright, for God said,

Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness (Genesis 1:26).

Man, however, by voluntary transgression, fell, and his only hope of redemption is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-21.) Man is not God and can never become God therefore he cannot redeem or save himself. God is the only one who can fill the "void" and bring man into a right relationship.

4. The Salvation of Man. Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:24 and John 3:3.) On the cross, Jesus Christ became sin and sickness, providing both salvation and divine healing for all mankind (Psalm 103:3),

being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

For by grace we are saved through faith. (Ephesians 2:8)

The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; that is the word of faith which we are preaching; that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:8-10)

5. **Virgin Birth.** Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin girl named Mary, and therefore Christ was and is both truly God and truly man. (Isaiah 3:64; Matthew 1:18; Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:28-35.) This not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church teaching about the Immaculate Conception, which means that Mary was conceived without sin. Although Mary was highly favored, Scripture in no way teaches that she was without sin. She was the human part of Jesus, and the Holy Ghost was the God part of Jesus that made Him the Son of God. To deny the virgin birth is to say that the inspired Word of God is wrong, which means that Jesus could not be the Savior.
6. **Bodily Resurrection.** Scripture is clear that Jesus was raised back to life not just in Spirit but also in body. The secular historian Josephus records this fact as well as Scripture. This is the “heart” of the Christian faith. (Matthew 16:21; Mark 9:9; John 21:19; Acts 4:33; Acts 10: 39-41 and Romans 10:9.) We have the only living God, as evidenced by the resurrection, which was verified by many but also assures hope of resurrection to believers for eternal life. (I Corinthians 15:20-23, 52-57; II Corinthians 4:14; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; I John 2:25 and Revelation 20:13.)
7. **Holy Ghost.** The Holy Ghost (also called the Holy Spirit) is present in the world and works in the lives of believers to guide, strengthen, empower and minister. Through Him, we are able to

have life abundant as well as life eternal. (John 3:3, 5-7, 16:13; John 20:21; Acts 1:5-8, 2:4, 2:38-39; Romans 8:11.

8. Two Sacraments. A "sacrament" is a sacred act as expressly set forth in Scripture and observed and practiced by believers. One is baptism, (Matthew 28:18-20) and the other is Holy Communion (the Eucharist or the "Lord's Supper") (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

Additional Beliefs/Doctrines Practiced

Remember that people put into practice what they actually believe, not just what they recite as a "doctrine," a "creed," as part of worship, or say they believe from someone's teaching.

A "doctrine" is a "teaching." Normally, this is based on the *Bible* (Scripture) as interpreted by the Church group to which the individual belongs. It is intended to be a guide for living for both now and hereafter.

The *Bible* is a book of faith but also includes scientific facts, all of which are correct (as science is continually verifying). The *Bible* also gives direction for all situations in life. Some of the guidance you will find address, but are not limited to, the areas health care, ecology, family structure and relationship, care and responsibilities of family members, proper and improper sexual relationships, care and responsibility to the poor/needy (both physically and spiritually), social interaction, international relations, and other financial matters (including tithes and offerings), worship (having a vital relationship to God) and many more. These Biblical directives, when followed faithfully, produce the order God intends in the world, the individual and in the Kingdom of God.

There are three types of doctrine:

1. Biblical. This is not loosely based on Scripture but a basic scriptural truth that is taken in context and confirmed or verified through other cross-references in Scripture.
2. Denominational. This usually has a Biblical base but is expanded or limited by the leaderships theological understanding, personal

experience, and preference. While most Protestant groups encourage individuals to study (II Timothy 2:15) and allow personal interpretation, in practice, if the results of *Bible* study differ from the denominational understanding, it will be discouraged, even if it is Biblically accurate.

3. **Personal.** Personal doctrine should be based on Scripture, but if it is not, it should be seriously questioned. The usual rationale for excesses is that of a “feeling,” “experience” or “new revelation.”

A doctrine should be based on a solid Biblical foundation, not on an individual's feeling, experience or preference. To find out whether a doctrine is Biblical, consider the following:

1. Does it match Scripture? Is it found in Scripture? Is it in context?
2. Does It give Inner-Peace? (John 14:26, 14:27, 16:13) If it is Divine Revelation from the Holy Spirit:
 - a. It will not go against Scripture.
 - b. It will give inner-peace.
 - c. There will be no confusion.
3. Does it lift up Jesus as Lord and Savior? Does it confirm His Word? Will acting on it glorify Jesus?
4. Does it give hope and help? (II Timothy 3:16) Does it convict but not condemn? Does it correct but not manipulate? Does it develop your relationship with Jesus? Will it transform lives as Jesus intended?
5. Is it balanced? Does it have the same emphasis or priority as given by Scripture or has it been changed? Is it legalistic (man's rules) or does it set people free (God's Word)?
6. Will it help bring the Kingdom (Romans 14:17) in individual lives through worship or discipleship, in families, in Church, in the community and in the world?

Examples of Specific and Additional Beliefs/Doctrines

While most Christian denominations (denominations usually reflect a preference and practice in some specific area of faith) state acceptance of Orthodox beliefs, there are differences in the specific practice of them.

Specific examples follow:

Eucharist or Holy Communion

FREQUENCY VARIES—by denominational or congregational choice.

UNDERSTANDING VARIES—Most Protestant denominations believe that the bread (or wafers) and grape juice *represent* the body and Blood of Jesus that was given for us. The Roman Catholic Church believes in transubstantiation, which means that the elements of bread and wine actually *become* the body and Blood of Jesus. For others, the middle ground of being *more than representative*, but *less than transubstantiated* into the physical is the idea that Christ indwells the elements.

PARTICIPANTS VARY—Some groups have “closed Communion,” that is, they allow only baptized believers or Church members to participate in Communion. Others allow visitors and children to participate, and some groups open the Communion Table to all who in true faith have turned to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Baptism with Water

METHOD VARIES—There are three primary means of water baptism:

1. **IMMERSION.** Sometimes called “dunking,” this procedure involves taking the individual completely under the surface of the water. This is the most common practice among Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Church of Christ and most Pentecostal Churches. The Brethren practice triune immersion...three times forward.

2. **SPRINKLING.** Sprinkling involves the minister's taking a liberal portion of water in his or her hand and placing it on the head of the person being baptized. This may be done once or multiple times, usually three, representing the Trinity. This is the primary practice among Episcopalians, Methodists, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians.
3. **POURING.** This procedure involves taking a pitcher of water and pouring a liberal amount over the head of the one being baptized. Lutherans, some Methodists and a few others practice pouring, based upon the preference of the individual.

AGE VARIES—Most who baptize by immersion or pouring do so for those who are old enough to understand the Gospel and have made a “profession of faith” for themselves. This is often called “believers’ baptism.” The age at which understanding of the Gospel is possible is called the “age of accountability,” but is not explicitly given in the *Bible*. It varies, of course, by the maturity of the individual, and can range anywhere from six to twelve years of age and up.

Those who baptize by sprinkling generally do it for infants as well as adults. For infants, the explanation is given that this is the method of beginning one's entry into the Body of Christ and the child will be *confirmed* when old enough to actually make his or her own profession of faith. This usually involves a Confirmation Class or Catechism Class, in which the young person is taught the basics of Christianity and then the earlier baptism is confirmed in a special service which includes the laying on of hands.

Dedication is not baptism. Dedication is used for infants and young children to dedicate them to the Lord and parents promise to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When old enough the child would then make a profession of faith and be baptized. Christening is another term used for either baptizing

or dedicating infants and is the time that the child is given his or her name. It is usually recorded and Church records are often used for legal matters.

UNDERSTANDING VARIES—Some denominations are adamant that water baptism saves, but Scripture does not say so. Only a personal faith in Jesus is necessary for salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in the shed Blood of Jesus.

Others believe that water baptism is the method by which a person, regardless of age, comes into the Body of Christ and begins an initial relationship with Jesus. This is why many groups sprinkle children when in fact, children are covered by prevenient grace until the age of accountability when a personal choice is to be made.

Biblically, there is a command to be baptized if you make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The only exception would be lack of opportunity due to extreme circumstances, such as impending death and lack of time or water. Baptism amounts to an outward sign of an inward change (the person has already been born again by confession of Jesus according to the Word (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9 and 10:13—this path of Scriptures is sometimes called the Roman Road). Baptism is a public profession of Christ. It is an act of obedience to the command of Jesus. The water does not save you—only the Blood of Jesus can save to the uttermost.

FREQUENCY VARIES—Normally, a person is baptized once. There is no need to repeat the experience. Exceptions to this general rule might occur if a person did not remember being baptized/sprinkled as an infant and wanted to make a public profession and receive water baptism, but this should not be on a repeated basis.

TRANSFER OF BAPTISM VARIES—Some Churches do not accept another Church's baptism. This action cannot be justified Biblically. They may require re-baptism for membership in their

local Church; however, no one can join Christ's Church. He adds to His Church daily, based upon acceptance of His Son Jesus.

Originally, circumcision was a sign of the New Covenant. Today, baptism is an outward sign to the world; the inward seal of God to the believer is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Basic Scriptural Truth, regardless of personal preference of method, is that believers are to accept baptism.

God is not a legalist. There is Biblical evidence that can be presented for each of the three methods, depending on your preference. While Jesus never gave specific instructions on how to baptize, the original Christians were all Jews who only practiced immersion. The *Didache*, an historical document assumed to be the teaching of the 12 Apostles, is interesting in that it talks about running water, still water and amounts of water, depending on what you have available. Ultimately it says in today's language, "just do it." God is interested in the heart, not just outward actions.

Full-Gospel Beliefs/Doctrines

Full-Gospel Churches are those Churches that believe that the indwelling presence of God is a sign and seal of relationship of accepting Jesus (New Birth). In addition, they believe that the Holy Spirit works actively in and through supernatural manifestations, such as the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, as Scripture states and as Jesus promised.

In addition to the Orthodox Christian doctrines previously described, there are valid Biblical doctrines that were practiced by the early Church and given by Jesus for spiritual growth and ministry, which He intended to be a part of the normal Christian life. The following are normally accepted and observed by Full-Gospel Churches:

1. **BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**—Based on Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5-8 and Acts 2:1-12. It is a specific time of empowering by the Holy Spirit. It is a command of our Lord Jesus to the disciples to wait until they received *POWER* and then they would be witnesses. This is a vital part of the Christian life and essential to fulfill the calling Jesus gave to all believers.

2. **SPEAKING IN TONGUES**—The *Bible* teaches about three types of tongues and the believer should understand clearly about them and what place they have in worship and ministry (see Chapter 13). This is a part of the Christian life that is often misunderstood and thus either neglected or abused.
3. **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**—The spiritual gifts are actually supernatural tools for ministry that work through the Holy Spirit. Without accepting and using these supernatural abilities, a Christian cannot be as effective as the Lord calls us to be.
4. **HEALING**—This is a topic that is either neglected or abused because many people do not realize what Jesus promises about healing for all believers. Healing is not limited to the physical realm, but also includes spiritual, emotional and relational healing, as well as healing of the memories. This healing is available to every believer today based upon the Word of God, but many miss it because of attitudes, false teachings or fear.
5. **RESTING IN THE SPIRIT**—Resting in the Spirit or being “slain in the Spirit” is not merely emotional. It is not a new phenomenon but has occurred throughout Scripture and occurs today when the power of God comes upon a person and the intensity is so great the body cannot remain standing.
6. **DELIVERANCE**—Deliverance occurs when a bad spiritual influence is removed from the life of a believer, and a bondage is removed. There will be freedom and more of the Holy Spirit can work. This is not necessarily as you might see in the movie, “The Exorcist” and you will be surprised at how it works today (see Chapter 15).
7. **ANOINTING WITH OIL**—This is a Biblical practice and not just a religious ritual. It is an area that God uses today just as He did years ago.
8. **FOOT-WASHING**—This is a Biblical practice that is often neglected, but is quite powerful in the life of the believer.

9. **FASTING**—This is the practice of not eating for a period of time and replacing food with prayer. The Apostolic Church fasted twice a week, but today fasting is usually done at the request of the Church leaders to prepare for a special event or in seeking the Lord about specific matters. There are a number of different types of fasts (see Chapter 16).

Now that you have found that *JESUS* is the *FOUNDATION* (Matthew 6:33, 7:24; Luke 6:48 and I Corinthians 3:11), it is time to begin to build on the Foundation by establishing a personal relationship with Him. Prepare to grow in Him by recognizing and developing both physical and spiritual tools that will enable you to experience both “life eternal and life abundant” as Jesus taught.

Summary/Review

1. **RELIGION**—Religion is essentially an organized form of beliefs and expression in God that is utilized in worship and should be used in making decision and resolving problems in life.
2. **CHRISTIANITY**—It is not just a religion—it is a relationship. Although Christianity is called a religion or faith because of how it is practiced, it has the only Living Lord Who was raised from the dead and provides a vital, living relationship with God.
3. **ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY**—Describes the basic essential Christian beliefs of the early Church whereby an individual personal relationship may be established. This is the beginning of a relationship with God, not the sum total of it.
4. **DOCTRINE**—means “teaching,” and there are three types of doctrine: Biblical, Denominational and Personal. All doctrine should have a Biblical foundation that is in context and not distorted. There are Biblical guidelines that every individual should use in determining what is Biblical.

5. **HOLY COMMUNION AND BAPTISM**—are part of Orthodox Christianity but vary in understanding and practice.
6. **FULL GOSPEL DOCTRINES**—are Biblical doctrines that are intended to be part of normal Christianity and are needed for spiritual growth, ministry and fulfillment of purpose in the individual believer's life. These doctrines include: Salvation, Healing, and Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Bottom Line

Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by following tradition, or committed by following Jesus as revealed in the Orthodox Christian faith.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God is not a legalist. He looks at your heart, not merely your actions.

Chapter 6

GETTING CONNECTED

The spreading branches appeared to be flourishing, except for two that seemed to be withering and drying up. A closer look revealed that these branches were broken off and separated from the vine. Almost everyone has seen vines with little branches. When those branches are separated from the vine, they die. Why? The vine is the source of life for the branch and so it is with every person. Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches.

In John 15:1-16, Jesus talks about being **CONNECTED** to Him. He also speaks about **ABIDING** which is staying connected and living a fruitful life in His power. This basic relationship, which is essential and must be maintained, is called salvation.

Not Everyone Sees the Need to Be Connected

For most people having a personal relationship with Jesus is not a priority. Independence (self-reliance and strength to achieve goals on one's own) is a quality that is valued in our society. The concept of sin and the need to be obedient to God are either ignored or placed in the category of "religion" as something not really needed in life.

The frantic search goes on as people spend money, time and energy to find fulfillment, which is elusive and impossible outside of Christ. Establishing a relationship with Jesus is the beginning of inner-peace,

fulfillment and accomplishing the divine purpose for which you were created.

Fourteen Years Is a Long Time to Run

I tried to live life on my terms from 1960 to 1974. During that time I was aware in my spirit that God was speaking to me, but I kept running hoping to find what I wanted, on my terms. I specifically remember one occasion when I was in Vietnam—the year was 1968. There was a fierce battle and a strong possibility that I could die. I remember having the thought that maybe I should have done what the Lord wanted and entered the ministry.

Immediately, a second thought followed. It was not particularly commendable, but it was at least honest, as I understood the situation. I said out loud to God during the attack, “There won’t be a battlefield conversion because I’d rather die than be a pastor—my heart is not right for it.”

The Lord spoke audibly to me, “You are not going to die, in fact you will not even be hurt.” My response was definitely not one of gratitude as I said, “I don’t care, I still won’t do it.” It would be five more intensely miserable years without peace before I made the vital choice.

Another time the Lord spoke to me when I was in Germany and the Chaplain asked me to be the head usher for chapel. I thought, “Why not?” I was “hiding in the Church” and it was a simple task.

Another time, I was asked to teach a youth class on Sunday because the teacher was absent. With no way out I grudgingly said I would. When the day came, it was a total disaster because I was under such conviction that I could not even pray, much less teach.

There were other encounters with God during these years, but I chose to discount or ignore them even though they were increasingly difficult and uncomfortable. One such occasion was in 1972 when, upon returning to the United States, my wife and I presented our children for baptism. As I stood in the front of the Church holding my son and my wife stood holding our daughter, the presence of God was so strong I almost cried.

If I could have left the Church I would have because God wanted to know about my relationship to Him. I remember telling Him, “You can have my family and children. I present them to You but you still can't have me. I'm not the right one for the job. I know my heart and I'm not preacher material.”

God asked me a question that was so clear, “Do you have better judgment than I do?” Since I thought I knew my heart, I almost told Him “yes”—but didn't—and chose to continue to run for yet another year.

During these years, I tried everything I could to satisfy the inner void and hunger, but nothing worked. Even though I had succeeded in some areas, at least by the world's standards, and had a wonderful family, I still lacked the true peace and fulfillment that come only from a relationship with Jesus.

HOW GLAD AND GRATEFUL I AM THAT GOD DID NOT QUIT ON ME. He began to show me, line upon line and precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10), that I was called to be ME and OBEY Him and He would do the rest! Through the years of ministry which included some trials, tribulations and needs that I certainly couldn't fill, **GOD HAS BEEN FAITHFUL** in supplying every need physically as well as spiritually. Hallelujah! It all began with a decision to respond to Him and trust Him. Let's take a look at how you can make a decision to trust Him.

Let's Get Started

God is in the now. He is the great “I AM”, Who is present tense. The Name of God is found in Exodus 3:14-15: YHWH. It is future tense for “I will be.”

He is the God of the present whether it was in the past, today or the future. He is alive and active in His creation. Believe the Word of God that you are special and precious to Him and that He wants to give you the best.

God did not create any junk. You were created in His image! Accept His offer of life abundant and life eternal (John 10:10) beginning now!

Consider These Things

It's time to think Biblically, rather than like the world. Our thought process affects our relationship with God. Basically, we all approach life through one of two ways of thinking:

PLATONIC THOUGHT—named after Plato, is the Eastern approach.

1. Everything is composed of parts or sub-groups even if you cannot see or measure them.
2. There is a recognition of the supernatural.
3. There is a continuing process of breath, life and growth.
4. God the Father created, creates and will continue to create.
5. God the Son saved, saves and will continue to save.
6. God the Holy Spirit empowered, empowers and will continue to empower.

This understanding is one of on-going present tense participation by God. This is why it is easier for the Eastern Orthodox Christians to accept the supernatural and miracles.

ARISTOTELIAN THOUGHT—named after Aristotle, is the Western approach.

1. Everything is scientific and logical, with no basic parts or sub-groups that cannot be measured, explained or understood.
2. The historical approach is the focus. There is a one time activity that accomplishes a purpose or goal.
3. God the Father created.
4. God the Son saved

5. God the Holy Spirit empowered

This understanding is one of past-tense activity by God. This is why it is harder for Western Christians to accept the supernatural and miracles.

We cannot establish a relationship with God by reason, knowledge and logic. Scripture tells us that we cannot understand spiritual things with the carnal mind. Truth is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

I Thessalonians 5:23 tells us that we are composed of three parts: spirit, soul and body.

1. Spirit—Knows God and relates to God.
2. Soul—Mind, emotions, will, intellect and personality. Relates to self.
3. Body—Relates to the physical world.

Normally, people try to use the *five physical senses* of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing, to contact, understand and relate to God. Adam and Eve did this in the Garden of Eden.

We are called to use the *five spiritual senses* of prayer, faith, praise, revelation and the Word of God to fellowship with, understand and relate to God. We are often defeated because we are moved by physical feeling and do not pay attention to what God says.

Jesus says in John 3:3 that you must be born again. There is no such thing as a nonborn again Christian. All Christians are born again or they are not Christians.

To be born again spiritually is a life transforming encounter with the Living God based upon His Word. It is much more than just separating from an old life-style and trying to change.

Salvation

Salvation is the result of a believer's response to Christ based upon faith, and is accomplished when an individual puts total trust in Christ for all things, both now and in the hereafter. Salvation (*Soteria*) denotes deliverance granted by God to those who accept His conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:12).

Being saved (*sozo*), or being born again, means that through spiritual birth in Jesus we are delivered from separation (Hell) to a relationship with God (Heaven) (Matthew 1:21). Salvation is available because of God's unchanging love (John 3:16-17). No one comes to the Father except through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

For a Biblical reference, see what is called the Roman Road. There are four Scriptures in the book of Romans that provide a clear process involved in salvation: Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9 and 10:13.

God wants you to pray from your heart, in your own words, about your need, your sin, asking Jesus to be your Lord to take control of your life. There will be an immediate change as you begin your walk with Him.

Components of Salvation

CONVICTION—Realization of a need that you cannot satisfy. Conviction is brought in your life by the Holy Spirit because God wants you to have an intimate relationship with Him and because you have the measure of faith to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

CONFESSION—This is speaking with your mouth what you know to be true in your heart (spirit). Specifically, it is speaking two things:

1. That you have done wrong by rebelling against God and choosing to please yourself first instead of Him.
2. That Jesus is Lord.

At this point you ask to be forgiven by God for past offenses in thought, word and deed and ask Christ to live inside and control your life. This is spoken by you, but accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

CONVERSION—Is the change of direction and thinking from old to new. This indicates an internal change in thinking and acting. Your standard of behavior is now Jesus Christ and no longer the world. Conversion includes renewing your mind with the Word of God.

COMMITMENT—Is not only the verbal statement of intent, but the measurable action in life-style of following Christ with prayers, presence, gifts and service. This involves living your faith by putting it into practice daily.

Changes

II Corinthians 5:17 tells us:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

When something becomes new, there are definitely changes. These changes are seen in spirit, soul and body.

1. **SPIRIT**—What is “born again” is your spirit (John 3:5-6). Romans 8:16 says that God's Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Our hunger and heart's desire is to be close to Him.
2. **SOUL**—Romans 12:2 says we are not conformed to the world, but are transformed by the renewing of our minds (souls). Our thinking is controlled by the Word of God, not the world.
3. **BODY**—Romans 12:1 tells us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service. Our actions glorify God because our heart's desire is to be with Him and please Him.

These changes continue as we become more like Him. This is sometimes called moving "from glory to glory." We are all works in progress and God is constantly changing and refining us as we seek (Matthew 6:33) and allow Him to work in and among us.

Some Common Misconceptions

UNIVERSAL SALVATION—There is no such thing as universal salvation. There are false teachers (wolves in sheep's clothing) who teach that all people will be saved. In some cases it is taught that God loves the world and wouldn't send anyone to Hell even if they do not accept Jesus as Savior. The essential element seems to be a belief in the existence of a god, regardless of religion, and not necessarily God the Father, Whom Christians know. Still others teach that everyone is already saved even if they don't know it because of what Jesus did on the cross. Scripture, though, is clear:

No one comes to the Father except through the Son (John 14:6).

ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED—This doctrine is sometimes called "eternal security," and is not Biblically true, although some major denominations teach it as truth. II Peter 3:9 tells us:

The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

While this tells us that He wants everyone to know Him, it also tells us that there are conditions, beginning with repentance.

John 3:3 tells us that it is essential for each person to have a spiritual birth (be born again by repenting and accepting Jesus).

Luke 6:46 tells quite clearly the necessity for obedience. If obedience is not present, the experience amounts to a false profession described in Titus 1:16.

Matthew 7:21-23 clearly describes those who, at one time had a relationship to Jesus and performed works in His Name, but did not remain obedient.

Matthew 24:13 reminds everyone to be obedient and faithful because endurance is rewarded.

Matthew 25:1-13 tells about Ten Virgins. Five were wise (those who had oil in their lamps) and five were foolish (those who ran out of oil in their lamps). The Wise Virgins are those who maintained their relationship and the Foolish Virgins are those who substituted formalism for relationship and were not prepared.

Hebrews 5:12-14 tells of the need to mature in the faith, as does Titus 2:11-12. Hebrews 6:1-3 encourages spiritual progress but Hebrews 6:4-6 describes the peril or danger of apostasy (turning from Christ and not being obedient and enduring unto the end). This is describing those who at one time apparently had a vital relationship with Jesus but decided to turn their backs on Him and not be steadfast as encouraged in Hebrews 6:10-12.

No one can “lose his salvation,” but he may choose to “discard it” by repeated and intentional disobedience. Actions reflect the heart. See Matthew 7:13-14, which describes entry into the Kingdom.

Love is demonstrated by keeping His commandments (John 14:15, 24).

Biblically, salvation is an ongoing process. A common explanation is that salvation is past in that we established a relationship and have been forgiven. It is present in that we are to have an active and obedient relationship. It is future in that we are to be faithful to the end. In the Greek, justification is in the *aorist* tense, completely in the past. Sanctification is present tense, and glorification is future tense. True salvation includes all three, not just the past tense.

God wants us to have both life eternal and abundant life, both of which begin with salvation, but develop as we mature in the faith and have a more intimate relationship with Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Summary/Review

1. CONNECTED—you must be connected to God to have spiritual life.
2. THINKING—the way you think determines how you respond to the world and also to God.
3. TRIPARTITE HUMANITY—we are composed of three parts, spirit, soul and body, and we must relate to God by spirit.
4. SALVATION—this is a relationship based on a personal faith in Jesus Christ and His Covenant with us by repentance and obedience.
5. ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED—is not Biblical.
6. OBEDIENCE—is the key (John 14:15).

Additional Reading

Charles Trombley, *Why God Became Man*, Charles Trombley Ministries, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, 1996.

Bottom Line

You must be connected to God to be spiritually alive.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by thinking like the world, or committed by thinking Biblically.

Basic Scriptural Truth

Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. To have life, we must be connected.

Chapter 7 IN HIS IMAGE

Recently, my wife Joyce and I were blessed to experience the birth of another grandchild. As we stood in front of the glass window watching the initial care of weighing and measuring the baby, we overheard the relative of another child ask the same question that we heard when all of our other grandchildren were born, “Doesn’t (name of child) look like (either one or both parents were named)?”

My immediate thought, which I did not express was, “Well duhhh, what do you expect?” So, I said, “Since, (name of child) has the genes of both parents it stands to reason that there is a similarity.” This is because each child is created in the image of the parents! What I did see was another precious child, created in the image of parents, but also an individual in the image of God with all of the potential to live a full and productive life.

Just as every child is created in the image of the parents, because of genetics, so we are created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-27 says:

Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

This image includes spirit, soul and body.

A Complete Package

As I look at newborn children, I am in awe of the fact that there is so much contained in such a small package. All systems are working and all of the potential is waiting to be developed. Naturally, as nourishment (food and attention) is provided, the child develops physically—usually rather quickly in the first few months. Likewise, the child develops mentally and socially with continued interaction with parents (in addition to playing with the child, we are told, it is also important to read to him or her). The child is also able to recognize and respond spiritually (Mark 10:13-16).

Even though the child can respond spiritually, he or she does not yet have the capacity to defend himself or herself spiritually; therefore, it is essential that parents provide spiritual protection as well as spiritual development. Protection comes through the scriptural application of the Word of God, the Name of Jesus and the Blood of Jesus. Development comes through reading *Bible* stories, singing and praying.

Spiritual DNA

Just as a child has the genetics of both father and mother, including characteristics, attributes and potential, so believers have the spiritual DNA of our Heavenly Father. Galatians 5:22-23 describes the fruit of the Spirit which is our spiritual DNA—spiritual qualities of our Heavenly Father in us that must be developed.

The fruit of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit working in us to produce the nature of Jesus and these character traits are reflected in our actions and relationships. These character traits or fruit of the Spirit are the result of Christ's being in control of our lives.

As we mature in faith, the fruit of the Spirit develops more because our relationship is more intimate. This should be reflected in our love, obedience, submission and hunger for His Manifest Presence (supernatural presence of God among His people).

God's character must be present in us for it to influence others to accept and serve Him. Fruit reflects our relationship and the spiritual gifts reflect tools for ministry. The tools are useless and ineffective without the basis of love for God and man (Matthew 22:36-40) and daily commitment of our lives to His control.

This control is accomplished by our willingly dying to self through not giving in to natural selfish desires and instead, drawing on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome them (see Galatians 2:20 and Romans 7:22-8:8). This is done in all areas of life (physical, emotional, relational and spiritual), not just in some, and it is on a moment-to-moment basis as desires are encountered and decisions are made.

Specific DNA Characteristics

Fruit is "A plant, crop or product; result; outcome; offspring (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002)." Each of the various portions of the fruit of the Spirit requires development. These seeds of DNA, planted by the Holy Spirit, are developed through nourishment, obedience and cooperative effort with God to produce the fruit of God's character in us. This fruit is essential to our continued and intimate relationship with God, as well as our relationships with and ministry to others.

The DNA characteristics are listed in Galatians 5:22-23. So, let's take a brief look at each one.

LOVE—Love is more than a feeling. It is a choice. *Agape* (life-giving love) is a choice to put another person's well-being ahead of yours as husbands do for wives, parents for children and Christ for us. This love is a fruit that must be developed and grown through relationship with God the Father. When you give God priority, His presence with and in you produces love (see I Corinthians 13). It comes from God's presence because He is love.

JOY—Happiness is temporary (satisfaction) based on conditions or situations. Joy is permanent (delight and fulfillment) based on personally and intimately knowing Jesus and His promises.

Nehemiah 8:10 says that the joy of the Lord is our strength. This comes from hunger and obedience. Joy is not an emotion but rather a spiritual reality (of knowing Jesus and His salvation) made evident in our lives as seen in our choices and relationships.

PEACE—Peace is not merely the absence of strife, but the presence of every good gift and every perfect gift from God. It represents wholeness and comes from being justified by faith, according to Romans 5:1 with a certainty of His promise for our future (see Jeremiah 29:11 for what God has planned for us, His children, by adoption). The desire for an inner peace is often the mysterious driving force behind people who are searching for meaning in life. It is elusive for many—in fact, probably most—people in the world because what is being tried is not from Jesus. See John 14:27 for the origin of true peace, and Philippians 4:7 for the result of peace. Romans 14:17 tells us that peace is part of the Kingdom of God.

LONGSUFFERING—Longsuffering means a long temper (as opposed to a short temper) and is associated with patience and endurance. It means that there is self restraint even when the individual is provoked. It is a quality of God, as listed in Exodus 34:6. Colossians 3:13 describes part of the character of the New Man (one who is born again) and identifies longsuffering as one of the qualities to be directed to our fellowman. God is longsuffering toward us. Longsuffering is a reflection of love and is associated with hope and mercy because of what God can do and what He has already done for us.

GENTLENESS—Gentleness has to do with being considerate and kind and not insisting on the letter of the law. Gentleness has to do with wisdom (Matthew 10:16 and James 3:17). It comes from the Holy Spirit and reflects a mildness such as parents should exercise with their children (I Thessalonians 2:7). Gentleness involves doing things in the nicest way possible. It is an absolute requirement for servants of the Lord (II Timothy 2:24).

GOODNESS—Goodness involves being in a right relationship with God, and being morally honorable and pleasing to God. It involves not only knowing the truth of God (Romans 15:14), but also doing it (Galatians 6:10, Colossians 3:12). It is the kindness of heart in action or love and holiness in action. This means someone has experienced God and is being obedient.

FAITH—This means to be of a firm persuasion or a conviction based upon hearing. It means there is an assurance, a trust, and a reliability. Faith comes from God and every person is given the measure of faith needed to believe that Jesus is the Christ. The main elements in faith are:

1. Firm conviction based on revelation knowledge from God (II Thessalonians 2:11-12).
2. Personal surrender to Christ (John 1:12).
3. Change in behavior inspired by surrendering to Him (II Corinthians 5:7).

There are three basic types (or stages) of faith:

1. Measure of Faith—basic amount of trust needed to believe in and accept Jesus Christ. This is what is needed for establishing a personal relationship with Jesus. This moves your heart to begin your spiritual journey with Jesus (Romans 12:3).
2. Fruit of Faith—His character in you that must be developed by obedience and love. This is what is needed for daily living, maintaining a vital relationship with God and finishing the race of faith. This moves hearts—both God's and man's (Galatians 5:22).
3. Gift of Faith—a gift imparted from God that is intended to be used in operation of ministry. This can move mountains and do the supernatural for God (I Corinthians 12:9). It is possible to have this gift and still

miss Heaven (I Corinthians 13:2), so it is essential that we develop and maintain fruit before seeking and using gifts.

MEEKNESS—This describes a humbleness in attitude of heart and mind as well as action. It means to be under the control of God (I Peter 3:4). It is true submission to God just as a war horse is under the control of the rider. It means that you do not struggle against or rebel against God, because you are daily dying to self, giving up pride and desiring the heart of God. It is not a weakness, but a controlled strength, like that of Jesus. It is associated with self control under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and simultaneously the Lamb of God who died for our sins. He knew when to cleanse the temple and when to lay down His life.

SELF CONTROL— First Corinthians 9:25-27 describes a rigid self control practiced by athletes with a goal of gaining the prize. Without a goal, discipline is nothing more than self-punishment. With the goal of pleasing God in spirit, soul and body, denial of self seems small because of the eternal reward. The power given to man by God can be abused and therefore demands submission and accountability. This means man's will must come under the operation of the Holy Spirit. This is a response by man to God's righteousness and gifts.

God's Directions for Being Fruitful

John 15:1-8 tells about the branch abiding in the vine and the branch bearing MUCH fruit. This fruit is normally thought to be converts or disciples but I personally believe that it means the Fruit of the Spirit. God is glorified when a believer matures in the spiritual DNA and abides in Him. To abide is to be vitally attached for life through a personal relationship and obedience. It includes continuing faithfulness, relating to others in love and making disciples.

Fruit is produced first in our own lives and then in reaching out to others. A list of the areas for being fruitful are listed in II Peter 1:4-10.

1. Faith.
2. Virtue (praise).
3. Knowledge of God.
4. Self Control (temperance).
5. Patience (endurance).
6. Holiness (Godliness).
7. Brotherly Kindness (affection).
8. Charity (love).

Pray to ABOUND in these areas and you will not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ or His blessings as you apply them to life.

Heart not Just Head

There are two types of knowledge and it is important to know the difference. It is reported that during a sea voyage, John Wesley thought he might perish in a storm that had arisen and was naturally quite upset. He was confronted by some Moravians aboard and asked why he was afraid if he knew Jesus. Wesley's reply concerning knowing Jesus was, "Yes, He is the Second Part of the Trinity." Apparently Wesley had only head (*Logos*) knowledge of Jesus at that time, rather than heart (*Rhema*) knowledge through a personal relationship with Him. It was later that John Wesley acquired heart knowledge of Jesus through a personal conversion experience and went on to be used mightily by the Lord.

It is entirely possible to have accurate facts—head knowledge—about something and have no heart knowledge, experience or relationship. This is why reading the *Bible* is difficult for many. In addition to head knowledge (which the world uses and is necessary) a person must have heart knowledge, which is Spiritual revelation based upon a personal relationship to Jesus as Lord and Savior (Matthew 16:15-17).

The head reflects a superficial knowledge while the hearts reflects a personal intimate knowledge by "operation of the Holy Spirit." To know Him and the power of His resurrection as presented in Philippians 3:10 is the result of heart knowledge. This comes from a hunger for Jesus by making Him a priority in study, prayer and by being obedient to Him as the final authority for decision in life. The result is that you will truly "know Jesus" and fulfill the purpose He has for your life.

Summary/Review

1. You are created in the image of God, which includes spirit, soul and body (Genesis 1:26-27).
2. You are a "complete package" that will develop either in the image of the world or the image of God depending on what you feed on.
3. Just as a child has the DNA of both parents, so each person born of the Spirit of God has our Heavenly Father's characteristics or Spiritual DNA with all of the corresponding potential.
4. These characteristics of DNA are what the *Bible* calls "Fruit of the Spirit" found in Galatians 5:22-23, and must be developed through choice and obedience.
5. The fruit is God's character in us that is developed and shared. This fruit is identified as: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self control.
6. The fruit is intended to develop and mature and bear "much fruit," according to John 15:1-8. Gradually, we reflect more of Jesus because we become more like Him. All else is secondary.

Additional Reading

Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing the Depth of Jesus Christ*, Seedsowers Publishing, Jacksonville, Florida, 1981.

Bottom Line

You are a “Complete package” and you will develop either in the image of the world or in the image of God, depending on what you are fed.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by eating the things of the world or be committed by feeding on the Word of God.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26), and when we are born again we have His spiritual genetics (Galatians 5:22-23).

Chapter 8

GETTING MARCHING ORDERS

Getting precise directions is crucial if you intend to do a job or project correctly and effectively. Sometimes, directions are included in written form, as with items you purchase that need to be assembled. You will also see directions on signs, such as road signs and billboards. Then there is probably the most common form of receiving directions, which is verbally. This means that the individual needs to hear the instructions or directions. When individuals hear instructions and follow them, goals are reached—not only as individuals—but also as a group. This is true for sports teams, musical groups, youth groups and in fact, any group—including the Church.

God Speaks in the Most Unlikely Places

In our society we are taught to “think inside the box” or within a certain framework. In the case of listening to God this means we usually have preconceived notions about how and when He will speak such as in Church services, Sunday School, prayer groups, Christian gatherings and special events. Don’t you suppose, though, that God could speak to you in daily life and activities, such as shopping in the grocery store or driving your car? At times while driving, I have had God cause me to go in a different direction from what I had intended, only to minister to a need someone had and often I did not even know the person. Admittedly, I have not always been paying attention, because my mind was on

something else. Even though I know that God speaks in these places I still seem to get caught off guard when it happens and have to ask Him again whether I have heard correctly.

One such event was recently in our local grocery store. I was shopping and saw a young couple coming toward me in the aisle. As they passed me, I had the distinct impression—although nothing was said or done—that they were really “pinching pennies,” so they were not getting some things they really needed.

We passed in the aisle and went our way. As I turned into the next aisle, they were coming toward me again. This happened two more times, and the last time as they approached, God said, “Give them \$20.00.” I thought I heard clearly but before I could get the money out they were past me and gone.

I hurried around the end of the aisle and waited until they came from somewhere several aisles back. As they approached, I asked whether I could speak to them for a moment, and the response was, “What for?”

I simply said, as I stuck out my hand with the money, “God told me to give you this.”

The reply was, “You don't have to do that.”

So I smiled and said, “God told me to do it. Enjoy.”

There was this blank stare, but I knew that I had heard correctly because my spirit told me so. I almost missed it, but am glad that I didn't. These seemingly small things are important to God, so we need to hear what He is saying to us about them, even in the most unlikely places.

The Need to Hear

Hearing is more than listening. Listening has to do with physically identifying words or messages. Hearing has to do with the heart. Hearing is receiving what is transmitted or imparted as it is intended. God wants us to hear not only with our ears, but also with our hearts. God speaks to

our inner-man (the human spirit) with His Spirit and we actually “hear” by revelation knowledge from the Holy Spirit.

In each of the letters to the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 2-3), there is the statement:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.

Hearing is a basic right (John 10:3-5) and responsibility (Revelation 2-3) of every believer. Hearing is part of communication which is essential in a relationship (Genesis 3:8; John 1:35 and John 5:30). Hearing is essential to growing in recognition of and in response to the Lord (Exodus 3:4-15 and Matthew 7:24-27). Without hearing, you cannot fulfill your calling and purpose in life (Romans 12:1-2 and I Peter 4:10). Hearing is necessary for obedience. God is a God of order, not chaos (Genesis 1), and He is not glorified when there is rebellion—which comes from rejection of His Word (Isaiah 66:1-2 and James 1:15).

How God Speaks

The use of the word “speaks” often confuses people because they think of audible words, which is not always the way in which God speaks to us. The word “speaks” is an inclusive term used for “communicating,” regardless of the form or method it takes. It is difficult not to hear God when we realize that He uses various forms or methods to communicate with us.

The essence of hearing from God is to know that He loves us, wants to fellowship with us and that His Spirit will bear witness with our spirits (when He speaks) because we have a relationship with Him (Revelation 3:20). God always speaks to you about yourself before He speaks about others and ministry.

Pay attention to what God says about you, even when it is uncomfortable and requires correction. If you do not respond to personal correction and growth, He will not be able to use you for other things He wants to do. Receive His correction by hearing and obeying and you will increase in maturity and service.

As we look at Scripture, the following are examples of how God "speaks" to those who are willing and expecting:

1. **SCRIPTURE**—This is a basic form of communication. This is used in *Bible Study* and personal devotions. It has the same authority and power as the spoken Word and it is a Source of life and health (II Timothy 3:16, Psalm 19 and Matthew 4:4).
2. **AUDIBLE VOICE**—Just as the Lord spoke to Moses, Saul and Jesus, so He speaks to people today (Exodus 3:4, Matthew 3:17 and Acts 9:4).
3. **CIRCUMSTANCES**—The situation around us can reveal God's voice and direction, even when we do not always recognize it (Genesis 37:23-27).
4. **DREAMS**—These are a means by which God speaks to humans today, just as they were for Joseph (Genesis 41:25 and Matthew 3:13). They usually occur at night. Sometimes they require interpretation and at other times their meanings are quite obvious. In either case, God will reveal what is needed.
5. **VISIONS**—These usually occur during waking hours, often when in prayer, sometimes based on events encountered or about to occur. If interpretation is needed, our ever faithful God will provide it (Ezekiel 37:1-14, Isaiah 6:1, Acts 10:9-16).
6. **INNER VOICE**—This is a common form of hearing from God that people sometimes overlook. Some think this is what the secular world calls "conscience" or "intuition," but it is actually the Spirit of God speaking to your spirit inside of you (Romans 8:16).
7. **CHURCH LEADERS**—Often God speaks us through His appointed leaders, such as Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, Prophets or Apostles (Ephesians 4:11).
8. **OTHER CHRISTIANS**—Our brothers and sisters in Christ can be a source of confirmation of a word that God has already given

you. Remember, God will not tell someone something about you or for you that He has not already told you (Hebrews 2:1-5).

Preparing to Hear

Preparation indicates that you are expecting something. In the case of a believer, it is the process of getting your spirit ready to receive from God by the following:

1. Hungering for the Word and presence of God (Matthew 5:6).
2. Seeking, by reading Scripture, prayer and giving God daily priority time (Matthew 6:33).
3. Repentance (I John 1:9).
4. Not quenching (restricting) the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19).
5. Not grieving (rebellng against) the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).
6. Praising (Hebrews 13:15).
7. Praying in the Spirit (I Corinthians 14:14).
8. Expecting to hear (Mark 11:24).
9. Bold obedience (John 14:15 and 21, 23-24).
10. Common sense by using information, opportunities and guidelines already available through government, family, Church, jobs, experience and education.

These are not legalistic or mechanical actions, but result from an attitude of heart, reflecting a desire to have an increasingly intimate relationship with God. Preparation is a life-style of wanting Him to be actively present and being ready, through obedience, for Him to appear or answer. Just as Jesus could do nothing without the direction of His Heavenly Father (John 5:19), neither can we.

There is a direct relationship between our yieldedness and obedience to our "hearing." Just as you trust your relationship to Jesus so you should trust your "spiritual hearing" when He speaks. As you hear and act in obedience you will be more sensitive to His Spirit and the number of incidences of your hearing will increase.

The problem is not in the transmission (from Jesus), but in the receiving (by us). He has given us what we need to hear. We just need to develop our receiving ability through daily preparation. If you do not know what to do in some specific situation, avoid doing what you know to be incorrect, and act on what you do know—and God will respond.

Hearing the Voice of God

TRUST ME...

It was a time of change and decision as I stood before the congregation a few years ago and told them that I was to leave the denomination of which I had been a part for twenty-one years. I just knew that I was to leave and begin a new walk in another area to which God was calling me. I asked the Lord for specifics and He gave me a two word answer, "Trust Me."

At the time, this seemed rather inadequate for planning purposes. Since I was sure that it came from the Lord, however, it was good enough for me. In obedience, I began to act on what I already knew and the Lord opened doors—one at a time! The result was a series of what I called "Red Sea Experiences," in which I was placed in a position for further growth while having all my needs met.

Just because you obey the Lord does not mean that everything will go smoothly for you. Look at the disciples in the Book of Acts. The Lord is in control. There is a natural tendency in "Red Sea Experiences" (needs being met at the last minute by supernatural means because you are unable to do anything except trust and obey) to focus on the world and not the Spirit.

The Lord will keep whatever you commit to Him (life, health, possessions, ministry, family and finances) as promised in II Timothy 1:12. It is a conscious act of our will to “commit” just as it is to “trust” and “love.”

There are various “Red Sea Experiences” in the Christian walk as we develop and mature in the Lord, but they are less terrifying and harrowing because we “Trust Him” and we trust our spiritual hearing to obey regardless of what a situation looks like.

No Counterfeits

Just as Pharaoh’s magicians tried to counterfeit what God did through Moses (Exodus 7:8-11) or as Simon the Sorcerer attempted to deceive the people (Acts 8:9-24), so satan is still attempting to offer counterfeits today. People seek answers from the wrong sources, just like King Saul did when he went to the Witch of Endor (I Samuel 28:7).

People try such things as ouiji boards, tarot cards, séances, astrology and horoscopes, rather than listen for the voice of God. Part of the reason may be that they do not have a relationship with Jesus. If they do, they are too lazy to approach God, and therefore depend on others instead of Him.

You are responsible for your own spiritual relationship and development. Seek the Lord first, and as you do, He will reveal counterfeits and lead you in the paths of Blood Covenant righteousness. Those who are in covenant with God through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ are in right standing with God.

How Do I know It Is The Lord?

If what you hear does not match the Word and glorify Jesus, then it is false. See the seven questions to ask whether a doctrine is Biblical in Chapter 5. You must walk by faith and the Word, but the closer you get to the Lord the more you will recognize His voice.

It is crucial that you not go by “feelings,” which include the worldly senses. Instead, listen to the inner-man as the Holy Spirit leads you. If

there is a glitch or a check (lack of peace) in your spirit (inner-man), God is speaking to you not to act on what you have experienced. Listen to God!

Results of Hearing

Hearing is a matter of the heart and not the head. When you hear with your heart (spiritually), you will receive what God is transmitting as intended. This is because your attitude, expectations, desires and spirit are in line with the Lord. The next step after receiving is acting on—applying—what is received, which requires an act of your will and obedience. The result of this is having the promises of God (Deuteronomy 28) manifest in our lives, an increase in the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), closer fellowship with God, knowing the power of His resurrection (Philippians 3:10), living an abundant life in the Kingdom (Romans 14:17) and being led by the Holy Spirit as He intended (John 16:13). It is possible to have life abundant as well as life eternal, but both begin by hearing what God is saying.

Summary/Review

1. Precise directions are critical if you intend to do a job or project correctly and efficiently.
2. God speaks in the most unlikely places such as daily life and events.
3. Biblically there is a need, from God's standpoint and ours, to hear Him.
4. God speaks in various forms or methods that we overlook or do not recognize because they seem too simple or not what we consider "supernatural."
5. Preparing to hear is a life-style.
6. Hearing the voice of God requires trust, exposing counterfeits and recognizing His voice through your "inner man."

7. The results of hearing from God are life eternal and abundant.

Bottom Line

We either listen to the world or to God.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by operating according to “feeling,” or committed by listening to the inner-man as the Holy Spirit leads you.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God says that His sheep know His voice and will follow no other.

Chapter 9

WHAT WAS THAT?

The directions were being read clearly by my wife as I was driving in the Dallas traffic. Reading from “Mapquest,” she was giving directions that were to lead us to the World Ministry Fellowship Meeting in Addison, Texas. As the traffic increased, so did the number of signs. I heard her say, “Take the I-635 exit, exit number 21B, take the I-635 WEST exit, exit number 21B, 0.5 miles.” Her words became faint as I focused on maneuvering through the traffic, and I realized that I had missed something when the words, “Number 23 toward MIDWAY Road 0.2 miles” registered in my brain and I did not see a sign for Midway Road. So I said, “What was that?” as I made a wrong turn and pulled off the side of the freeway to stop. Even though I heard the words, I did not interpret correctly nor quickly enough to place things in context for use. I thought the directions were difficult because I lost my focus and paid attention to distractions. It was not the fault of the map because the map was correct and did not change. Neither were there any great “hidden meanings,” because the words meant just what they said. *I* needed to pay attention to the words and the context in order to interpret them correctly.

The Map

Our map is the *Bible*. The *Bible* is:

That collection of books of the Old Testament made by the Jews, and of the Gospels, Acts and Epistles and book of Revelation made by the early Christian Church, which the Church recognized as the divinely inspired record of God's revelation of Himself and of His will for mankind (*Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1975, p. 23).

The *Bible*, or "The Book," is actually a collection of 66 separate writings, or individual books. There are 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament that are accepted by Protestants as canon. "Canon" means: "A law or code of laws established by a Church council, or the books of the *Bible* officially recognized as the Holy Scripture; to be canonical means to be officially approved; orthodox (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002)." These writings or books are regarded as Divinely Inspired (the writers were writing as the Holy Spirit directed them) and can be accepted as the rule of Christian faith and conduct.

The *Bible* is God's revelation of Himself to man to provide guidance for life eternal and life abundant. It is God-breathed, the living, infallible and everlasting rule of faith and conduct and is superior to conscience and reason (II Timothy 3:16). The *Bible* is the Recorded Word of God on which everything else is determined or decided and is the standard by which all things are judged.

God is the Author and the *Bible* is what I call "Divinely Dictated" (to over 40 different individuals), written over a period of 1500 years and is both infallible (not prone to error) and inerrant (free from error). The Word of God is to be believed, studied and applied to life. The study of the *Bible* is essential for growth and power in the ministry of our Lord Jesus. Yet, it involves far more than reading, as we might apply the term in reference to secular books. It involves interpretation and application to life! II Timothy 2:15 is a command to study!

The Interpretation

To "interpret" is to: "Explain to oneself the meaning of or to expound the significance of (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*,

Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002).” When we look at Biblical interpretation, we are looking at the act or process of explaining the meaning of what God says in His Word.

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), the word “interpretation” means, “1. to explain the meaning of words in a different language or 2. to interpret fully or explain.”

Interpretation involves:

1. Understanding and defining words.
2. Keeping words in context (no proof texting by taking words out of context to have them support your preconceived notion).
3. Knowing there may be new revelation to you as provided by God through study, prayer and the Holy Spirit, but there are no new (additional) revelations that God has not recorded in His Word.
4. Prayer, because it is preparation of the attitude and heart to receive.
5. Listening and hearing the Holy Spirit. “Being open” to the Holy Spirit is the single most important matter so that He can give you revelation knowledge.
6. Accurate Biblical interpretation always glorifies God and enables man to respond to a loving and waiting God.

The Misunderstanding

A common thought expressed about the *Bible* is that it is difficult to understand. So, like many other things that seem to be difficult, people simply avoid the *Bible*. If you wrote a letter to someone, you would want to write it in such a way that they could understand and reply. God did the same thing with the *Bible*. He made it simple and clear so that

anyone could understand and respond—if they follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they read.

1. Most of the time the *Bible* is viewed as something to be read as we would read secular material. It is, however, a very personal love letter from God to you.
2. Sometimes, people intentionally avoid the *Bible* because they don't want to be responsible for its demands upon them.
3. People mistakenly believe that not knowing is a good excuse for not obeying the Word of God.
4. Others make the excuse that only scholars and people with academic degrees can understand or interpret correctly. Please note that these are helpful in an intellectual sense, but without the Holy Spirit, they are incomplete.

Many have been taught that the *Bible* is outdated and does not apply to today. To be applicable to real life, the *Bible* must be contemporary in its presentation to life, but it should never be compromised. Neither should it be so theological as to be confusing! Jesus presented the message of His Father in love, simplicity and power. This is a pattern we ought to follow today. Unfortunately, this is not the case most of the time because people are trying to be religiously and politically correct.

A case in point is a theology class in which the students and the professor were discussing the difficulty of presenting the Gospel in a contemporary manner. After some time, a student shared an article he had read recently on "The Contemporary Version of Matthew 16:13-17." It went something like this, Jesus asked, "Who do men say that I am?" After some rambling, the response was, "You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of all being, rooted in conflict and love." And Jesus said, "WHAT?"

Needless to say, the class quickly grasped the concept of the need for simplicity and clarity in presentation of the *Bible* if it was to be as effective as Jesus intended.

5. Still others have been taught that the *Bible* is only for some and not others. This is not true because Jesus died for everyone, but each individual must make a conscious decision to accept Him and live for Him.
6. There is a tendency to avoid trying to understand the *Bible* because it is easier to say, "Everyone understands it differently." This gives a person a false sense of security because God is not a respecter of persons. He is willing to reveal Himself to all who seek Him. The message is the same for everyone. This is what God has shown me to be Basic Scriptural Truth.

Basic Scriptural Truth

A BASIC SCRIPTURAL TRUTH is simply this: a Biblical truth, revealed by the Holy Spirit, that is common to men of all ages and when applied, results in life eternal and life abundant.

These truths are not denominational or individual interpretation, but revelation knowledge from the Holy Spirit in clear, basic, unchanging statements that are intended for all men and enable them to be set free and have intimate relationships with Jesus. These truths are the same for all men. They may be stated by quoting Scripture or summarizing in your own words what the Holy Spirit has revealed in context in the *Bible*.

Some examples may be found in Genesis 1:1; John 3:16-17; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:5; Romans 8:1, 8:38 or Matthew 22:36-40. Still another Basic Scriptural Truth, found in Hebrews 13:8, says:

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever.

Another example is the call to be baptized in water for all who profess Jesus (not a particular method of baptism, which is personal preference). What Basic Scriptural Truth is God speaking to you about today for

yourself? To share with others? Obedience to revealed Basic Scriptural Truths is the basis for freedom, victory and maturity in Jesus.

The Key

The “key” to interpretation is not intellect—although it is required—but the Holy Spirit in you. God will not withhold truth from you if you seek Him. He speaks the same message to all who will pay attention.

We have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). Acts 4:13 tells about the effect of the presence of Jesus in a person's life.

The Tools

Before any interpretation occurs there must be a hunger for the Word of God and a willingness to be obedient. This hunger in your heart comes from the Spirit of God, but you must be willing and intentional in response.

Books, words, prayer, the Holy Spirit and the *Bible* are tools in interpretation. There is head knowledge and heart knowledge. We are to do our part with head knowledge by using our intellect to study, then God's Word will do It's part by giving us heart knowledge. So let's look at some simple tools that are available to every believer (II Timothy 2:15).

The *Bible* is its own best commentary as you study and cross reference. Don't be confused by “types of *Bibles*” because God will honor His Word and reveal to you what He intends for you to receive regardless of which translation you use, even though more accurately reflect the original meaning better than others.

Factors in choosing *Bibles*:

1. Name—If the *Bible* has a name like Oral Roberts, Dake or Hagee, then it describes who is endorsing the particular version because it emphasizes certain topics of the individual's ministry and probably includes helpful comments or commentary.

2. Type—Prophecy *Bible*, study *Bible*, etc. describe what may be emphasized or highlighted for easy of study, such as healing, in which case all healing the Scriptures are emphasized for ease of identification.
3. Format—*The Open Bible*, *Youth Study Bible*, *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*, *Life-Application Bible*, or the *Amplified Bible*, which has definitions of words in parenthesis after the text. Each of these *Bibles* describes a particular format used for specific age groups or activities, such as more in-depth study.
4. Translation—King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), Living Bible Translation (LBT). These are different translations and the basic difference is ease of reading.
5. Paraphrase—*The Living Bible* (TLB) is a paraphrase, not a translation. Although good for general use, it is not adequate for in-depth study.
6. Study aids—Almost all *Bibles* have:
 - a. A table of contents.
 - b. A listing of the books of the *Bible*.
 - c. At least a brief concordance.
 - d. And a minimum number of maps.
 - e. More detailed study *Bibles* include varying amounts of the following:
 - i. Instructions for coding if certain passages are marked for emphasis such as healing, prophecy, salvation etc. Some are even color coded.

ii. Summaries or of the various books.

- f. Some even have a brief outline of each book with the summary about the contents, author, etc.
- g. Character Studies of individuals.
- h. Biblical Timelines (some even compared to secular history).
- i. Ministry studies of individuals.
- j. Indexes for either finding specific data or cross referencing items.
- k. Historical and/or Archaeological data.

7. Publisher—There are many different *Bible* publishers, such as Tyndale, Kirkbride, Cokesbury and Thomas Nelson, just to name a few.

There are many good study *Bibles*, but I prefer the *Life Application Bible* (NKJ Version) for general use and study because it has most of the items listed above, except for color coding, and is easy to use. It is especially easy to use for a new believer who is trying to relate names, topics, timelines, concepts, etc.

Books are also a help in correct Biblical interpretation. The following list is provided to introduce you to a few as you begin more serious study. The material contained in these books is factual data that is unchanging; it is not personal opinion nor generalized commentary

PRIMARY BOOKS

1. *Bible Encyclopedias*, depending on the number of volumes in the set, usually give history, archaeological data, Biblical references, pictures and a general overview of Biblical references, topics, people and locations.

2. *Bible Dictionaries*, usually in a single volume, contain brief definitions, limited history or archaeology, Biblical references, pictures and brief descriptions of topics, people and locations.
3. An Interlinear Greek and English New Testament provides the Greek text with English words under the Greek text. This is a transliteration, which is word for word—not a translation with sentence structure as we know it. You will see the Greek word and will be able to compare it in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Look up John 21:15-25, following the process described above, and you will see that Jesus asked Peter if he loved (*agape*—would lay down his life for) Him. Peter responded yes, that he loved (*phileo*, liked, had kindness or brotherly compassion for) Him.

While this does not make a difference in your salvation, it does make a difference in understanding what Jesus was asking of Peter as a follower and also of us if we are truly His disciples. This is excellent for word studies and provides emphasis as originally intended.

4. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* is a solid foundation for precise definitions that open understanding for Biblical truths as originally intended when spoken. The procedure is to find the word you want from the interlinear and look up the English word. From there, you will find the Greek word(s). Scripture is given to show you which is the correct Greek word with the text you are reading. Then you will find the definition as originally intended, and not merely an English generalization of the word. An example is the word "love," which has two entries: *agape* (life-giving) or *phileo* (brotherly kindness). It is not merely a strong feeling or compassion as we might use it today.
5. *The Septuagint* (with Apocrypha). This is the Greek translation of the Old Testament and a primary document used in translations today. The Greek is on one side of the page and the English on the other. The English portion is the exact word-for-

word translation and is not necessarily in our commonly used sentence structure.

The book also contains the Apocrypha, or intertestament (the period of four hundred years between the writing of Malachi and the New Testament) literature, that is accepted as equal with Scripture by the Roman Catholic Church, but not by most Protestant Churches.

6. *The Complete Word Study of the Old Testament*. This is a complete, if not exhaustive, study of Old Testament Words. The format is a presentation of the Old Testament, book by book, and above each line of text there are study guides corresponding to the words.
7. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words*. This is a solid foundation for definitions of both Old Testament and New Testament words. Not only does it define each important word, but shows how it is used by referencing to specific Scriptures.
8. *Strong's Concordance*. This is a basic tool to locate specific Scriptures or texts. It is so widely used that many dictionaries and commentaries number their study guides to correspond to Strong's Concordance for ease of reference.

SECONDARY BOOKS:

Commentaries are a source of information from a previous study, but they cannot replace individual study because a commentary is just that—an explanation, interpretation, illustration or personal experience from an individual or group. Commentaries are usually found in three different forms:

1. Used as footnotes to further explain something. Most commonly used in study *Bibles*.
2. Individual Commentaries are usually by someone who has done extensive study in a given area.

3. Group/Committee Commentaries are by a group or committee considered to be outstanding in their area of study.

Commentaries range from brief statements to volumes of material. They may be of assistance but should *never* be substituted for personal study.

ADDITIONAL BOOKS

Bookstores and libraries have large selections of Christian books on many subjects. These are usually contemporary, although they may include some older books in which authors present some specific Biblical topics. These books can definitely be helpful, especially if they present Biblical facts in context, rather than selected Scriptures to support a pre-conceived notion.

Some Things to Remember

Always check the source:

1. Publisher—Some publishers only print material from their pet theological understanding. This is not necessarily bad, but you should check out their theological foundation.
2. Author—Regardless of how interesting or informative an author may be, check to see how the material lines up with Scripture.

Remember your purpose:

1. Study so you will be able to relate better to and share Jesus with others.
2. To merely gather academic data and facts, even if correct, is a useless endeavor if not applied under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
3. Do everything possible to be solidly rooted in the Word of God so that you use relevant materials but are not confused by those that are not relevant.

4. Prayer is vital to correct Biblical interpretation because without the leading of the Holy Spirit, the information is just that—information—and no different from a secular approach.

Example—If you study the *Bible* from a secular or purely academic viewpoint, looking for literature, prose, poetry, history, violence, archaeology or whatever, you will find plenty of data, but you may miss the heart of the Gospel. The reason for this is that a person uses only the head and does not include the Spirit. Pray before you study that you might receive the insight of the Holy Spirit through revelation knowledge, not just factual data.

5. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth (John 16:13). Use all of the resources that God has placed at your disposal, but never rely on them to the exclusion of the Spirit of the Living God. He is our Source and Guide and will provide what you need. Listen carefully to Him as you study and hear what He says, because He alone determines what we need to retain and use from our *Bible* study to Glorify God.

Summary/Review

1. To correctly interpret the Word, we must pay attention to both the words and the context of what we hear.
2. The *Bible* is a “Self-Revelation” of God to man to provide guidance for life eternal (living with Jesus forever) and life abundant (living in God’s health, provision, protection, peace, and joy).
3. Interpretation involves understanding and defining words, keeping them in context, praying and listening to the Holy Spirit. Realize that there may be new revelation to you, as provided by God, but there are no new (additional) revelations that God has not recorded in His Word.

4. There is a misunderstanding that the *Bible* is difficult to understand and that only some people can do it based on academic degree or position.
5. A Basic Scriptural Truth is that the *Bible* is applicable to life and its eternal truths are available to everyone who is willing to truly seek. God will reveal Himself.
6. The “key” to interpretation is not intellect (although you should use it), but rather the Holy Spirit in you.
7. Tools provided for your use in interpretation include the *Bible*, reference books, commentaries, prayer and the Holy Spirit.
8. Remember that the gathering of data, even if correct, is useless unless it is applied under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
9. You are called to study (II Timothy 2:15).

Bottom Line

The *Bible* is applicable to life and its eternal truths are available to everyone who is willing to truly seek.

Comfort or Commitment?

I can be comfortable by believing the *Bible* is difficult to understand, or committed by realizing that the *Bible* is a “Self-Revelation” of God to man to provide guidance for life eternal and life abundant.

Basic Scriptural Truth

II Timothy 2:15

Chapter 10

BEING DOERS OF THE WORD

Recently, I had an e-mail message handed to me by a person in my congregation. It was a clear illustration of what God expects of us as believers. In summary, it was about a man whom God told to push against a large rock.

This was the task assigned to the man by God: push against the large rock. Day after day, all day long, the man pushed against the rock. Days, months and years passed and one day satan spoke to the man and said, “Why are you pushing so hard all this time? You haven’t moved the rock even one millimeter!” The man thought about it and decided that it made sense so he didn’t push as hard from then on.

God saw that the man had eased up on pushing the rock and asked him why he wasn’t doing what he was told. The man explained about satan bringing up the point that the rock had not been moved and suggested less effort if there was not going to be any movement of the rock. After hearing the man God said, “I told you that your job was to push on the rock, not to move it. I will move the rock.”

This not only describes the call to obedience, but also the call to be a *doer* of the Word. Do what God tells you to do! James 1:22 tells us:

But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

If we are honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that most of us know more of God's Word than we obey. Doers of the Word have a heart for God and want to please Him because their priorities are right.

In Matthew 21:28-31, Jesus told of a man who had two sons. The father told the first son to go work in the field and the son replied "no, sir," but later changed his mind. The man spoke to the second son and told him to go to the field to work and the son replied "yes, sir," but didn't go. When Jesus asked His disciples which of the sons did the will of the father, they answered correctly when they said "the first."

John 14:15 and 14:23 are clear that if we love God, we will keep His commandments and be doers of the Word. It is dangerous to pretend to obey God when our hearts are not right because He knows our intent. To "do" is essentially to "take action." In the case of the Christian, it is to act in obedience to the revealed Word of God.

Throughout Scripture, especially the New Testament, there are plenty of "action words," such as "go," "do," "obey" and "love." All of these indicate the need to apply God's Word to our daily lives—in all areas—not merely hear it.

Covenant Relationship

Most people have made agreements for such things as a loan, a car or a house. These arrangements were made with a bank, an attorney or a real estate agent by signing an agreement which is binding by law. No one would cheat on it or fail to uphold what was promised; but what about an agreement with God? It is called a Covenant.

A covenant is: "a binding agreement made by two or more persons or parties; a formal sealed contract or agreement (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002, p. 260)."

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, "diatheke primarily signifies a disposition of property by will or otherwise (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983)." The Hebrew word meaning covenant

comes from a verb meaning “to cut or divide,” having to do with a sacrificial custom in covenant making (Genesis 15:10).

“The English word covenant literally means a coming together, which signifies a mutual undertaking between two parties or more, each binding himself to fulfill obligations (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 243).”

It is into this type of relationship that you enter when you become a Christian. Each believer needs to know the conditions and responsibilities of the Covenant relationship. Basically, in broad terms, it means that God promises to meet our needs and care for us, as His children, and our part is to be obedient to His Word. Our Covenant with God carries with it both conditions and responsibilities:

1. The conditions are that you repent of your sins and give Jesus total control of your life. This means that you are truly sorry, in your heart, for rebelling against God. You admit that you believed that you knew best and therefore chose to please yourself first. Next, you change your mind, purpose and actions to live under His control in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. The responsibilities are obedience to His Word and faithfulness in doing the teachings of Jesus. This means putting Him *first* above all else through worship and obedience. Next, it means that we put His Word into practice in relation to others by truly loving and treating them according to His Word.

God made a Covenant with Abram (Genesis 15) and he became Abraham (Genesis 17). Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees (the area known today as Iraq, near the Persian Gulf), where the people were moon worshippers and worshipped the moon god Sin (*Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1975, p. 753).

These people were the forerunners of today's Muslims, who worship the demon god Allah, rather than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham was obedient to God and moved to Haran (modern day Turkey) with his father Terah and wife Sarai (Genesis 11:31). From there he went to Schem and Bethel near Jerusalem and on to Beersheba. God had

already made the Covenant with Abraham, but now it was time for Abraham to uphold his part. God called for Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac, so Abraham made the three day journey to Mr. Moriah, near Jerusalem. God didn't want Isaac to die. Instead, God wanted Abraham to be willing to sacrifice him, so that it would be clear that God was Abraham's first love.

Old Testament Covenant and New Testament Covenant

In the Old Testament, when a Covenant was made, it required the shedding of blood, such as when God covered Adam and Eve with skins (Genesis 3:21), or the Covenant God made with the Hebrew people in the Passover (Exodus 12:3) or when God required Abraham to circumcise all male children (Genesis 17:10-11).

David and Jonathan made a covenant (I Samuel 18:3). It included the ritual of exchanging coat, sword and belt, as well as sacrifice of an animal, making a blood oath by mingling their own blood, telling the conditions to God and reading or reciting the curses and blessings in Deuteronomy 28, which they were to receive either by keeping the covenant or by breaking it.

In the case of Covenant offerings to God, whether by Abel (Genesis 4:4) or Moses (Exodus 24:6-8), the animal died as a substitute for man, and the sins were covered by the animal's blood, not removed. This meant that you could approach God and the price for your sins had been paid. Words to this effect were repeated by the priests and the entire process was directed by the Lord. This was a temporary provision, which pointed forward to the death of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior (Hebrews 9:9-10:24).

The New Testament describes the sacrificial death of Jesus for all humans. Each individual must accept Jesus' sacrifice because there is no such thing as universal salvation. Leviticus 17:1-14 tells about the sanctity of the blood. It is only through the Blood of Jesus that believers have access to God.

Jesus' Blood not only *covered* sin as sacrifices did in the Old Testament (Hebrews 10:4), it *removed* the sin and washed it away (I John 1:7).

Jesus is the Source of the New Covenant with our Heavenly Father (Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20 and John 6:53-56). We are to accept Him, His lifestyle and His relationship to the Father. This one, full and sufficient sacrifice of Jesus is the basis of Covenant with God which includes our willing submission, obedience and faithfulness. The Lord's Supper (the Communion meal, also called the Eucharist) is a reminder of Jesus' cutting the Covenant with us and a renewal of our commitment to Him (I Corinthians 11:23-33).

Obedying God is often a struggle because we do not want to give up what we love. Our most difficult task is to die to self daily (make Jesus Lord). Only in this way can we complete the race and fulfill our part of the New Covenant that God has made with us through Jesus (I Corinthians 11:25 and Matthew 26:28).

We have a binding agreement with God through the sacrificial Blood of Jesus to keep our part of the Covenant. Our part is to love, trust, obey and serve God according to His Word. This New Covenant is better than the old (Hebrews 8:6), and believers are the ministers of this New Covenant; that is, they are to invite others to participate in it (II Corinthians 3:6).

I define the Covenant as "an agreement that cannot be canceled and is without an expiration date (it is everlasting) to which God holds us accountable." The Covenant is the basis for our relationship with God, the beginning of it and the right by which we continue it. Romans 8:1 tells us:

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:16-17 confirms that we are heirs and Romans 8:31-39 assures us that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God will never abandon us. If we are separate, it is because we separate ourselves through disobedience, rebellion and choice (we simply like the world better than God and choose it over Jesus, whom we have professed as Lord and our First Love).

Under Authority

As part of the Covenant (the other part is making Him Lord), we commit ourselves to be under the authority of and obedient to God as He leads us by Scripture, the Holy Spirit and Revelation knowledge. The decision to be in and remain in Covenant is the most important decision you will ever make in your life because the decision you make now—as verified by your faithfulness—lasts for eternity.

Once the Covenant has been cut, then the journey begins to fulfill the purpose for which you were created, which is:

1. To have an intimate, ongoing relationship with God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. To bring His Kingdom to the world in power and glory as we allow Him to work through us.
3. To risk (actually trust) living in the promises and commands of God, rather than acting on head knowledge and depending on ourselves, as did Adam and Eve.

Under Authority by Choice

God favored Abraham because of his willingness to venture into the unknown by placing complete faith in God's promise. Even Abraham's character flaws were overshadowed by his obedience to God. The same is true for us today. We are in Covenant by choice and we are accepted by God. To fulfill the purpose for which we were created, we need to be under His authority to receive direction, support and power.

Being under authority to Jesus is a voluntary choice, not merely a legalistic action. You choose to be under His authority because you desire to please Him like He pleased the Father. It is possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason. In such a case God uses what is done (such as helping the needy or tithing) to help others, but the individual does not receive what God desires for him because the heart is not right (Matthew 15:8 and Mark 7:6).

Confess and Do

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said:

Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.

John Bevere said, “This statement abolished our general concept and definition of who is saved. We have taught and believed that all you have to do is confess a ‘sinner’s prayer,’ and you are ensured a secure place in Heaven. We have neglected or placed no emphasis on keeping His command. This counterfeit grace leads many astray, causing them to make light of obedience. Jesus said that those who will be in Heaven are those who confess and do the will of God, thus keeping the commands of God (*Under Cover*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2001, pp.30-31).” God is telling us to stay under authority and complete the race (II Timothy 4:7, Philippians 2:16).

In Matthew 7:22, Jesus continues:

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then Jesus declared to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.

Just as in the Book of Revelation when He talks to the Churches, so He is speaking to the Church today. He speaks to all believers. He is saying clearly that even though you honored His Word, if your heart is not right, you have no part of Him or His Kingdom. Wow! What an eye opener.

Remain under authority

Remaining under authority has other benefits, as well.

It is a guard against:

1. Deception (Galatians 3:1).
2. Being a slave (II Peter 2:19).

3. Rebellion (I Samuel 15:23).
4. Curses (Numbers 23:8).
5. The devil (James 4:7).

It is a foundation for:

1. Blessings (Deuteronomy 28).
2. Salvation (Matthew, 24:12-13 and Revelation 22:14).
3. Spiritual power to minister (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-5, 8).
4. Prosperity—Having enough of everything to meet your needs with something left over to give to others—this is in all areas as indicated by the following:
 - a. Spiritually (III John 2).
 - b. Mentally (II Timothy 1:7 and Romans 12:2).
 - c. Physically (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:17 and I Peter 2:24).
 - d. Financially (Mal. 3:10-11; Luke 6:38 and II Corinthians 9:6-15).
 - e. Socially (Proverbs 3:4; Luke 2:52 and Esther 2:15).

Obstacles to Being Under Authority

The basic cause of separation from God is rebellion or lawlessness, regardless of the form that it takes. Some forms of rebellion or lawlessness that separate us from God include:

1. Pride.

2. Lust of the flesh.
3. Love of money.
4. Doubt.
5. Self-sufficiency.
6. Lust for power.
7. A controlling spirit.
8. Language—speaking worldly things instead of the Word of God.
9. Unwillingness to repent.

Repentance is the beginning of where God wants us in relationship to Him. What is keeping you from Christ and being under His authority? It is essential for us to be under His authority before we can fulfill our purpose, which is to have an intimate relationship with God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and to bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

The Centurion Example

In Matthew 8:5-13, there is an outstanding example of being under authority. The Centurion recognized authority and willingly submitted to Jesus and his servant was healed! In Romans 13:1-7, we are commanded to be under the authority of the civil government because all authority comes from God. When it is corrupt, He will deal with it and show us how to respond if it goes against His Word.

Spiritual Authority

Jesus gave spiritual authority to believers (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18 and Acts 1:5,8). This authority and power is meant for ministry and service just as it was when Jesus walked with the disciples and empowered them to do miracles. You are called to continue the ministry Jesus in the power that He had and with the results He had. This is

done today by being under His authority and functioning through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a daily and sometimes hourly process, which will definitely bring the Kingdom along with the supernatural manifested presence of God.

Summary/Review

1. God calls us to apply the Word to life and be doers—not just hear it, but take action.
2. A Covenant relationship is the most binding of all agreements and cannot be canceled.
3. All believers are in Covenant through Jesus.
4. You need to be aware of the conditions and the responsibilities of the Covenant and be accountable for fulfilling them.
5. Being in Covenant and being under authority both are voluntary choices which go together.
6. We are called to be faithful to the end and overcome obstacles in the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember, what God calls us to do, He equips us to do—but we must act.
7. We must be under authority to exercise authority and God has given us spiritual authority to bring His Kingdom, which includes supernatural manifestations as well as physical talents or natural skills.

Bottom Line

If you confess the truth of the Word of God then you should obey it in daily life.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by believing that hearing is sufficient or you can be committed by acting in obedience and doing the Word.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God calls believers to be doers of the Word, which means being in Covenant and being under authority.

Part II - Pentecostal Christianity

Definition:

Pentecostal Christianity is not a separate “type of Christianity” but another step in obedience that is the basis for discipleship through a supernatural empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Focus:

The focus of Pentecostal Christianity is the equipping of the believer with supernatural power for ministry through the mighty Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Emphasis:

The emphasis is on increased effectiveness in discipleship by the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are meant to be a tool or by-product, not a focal point.

Chapter 11

MATURITY

It is interesting to watch children play—especially make believe—because they use their imaginations and pretend they are something they are not. An example is watching a child dress in adult clothes, when she can't possibly fill the shoes. A child may pretend to be a doctor, firefighter or policeman, supposedly using the “tools” particular to the trade to help people. It seems that the children want to become something they are not, and by having the physical appearance and knowledge of the activity or equipment for a profession, they feel like they “become” what they envision.

Whether it is in daily play or in other circumstances, children are often trying to be “grown-up” or what some might call “mature.” Maturity takes more than external appearance or even knowledge and skills. Internal growth is needed for a person to develop into his or her full spiritual potential.

In the area of physical development, a person reaches a point of full growth or abilities, but not so with spiritual development. Spiritual maturity is never reached, it is an on-going process by which Christians become more and more like Jesus. According to II Corinthians 3:18, they go from:

glory to glory.

Definition

Spiritual Maturity is the development of the spirit by continually submitting to Jesus, as He submitted to the cross, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to work (by whatever means necessary) to bring us into a more intimate relationship with God. The goal is experiencing the fullness of Jesus, and to be fully conformed to His image. The result is a transformation. Romans 12:2 tells us to be "transformed" which begins with the renewing of the mind, but continues in submission and obedience. The great Bible teacher Madame Jeanne Guyon said it very clearly:

To be transformed, you must lose all your own properties so that you might partake more deeply of God's nature. Not many people come to this place. For this reason, people do not talk much about the cross and transformation. We cannot speak well upon subjects we know little about (*Spiritual Torrents*, Seedsowers Christian Publishing House, Sargent, Georgia, 1989, p. 72).

People often mistakenly think that maturity comes with age. Age is not an indicator of maturity, but it may be an indicator of endurance and trials, to some extent. It is possible to have the same experience over and over and never progress past a particular point. This is often due to the fact that people want to be in control and remain in a comfort zone that is familiar, rather than trust God, risk the unknown and advance spiritually. Hebrews 5:12-6:6 describes spiritual immaturity as the need to move beyond the basics in the faith to truly "abiding" and experiencing both life abundant and life eternal.

Hindrances

The primary cause of immaturity is selfishness. This is also the cause of spiritual immaturity and is revealed in attitudes, actions and activities. There is a difference between being childlike and being childish. To be childlike is to be open and accepting. This is why Jesus tells us to come to Him as a little child (Mark 10:15). To be *childish* reflects attitudes and actions of selfishness (Jeremiah 4:22). Some Biblical marks of immaturity are:

1. The inability to receive strong doctrine (I Corinthians 3:1). Sometimes an individual has an unwillingness to receive hard sayings (Called “hard” because of what they ask us to do or because they challenge our preconceived notions), but at other times, there is an hindrance of being carnally minded and thinking like the world. When you think like the world, you cannot understand spiritual matters.
2. The necessity for being under tutelage (Galatians 4:1-3). This is a case of someone’s feeling the need to remain under the guidance and control of a tutor, rather than progressing through knowledge and application.
3. Being unstable in the faith (Ephesians 4:4). This is usually identified by the fact that someone is tossed about by different things they hear, rather than listening to the Word of God. They usually reflect the most current material encountered because they are “not rooted in the Word.” This is evidenced usually by indecision, non-commitment and a desire for comfort or security.
4. Continuance in the most elementary or primary elements of the Christian faith (Hebrews 5:12 and I Peter 2:2). Rather than progress, develop or mature, individuals elect to remain at a beginning relationship, and in some cases even forget the basics and live like the world with little or no discerning of good and evil.

Growth

Some Biblical marks of maturity are:

1. Putting away childish things (I Corinthians 13:11). This includes change in such areas as attitude, habits, activities, relationships, soul-ties, goals, use of finances, life-style, commitment and purpose for living so they line up with God's revelation to us through Scripture and personal encounter.

2. Cultivating understanding (I Corinthians 14:20). This means to develop understanding through study, prayer and fellowship time with God. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as well as His ways—not merely His actions.
3. Striving to be like Jesus (Ephesians 4:13 and Colossians 2:2) It is the desire to be more in His image rather than trying to follow a philosophy. It is to be like Jesus and do only what you hear the Father say or what you see Him do. Follow His example in living, relating and obedience so that His Kingdom will come on earth as it is in Heaven.
4. Desiring and receiving the deeper Truths of the Gospel (Hebrews 5:14). This involves distinguishing the difference between good and evil by renewing our minds and relying completely on the Holy Spirit. It also involves acting in obedience to what God reveals. To receive deeper Truth is to receive more of the Lord as we hunger, seek His Manifest Presence and act in obedience.
5. Overcoming temptation (I John 2:14). This is evident when Christians draw near to God, resist the devil and overcome the carnal, sensual and selfish enticements of the world. Jesus did it through the Word and obedience and so can we, because He is faithful to strengthen us.
6. Dying to self by allowing God to work (I Corinthians 15:31 and Galatians 2:20). This is not merely changing habits, but rather seeking God and allowing Him to remove the root causes of bad habits by purifying and renewing our hearts. You cannot die to yourself by your own efforts. You can only see the need, repent, open your heart and allow God to bring death to the old and life to the new.
7. Hungering for the Word (Matthew 5:6). To be hungry is to experience an extreme desire or craving for something—in some instances to the point of famine, in which case you would literally die without the nourishment you seek. When you grow and mature spiritually, your hunger for the Lord is as intense as your need for air.

Progress

Ephesians 3:17-19 describes spiritual progress. Know that the process of maturity is never finished, but is always on-going. When people speak of maturity, there is an unspoken idea that the maturity is complete in that all areas of life are developed equally. Such is not the case. You may mature in one area of the Christian faith and be lacking in another. Be assured, though—what God starts, He completes. You are a work under construction and in Him and through His strength your weak areas will be developed as you submit and obey. This is the process of refining. It is a life-long process.

Maturity results from faith and obedience. It does not result from feelings, seeking spiritual highs, knowledge, nor from encountering difficult experiences—especially when accompanied by a wrong attitude. God will use every situation in your life to help you accomplish His purpose for your life so that eventually His work in you will be achieved. Maturity comes on God's terms, not ours, and is experienced a step at a time as we completely give ourselves to God and allow Him to examine our motives and work in the secret places of our hearts.

Maturity is measured by how we respond to God as we encounter life experiences, not by how we react to the world. Maturity may be recognized in three basic areas which we have either examined or will consider in the remaining portion of the book. The three basic areas are:

1. Our relationship with and ministry to God.
2. Our use of spiritual gifts.
3. Our ministry for the Lord.

Summary/Review

1. Definition—Spiritual maturity comes from developing the spirit by submitting to Jesus.

2. Hindrances—Immaturity reflected by selfishness and a desire to be in control.
3. Growth—Renewing of the soul by submission and obedience.
4. Progress—Maturity is on-going and measured by response rather than by reaction.

Additional Reading

Watchman Nee, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Christian Fellowship Publications, New York, 1972.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, Christian Liberation Crusade, Ft. Washington, Pennsylvania, 1957.

Bottom Line

Maturity is ongoing and is measured by response, not by reaction.

Comfort or Commitment?

You may be comfortable by the immature reaction of selfishness or you may be committed by the maturity of submitting to Jesus.

Basic Scriptural Truth

Believers are called to grow in Christ (Ephesians 4:15 and Colossians 1:10).

Chapter 12

EMPOWERING

During my years in high school and college, I was almost consumed by my effort to get stronger through weight training. I believed it would help me excel in the Decathlon (a track and field event). I ate the correct foods and supplements (there were no steroids in use that I was aware of at the time) and spent hours lifting weights. I tried "bulking up" by lifting fairly light weights with a high number of repetitions. After talking to a weight-training coach, I tried "power lifting," which consisted of heavy weights with fewer repetitions. I found that there was a great difference between "strength" and "power." Strength is the state of being developed or strong. It is the source of or potential for power or force. Power, on the other hand, is strength exerted to perform effectively. Strength, in a nutshell, is potential (training) but power is active (use). It is this active power that enables us to achieve desired results.

People seek power in the world today to be able to reach personal goals. Some examples are:

1. Physical power for personal participation in sports and athletic competition.
2. Power in business through knowledge of facts.
3. Power in relationships through knowing the right people.

4. Power to control or manipulate other people.
5. Power in religion through academic degrees to the exclusion of anointing.
6. Power in politics by membership in clubs, lodges, political parties and even accepted religious groups..
7. Power through political correctness by using inclusive language regardless of what is morally or spiritually correct (the result is compromise of both integrity and beliefs).
8. Power in finances by acquiring or controlling large amounts of money or having the support of wealthy people.

The strength and power needed to live as Christ calls us to live is not available through any of the means listed above. Neither does it come from horoscopes, tarot cards, séances, necromancy (attempting to contact the dead—a popular TV show, “Crossing Over,” attempts to give credibility to this detestable practice), psychic hotlines, perverted religious practices or any other occult means.

While some occult power is real and works to a limited extent (as with Pharaoh’s magicians), it is a dangerous, pale, weak and temporary imitation of what God offers to the Christian. Do not seek power from any source other than God and do not seek power at all for the wrong reason. Seek it as a means of fulfilling the purpose for which God called you, to bring His Kingdom and to Glorify God.

The need for power does indeed exist in life, but receiving it begins with salvation, develops through empowerment, and continues through the anointing.

Power begins with *salvation*, which is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Salvation is based on our need and it results in strength, through His indwelling presence (John 3:3 and II Corinthians 12:9).

Power for the Christian develops through the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. This *empowering* is a release or overflowing of the indwelling

presence of the Holy Spirit. This is based on our obedience to God and it results in our having supernatural power and authority available for ministry (Acts 1:5, 8).

Spiritual power continues through the anointing, which is an ongoing covering of His Manifest Presence. This is based on fellowship and it results in a lifestyle of intimacy with God and supernatural ministry for Him with mankind (I John 2:20, 27 and I Peter 2:9).

Power is God's, not ours, and He alone is our Source of it. Acts 17:28 is clear:

In Him we live and move and have our being.

We are dependent on His presence and power as seen in creation, life and ministry. He is not only sovereign, but also personal and wants us to receive promises according to His Covenant, whether it is life eternal (John 3:3, 5), life abundant (John 10:9-10), blessings (Deuteronomy 28) or spiritual power (Acts 1:5,8). Whether it is salvation, Baptism with the Holy Spirit or anointing, it is our responsibility to choose to receive and act on it if we are to live to the fullest, fulfill our purpose in life and bring His Kingdom.

Definition

The word empower means “To invest with legal power; authorize.” Invest is defined as “To furnish with authority or power; to install in office; inaugurate (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002).” So, to be empowered is to be furnished with legal power.

This power is granted by an authority (such as the government) to an individual (such as a policeman) for the purpose of serving or achieving a goal (such as protection). The individual is acting under the authority and in the power of the government (Romans 13:5).

Just as this is true for the physical world, so it is true in the spiritual world. Every believer is called to be furnished with authority and power to be the most effective possible in serving God and bringing His

Kingdom. We can either try to serve in our own power and intellect or we can choose to be under the covering, protection and direction of the Holy Spirit and function in supernatural power.

Misunderstanding

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a term that is not understood by many Christians (some do not even believe or accept that it is valid). Many of those who say they understand seem to have different perspectives.

1. Classical Pentecostals (such as Assembly of God, Pentecostal Holiness and Four-Square Gospel) will tell you that the primary evidence of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is "speaking in tongues" (see Chapter 13).
2. Others (such as Baptists and Presbyterians) will tell you that to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the Spirit and that they were filled when they were saved .
3. Still others (such as Methodists and Nazarenes) will tell you that it is a second work of grace, similar to sanctification, but you don't need to speak in tongues .
4. Finally, there is the position that says that the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is necessary for a Christian to maximize his or her spiritual potential because it is the Source of power for Christian service.

What is truly needed is for us to pay more attention to the directions of Jesus about what God desires, rather than debating whether to approve, accept, explain or use what He says is necessary and available.

Three Baptisms

We are told that there is more than one baptism (Hebrews 6:1-4). I have found three, as follow:

1. **BAPTISM WITH WATER** is a sign of regeneration and relationship to the Lord. This is an act of obedience after becoming a Christian. Baptism is an event in which the believer publicly professes Christ. The Holy Spirit came to indwell the individual when he or she originally accepted Jesus as Savior (John 3:3,5). Some people say, "I have Jesus in my heart."
2. **BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT** occurs when a believer recognizes the need for spiritual power for ministry and asks for it to be released (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:5,8). Some incorrectly say, "Now I have the Holy Ghost." Actually, the Holy Spirit now has you! He was dwelling inside you from the time you were born again. Your cup was full, so-to-speak. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the experience of having your cup go from full to overflowing.
3. **BAPTISM WITH FIRE** is the refining and maturity process through which Christians must pass as they develop in service. This is an ongoing process as we get into a more intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. It is a supernatural burning away of the chaff of our pride and other aspects of sinful nature that try to hang around in our lives even after we have been born again and Baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Pattern

This sequence of baptisms is seen in the water baptism of Jesus and the time immediately following it. In Matthew 3 and Luke 4 we have the record of the baptism of our Lord and in both instances the sequence is the same:

1. Jesus was baptized in water by John the Baptist (literally, "Baptizer") and this was an outward sign to the world of His commitment and relationship to God the Father. The sign of this is water.
2. After Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, He was baptized with the Spirit. The spiritual sign of this was the dove. It was confirmed by the voice of God the Father.

3. The Baptism with Fire is when God consumes our carnal nature and replaces it with His holy nature. Jesus went into the wilderness and encountered temptation. He overcame Satan with the Word of God and the power of the Spirit. The sign of this is trust and obedience made manifest in daily life.

This pattern, or sequence, was true in the early Church and should be true for us today. One of the reasons that more is not written or recorded about being baptized with the Holy Spirit is that it was a common experience as part of the faith. Jesus was the example of it and then He commanded that believers receive the experience before becoming witnesses (Acts 1:8). This is not an option. It is a command and is an essential element of the Christian life.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God came upon the prophets and the prophet spoke the message or acted for God. The Holy Spirit did not live in man, but was external. In the New Testament, after the resurrection of our Lord (John 20:22), the Holy Spirit lived inside of believers as a Source of direction and spiritual life. The Church was actually born on Easter Sunday when, after the resurrection, Jesus breathed on His followers and said:

Receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon believers as He did on prophets in the Old Testament, but it was for the purpose of empowering spiritually, as Jesus had promised. The power remained dormant for a while (they were still afraid in the Upper Room), but it had been released and made available for use through obedience. They were supernaturally equipped for ministry and you can be, as well, if you will request it and obey.

Purpose

The purpose of Baptism with the Holy Spirit is to equip the believer through spiritual, supernatural empowering for witnessing and bringing the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven (Acts 1:8).

In the Book of Luke, the author uses “baptized with the Spirit” and “filled with the Spirit” interchangeably. In Acts, Jesus says, “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). To be accurate, “infilling” is when the Holy Spirit comes inside the person to live. This occurs once—when you receive Christ and are born again through spiritual birth.

To ask to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit is to request that the power of God be activated in your life for ministry. It involves offering yourself as a vessel through whom it will flow. This happens only one time.

To be “filled with the Spirit” is to come to the Lord daily for renewal, strength and direction in ministry. This happens daily and is a matter of keeping current in hearing and obeying the Lord.

To be “anointed” is sometimes mistakenly interchanged with the term, “Baptism with the Holy Spirit.” The mighty Baptism with the Holy Spirit equips the believer with the necessary supernatural power for ministry. Anointing (see Chapter 17) is the ability to live and function under the authority, power and Manifest Presence of God. It comes from “being with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Process

The process of being Baptized with the Holy Spirit is identical to salvation. While there are steps, there is no legalistic language required—it is the intent of the heart before the Lord that is important. The major difference is that the individual believer asks for spiritual power and gifts for use in ministry and bringing the Kingdom of God, rather than a personal relationship with the Lord, since the individual already has such a relationship.

1. Recognize the need for power other than your own.
2. Recognize Jesus as the Source.
3. Ask Him for His promise of the Holy Spirit in power.
4. Thank Him for granting it (this is done by faith just the same as salvation is accepted by faith).

Primary Evidence

Following this experience there will be a physical manifestation at some point. You receive by faith and not by feeling. Some people have said, "I don't *feel* baptized in the Holy Spirit." Others have said, "When is it *ever* going to happen?" Another said, "I haven't spoken in tongues yet." For still another there is the expectation of "being slain (or resting) in the Spirit." None of these is proof. It makes no difference whether you stand still, are slain in the Spirit, pray in tongues, cry, or whatever other experience is possible; these are after-effects, not evidence.

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

You receive by faith. After this, when you act in obedience, God will manifest Himself through you supernaturally, as identified in what are called "spiritual gifts."

The primary evidence of an individual's being a Christian is peace (Romans 14:17). The primary evidence of a believer being Baptized with the Holy Spirit is power. The primary evidence of a believer in relation to others is the love of God reflected through the fruit of the Spirit.

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a normal part of the Christian life. This is very noticeable when you visit another country and believers there do not know enough not to ask for and receive it. In the United States there seems to be a block concerning this experience which is a necessity for effective ministry and witnessing. The empowering is spiritual, not intellectual. It comes through total dependence upon the Lord and obedience to His Word.

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit means that the Spirit comes upon you in order that you might receive the release of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, Who lives in you. It is for use in:

Worship (and praise).

Witness (evangelistic outreach).

Warfare (spiritual offensive against demonic forces).

Work (acts of service in ministry).

If a person is not baptized with the Spirit, for whatever reason, he or she is certainly not “second class,” but will function at less than optimum efficiency in the service of our Lord and will experience a lesser degree of the abundant life. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not a “badge of honor” or a “sign of maturity,” but rather an act of obedience—serving and pleasing the Lord. This wonderful experience brings with it additional responsibility and accountability.

Summary/Review

1. DEFINITION—Empower is to install in office and furnish with authority and power.
2. MISUNDERSTANDING—People need to know, accept and follow what Jesus said about being Baptized with the Holy Spirit, not what man thinks or prefers.
3. THREE BAPTISMS—There is more than one baptism of which believers need to be aware.
4. PURPOSE—The purpose of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is to equip the believer with supernatural empowering for witnessing and bringing the Kingdom of God on earth.
5. PROCESS—It is a matter of recognizing need, Biblical mandate, requesting and thanking Him for receiving.
6. PRIMARY EVIDENCE—The primary evidence is not “tongues,” but power for ministry.

Additional Reading

Don Basham, *Spiritual Power*, Whitaker House, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 1971.

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Benny Hinn, *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1990.

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Basic Scriptural Truth

Tarry until you receive power and then you can be witnesses (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8).

Bottom Line

You either function in your power or God's.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by relying on your own strengths or committed by recognizing your weaknesses and depending totally on Christ.

Chapter 13

TONGUES

On my 39th wedding anniversary, I was trying to think of a way to communicate to my wife that I love her and that she is very special to me, as she always has been. Every day I tell her verbally that I love her and I even draw cartoons on notes in her lunch. But this was different. I wanted it to be special, so I bought a card that I thought expressed how I felt, yet there was something missing—so I purchased one rose for every year we have been married and presented them to her during the morning worship service and gave her a hug and kiss!

What Happened?

In an effort to communicate my feelings, I SPOKE. Then I DREW CARTOONS, I went on to a PRINTED card. I continued my effort with FLOWERS. Finally, I gave her a hug and a kiss! The common thread in all these efforts is that I utilized every form of “language” that I knew to express my feelings. I progressed in intensity with each effort until I was sure that she understood, because she is very special to me. I was passionate about getting the message across.

It is the same with God. Sometimes He calls us to change languages to get the message across. As believers, we need to be passionate about God and serving Him. Sometimes there is a need to “change languages” and in the Christian faith, people call this “speaking in tongues.” There are several types that are not recognized or utilized as they should be. In

each instance, "tongues" communicates beyond the ability of our natural language, English, because it is Spirit controlled, not brain controlled.

The Tongue

The tongue is a part of the body that is designed to produce verbal communication. It is either controlled by the brain or it is controlled by the Spirit. In either case, the deciding factor is the "soul," which is the mind, emotions, will and intellect. A conscious choice is made to respond with the natural or the Spirit.

1. If the choice is to respond in the natural, then the brain begins transmission, because the soul has decided this is the language to be used. This is the normal process in daily life. No words can be spoken without an act of will. If the words are in one's native language, in this case English, and are in obedience to the Lord, the person is being "led" by the Spirit and communicates in the natural language. This is what happens most of the time. The tongue speaks words, as processed and directed by the brain, and approved by the soul.
2. If the choice is to respond in the Spirit, then the brain ceases to process as it naturally does and the Spirit of God takes direct control. The words are then spoken by the tongue. The soul has given control to the Spirit, by choice, rather than to the brain.

Once again, regardless of the type of tongue—natural or Spirit—the individual chooses to speak or not to speak. No one ever speaks because he or she is "over-powered." God will not "over-power" you—even if you are in awe of Him—because He has given us a free will. He is a gentleman and will not make a choice for us. The devil cannot "overpower" a believer and make him speak, because the soul is the deciding factor.

Remember that you are responsible for your own choices concerning speech:

1. To speak or not to speak.

2. To be “led” by the Spirit and speak in English.
3. To be “directed by the Spirit” and speak in another tongue or language. This, in effect, is allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through you with your tongue, but speaking His words.

Natural Speech

Natural speech occurs when an individual speaks in a native or natural earthly language to communicate. The brain processes the *words* to be spoken, but the soul determines *what* is spoken. The words are either in line with God's Word or in line with the world. The soul is the mind, emotions, will and intellect. It is the part of you that God placed there so that you would make voluntary choices rather than be like a puppet or an animal. Most of the time, animals react by instinct, but man is intended to respond by using the soul to make a choice. This choice is either for God or for self (Genesis 1-3).

The Word of God is life and health to those who listen and obey (Proverbs 4:20-22). If we do not bridle our tongue and bring it, by choice, under God's control, it brings destruction (James 3:6, 8) and we deceive ourselves (James 1:26). Just as surely as we act on what we believe, we also speak what we believe. God told the Israelites that His Word was in their mouths and hearts and that He was setting both life and death before them (Deuteronomy 31: 14-15, 19). The choice was theirs. He gives us the same choice of life and death by what we speak and what we obey. This begins with:

Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

If this is not done, then it is “iniquity,” and the thought leads to action or “transgression,” which is going knowingly against God's Word and is a form of rebellion. This rebellion is based on choice and is called sin. My personal acrostic for sin is:

S-eparation
I-ndifference
N-eglect

This acrostic perfectly describes the sinful attitude toward God and His Word. The result is spiritual death.

Spiritual Speech

In I Corinthians 2:10-14, the Apostle Paul talks about “spiritual speech,” which was declaring in the natural tongue the spiritual revelation of God. Acts 4:24-31 describes Peter's prayer and being filled with the Holy Spirit. He immediately testified with boldness. This testimony, to be effective in reaching people, would have to be in the natural language, even though it was received by Spiritual revelation. This is also described as “being fervent in the Spirit” in Acts 18:24, where Apollos' powerful speaking of the Word of God is described.

If you continue in the Word, you will see that God gives “new tongues” (Mark 16:17, Acts 2:2-4 and Acts 19:1-6). This is an experience in which the believer has an encounter with God and allows the Spirit to “control the tongue” and speak through him the message God intends.

Our Attitude

There is a tendency to focus on “tongues” as a gift and then the use of “logic and reason” to determine whether we agree or disagree with Scripture. Tongues are not the issue but rather a by-product of an intense, intimate relationship with God.

I liken this to a ladder that is laying on the ground. All of the rungs are of equal height above the ground but they are all hooked to the same rails for stability, even though they are in different positions. This is like our relationship to the Lord. God is not a respecter of persons, so all believers have an equal relationship to the Lord just like the rungs on the ladder in relation to the ground. But when applied to daily life, it is like the ladder against the wall. Although the rungs are supported by the rails, they are in different locations for use. Granted, the rungs do not have a choice of location, but we do have a choice in terms of our response to the Lord.

Some hindrances include:

1. Not believing that tongues are Biblical,
2. Not believing that they are for today.
3. Not seeing any value in tongues.
4. Falsely believing that tongues are merely a result of excitement or unrestraint.
5. Falsely believing that tongues are ecstasy and the believers do not know what they are doing.
6. Falsely believing tongues are made-up (fake).
7. Falsely believing that the experience is only for the “uneducated.”
8. Falsely believing that tongues come from the devil and are not of God.
9. Having fear of not being in control, not understanding or seeming foolish to others. A better perspective is: How do you look to God?

Be honest with God. Just tell Him that you are afraid, you don't believe Him, you care more about what others say than about what He says or that you don't want the responsibility that comes with the gift. Don't tell Him that it is not a valid experience, because He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Types of Spiritual Tongues

1. **PENTECOSTAL TONGUES**—The early Church experienced this on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The disciples had already received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit when they were born again (John 20:21). The power of God from the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in other earthly languages (even though they didn't understand themselves). The

saving grace of Jesus was presented in various languages so people could receive Jesus. Pentecostal tongues (instant foreign language) are directed to non-believers so they will accept Jesus. If there are no interpreters for speakers who share the Word in other countries, Pentecostal tongues still occur. The disciples yielded (accepted what Jesus said), obeyed (tarried) and acted (spoke) and the result was 3000 souls saved! How do we compare today?

2. **PROPHETIC TONGUES**—To prophesy is to reveal the will of God (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983). This is true of any spoken word that reveals the will of God which can only be done through the Holy Spirit, regardless of the language. This type of tongues is prophetic in that it is revealed in the form of the gift of tongues with interpretation. It is identified in I Corinthians 12:10. This is when God gives a message to believers to be shared with other believers. The message is in "tongues" and since it is directed to other believers (the Church), it needs interpretation. God provides the interpretation needed through other individuals present.

The purpose is to give instruction, direction, correction or encouragement for believers to act upon. If individuals do not respond by speaking as the Lord directs, then He will select others from the group and confirm His Word. This, like Pentecostal tongues, is spoken in obedience to the Lord. It is not something that originates with you. If the message was in English it would be called prophecy, word of knowledge or word of wisdom. This normally occurs in worship service as believers are assembled, but not necessarily every time of worship. This is usually executed in a louder tone of voice so that all present can hear the message.

3. **PRAYER IN TONGUES**—This is the most common type of tongues and is listed in I Corinthians 14:14-15 (praise and thanksgiving) and Romans 8:26 (intercession). It is clear that it is the Holy Spirit that is in control, even though the tongue of the person is used. Since His Spirit lives in you, you can "pray in the

Spirit” any time you wish. This type of tongues is directed toward God and is prayer. This normally occurs when a person “runs out of English” and is still intent on expressing what is in his or her spirit, rather than what he or she is thinking. It needs no interpretation, but if you want to know what you pray, then ask God for the interpretation and He will give it to you. I have experienced praying in the Spirit to be a softer tone of speaking—like a “love language” to God (which it is)—than prophetic tongues. When there is interpretation, I have found that it is a bit louder and spoken with authority and emphasis.

Different Experiences

Each person’s experience is different and should not be compared with that of others. Usually, the experience comes when a person has asked to be Baptized with the Holy Spirit and yields everything to the Lord. Sometimes it is immediate and sometimes it occurs later. In either case, it occurs when the person is willing to speak to the Lord about what is in her or his spirit and give Him praise (in many instances, people will have this encounter with the Lord following water baptism).

Before I experienced letting the Lord control my tongue in prayer, I had heard both “prophetic tongues” and “prayer in tongues,” but did not know the difference. I assumed that everyone who “spoke” had the gift of tongues, according to I Corinthians 12:10, but this is not the case.

Once I heard “tongues” that were accompanied by other manifestations that didn’t match Scripture and I had a check (negative response) in my spirit. When I asked, the Lord confirmed that my spiritual impression was correct and that it was not of Him but an imitation. This impressed on me the need for every believer, whether they have experienced tongues or not, to be spiritually sensitive so that they will not be deceived. Even if you have not experienced “tongues” or interpretation, there should be a witness of the spirit, a feeling of peace and the message will glorify Jesus.

On another occasion, early in my ministry, a person asked me to pray for healing. I asked what was needed and the person said, “Just pray.”

I paused and asked the Lord for a word of knowledge (which I had experienced before) so I would know how to pray. Nothing! So, I asked the Lord to let me “see” like He had before on what seemed to be a computer or television screen. The Lord replied, “No, pray out loud in tongues.”

I said that the person would be terrified because they were not used to that type of prayer. About that time the person said, “Well, are you going to pray?”

I replied that I was about to, but I was asking the Lord what to pray for and paused again. The truth was that I had never prayed for anyone in this manner before and I was afraid of making a mistake.

Once again, the person asked whether I was ever going to pray. I responded, “yes.”

The individual said, “When?”

I replied, “Now.”

I told the Lord that I would do as He said and pray out loud in tongues, but when I was finished I would like interpretation so that I could speak in English and the person would know what was prayed. I did just that, and when I finished speaking the interpretation in English, the person confirmed the medical condition that the Lord revealed to me and there was verified total healing! In addition to helping the person receive healing, this experience was for me—that I might learn to trust the Lord more.

On another occasion, I was praying softly in tongues for a particular person and emptying my spirit in intercession, then suddenly the “language” changed from soft to strong with great emphasis. Much to my amazement, the person said, “Do you know what just happened? When your language and tone switched, it went from ‘praying in tongues’ to the ‘gift of tongues,’ and the Lord gave me the interpretation concerning my situation and what to do about it.”

A word about the “language.” No two individuals’ “language” is the same, but each is authentic as received from the Holy Spirit. The language develops as the person grows much like a child’s vocabulary increases as the child grows. Note that there may be a difference in how one individual prays in tongues as compared to how the same person gives a prophetic word in tongues (I Corinthians 12:10).

Purpose

The purpose of tongues is the ability to allow the Spirit of God to speak through you as He desires in various situations. This begins with giving control to Jesus by giving up pride, status, image, academic degrees and natural understanding. It includes trusting your First Love—JESUS—and acting in obedience to the guidance of His Spirit. Remember:

1. **PENTECOSTAL TONGUES**—for sharing the Gospel in another person’s native language, when there is no interpreter so the person can hear the saving grace of Jesus and accept salvation.
2. **PROPHETIC TONGUES**—for sharing a specific word from the Lord for a group (or on occasion, for an individual) that requires interpretation (I Corinthians 14:2-5). The word will be direction, instruction correction, or encouragement. If the word is for you, the Lord will never “read your mail” (tell secrets publicly) to others nor will He give information to others that He has not given to you first. The word will merely confirm what the Lord has already told you. He is a gentleman and expects believers to act accordingly.
3. **PRAYER IN TONGUES**—for communicating directly in the Spirit with the Lord. The devil acts on our spoken natural or native language (for example, “I’m afraid” or “God won’t”), not our thoughts or prayer language. The advantage of this type of prayer is that the believer has chosen to be under the complete control of the Spirit in prayer and intercession, so there is direct communication as listed in Romans 8:26 and I Corinthians 14:14-15. Read these passages today and listen to what the Holy Spirit says to you about them.

Application

The application is the same today as it was in the first century Church:

1. **PENTECOSTAL TONGUES** are for presenting the gospel in someone's natural or native tongue. This would not occur except on rare occasions when an interpreter is not present and God wants people to hear in their own language.
2. **PROPHETIC TONGUES** are for presenting a current message to a group with confirmation by interpretation.
3. **PRAYING IN TONGUES** is for the purpose of intercession and a more intimate fellowship with God by allowing Him to express through the Spirit what is inside that normal words can't describe.

Summary/Review

1. Sometimes there is a need to "change languages" from natural to spiritual, just as there is a need to "change forms of expression" in natural language.
2. The tongue is designed to produce verbal communication and it is either controlled by the brain, or by the Spirit of God. In either case, the deciding factor is the "soul," which is, essentially, the mind. A conscious choice is made to respond with the natural or the Spirit.
3. We are responsible for our own choices concerning speech, whether in the natural or the spiritual realms.
4. Attitude can determine hindrances or use of "tongues." The greatest hindrances are a controlling spirit, natural understanding and pride.
5. Other than the natural or native tongue, there are three types of tongues: Pentecostal, Prophetic and Praying in tongues. Each has a specific purpose.

6. Individuals' experiences with tongues vary and should never be compared. Just be Biblical and allow the Holy Spirit to work through you. It is not something you "do" of your own accord, but something you act on in obedience and allow.

7. Your individual language is authentic as received from the Holy Spirit. It has form, style and syntax, and develops or increases with use.

8. Know that every type of spiritual tongues is a divinely anointed utterance in a language the speaker has never learned. It is for the purpose of communication and accomplishing God's will, either with Him or others.

Additional Reading

C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, Regal Books, Glendale, California, 1979.

Don Basham, *The Miracle of Tongues*, Fleming H. Revel Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1973.

Don Basham, *Spiritual Power*, Whitaker House, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, 1971.

Oral Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit and the Value of Speaking in Tongues Today*, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1964.

Bottom Line

We choose the form of communication that we believe will be most effective in the achievement of our goals.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by thinking that you have allowed God to guide your speech, or you can be committed by allowing Him to control your speech with His Spirit.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God wants the control and use of your tongue just like He wants the rest of you. If you haven't given God control of your tongue, then you haven't given Him complete control of your life.

Chapter 14

TOOLS (GIFTS)

My son and I were working on a project and he asked for a particular tool that I did not have. He said that we would have to “make do” by another means if we wanted to finish the project. We completed the project using the means that we had available, and while the project was by no means “shabby,” it did not have the precision that the other tools would have produced. On another occasion, a specific tool that was needed was not available, so the job could not be completed.

It is the same in spiritual matters. You can try to accomplish a task with natural skills rather than spiritual ones. You may make a little headway, but you will not accomplish what you could or should if you had the right tools. When operating in the Kingdom of God, you need the right spiritual tools for the job and they are called “spiritual gifts.” These “spiritual gifts” are part of the equipping of the saints to make disciples, grow the Church and bring the Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

Definition

C. Peter Wagner has the best definition of “spiritual gift” that I have found: “A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God’s grace for use within the context of the Body (*Your Spiritual Gifts can Help Your Church Grow*, Regal Books, Glendale, California, 1979, p. 42.)”

Spiritual gifts do not originate within the individual. They come from God. In fact, Jesus, in Ephesians 4:8, is identified as the Source of these gifts. Manifested gifts reveal Christ in His Body. It is the same today as it was yesterday and as it will be tomorrow. The spiritual gifts are actually supernatural abilities granted by God for use in ministry to bring His Kingdom and free captives (those who are in spiritual bondage). This is because human talent is not adequate for the spiritual ministry entrusted to the Church and for which it is commissioned (Matthew 28:18-20).

This commissioning was not given to an organization or structure but to living, breathing human beings. It is these individuals who constitute the Church—the Body of Christ—and it is these individuals whom God uses to reach the world and spread the Good News.

Just as God called and empowered Moses (Exodus 3:4), or Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:15-16) or the disciples on Pentecost, so He does with believers today. Throughout Scripture, God has called individuals from all walks of life into ministry. Whether it was the prophets in the Old Testament or the disciples in the New Testament, their backgrounds were quite varied, ranging from shepherds to fishermen, and all were laypersons (not pastors) who were anointed with the Spirit of God. God the Holy Spirit is the One Who enables believers to continue the ministry of the Lord Jesus in the same power the Lord Jesus displayed and with the same results He obtained! He is the same today as He was then.

The enabling begins when people experience a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-39) and continue to witness after they are empowered (Acts 1:4-5, 7-8). The witnesses referred to in Acts 1 are all believers in the Body of Christ and include the five fold ministries found in Ephesians 4:11, but are not limited to it exclusively.

Settling the Debate

Some scholars believe that certain gifts are natural and others are spiritual. This is true in a general sense, in that everything given to us by God has been given voluntarily and without consideration or request of compensation. Natural talents, skills and abilities come within this understanding. Spiritual gifts are different.

There are individuals and groups who believe that all or part of the spiritual gifts ceased when the apostles died, because they were needed as credentials for the apostles, but are no longer needed as outward signs to confirm the Christian faith. The belief that all or part of the spiritual gifts ceased with the apostles (this position cannot be Biblically supported) is called *dispensationalism*. "The intellectual center of this effort is in Dallas Theological Seminary, an interdenominational school that looks with disfavor on the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement of recent decades (C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, Regal Books, Glendale, California, 1979, p. 22)."

The Holy Spirit has been a vital part of the growth and development of the Church, but the early Church had more to say about discipline and heresy (denial of essential doctrine) than it did about "gifts." One of the primary reasons for this is that gifts were very common, and therefore not as controversial as they can be today. What follows is one authors opinion:

In fact, there is evidence from the second century that the *charismata* were so widely accepted and practiced that was unnecessary to defend their use or mention their occurrence. Therefore, the omission of the *charismata* in the writings may indicate that the gifts were functioning so smoothly in the life of the Church that there was no need to write about them. Even if one concedes that the gifts became less emphasized as the Church developed, it does not suggest that they were spurned as untrue, false or discordant (Mark Randall Hall, *Glossolalia as Past Phenomena: Occurrences of Tongues-Speech During First and Second Centuries*, (M.A. Thesis, Oral Roberts University, 1989).

John 10:27 clearly states:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Christians have a Biblical right and need to hear a certain, clear message from God, whether or not man views it as controversial.

It is an established fact that spiritual gifts were operative in the early Church and that the supernatural was a vital part of the community of faith. The same should be true for the Church today. It is time that we, as believers, accept the authority of the Word, study and walk closely with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Priesthood of Believers

At Mt. Sinai, before giving the Ten Commandments to Moses, God said the following concerning the Hebrew people:

Now therefore, if you will obey My voice and keep My Covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6).

The people were a holy nation and the priests represented the people before God.

This relationship with God is continued today as believers have a relationship with Him through the person of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Christ, Who lives in believers, is the basis for ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. This was true in the Apostle Peter's day as he spoke to the Christians who were dispersed in various countries of the world:

You also, like living stone, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5).

The Spirit of Christ lives in those who believe today as surely as He did in the saints of the past. He continues to be the source of power for ministry. The specific privileges and responsibilities of believers, as part of the priesthood of believers, are clear:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light (I Peter 2:9).

Today, the priesthood of believers is normally identified in the nomenclature, "discipleship." Disciples minister because Jesus is the Source of commissioning and empowering and this has not changed. Jesus is quite clear about the believer's source of strength and life as well as what is expected of a disciple. A mandate was given to disciples to abide in Christ and to produce much fruit:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples (John 15:4-5, 8).

No fruit can be produced without the equipping and power of God which comes from abiding in the Vine (John 15). This is true whether it is the fruit (His nature, Galatians 5:22-23) inside or fruit (making disciples, Matthew 28:18-20) outside. Both the equipping and the power include—but is not limited to—what we call today, "spiritual gifts." As an important part of the royal priesthood, you have not only the inner spiritual quality of Jesus, but also the power to minister, as a witness, to the entire world.

For All Believers

This equipping is available to disciples throughout all ages, and is the basis for all ministry, whether by lay persons or clergy. The pastor is ordained and placed in the Church to lead and equip (Ephesians 4:11) and lay persons (all the ministers who are non-ordained, Colossians 1:24-25) are to minister as priests before God (Revelation 1:6; I Peter 2:9). According to Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, all in the Body of Christ (believers) have been endowed with spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit. The purpose is to enable them to minister, and bring the Kingdom of God and to "edify the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Gifts and Manifestations

In I Corinthians 12, the words normally used are, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren," when, in fact, the Apostle Paul was speaking

about how spiritual matters were seen or made visible. In some translations, it says, "spiritual matters." Other translations say, "manifestations," but really, the most correct is "spirituals." What it amounts to is that people had encountered supernatural events (both good and bad) and the Apostle Paul was giving specific instructions about identifying spiritual activity as it came from the Lord and how it was to be identified and used in ministry to build up the Body of Christ.

I believe that—to be Biblically correct—there is really only one gift and that is the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) Who has many manifestations. I Corinthians 12:4 says:

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

So, as we take a look at what are commonly called "spiritual gifts," we are actually looking at the spiritual activity or manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit at work through believers.

Receiving and Activating

Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit, Who indwells believers (with all of His potential), when they accept Christ (Acts 2:38; I Peter 4:10) and are Baptized with the Holy Spirit. The spiritual gifts are made manifest (visible) when we act in obedience to what the Lord is telling us. These spiritual gifts are available to all believers and for use in daily life and ministry.

Types and Number

The most common way in which spiritual gifts are categorized by Classical Pentecostals is the list of nine gifts in I Corinthians 12:8-10:

1. Motivational (Exhortation) Gifts—Wisdom, Word of Knowledge and Faith.
2. Manifestation (Utterance) Gifts—Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation.

3. Miracle (Power) Gifts—Miracles, Healing and Discerning of Spirits.

While these are correct, the list is incomplete. Every believer needs to recognize and utilize spiritual gifts, so there needs to be further study and examination. C. Peter Wagner (*Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, Regal Books, Glendale, California, 1979, pp. 59-60, 62-63, 73.) gives the most comprehensive study I have found:

1. Prophecy (preaching, inspired utterance)—Romans 12.
2. Service (ministry)—Romans 12.
3. Teaching—Romans 12.
4. Exhortation (stimulating faith, encouraging)—Romans 12.
5. Giving (contributing, generosity, sharing)—Romans 12.
6. Leadership (authority, ruling, administration)—Romans 12.
7. Mercy (sympathy, comfort to the sorrowing, showing kindness)—Romans 12.
8. Wisdom—I Corinthians 12.
9. Knowledge (studying, speaking with knowledge)—I Corinthians 12.
10. Faith—I Corinthians 12.
11. Healing—I Corinthians 12.
12. Miracles (doing great deeds)—I Corinthians 12.
13. Discerning of Spirits (discrimination in spiritual matters)—I Corinthians 12.

14. Tongues (speaking in languages never learned, ecstatic utterance)—I Corinthians 12.
15. Interpretation of tongues—I Corinthians 12.
16. Apostle—I Corinthians 12.
17. Helps—I Corinthians 12.
18. Administration (governments, getting others to work together)—I Corinthians 12.
19. Evangelist—Ephesians 4.
20. Pastor (caring for God's people)—Ephesians 4.
21. Celibacy—I Corinthians 7:7.
22. Voluntary poverty—I Corinthians 13:3.
23. Martyrdom—I Corinthians 13:3.
24. Hospitality—I Peter 4:9.
25. Missionary work—Matthew 28:18-20.
26. Intercession—Matthew 28:18-20.
27. Exorcism—Matthew 28:18-20.

Use

In all, Wagner identifies 27 different spiritual gifts, each of which is intended to be used to build the Body of Christ and to bring the Kingdom. The gifts are to be used within the Church setting first and then in the community. The use of gifts enables the individual believer to be more effective in service and ministry. They always glorify God and help mature the Church. Spiritual gifts are not a badge of honor or

prestige, but rather “supernatural tools” of ministry for the Lord Jesus to be used as He intended.

In addition to power for ministry identification, the use of spiritual gifts provides the individual with a Biblically healthy self-esteem, true humility as he or she realizes that all are equally important to God. The use of spiritual gifts also results in unity in working with others and gratitude for the opportunity for increased effectiveness in ministry. If you are not using your spiritual gift(s), you are “quenching the Spirit” by using only your natural abilities and not the supernatural resources God has given you. Reasons for not using them range from a lack of understanding to fear. You may choose to begin using them at any point, thus increasing your effectiveness and giving more glory to God.

Accountability

Romans 14:12 tells us:

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

This is true whether we are dealing with natural talents (Matthew 25:14-30), spiritual gifts (I Peter 4:10) or life and opportunities for ministry (Hebrews 9:27). We are stewards of all that God has given us and must use the gifts to the most effective extent possible and glorify God (I Corinthians 4:2). This means that every believer needs to know which gift or gifts he or she has been given for use in ministry. Sometimes there is what Wagner calls a “gift-mix,” in which it is possible for more than one gift to be in operation. An example might be the pastor/teacher combination. The gifts function based on circumstances and need.

I, like Wagner, believe that once a person has a spiritual gift, it is for lifetime possession and use (Romans 12:4). This is your primary, but not exclusive gift, because you may have a gift-mix or be multi-gifted. If this is true, then the gifts compliment each other for maximum efficiency. Your primary gift is actually what might be called the “office” from which you function throughout your life.

Further, I believe that it is possible for every believer to use any gift temporarily on the basis of need, as the Spirit wills. If the person with the

spiritual gift needed is not present and you are present, then God will use you! This gift is what I call a "role" gift, from which you function on an as-needed basis, determined by God.

Regardless of the number of gifts, they still exist and are intended to be in use for the Lord.

1. Identify or recognize your spiritual gift(s) through prayer and taking a spiritual gift inventory, such as the one used by Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, entitled, *Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts: A Personal Method*, which is published by Zondervan (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981).
2. Once you have identified your gift(s) and put them into use, you will have the gift(s) confirmed by the Body of Christ. This means that they are used first within the Church and are verified as being valid.
3. Step out and put the spiritual gifts into action as God opens the door—don't hesitate or wait. God gave them to you and the Body of Christ confirmed it and now BOTH EXPECT to see you use it! Begin by asking your pastor to provide and support a ministry time in Church then be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and respond boldly in the community as God leads.

Summary/Review

1. Spiritual gifts do not originate with the individual. They come from God and are the supernatural means by which the ministry God intended takes place. They operate as we act in obedience because we are related to Him (I Peter 4:10).
2. Biblically, there can be no "debate" about the existence of spiritual gifts. They are a vital part of the Church and should be sought, identified and used by God's people (Acts 4:13).

3. Believers are part of the “Priesthood of Believers,” who have the inner spiritual quality of Jesus and the power to minister through spiritual gifts, as led by the Holy Spirit (John 15:4-5, 8).
4. Spiritual gifts are for all believers to use (I Corinthians 12:27-28).
5. There is actually only one gift (the Holy Spirit) but many manifestations (I Corinthians 12:4).
6. Spiritual gifts are received when the Holy Spirit comes to live within you, at the point in time when you are born again (Acts 2:38; I Peter 4:10). They are released through the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and made manifest when we act in obedience.
7. Spiritual gifts are not limited to those listed in I Corinthians 12, but are also found in Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and various other Scriptures. Twenty-seven have been Biblically identified for believers to use in ministry and glorifying God. To not use them is to quench the Spirit and function at less than optimal effectiveness.
8. Accountability is an important aspect of the use of spiritual gifts. This is why they are confirmed by the Body of Christ and used there first, before reaching out into the community.

Additional Reading

Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *Gifts of the Spirit*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1976.

Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life*, Discovery House Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995.

Frank R. Tillapaugh, *Unleashing the Church*, Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1985.

Bottom Line

Spiritual gifts do exist and should be active in your life as a believer.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by falsely believing that physical skills and talents are the same as spiritual gifts, or you can be committed by seeking all God has to offer.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God intended spiritual gifts to be a vital part of ministry for every believer.

Chapter 15

MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY

One day while I was attending seminary, the Lord opened a door for me that literally changed my understanding and expectations in ministry. My roommate, Calvin Easterling, who is now a professor and administrator at Oral Roberts University, had gone to class and accidentally locked me out of the dormitory room. I was half dressed and returning from the shower at the end of the hall, when I found the door LOCKED! As I stood before the door, time was running out and I needed to get to class. I thought there was no master key available and I couldn't "card" the door. So, as I stood there wondering what to do, God reminded me that He was the same today as He was yesterday and would be tomorrow. He told me to call upon Him.

I said, "Lord this is not a time for praying. It's a time for action!" He reminded me that He would answer when called upon and that He was concerned about even the small things (I thought, "This is no small thing!"), so I did what He said.

As I stood in front of the door, looking at the lock, I touched it and thought how something as small as a key could either hinder or help a situation. I hoped that maybe I just hadn't turned the handle far enough, so I tried the door once more to ensure that it was locked. It certainly was, much to my dismay. It was then that the Lord impressed me to take my finger and run it around the lock and speak in His name, which I did.

Immediately there was a “click” and the door opened! As I stood there for a moment, it was almost as if I could hear God laugh in delight. I hurried on to class still thinking about what had happened.

When my roommate returned and I told him about it, he smiled and said, “Really, how did you say it happened?” So we both stood in front of a locked door and as I demonstrated what had happened, God repeated the exact process for him and Calvin walked through the open door! My roommate, who was Spirit-filled, said, “Now I believe!” God had indeed shown me that He was still “in charge” and “available today.”

That was just the beginning of many manifestations of God's presence, love and power with which I have been blessed. I have been blessed to see the supernatural touch of God in lives where legs were lengthened, blind eyes given sight, the deaf made to hear, time stood still and storms turned away.

Praise God that He is willing and available to work in the lives of His people. He is not a celestial sugar-daddy or a Heavenly Santa who produces on demand. He is a loving God who is active in the lives of His children and fulfills His promises.

Previously, I had known that “God could” but now I had experienced that “God would.” This radically changed my understanding and expectations. Throughout the years, I have found that God acts like Himself by doing the seemingly impossible and working in the supernatural. Let's look at some other “manifestations in ministry” and see how God wants to work in the lives of those who are in need and who are willing to be used.

Being Childlike

All of us know the delight, belief and joy that children express. All believers should have the same attitude toward the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Be open to whatever God does, but always compare the experience to Scripture. God blessed me with a belief in the authority of the Word. For me, if Scripture says it, then it is true and worthy of full acceptance. I knew tongues were Biblical, but I had just not yet personally experienced them. I knew healing was Biblical, but I had just

CHAPTER 15 – MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER

not yet experienced it. On and on the list goes, and as I grow in Him and experience more of Him and His presence I look to the Word and it is clear that He is still actively working in lives today.

Desire and seek whatever is of God, as contained and promised in Scripture. Do not merely seek experiences or signs but seek the GIVER, and all else will follow. Be like a child and be sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you and work through you.

Resting in the Spirit

Resting in the Spirit is not a new phenomenon. It is Scriptural and has occurred throughout history. It occurs today when the power of God comes upon a person and the intensity is so great that the body cannot resist it. In Scripture, there are accounts of God's touching people and their "resting in the Spirit," but there was not anyone who touched them, as a vessel of the Lord, nor were there any "catchers." Like other manifestations, this one is not to be sought, but neither is it to be avoided—merely experienced.

Biblical References

In Exodus 40:34-35, the glory of the Lord covered the Tabernacle like a cloud and Moses was not able to enter.

II Chronicles 5:11-14 describes an occasion when the House of the Lord was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not continue to minister.

II Chronicles 7:1-2 tells of the glory of the Lord filling the Temple and the priests' not being able to enter.

Daniel 10:9 describes an event in which Daniel lost his strength but could still hear while in a deep sleep with his face to the ground.

Matthew 28:4 describes the resurrection of Jesus. The Roman guards at the tomb shook with fear and became like dead men. This is a description that leads people to label the experience as being

"Slain in the Spirit." This indicates that there is no movement or response at all.

In John 18:6, Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. When He spoke, "I am He," the people drew back and fell to the ground. This occurs today when the glory of God is present and there is not a prayer or touch.

II Corinthians 12:2-4 describes the Apostle Paul's encounter with the power and presence of Jesus to the degree that his body could not stand it and his spirit was in the presence of God. This was evidently not merely being under the power, but also out of body, which does occur occasionally today.

Acts 9:4 is where Saul of Tarsus encountered the risen Christ and fell to the ground.

Acts 22:7 is Paul's account of his encounter with the risen Christ and his conversion.

Revelation 1:17 describes John's encounter with Jesus and falling at His feet as if dead.

Historically

In addition to Biblical references, there are records of this manifested presence of God throughout history. Great Christian renewal leaders, such as Wesley, Whitefield and Berridge recorded a few such occurrences in the 1700's. In the revival of the early 1800's, this phenomenon was experienced by the "Shakers" and in the mid 1800's by Charles Finney. In the 1900's, there was Azusa Street and manifestations in revival across America. Manifestations occurred during the Welsh Revival, the Brownsville Revival, the Toronto Blessing and continue today.

Resting in the Spirit occurs in the ministry of many of God's people, such as Katherine Kuhlman, Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, Charles Hunter, Francis MacNutt and Benny Hinn, to name a few of the larger ministries.

CHAPTER 15 – MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER

It also occurs in almost every ministry today in which there is an openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Terms

The following terms are used to describe the same experience. The term used depends on the individual and how they have had it explained to them by others.

1. Falling Under the Power.
2. Slain in the Spirit.
3. Resting in the Power.
4. Resting in the Spirit.

What Happens

There is a release of God's power and the individual cannot stand the intensity. There is usually a physical collapse or what some people call "falling down." This may be backward, forward or straight down.

In some instances, there are "catchers" to ensure that the person does not receive injury by falling to the floor. Even though the person will be not be injured, it is still good to catch him or her because often some are not conscious.

Some people get the mistaken impression that the individual "passed out" because there appears to be a loss of consciousness. Often, there is a feeling of floating or resting gently. Sometimes the person experiences light and heat. Many times the person can hear but not see. In some instances the person cannot move.

During this time of spiritual resting, there occurs what I call "spiritual surgery." The Lord is ministering directly to the needs of the individual. The individual may receive strength, revelation and healing.

Sometimes the Lord ministers to the person and after a time he or she can see clearly and talk but still cannot move. They are what some call "glued to the floor" until the Lord is finished.

During the period of time that the body's energy fades and the power of God is ministering to the person, there may be crying, groaning, laughter or praise. This is NOT emotion, hysteria or ecstasy, but the power of God being manifested.

The duration of time for resting in the Spirit varies. It may be as short as a minute or two or as long as several hours. Do not disturb or touch the person. Allow the Lord time to bring His work to completion.

A Counterfeit

Several years ago during ministry, an individual cried out, "I think I'm going to be slain in the Spirit," and then collapsed. Immediately following this there was twisting, jerking and thrashing of the body, almost like spasms, and the individual's face had a grimace or contortion to it—no peace at all. I asked the Lord about it because my spirit did not witness to it. The Lord said it was an imitation that needed to be addressed. As I spoke and acted in obedience, the situation was reversed and the person was set free from a demonic spirit by the true power of the risen Christ!

Resting in the Spirit is indeed of the Lord and serves a purpose as He touches lives with His glory. Simply let Him work until He is finished with the individual, regardless of what you may experience from a worldly perspective.

Out of Body

In my experience, I have seen people resting in the Spirit with a variety of manifestations, such as receiving revelation knowledge, confirmation, direction, healing, laughing, crying, lying so still they appear to be dead, resting in the Spirit for several hours or even straining to get up and asking why he or she could not move. Once, I prayed for a particular individual and the person was "resting in the Spirit." After fifteen

CHAPTER 15 – MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER

minutes, another individual said, “Pastor, are you sure she is alive? I haven’t seen her move.”

I assured her that there was no problem. In a few minutes, another lady made the statement, “Pastor, I can’t see her breathe. Are you sure she is okay?”

I took a closer look and could not see the person breathing, so I put my watch under her nose and it did not fog. I placed my hand under her nose and could feel no air coming in or going out. When I looked at her complexion, it was still healthy looking and had color, but still there was no visible inhaling or exhaling.

A suggestion was made that maybe we ought to seek medical help, but I said that since this was of the Lord, He was in charge. We waited for a little over five more minutes and the individual began to move and “wake up.” When the person was fully conscious and talking to me, I said, “I know that you were resting in the Spirit, but your spirit was not in your body. Where was it?”

At that point, the individual shouted with joy, saying that she had indeed left her body and walked with Jesus. She began to describe the glorious experience. The result was not just the wonderful experience but a healing that had been needed for a long time.

Healing

Healing is a topic that is either neglected or abused because most people do not realize what Jesus promises about healing for all believers. Healing is not limited to the physical but includes spiritual, inner (emotional and memories) healing and relational healing. Healing of spirit, soul and body is available to every believer today based upon the Word of God, but many miss it because of wrong attitudes, teaching or fear.

It Still Happens!

In 1977, shortly after I was baptized with the Holy Spirit, I encountered divine healing and found out that God still heals today. I pastored two

small Churches in Oklahoma while attending a school of theology in Dallas, Texas. A member of my congregation asked me if she could ride with me to Dallas for the purpose of taking chemotherapy. Her daughter, who lived in the Dallas area, met us upon arrival and thanked me for bringing her mother. She invited me to attend a Wednesday morning healing service at the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection. I did not know what to expect, but there was singing, praise, worship, some high church liturgy and Holy Communion, followed by a ministry time that included anointing with oil, prayer and the laying on of hands. As I relaxed and enjoyed the presence of the Lord, I noticed that there were people (I was told there was an average of 150) in work clothes and from all walks of life reaching out to the Lord—expecting their loved ones, friends or themselves to be touched and healed.

The power of God was so strong that some could not stand. The healing began. Some were healed instantly, while others were healed during the remainder of the time we were there. The love of God was so strong that I described it to a friend as, “a fifty gallon barrel of liquid love being poured over me.” It was almost breath-taking to experience that touch of God. I was in awe of the movement of the Spirit of the living God and it was during this time that I experienced the deaf hearing, the blind seeing and the lame walking! No longer could the reality of God be rationalized away by dispensationalism, theological presuppositions or emotionalism, as presented in scholastic and academic circles. Healing still happens and I was blessed to experience it!

This was a whole new area for me, but it was an important element of the Christian faith that I needed to learn about and apply as a pastor. Little did I know at the time that healing was not necessarily popular in Church, even by people who claimed they believed in it. God is good, though, and He gave me favor such that I could learn from Father Ted Nelson, the pastor, and participate in the Episcopal healing ministry on a weekly basis. It was on one of these occasions that a guest speaker, Father Francis MacNutt, spoke on healing and ministered to the people. His spirit was so gentle and his approach was so Biblical that the glory of God filled the sanctuary and people were healed. He has authored several books, but the one entitled *Healing* is basic, Biblical and balanced. It gives very practical advice on how to allow the Spirit of God to use a person in healing. One chapter of the book gives eleven reasons why

CHAPTER 15 – MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER

people are not healed because in the natural some people do not seem to receive Divine Healing. Over the years, I have had the opportunity and privilege to experience Divine Healing in groups as well as when praying with people individually. What follows, in brief form, is what God has shown me, what I have experienced and what is available to every believer,

Healing Is Biblical

Isaiah 53:4-5 tells us:

Surely He has borne our sickness and carried our pains; yet we esteem Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

We must always remember that we can heal no one. Jesus is the healer (Acts 10:38) and He works through believers.

Exodus 15:26 and Deuteronomy 7:15 express God's desire for healing for His people. See what He did for Moses in Deuteronomy 34:7.

Matthew 10:1, 7-8 describes what He empowered the Apostles to do.

Matthew 28 tells us that He gave believers the same power today.

Mark 16:15-18 tells us clearly what God has empowered believers to do and is calling them to act upon. Healing was the by-product of preaching and declaring the Word of God. He honors His Word and His glory is made evident.

The healing power of God is greater than any and all disease (Proverbs 4:20-22). The purpose of healing is not merely to help the person feel better, but also to demonstrate the Kingdom of God and offer the Healer (Jesus) to people as their personal Lord and Savior.

Healing is part of our redemption and what Jesus did on the cross for everyone who will accept Him. In addition to salvation, which is primary, healing is available as part of the total package of blessings from the Lord.

When Jesus redeemed us on the cross, it was for spirit, soul and body. This included all diseases listed in Deuteronomy 28:15-62 and "also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law...if Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, and sickness is included in the curse, surely He redeemed us from sickness (F. F. Bosworth, *Christ the Healer*, Fleming H. Revel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, p. 40)."

Some Basic Healing Scriptures

1. Exodus 15:26—He is the Lord who heals us.
2. Proverbs 4:20-22—God's Word is life and health.
3. Isaiah 53:4-5—By His stripes we are healed.
4. Matthew 8:17—He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.
5. Matthew 21:22—And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.
6. Mark 11:23-24—Speak, believe, receive.
7. Mark 16:18—Believers will lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.
8. II Corinthians 1:18-20—All God's promises are yes and amen.
9. Galatians 3:13—Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.
10. Hebrews 11:1—Faith is NOW.
11. James 5:14-15—The Lord answers prayer of faith and anointing.

12. I Peter 2:24—Christ died for our sins and it is through Him that we are healed spiritually as well as physically.

Types of Healing

While all healing comes from the Lord, it generally comes in one of two ways: either Divine Healing or healing through doctors. God uses both of these ways to heal and we need to be aware of how He works and what He wants to do.

While God has made provision for healing in the atonement as Scripture clearly shows, it is not proper to refuse medical treatment. Use the resource of medical treatment if that is what is necessary in a particular instance. Pray first and then go to the doctor. God prepares the body to receive treatment and often heals before arrival at the doctor's office. Doctors will then verify what God has done because God's work will stand the test of man whom He created! Healing is the removal of disease and restoration to wholeness (Luke 4:18). Setting captives free spiritually, emotionally and physically was the mission of Jesus and continues to be His mission through us today.

DIVINE HEALING occurs when God does a healing work in a person's body without the assistance, presence or treatment of a doctor. There are three basic areas in which healing is made manifest: spiritual, emotional and physical.

1. Spiritual healing has to do with salvation.
2. Emotional healing has to do with memories and experiences.
3. Physical healing has to do with the body.

DOCTORS are individuals through whom God works in the lives of people who come to them for medical care. This is usually the case with healing because people are taught to be governed by natural sight. "Being governed by natural sight is unscientific because it does not take into account all the facts. It overlooks

the greatest and best of facts. Healing by natural means only is unscientific because it overlooks important facts. It overlooks the supernatural agency in disease as well as the privilege of the supernatural in recovery. We thank God for the thousands who have made great spiritual advancement while receiving healing in this way. The process of faith that brings the healing is a far greater blessing than the healing itself (F. F. Bosworth, *Christ the Healer*, Fleming H. Revel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, p. 130)."

While there is talk today of medical services "healing the whole man," it does not work this way because physical medicine cannot affect spiritual sickness. This is also true of psychiatric treatments. If the cause is chemical imbalance or physical injury, then medicine works—to a degree. Spiritual causes, however, require spiritual treatment from the power of the living God.

Some Hindrances to Healing

The following list contains some of the more common hindrances to receiving healing:

1. A lack of faith.
2. Unforgiveness.
3. Hardness of heart.
4. Unbelief.
5. Unconfessed sin.
6. Having hope instead of faith.
7. Rebellion.
8. Being in strife.
9. Not responding to the Word.

10. Praying “Thy will be done” cancels the revealed will of God.
11. Going against natural laws.
12. Belief that God is the author of sickness (which He is not).
13. Belief that it is not His will to heal all (which it is).
14. Being double minded.
15. Believing the five natural senses rather than the Word of God.

Some Keys

1. God is sovereign.
2. Use faith to take what God offers now.
3. God has made provision for healing and it has not changed.
4. God is not limited by the world He created.
5. In terms of your healing, God is limited by your belief, acceptance and response.
6. There is no legalistic pattern of healing.
7. There are some essential ingredients for healing:
 - a. Faith—that the Word is true
 - b. Belief—that He will honor His Word now.
 - c. Receiving—accepting what God offers, such as forgiveness.
 - d. Responding—put forth effort. Act in obedience to His Word.

How to Receive

People receive at their faith level. During a hospital visit, I asked a lady about prayer. She said, "Yes, pray for me to endure." I was shocked that she would rather endure pain than be healed, but prayed according to what she was willing to receive.

In the same room, there was an elderly lady whose daughter asked if I would pray with them. I looked at the gentle, sweet lady in the bed and asked about why she desired prayer. Her response was, "I don't know what is wrong, I am just bad sick and want to be healed."

As I anointed her with oil and spoke in Jesus' name, I had quite another shock. She immediately got out of bed and began running down the hallway, shouting loudly, thanking Jesus for her healing! This was baffling to her family and to the hospital staff because the family had been "called in" since Grandma was supposedly dying. She was completely healed.

Just as the Israelites, as recorded in Numbers 21, who were bitten by snakes, were told to look at the bronze serpent on the pole and they would live; so we must look to Jesus, Who has already provided means of healing for us. If you look to feelings or symptoms, you are doing the opposite of what God requires. Faith, as demonstrated by Abraham, is acting on what God says rather than what we see in the world. This is faith (the releasing of the Spirit to move supernaturally by obedience) not mind-science (which is trying to cause something to happen through concentration, meditation or by focusing on mind over matter). When you commit your life completely to the Lord, He is responsible for the healing of your body, so remember His promise in Isaiah 53:5:

But 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.

Just Say It

The heart is the center of life. We are told that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak (Luke 6:45). Just as surely as we act on what we truly believe, so we speak what is in our hearts, which is our confession of either Christ's Word or the world.

Several years ago, I was at an artist's studio to see some paintings being created for our local Church. An elderly couple came by to bring some art supplies. The artist informed me that the lady was bringing the supplies because she could no longer paint due to a condition in her hands that the doctors said could not be cured, even by surgery. Further, the artist, who is a believer, asked that I pray for the lady. During this time, I was a bit uncomfortable, because I felt as though I had been put on the spot. The Lord spoke to me and said, "Just say it."

I said, "Say what?" He replied, "Say My Word, just like My Son Jesus did before Lazarus's tomb."

The lady was gracious as she stretched forth her hands with the middle finger on each hand drawn tightly to the palm. She had a look that seemed to say, "Okay, if you think it will work."

Her husband said, "Well, it can't hurt."

I had a feeling I have never had before. As I looked at her hands, I had this almost overwhelming feeling of merely wanting to cry, which I knew would do no good. With boldness, I said, "Not only will it not hurt—she will be healed."

As I reached out to take hold of the lady's hands, the Lord reminded me to "Just say it." So, I thanked the Lord that He heard me always and that He was faithful to His Word and then called the lady by name and simply spoke, "Be healed in the Name of Jesus."

The lady began to move her fingers, but not fully, so I "just said it" again, never having a doubt as to the outcome. Suddenly, the lady held her hands in the air and began to open and close them, over and over and over again, as she walked out the door to the car. The Lord showed me

that the almost overwhelming feeling of sadness and wanting to cry was how He felt when He saw people in need. It is my understanding that the lady attended her Church on Sunday and went up and down the aisle telling people how she was healed—and even showed her hands to the priest who knew she was crippled. We are just vessels for His use, so “Just say it”.

From this experience, I found that God revealed to me that all of us have a depth of spiritual feeling, but we do not always acknowledge or know how to respond to it. We may even be a bit uncomfortable with it. Hold fast to your confession of Christ and His Word and act upon it. The Anointed One—Christ—will bring you out of your comfort zone and into His world of the supernatural as He touches lives.

The Time Is Now

Hebrews 11:1 says:

Now faith is...

Hebrews 4:7 says:

Today, if you will hear...

God is the great “I AM,” the God of the present—Who acts in the present. It is true that He acted in the past and that He will act in the future, but we live in the NOW and that is where He meets us. It is not about waiting for some future promise, but receiving what He has already given. Whether it is like the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, or the Centurion, who stood in for his servant, or the man carried to Jesus by friends, it is a matter of learning how to receive what God has already given us.

Some people have not received, but this fact does not change the truth that God’s Word is still good and available for us today.

Many throughout the Scriptures became famous for having faith as a result of seeking God for what we call temporal blessings. When we have learned the process of faith for

receiving healing, we have learned how to receive everything else God promises us in His Word. The Church could win millions for the service of God, and make them fighters of “the good fight of faith,” by offering them the healing of Christ purchased for them (F. F. Bosworth, *Christ the Healer*, Fleming H. Revel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, p.130).

When we offer the healing of Christ, which was purchased on the cross, we need to realize the process of faith for healing. Prayer prepares people to receive. The reason we don't “pray for healing” is that it has already been accomplished, as stated in Isaiah 53:4-5. The “prayer of faith” mentioned in James 5:14-16 is for those who are stronger in the faith to encourage and assist those who are less spiritually mature to realize and apply the rights inherited in salvation in Jesus Christ.

The normal method of healing in the *Bible* is by command and touch. Since the “faith of God” Jesus taught us to use involves the spoken word, we must speak the Word of faith in order for it to take effect. Jesus spoke healing into existence (Gene G. Day, *Is Any among You Sick?*, Gene Day Ministries, Parsons, Kansas, 1990, p. 95).

Just as Jesus and the early Church spoke healing into existence through the word of faith, so we are called to do it today.

Faith in God's Word expressed by the spoken word released spiritual power that actually causes physical bodies to be restored. The key to entrance into the world of powerful faith experience is given in Romans 10:8-10. In ministering to the sick, I first attempt to raise the faith level of the one being ministered to. When he has expressed his readiness to receive and his faith in God's will to heal, the next step is to go ahead and heal him. This involves laying on of hands, anointing (sometimes), and then a spoken word of command (Gene G. Day, *Is Any among You Sick?*, Gene Day Ministries, Parsons, Kansas, 1990, p. 96).

Those who seek God can produce results by learning to conform to His laws of faith and love. The first step in seeking to produce results by a supernatural power is to contact that power. The second step is to turn it on. The third step is to believe that this power is coming into use and to accept it by faith. No matter how much we ask for something, it becomes ours only as we accept it and give thanks for it. But something besides understanding is required if one desires real healing and that "something besides" is—for want of a better word I shall call it the "climate" necessary for healing (Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light*, Macalister Park Publishing Company, 1947, pp. ix-x).

The "climate" is what we today call the "Manifest Presence" of God that comes from the believer's being saturated with the Spirit of God through prayer, listening, praise, worship, reading the Word and a hunger that produces sensitivity and instant obedience.

Deliverance

Several years ago, a young man around twenty years of age was brought to church for prayer, which was to take place at the end of the service. He decided to get up and come forward during the service and before the offering. He indicated that he wanted to accept Jesus and be baptized right then. I explained that I would be glad to pray with him to accept Christ and would baptize him but that I wanted to talk to him first about the commitment he wanted to make and there was not time in the middle of worship. He returned to his seat.

A moment later, he moved one row forward from where he had been. He then stood up, turned around, made a fist, and drew his arm back as if to hit the person in front of him (this was the individual who brought him to church).

I started to go to where he was, but and the Lord said, "No, receive the offering."

I replied, "But Lord, he is going to put five in that person's face if something isn't done."

The Lord repeated His instructions, so I called the ushers forward to receive the offering. The young man remained like a statue, never moving, left arm forward as if to measure distance and right arm drawn back to strike. The ushers went around him and when the offering was complete, returned to the front. Then the Lord said, “Now, go get him.”

As I went forward to enter the row where he was standing, I called him by name and told him to be seated. At this point he said, in a voice different from when he first spoke, “I don’t have to.”

He turned and moved toward me with his fist raised. I stepped toward him, reached out and said, “Yes, you do in Jesus’ name.”

Suddenly, his forward movement stopped. He came up off the ground about six inches, and went flying backward through the air. When his feet touched the floor, he spun around and ran into the wall as he attempted to leave. He recovered, ran down the aisle and hit the glass front doors, throwing them open wide.

Outside, he ran to a signboard in a rock structure with a cross on top. He climbed the rock and was hanging on the cross screaming to be saved! Needless to say, it was a shock, but the young man didn’t just need prayer—he needed deliverance. Since the purpose of the service was to worship Jesus, not conduct deliverance, the young man was taken to a room to await the close of the service. It was at this time that prayer and deliverance took place, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the young man was delivered and accepted Jesus.

While this may seem to be an extreme case, the need for deliverance is not limited to the lost. Christians, too, may have spiritual bondages that hinder them. This is why you should examine what Scripture says about the matter and how to deal with it.

What Is Deliverance?

Deliverance is the believer’s exercising spiritual authority in the name of Jesus to remove spiritual bondage caused by demonic influence for people in need who are unable to do it for themselves.

Problems and Caution

Not all spiritual problems are caused by demons, so do not hunt for demons in doorknobs! Most of the time, a person's greatest enemy is self, because the old nature is still alive and active.

What Scripture Says

Luke 4:18 describes deliverance from bondage, not only for Israel as a nation, but also for believers. Bondage means:

To bind, primarily the condition of being a slave; the condition of creation, Romans 8:21 or the fallen condition of man himself which makes him dread God, verse 15, and fear death, Hebrews 2:15 (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 131).

Subjection to a power, force or influence (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002).

Bondage is common to man and Jesus is the Source of deliverance for everyone, whether they are lost or saved.

Deliverance is the act of setting free. It also means, "To rescue from, to preserve from and so, to deliver and is synonymous with SOZO, according to II Corinthians 1:10; II Peter 2:9 and Jude 6 (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 281)." John 8:34 says:

Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

Sin is basically rebellion—choosing to please ourselves first instead of following Jesus and being obedient to God's Word.

Sin always begins with an attack on the mind, just as it did with Eve in the Garden of Eden. This is why we are told, in Romans 12:1-2, to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 8:5 is clear that

CHAPTER 15 -- MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER

those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh. Likewise, those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. It is imperative—if we want to fulfill our potential in Christ and experience life abundant—that we allow the Holy Spirit to renew, reeducate and redirect our minds.

Romans 14:23 tells us that whatever is not of faith is sin and James 4:17 tells us that to know to do good and not do it is sin. It is possible, therefore, to enter into or to fall back into bondage by choice. If a person loses weight and then chooses to overeat, the bondage of food will cause him or her to be overweight once again. It is no different spiritually. Once you have been set free of a bondage, you may enter it again by choice. Just because a person is Christian (has a personal relationship to Jesus) does not mean that he or she does not have bondages that hinder the Christian walk or even daily life. Some bondages common to Christians include:

1. Selfishness.
2. Pride.
3. Covetousness.
4. Controlling spirit (desire to manipulate others).
5. Fear.
6. Soul-ties.

John 8:31-32 is the key to being set free spiritually, emotionally and physically:

If you abide in My Word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

This that if you live in obedience to the Word of God and know Him intimately, then He will free you of bondage.

The Need for Deliverance

When there is a bondage caused by demonic influence, there is a need for deliverance. There is much difference of opinion among Christians about demons and some even question their existence. Others deny the possibility of demonic influence on a "saved person."

1. It is important for you to know that satan's power and the power of demons is LIMITED; as a believer, you have authority over them.
2. POSSESSION indicates ownership of the soul not merely influencing actions. Only those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus may be possessed.
3. OPPRESSION is what happens to Christians and indicates an influence on thoughts and actions. The soul belongs to Jesus because of profession of faith and relationship, but mind and body can still be tormented. Usually this is because the old nature is not dead, even though our spirits have been born again. An example is when a person chooses gluttony or fear and lets these things dominate or control her or his life. This is why many Christians live in defeat, instead of victory. Even though they have been "born again" spiritually through repenting, confessing and accepting Jesus, they choose to live by their carnal (fleshy) nature and open doors to demonic influence.

Demons are fallen angels, not spirits of the evil dead or disembodied spirits (II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6) of the pre-Adamic race (although satan ruled this race we call "cavemen," which existed before Adam and the first flood of Genesis 1:2). Their ranking is found in Romans 8:38; Daniel 10:13 and Daniel 10:20. They serve satan, the fallen angel Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:15 and Revelation 12:4-9) who was defeated by Jesus on the Cross at Calvary. He will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10), along with all of his helpers (Matthew 25:41) and followers (Revelation 20:15 and 21:8).

Demons are spiritual agents of idolatry that act under satan (Revelation 16:13-14) whose task it is to disseminate error among believers, tempt

CHAPTER 15 – MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER

with unclean thoughts and cause rebellion against God (they differ in degree of wickedness, Matthew 12:45). They seek to inhabit human bodies (Mark 5:1-17) in order to indulge and express sinful and lustful natures. They have all the attributes of personality, possessing minds, emotions and wills. They are personal enemies to be dealt with by the Word, Name and Blood of Jesus. Christians should always consider them to be trespassers. A trespasser is anyone who unlawfully and stealthily encroaches on the territory of another. They hate you because you belong to Jesus (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

The entry of a demon into a human is usually the result of one or more of the following:

1. Disobedience to God (I Samuel 15:9).
2. Continual indulgence of carnal appetites (Romans 6:12; Galatians 5:16-21 and Ephesians 4:27).
3. Psychic or occult experimentation (Deuteronomy 18:9-14 and 31:16).
4. Doctrinal error (Ephesians 4:13-14 and I Timothy 4:1).
5. It can also occur before birth (Exodus 34:6-7); just as physical stress affects the unborn, so can spirits—even though they are not inherited. We need to pray God's blessings and protection over expectant mothers.

In a society that is increasing in knowledge and ever learning but never coming to a fullness in Christ, people are open to deception daily through advertisements, products, health aids and even exercise. In the name of personal rights, freedom and intellectual progress, countless people, including many Christians, have opened their lives to demons by involvement in such seemingly harmless activities such as:

1. Exercise (yoga and some forms of the martial arts).
2. Divination (revelation, predictions, horoscopes and fortune telling).

3. Witchcraft (charms such as ying/yang, mind-control, chants, hypnosis and attempts to manipulate or control others).
4. Sorcery (movies like Harry Potter, games like Dungeons and Dragons and Ouiji Boards, drugs, some forms of music and dancing).
5. Membership and fellowship in clubs, groups and lodges, such as Masons, whose foundation and goals are clearly anti-Christian.
6. Native Medical treatment that involves religious practices in addition to natural herbs.
7. Participation in corporate—or any other—"think tanks" that encourage or involve spirit guides and helpers for self improvement and achieving full potential.

Once Again, Remember...

Not all problems are caused by demons, so don't hunt for them behind every bush! Deliverance is not a substitute for self-discipline and obedience to God's Word.

The point is not to become obsessed with deliverance, because God is in charge and is stronger than satan. Be aware of what is causing difficulty and address it in the power of Jesus. We do this with physical healing (identify the problem and then work on a solution), and we need to do this with spiritual matters, also. This is an on-going process of maintenance that involves:

1. Recognition of need.
2. Repentance.
3. Return and renewal - drawing closer to God and allowing Him to work and manifest Himself through us according to His Word.

Christians must be balanced and keep their focus on Jesus rather than on the opposition. It is crucial for Christians to know and obey the Word of God because this is a form of prevention of disease and engendering Divine Health, whether it is seen in the individual's body or spirit. When some disease comes on a person, not always of their own doing, then the individual should initiate what I call the "cure process," which includes prayer, repentance and—if need be—deliverance.

In daily living, everyone comes in contact with germs and dirt. The solution is not only prevention, but also health care by washing or bathing. It is the same in the normal Christian life. Everyone is exposed to spiritual matters that can hinder effectiveness, abundance and victory in the Christian walk. The most common form of "spiritual bathing or cleansing" is daily prayer, repentance and commitment by the individual believer. In rare cases, another believer may become involved in helping the person break the spiritual bondage through deliverance of oppression. This is a very serious matter and should not be attempted without a second believer present. It should also involve prayer, fasting and discerning of spirits.

Just as deliverance was a part of ministry performed by the disciples under the authority of Jesus (Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7 and Luke 9:1), so it is a part of ministry today (Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-18). Deliverance is actually part of the healing ministry (Matthew 4:23-24).

Determining Need

The following are possible indications of the need for deliverance because there may be a spiritual origin of the problem:

1. The conditions compel, shame, defile or torment a person, especially on a repeated basis.
2. The conditions constantly defy other spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, repentance and fasting.
3. Revelation of the Holy Spirit through discerning of spirits (I Corinthians 12:10).

4. Detection through observation (Mark 7:24-30) of such things as repeated and abnormal life-hindering:
 - a. Emotional problems
 - b. Mental problems
 - c. Speech problems
 - d. Sexual problems
 - e. Addictions
 - f. Physical infirmities
 - g. Religious error

Just as it is possible for a person to live life with a medical need, such as medication for epilepsy, so it is possible to life live with a spiritual need (oppression) that should be addressed. The result in both cases is a life that is hindered or less than optimal because the need was not addressed and corrected or treated.

While it is not desirable for people to let their imaginations run wild or to panic, there is a need to be cautious. In some cases, when a spirit is identified and confronted, the supernatural occurs from a negative perspective and the person's body may move differently from its normal pattern, another voice may be heard from the person, the skin color may resemble a chalk gray and there may be extremely dark circles under the eyes while they appear to be recessed more than normal.

Steps to Deliverance

1. Humble yourself (James 4:6-7).
2. Honesty (Psalm 32:5)—Call the same name in yourself that you call it in others.
3. Confession—God hasn't changed and He requires this of you.

4. Repentance/Renouncing (Proverbs 28:13)—Turn with heart and will away from the devil. Make a clean break with satan by getting rid of all items in your life and home (Deuteronomy 23:7) that are spiritual bondages.
5. Forgiveness—Grant it and receive it (I John 1:9 and Matthew 6:14-15).
6. Prayer—(Joel 2:32) call upon the Lord and be delivered.

Biblical Authority

1. Matthew 10:1, 8, 28:20.
2. Mark 3:14; 16:17.
3. Luke 4:18; 10:17-20.
4. Acts 2:38-39.

Retention

1. Put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10).
2. Confess positively.
3. Stay in Scripture (James 1:22-25).
4. Crucify the flesh (Luke 9:23).
5. Develop a life of praise and prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
6. Maintain a life of fellowship and spiritual ministry (I Corinthians 12:7-14).
7. Commit self totally to Christ (Ephesians 6:16).

8. Live in Him and the power of His resurrection (Philippians 3:10).

Open Doors

The *Bible* has many descriptions of deliverance, but in today's world, with all of our intellect and knowledge, there is a tendency to rationalize and explain away the fact that demons exist and how they can influence humans. There is no need to be afraid of satan or demons, because Jesus has the power (through the Word, Name and Blood) over them all. You, as a child of God, belong to Him and have a right to exercise His authority in casting them out.

As I mentioned earlier, only those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus can be "possessed" or have their souls belong to satan. The secular world—and even some Christians—may laugh at demon oppression, but it is very real and can cause much damage and pain in spirit, soul and body. It should be boldly addressed in the power of Jesus so that people can be set free (Luke 4:18).

Some areas of entry and influence that can cause oppression are such things as Ouiji boards, astrology, tarot cards, fortune telling, contact through psychic hot lines, horoscopes and yes, even yoga! In some instances, there are generational curses, such as heart disease, cancer, or diabetes and tendencies toward suicide and depression (Exodus 34:7 and Deuteronomy 20). These have been broken by Jesus (Galatians 3:13) and can be appropriated by believers (those who not only believe, but also obey) as part of their inheritance rights as children of God .

Just as "fear" is a demon, so are gluttony, doubt and lust, to name just a few. Most of the time, we are told in our society that such things are mental health issues and have fancy psychological names for them. In reality, their root causes are demonic influence or oppression. This includes many of the so-called incurable diseases, as well as addictions.

Many deliverances from oppression can be accomplished quickly and easily by the individual involved through repentance and prayer. Other instances may require that the person renounce and remove any spiritual bondage or relationship hindering him or her, such as:

1. Charms, decorations or symbols of such things as Native American religious activities.
2. Oriental practices, such as attempting to balance yin and yang in life and body.
3. Ownership and/or use of any items or practices found in pagan religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormonism.
4. Membership in occult groups, such as the Masonic Lodge or the Order of the Eastern Star.

In every case, caution—not fear—should be utilized, as well as wisdom from the Holy Spirit, as the believer functions in the power of the risen Christ.

From a Distance

Early in my ministry, a mother presented me with a request of prayer for her adult daughter, who lived in a city several hundred miles away. The adult daughter was in such fear that she would not leave her home, closed the blinds, doubled locked all the doors, and severely restricted what her children could do. When asked whether deliverance would work from a distance, I replied, "Yes, it did for Jesus, and He empowers us to do the same."

After speaking in the Name of Jesus and casting the demon out, we noted the time. The next morning, the woman in the far city called her mother and asked whether we had prayed for her, because at 8:30 p.m. the previous evening, all fear had left her! This was the exact time we had spoken deliverance. The results were that fear never returned, lives were changed and Jesus was given the glory.

All Believers Have Authority

It was the middle of the afternoon in a small Mexican village. The members of the mission team were ready to share Jesus and encourage

people to come to the evening service. There were team members standing around all four sides of a building, speaking with people about the love and healing power of God. Suddenly, a team member came on my side of the building and said, "Pastor come quick! We need some help."

I went to the other side of the building, expecting to share, through an interpreter, something about the *Bible* or Jesus. Instead, I saw the interpreter talking to a group of young women and one seemed agitated.

I inquired regarding the problem and was told that she was "*loco*," or "had spirits," and had been this way for several years. Her friends had brought her to hear about the Lord, but she appeared "hyper" as she moved among the people, staring at them and mumbling. She stopped in front of me, put her face about three or four inches from mine, and walked in a circle around me. Then she said something in Spanish, as her eyes rolled and her body twitched. The interpreter said, "She wants to know where you are from."

My reply was directed by the Lord. I said, "Tell her that it is not where I am from that matters, but rather Who sent me—and in just a moment she is going to be free." At that point, I spoke in Jesus' name and for a moment the young woman stood very still. Her eyes cleared up, her countenance changed, her body stopped twitching and there was a smile on her face.

The interpreter listened to the crowd as they began to talk hurriedly and said that those who knew the young woman indicated that she was totally different. As I returned to the other side of the building, I heard the team presenting the gospel and subsequently, the young woman accepted Jesus.

Later, I talked to the team and explained that, as believers, they have authority and should not hesitate to act upon it in ministry, as God directs, because God honors His Word.

Encounters and Response

I have heard it said, “It’s not so much what happens to you in life that matters, it’s how you respond.” Just as this is a true statement for the physical or natural world, so it is true for the spiritual world as well. Often God tries to bless us or give us the opportunity to grow, but we retreat into our “religious comfort zones,” because we are more attuned to responding in the physical than in the spiritual realm. When we have a personal, intimate relationship with God and know His Word, then we should be confident in obeying God and taking joy in watching Him work.

You may not be able to understand or have an experience as a frame of reference, but if what you experience glorifies God, lifts up Jesus, manifests power that matches Scripture, gives peace and sets captives free, then it is of God, and you should rejoice and press-in (seek to know the Lord more intimately)! In a society that relies almost exclusively on intellect, recognizes natural laws and utilizes primarily scientific processes to meet daily needs, you would do well to rely on the Holy Spirit. You should recognize spiritual laws and use the means and processes God has given you to minister to a hurting world and set captives free.

Summary/Review

1. Supernatural revelation, power and manifestation of God's presence occur today as they did in times past.
2. We never rise above our confession.
3. Our confession reveals the degree of our willingness to act and receive.
4. Resting in the Spirit is the release of God's power on an individual to such a degree that the body is overpowered and collapses. This is usually a time of healing and/or revelation.

5. Divine Healing is for now and the focus is on Jesus and the spiritual senses, just as medical healing is for now and the focus is on the natural senses.

6. Deliverance is part of healing and is not meant to be a substitute for lack of spiritual self-discipline.

7. "Hunger for God" produces a response from God that is seen in some particular manifestation. God honors His Word.

8. Remember to seek the Giver rather than the gift (which comes with the Giver).

9. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and obedience come from a "hunger for God."

Additional Reading

RESTING IN THE SPIRIT

Ezra Coppin, *Slain in the Spirit, Fact or Fiction?*, Ezra Coppin Ministries, New Braunfels, Texas, 1976.

Ron Knox, *Enthusiasm*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1950.

Francis MacNutt, *Power to Heal*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1992.

HEALING

Marilyn Hickey, *Be Healed*, Marilyn Hickey Ministries, Denver, Colorado, 1992.

Charles and Frances Hunter, *To Heal the Sick*, Whitaker House, New Kensington, Pennsylvania, 2000.

Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1999.

CHAPTER 15 – MANIFESTATIONS IN MINISTRY NESTER DELIVERANCE

Twilah A. Fox, *On Deliverance*, Twilah Fox Ministries, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1984.

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, Impact Christian Books, Kirkwood, Missouri, 1973.

Norvel Hayes, *Jesus Taught Me How to Cast out Devils*, Harrison House, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1982.

Bottom Line

The reality of God is seen in supernatural manifestation according to the Word.

Comfort or Commitment?

We can be comfortable by considering the supernatural as coincidence and trying to rationalize it away, or we can be committed by “hungering for God” and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God still manifests Himself and we need to be sensitive, obedient and press-in!

Chapter 16

OTHER PRACTICES

In previous chapters, we examined Empowering, Tongues, Tools/Gifts and Manifestations in Ministry. Other practices include anointing with oil, use of prayer-cloths, laying on of hands, standing-in, footwashing and fasting. All of these practices have Biblical foundations and contribute significantly to the Christian life, if used according to Scripture.

What Are You Doing?

It was on a Wednesday morning healing service at a Spirit-filled Episcopalian Church that I first encountered anointing with oil. The question I asked, when I saw many of the supernatural occurrences in the healing service that I had only read about in the *Bible*, was, “What are You Doing?”

After a time of receiving Communion, the presence of the Lord was so strong that it was difficult to remain standing. An invitation was given to come forward for anointing and healing. I went forward and knelt at the altar. As Father Ted Nelson placed the oil on my forehead in the sign of a cross, I felt something happen in my spirit as well as my body. Even though anointing with oil was not part of my previous Christian experience, I knew that it was certainly Biblical, and thus valid for today.

I received healing that day because I was open and expecting a touch from God. While anointing oil is not necessary for healing, it is a point of contact for people to receive healing (Mark 6:13).

Later in the week, when I had returned home (I was attending a school of theology three days a week in Dallas), an individual asked me, "Would you anoint someone with oil like Scripture says?"

Coincidence? I do not think so! God had been preparing me for what was coming in ministry. I thought about it for a moment, and replied, "Yes."

Then the person threw me a curve by making the statement, "I know that anointing is not part of your Church, so why would you do it?"

I replied, "Because it is Biblical." Even though I did not realize it at the time, this was the beginning of my increased focus on Scripture and application in daily life rather than merely following church or denominational tradition.

Then I had another thought which was that I did not know what type of oil to use. I knew that it was not Wesson, Crank case or Three-in-One, but where did I find that special, good smelling anointing oil?

Immediately following this were other questions of exactly how to anoint and with what amount of oil. To answer these questions, I went to Scripture, to the Lord in prayer and to Father Ted, who confirmed what I had found in Scripture and told me about the "good smelling oil" that he used (it was olive oil with a small amount of frankincense and myrrh added). This was the beginning of one of the first of several Biblical practices the Lord has called me to utilize in ministry.

Definition

To anoint is to "apply oil or ointment; to place oil on as an indication of sanctification or consecration in a religious ceremony (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002)."

“In the Scriptures, the practice of anointing with oil, either with or without perfume, had both a secular and a religious significance (*Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1975, p. 170).” We can see these secular and religious practices as recorded in Scripture. The material used was oil or ointment as recorded in Luke 7:38, 46.

From *Vine's Expository Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 50) we find the following:

1. ALEIPHO—A general reference for anointing of any kind.
 - a. After refreshment (Ruth 3:3; II Samuel 12:2 and Daniel 10:3).
 - b. The sick (Mark 6:13 and James 5:14).
 - c. A dead body (Mark 16:1).
 - d. A pillar (Genesis 31:13).
 - e. Captives (II Chronicles 28:5).
 - f. A wall with mortar (Ezekiel 13:10).
 - g. Priests (Exodus 40:15).
2. CHIRO—Confined to sacred or symbolic anointings.
 - a. Christ as the Anointed of God (Luke 4:18).
 - b. Anointed One (Daniel 9:26).
 - c. Believers (II Corinthians 1:21).
3. ENCHRIO—To rub in (Jeremiah 4:30 and Revelation 3:18).
4. EPICHRIO—To rub on (John 9:6-11).

5. MURIZO—To anoint a body for burial (Mark 14:8).
6. CHRISMA (CHRIO)—Oil and aromatic herbs.
 - a. The Holy Spirit (I John 2:20, 27).
 - b. Holy Anointing Oil (Exodus 30:25).
 - c. Oil (*Eliaon*) (Luke 7:46).
 - d. Ointment (*Muron*) (Luke 7:46).

Application

Anointing was practiced by the early Church and is meant to be practiced by the Church today, according to Scripture. Oil is a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit, similar to water, wind and fire. Oil is applied to set the person or object apart, consecrated unto the Lord. Objects were anointed, as recorded in Exodus 29:36; 30:26 and 40:10. Persons were anointed, as recorded in Leviticus 8:30; I Samuel 10:1 and II Kings 9:3. Guests were anointed in II Chronicles 28:15 and John 12:3. The Body was anointed in Ruth 3:3; Psalm 92:10 and Amos 6:6. Anointing was used for healing (remedy/cure) in Isaiah 1:6; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34 and James 5:14.

I have noticed that oil is used with prayer for the purpose of calling upon God to heal in Acts 3:1-10. Oil is used as a "point of contact," much the same as "laying on of hands" that encourages the person and enables him or her to receive. Dr. Gene Day, in his book, *Is Any Among You Sick?* (Gene Day Ministries, Parsons, Kansas, 1990, p. 100), indicates that oil is a faith-builder and is also very much in order when addressing so-called "incurable" disease.

God honors the intent of your heart rather than merely legalistic actions, as reflected in Scripture. In Charles and Frances Hunter's book, *To Heal the Sick*, an account is given of a group of believers (who did not know how to anoint, since the *Bible* does not give the exact amount of oil to use), who poured a gallon of oil over a woman and prayed the prayer of faith and God answered with healing (Whitaker House, New Kensington,

Pennsylvania, 2000, p. 107). Normally, in most Churches that practice anointing with oil, a small amount of oil is placed on the finger and dabbed on the forehead. While this may be honored by the Lord, pouring is Biblically more accurate.

Anointing is a dramatic spiritual event. It should be observed with great respect for the importance it has as a symbol of the presence of God upon the anointed one for healing, for forgiveness and for strengthening of faith. It is powerful, beautiful—and, most important—it is ordained of God (Charles and Frances Hunter, *To Heal the Sick*, Whitaker House, New Kensington, Pennsylvania, 2000, p. 101).

Prayer Cloths

As with other areas in ministry that I had not encountered, a request for me to anoint a prayer cloth caused me to Biblically examine its use. A woman came to the front of the Church at the end of a service carrying a handkerchief which was being used as a prayer cloth. In some instances, I have heard of people bringing articles of clothing—such as a shirt or blouse—that would be worn by the individual being prayed for.

This woman requested that I place anointing oil on the handkerchief and pray, because she was going to send it to a sick relative. She stated that she believed God would use this point of contact because it was Biblical. I complied with her request and the individual was indeed touched by the wonderful healing hand of God.

The Biblical foundation for this ministry is found in Acts 19:11-12:

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

The fact is that there is power present when God places His anointing on something. In this case it is a piece of cloth that has been prayed over by believers, not just by pastors. Instead of laying hands on a person and praying, the believers lay hands on the cloth and pray God's presence and anointing on it for miracles when received. God's anointing on the cloth

(you can anoint it with oil if you like, but it is not necessary) can be for healing, deliverance or even salvation.

Remember to always keep your focus on JESUS and know that God uses different methods of touching people. Prayer cloths are merely one way in which God uses a point of contact. Do not neglect their use if God leads you to do it.

Laying on of Hands

Jesus healed the sick by laying hands on them as recorded in Luke 4:40:

And He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.

Luke 13:13 says:

And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

Normally, this is thought of in the Church as part of an official public ministry limited to baptism, ordination or confirmation. While it occurs in these instances, it is certainly not limited to them, Biblically. The laying on of hands is used in:

1. Baptism—Act of obedience.
2. Ordination—Act of admission to ministerial rank.
3. Confirmation—Act of verification and completion of baptism.
4. Blessings (Mark 10:16)
5. Empowering (Acts 8:14 and 19:6)
6. Release, activation and imparting of spiritual gifts (I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6)
7. Consecration or setting apart for God (Acts 6:6 and 13:3)

8. Healing (Mark 16:18: *they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*)

Laying on of hands is a gentle matter—a healing touch. Many times, the persons will say that they feel “warm,” that they feel like “electricity” just went through them, or even that they “tingle like they do when their feet are asleep.” In some instances, they may experience what appears to be a flash of brilliant white or radiant blue light. Regardless of what the person experiences, even if it is nothing at the moment, the power of God is at work!

Believers are like a garden hose or electrical wire, because they transmit whatever is in them. Neither the garden hose nor the electrical wire has power. They cannot transmit anything without being connected. When you, as a believer, are connected through abiding in the Vine, God's healing and power are transmitted through you and imparted to the recipient of the laying on of hands.

Standing-In

Often people come forward in a service to “stand-in” in the place of someone (who is unable to be present) in need and request prayer for some specific need. This is a form of intercession.

The Scriptural basis for this is found in Luke 7:1-10, where a Centurion sent elders to Jesus requesting healing for his servant. The servant was sick and could not come to Jesus to be healed. The Centurion had faith that Jesus could and would heal his servant from a distance merely by speaking it. He believed in the authority of Jesus. The Centurion sent elders to make the request of Jesus. They were a point of contact, even though, according to Scripture, Jesus did not lay hands on them. This is a form of intercession based on the compassion of the person making the request. Just as Jesus spoke healing, so the Word of healing is spoken over the individual “standing-in” as a proxy for the person in need. It is not uncommon for either the person standing-in or forth one speaking the healing Word to receive revelation knowledge from the Lord about a specific cause or area of sickness to be addressed.

Footwashing

In Biblical times, footwashing was a common custom in which servants washed the dirt and dust off of guests' feet (Genesis 18:4). It was discourteous to neglect the practice. It would also be discourteous to refuse the hospitality of the host. In John 13:1-17, there is the record of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet before the Last Supper. In verse 7, Jesus told Peter:

What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.

This indicates that there is something past the normal host duties that is taking place. In verse 8, Jesus said to Peter:

If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.

This clearly indicates that Peter needed to receive something from the occasion that he did not already have. Most people agree that footwashing is a blessing. Jesus, however, was teaching Peter much more. He was telling Peter that he had to have the attitude and heart of a servant. He was telling Peter, furthermore, that he needed to be obedient and act on the spiritual revelation that God provided.

It is evident that Jesus made a distinction between bathing and footwashing. The bath was for the entire body (some believe that this represents salvation) but the footwashing was just for the feet (partial cleansing), and this represents the need for continued cleansing because of the contact engendered by walking in a sinful world. Regardless of what the words represent, it is evident that the feet need cleansing because of contact with physical dirt and dust. Spiritually, this is true of believers. Footwashing can be a powerful reminder that all believers need to CONTINUE TO RECEIVE FROM JESUS if they are to be truly effective in ministry.

I Have to Do What?

When I was in Haiti on a mission trip, many great things happened, such as people receiving:

1. Medical treatment—one couple walked twenty miles carrying an infant who was sick.
2. Food—many bags of rice and other food staples were handed out to the needy.
3. Salvation—the message of Jesus was always given and large numbers of people received Jesus as Lord and Savior.
4. Baptism—people being immersed in the Caribbean Ocean while songs of faith and praise were being lifted to God.
5. Deliverance—demons who had trespassed and taken up residence in lives of believers departed to torment and oppress them no longer .

I was blessed to observe healing (removal of disease and restoration of health to bodies), but the supernatural event which touched me most during the entire time I was in Haiti was the footwashing service with the missionary with whom we stayed.

Prayer was an on-going matter with the team. We had prayed together for six months prior to the trip and not one of us became ill or had difficulties of any kind. We were delivered from destruction as we departed from a Voodoo village where some of the people were saved and set free. The others in the village did not appreciate our ministry. On our walk to the van a mile away, we were surrounded by Haitians waving machetes, shouting and shoving, but the Lord miraculously delivered us, just as He did those who had just been saved. We prayed individually and together in the morning, on the way (in a van) to the ministry site, on the return trip and again at the evening services. Prayer was a mainstay, but even with all of the wonderful supernatural happenings that occurred, the event that touched me most and bothered me most was receiving in footwashing!

Our missionary host brought out a large round metal washbasin filled with water and sat it on the floor. He began to tell the importance of footwashing and invited each member of the team to participate. Before I

did I said, "I have to do what? Let someone wash my feet? Isn't it enough that I am willing to wash others?"

It was an eye-opener for me, not because of being willing to wash others' feet, but because I did not want to receive. I was uncomfortable in this situation, and the Lord asked me why. The servant must indeed have a heart to serve but it comes first from receiving from the Lord Himself. We must be filled with Him instead of ourselves (even with all of our good intentions, academic preparation and dedication to giving). Acts 4:13 tells the story! When we have been with Jesus and are full of Him, His anointing flows. To have been with Jesus indicated fellowship, intimacy and receiving!

There is a need for each of us to receive from others. Footwashing is an opportunity to meet that need in preparation for continued ministry.

Observance

Although the observance of footwashing is not a sacrament, it is clear from John 13:14-15, 17 that Jesus intended for believers to continue the practice, not as a legalistic act, but as part of preparation and as a reminder concerning ministry. This can be done for special events, such as the mission trip to Haiti, which was previously described, but the most common time to observe footwashing is on Maundy Thursday (Mandate Thursday). Maundy Thursday is the day on which Jesus ate the Last Supper and gave final instructions to His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion.

The process we use in our church is to have a brief teaching about footwashing, then offer it to the congregation. The lights are dimmed and soft music is played. I encourage others by choosing someone and washing his or her feet. During the time of washing, you are encouraged to tell the person whose feet are being washed how important he or she is to the Lord and also why he or she is important to you. The exact form, like other areas, is not as important as the heart's intent behind the action. How do you really treat others? How do you really forgive? How do you exemplify the mission of serving as Jesus did?

Fasting

In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus specifically addresses fasting. Verse 16 begins:

Moreover, when you fast...

Verse 17 begins:

But you, when you fast...

From examination of Scripture there is no doubt that Jesus intended for his disciples to obey the leading of God through the Holy Spirit and to fast.

Do What?

Early in my ministry, a person came to me and asked whether I believed in demons. She described what had occurred in the life of a family member and stressed the need for help because the situation was critical. I agreed to visit with the family member, who was on a psychiatric ward in a major city in Texas.

The Lord spoke to my spirit and told me that I was to fast for three days and that when I ministered to the family member that He (God) would do the work that was needed. At first, I said “Do What?” because—number one, I like food—and number two—I did not know what to actually do. In obedience, though, I fasted (having only liquids) for three days.

Upon my arrival at the hospital (two others went with me as the Lord directed), I walked up to the desk and asked the nurse about visiting the family member. To my amazement, the nurse looked wide-eyed and pushed back from the counter where I was standing. I reminded myself that I had taken a bath and brushed my teeth, so there should be no reason for her to respond in that way. I repeated my request. The nurse merely pointed to a physician who was standing with his back to me. I spoke to him and made my request. His response was similar to that of the nurse. This was somewhat perplexing to us, but at least he indicated that I could visit with the family member.

After introducing myself, I relayed the messages from the patient's family and gave him a cake they had sent. Next, I got right to the point with a boldness that could only have come from God. I told the man that his family had indicated that he was tormented by demons. He began to call the demons by name and tell me about them. The medical situation, according to family, was that he was tormented and rarely ate or slept. His medical records indicated that he had a tumor on the brain and needed surgery. I asked him whether he wanted to be free and he said "yes."

We went downstairs to the hospital's chapel. What took place next was similar to the events in the movie, *The Exorcist*. As the Word of God was spoken, the demons screamed and departed. The man immediately became free of torment (this is verified by his medical records) and began to eat and sleep. I never heard anything else about the tumor, so I do not know what occurred in regard to it.

Fasting was vital to this particular ministry (those who went with me also fasted). The strange response of the staff was a spiritual response to the power resulting from fasting, not my physical hygiene or manners, as I had supposed. Since then, I have been obedient to fast on many occasions, as the Lord led and have found that God uses this to bring changes in me, situations and in ministry. God is presently speaking to me about fasting and particularly the partial fast. I realize that God is calling for obedience to achieve a given result. Now, though, I no longer say, "Do What?" I say "How?" and "When?"

Defined

Fasting (*NESTEIA*)—voluntary abstinence from food, Luke 2:37 and Acts 14:23 (some mss. have it in Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29); fasting had become a common practice among Jews, and was continued among Christians; in Acts 27:9, the Fast refers to the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16:29 (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 410).

History

Most scholars believe that the practice of fasting began with the loss of appetite during times of great distress and duress. Fasting apparently began as a natural expression of grief; however, after time, it became customary to reflect or prove one's grief to others by abstaining from food and/or showing sorrow. In the New Testament, fasting was a widely practiced discipline, especially among the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist. Jesus began His public ministry with an extended fast of 40 days (Elmer L. Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1996, p. 25).

There is no record that our Lord Jesus gave any directions for either the frequency or duration of fasting. What He did tell us was that the fast should be for God and not for man. In many other religions, people practice fasting to attain something for themselves and the focus is on self. Whereas in the Christian faith, the focus of the fast is on God. It is not intended to try to impress others, but rather to grow closer and have a more intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father by not being distracted by the world, but by paying attention to what He says and wants.

Purposes

To fast as an end in itself (a religious practice or legalism) is not honored by God. Jesus explained this when He told His disciples not to fast as the Pharisees did, but to fast unto God (Matthew 6:16-18). He was telling His disciples to look at the motives of their hearts and to focus on God during the fast.

Fasting is beneficial for the physical body (by allowing the body to remove toxins and by giving the digestive system a rest) as well as for the spirit. It is actually a form of worship, whereby we humble ourselves, submit to God and sacrifice personal comfort for the greater well being of the Kingdom by denying self and making God a priority. Fasting may be either an individual matter (as directed by the Lord), or a group activity (as requested by a Church or political leader). Biblical examples

of fasting include fasting for personal renewal, holiness, correction, intercession, repentance, deliverance, revelation or direction. The purpose of fasting is to change the heart of a human and align it with the heart of God.

Types of Fasts

The most commonly identified types of Biblical fasts are:

1. **THE NORMAL FAST**—to go without food, but taking liquids, such as water or juice. This is the type of fast most people have heard about or recognize. While there are no specific directions for duration, usually one to seven days is a common time frame (Luke 4:1-2).
2. **THE ABSOLUTE FAST**—to go without both food and water. This is seen in times of crisis or need and the duration is for a short period of time because the body cannot go very long without water (Esther 4:16 and Acts 9:9).
3. **THE PARTIAL FAST**—includes either limiting eating or omitting one meal a day, or both (if you omit one meal a day, then do not overeat the other two!). This could also involve eating only fruits or vegetables. This type of fast is one that will work for most people, especially in our busy society that has business dinners, etc. (Daniel 10:2-3; I Kings 17 and Matthew 3:4).

Fasting that Pleases God

Isaiah 58:6-9 is the key. This scripture passage describes not only what God does not like, but also what He desires and blesses. Read it carefully. True fasting is more than what we do not eat. It is pleasing God by being personally obedient and applying His Word to daily life and relationships. This describes fasting that is not meant for self improvement, but for breakthrough, which is actually breaking out of self and coming into the presence of the Living God.

Elmer L. Towns, in his book, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* (Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1996, pp. 20-26), takes Isaiah 58:6-8 and highlights Biblical characters who exemplify the fasts listed. Each has its own chapter and the author gives an excellent fasting preparation check list that enables people to see not only the purpose, but also the preparation and process that lead to the product! I believe Towns' book is anointed and merits a summary as follows:

1. THE DISCIPLES' FAST—the purpose is to *loose the bands of wickedness* (Matthew 17:21).
2. THE EZRA FAST—the purpose is to *undo the heavy burdens* (Ezra 8:23).
3. THE SAMUEL FAST—the purpose is to *let the oppressed (physically and spiritually) go free* (I Samuel 7:6).
4. THE ELIJAH FAST—the purpose is to *break every yoke* (I Kings 19:4, 8).
5. THE WIDOW'S FAST—the purpose is to *share (our) bread with the hungry* and to care for the poor (I Kings 17:16).
6. THE SAINT PAUL FAST—the purpose is to *allow God's light (to) break forth like morning* (Acts 9:9).
7. THE DANIEL FAST—the purpose is so that *thine health shall spring forth*, to gain a healthier life or for healing (Dan. 1:8).
8. THE JOHN THE BAPTIST FAST—the purpose is that *your righteousness shall go before you*, that your testimony and influence for Jesus will be enhanced before others (Luke 1:15).
9. THE ESTHER FAST—the purpose is that *the glory of the Lord will protect us from the evil one* (Esther 4:16, 5:2).

Now Is the Time

In Matthew 9:15, Jesus describes the time to fast. It is whenever you need a closer walk with the Lord, increased effectiveness in ministry and preparation for His return. Fasting is not a guarantee of spiritual development, but it is one tool that Jesus has provided and occasionally calls us to use. It helps us individually and assists in bringing the Kingdom. God is calling the Church to return to fasting (not merely in terms of food, but also other things of the world) and prayerfully, this brief summary will enable you to become a vital and powerful part of His mighty work on Earth.

Summary/Review

1. Anointing (the act of setting apart a person for holy service by applying oil or the laying on of hands) was practiced by the early Church and is meant to be practiced by the Church today according to Scripture. Oil is a symbol of the presence of God and the Holy Spirit. Oil was used in anointing objects, individuals (to consecrate them unto the Lord), guests, the body and for healing. It is a point of contact that is a faith builder and a symbol of the presence of God on the anointed one.

2. Prayer cloths are a point of contact on which God places the anointing (His presence in the form of power) when a person cannot be present to personally receive prayer. This is not intended to be used in place of direct ministry. Remember that Jesus is the focal point, not the cloth!

3. Standing-in is performed when a person comes forward and stands in place of another person in need of prayer for healing or ministry of some type. It is a point of contact and a form of intercession. It is not intended to be used in place of direct ministry.

4. Footwashing is a time of preparation of heart and attitude for ministry which begins with receiving and then giving. It is a reminder that believers need to continue to receive from Jesus in order to be effective. If you are not willing to submit your will and humble yourself in obedience, then you will not be able to give as God intends.

5. Fasting is a form of worship in which we humble ourselves, submit to God and sacrifice comfort for the greater well being of the Kingdom by denying self and making God a priority. The purpose is to change the heart of an individual and align it with God. Empowering, fellowship and bringing the Kingdom (i.e., bringing the power of God into the world) will result. In Isaiah 58:6-9, God describes the type of fast that pleases Him and brings breakthrough.

Additional Reading

Arthur Wallis, *God's Chosen Fast*, CLC Publications, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, 2001.

Bottom Line

Christians do not always practice what they know the *Bible* says.

Comfort or Commitment?

It is possible to be comfortable by not acting on revealed Biblical truth, or you can be committed by acting in obedience on an action or command from God.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God is Biblically clear on how He makes His presence known.

Chapter 17

STAYING FILLED

Have you ever heard someone say, “Boy, that person sure is full of himself?” What is meant is that the person is concerned about himself first. All of his thoughts, goals, desires and activities are centered accordingly.

Even though we are created in the image of God, we are creatures of comfort and desire to please ourselves first. Biblically, this is called Original Sin—making ourselves our priority in life rather than God. This should change when we are converted and the change should be even more evident as we mature in discipleship and anointing.

It is a simple fact that we will either be filled with ourselves or the Lord. It is our choice. If we are filled with ourselves, then we shall follow the world’s ways, systems and goals. If we are filled with the Lord, then we shall desire Him above all and seek to fellowship and serve Him first.

We are told in Matthew 6:21:

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

You store and “fill-up” with whatever you think is valuable and is treasure. Is the Lord’s presence your treasure, or is the world more important to you?

There are numerous references in Scripture about God's giving us a "new heart," a heart that is after Him. Matthew 15:18 is clear when it tells us that the things that come out of our mouths come from our hearts. Whatever fills our hearts will overflow through our mouths! The heart is either filled with the world or with Jesus—it is your choice. Just as you fill your heart, mind and body on a regular basis, so you need to fill your spirit on a regular basis.

When you accepted Jesus, His Spirit entered your life and filled you. You are filled daily, however, as you spend time with the Lord. To "stay filled," you must come to the Lord daily (to receive a fresh supply of His presence) for renewal, strength in the relationship and anointing for ministry.

Glory is God's presence. Anointing is God's presence working through you. The infilling is receiving a fresh supply of God's power daily for ministry. Next, we shall examine how these three work together.

Glory

Glory is defined as: "Great honor, praise or distinction given by common consent (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002, p. 476)." It is further defined as: "...the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation; as exhibited in whatever way He reveals Himself (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 483)." God was glorified (honored) in the resurrections of Lazarus and Jesus because His glory (Manifest Presence) was experienced by those present. Since God's Glory is the foundation for anointing, let us look at what it encompasses.

1. PRESENCE FOR RECEIVING—In the Old Testament the presence of the Lord was recognized in angelic appearances, the showbread, the Ark of the Covenant and also in the glory cloud over the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8). In Exodus 33:18, Moses said:

Please show me your glory.

He wanted the assurance of God's Manifest Presence, and God granted his request.

2. **HOLINESS**—Isaiah 6:3 talks about the “Glory of Yahweh (God).” The revelation of His majestic holiness (purity) and His glory are closely related. Sometimes the term “Shekinah glory”—or presence—is described as overpowering, awesome or brilliant.
3. **COVERING**—Just as the glory cloud covered Mt. Sinai, the tabernacle and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, it (His goodness, Exodus 34:19) covered Moses to the point that his face shined brightly (Exodus 34:29-35). God's Nature, goodness and presence (glory) often “cover” people and places when God exhibits self-revelation today.
4. **GLORY**—The direct self-manifestation of God's presence, regardless of the form it takes, in the lives of His people as we fellowship with and worship Him. Glory is between you and God as He manifests Himself and ministers to you. Anointing is the release of glory in ministry. It is between you and the person God is calling to receive ministry from you.

Anointing

To be anointed is to live and function under the power, authority and Manifest Presence (glory) of God. It comes from “being with Jesus (Acts 4:13).” This requires paying the “price” of putting Him first in all things.

1. **POWER THROUGH PRESENCE**—Luke 4:18 tells us:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me.

2. **AUTHORITY FOR MINISTRY**—To preach, to heal, to free captives (those who are oppressed or in bondage) and to grant spiritual and physical sight.
3. **PRESENCE TO BRING THE KINGDOM**—Luke 4:19 says that the Good News is for NOW:

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Webster's defines *anoint*: "to apply oil or ointment to; to place oil on as an indication of sanctification or consecration in a religious ceremony (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002, p. 46)." In physical anointing, oil is placed or rubbed on an individual. In spiritual anointing, God is placing something on the believer. Instead of oil, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, God is placing His glory on the believer for ministry.

Just as God anointed Jesus with His glory, so He anointed Peter and John at the gate (Acts 3:1-10). He still anoints believers today, whether with specific spiritual gifts or the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11). He anoints (gives, grants, places or imparts) believers with His glory for ministry today just as He did in Biblical times.

Anointing, then, is actually the glory of God being applied in life situations. It is where God is brought or comes to someone through an individual who is a willing vessel. Anointing does not try to lift the person to God, rather it brings the power, authority and presence of God to the person in need. It is not a matter of your reaching to God in prayer, but a matter of a supernatural touch of God through a willing, yielded, obedient person.

It was reported that, in a hotel where evangelist Katherine Kuhlman was staying, the anointing was so strong that people on the floor above her and the floor below her were healed. While this may seem unrealistic to many, I have personally experienced the anointing so strong that not only were people healed, but also others could not stand, walk or even talk!

Anointing is not about what you do, but rather about what God does as you are yielded, expectant and obedient to Him. Bring Your anointing, Lord!

Infilling

1. What it is not—Baptism with the Holy Spirit, which is to request that the power of God be activated for ministry and offering

yourself as the vessel through whom it will flow. This happens only one time.

2. What it is—Infilling is coming to the Lord daily in prayer, Bible study and listening to His Spirit to receive a fresh supply of His presence. This is essential if the anointing is to flow in your ministry and God is to work as He wants to work. This happens daily.
3. How it is received—Essentially, what it amounts to is to live (Matthew 6:33) in such a way that you have a continual hunger and heart's desire for the Lord to be above all else in every area of your life. It is to make Him the priority of your life, to come like a child and sit on His lap to listen and fellowship with Him. In doing so, you receive a fresh supply of His presence to strengthen and guide you and to share with the world.
4. Repentance—Is the beginning of receiving God's presence and direction because we can truly see ourselves in need and God as our Source.
5. Prayer—Open your heart and share with God your desire for Him.
6. Request—His Manifest Presence (glory).
7. Scripture—Remind Him of His promise in Jeremiah 29:11.
8. Thanksgiving—Give thanks for His answering your request and granting you His Manifest Presence.
9. Fellowship—Spend time daily with Him, LISTENING to what He has to say. Then obey!

Purpose of Infilling

The infilling is essential if the anointing is to flow in ministry as God desires. The result is that the presence and power (glory) of God will touch and transform lives

This will happen in the Church through such means as word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, deliverance and healing.

On one occasion, I prayed for a person's knee to be healed. After prayer, the person was standing with a cane, although the knee felt a little better. The Lord spoke and told me to speak to the knee, rather than to pray about it, because His anointing was present to heal. I spoke, and the glory of the Lord was made manifest as the knee was instantly healed and no surgery was required.

God touches lives through your witness as a believer as people see how you respond to life's situations. In addition, they will see the anointing that comes from the glory of God, because you are infilled each day anew with His living Manifest Presence.

In a single day, God granted me the opportunity to minister in His anointing in three stores where I was shopping. In two of the three instances, I did not know the people. In every instance, God provided boldness based on revealed needs and people received healing. One person who was healed that day claimed a relationship with Jesus, yet maintained, "I am healed because I do not have any pain or soreness and can move like normal, but it sure is scary."

Yet another person who was touched by God said, "I'm a believer, but I didn't believe God healed. I thought it was just a gimmick on TV."

On still another occasion, after eating in a restaurant and walking across the parking lot, a man shouted to me and ran up and said, "I heard you and the group talking about Jesus. I want what you talked about. I want Jesus in my life; will you pray with me?" As we used the car hood for an altar for prayer, God came in and transformed his life! If you are filled daily and obedient, God will use you to supernaturally touch lives for Him.

Summary/Review

1. You will be filled with something—either yourself, the world or Jesus—which ever one is the most important to you.
2. Glory is the direct self-manifestation of God's presence, regardless of the form it takes, in the lives of His people as we fellowship with and worship Him.
3. Anointing is the glory of God applied to life situations. It is where God is brought or comes to someone through an individual who is a willing vessel.
4. Infilling is coming to the Lord daily to receive a fresh supply of His presence, which is essential if His anointing is to flow in ministry as He intends.

Additional Reading

Benny Hinn, *The Anointing*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1992.

Bottom Line

You will be filled with either the world or Jesus.

Comfort or Commitment?

You will be comfortable by being filled with worldly things, or you will be committed by being filled with God's glory and anointing by the Holy Spirit.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God's glory and anointing are available and meant for today.

Part III - Biblical Christianity

Definition:

Biblical Christianity is living and functioning under the anointing, power and Manifest Presence of God.

Focus:

The focus of Biblical Christianity is fellowship with God as He originally intended.

Emphasis:

The emphasis is on a more intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father and living in His glory and Manifest Presence.

Chapter 18

HOW GOD WORKS

Years ago, I was in the United States Army, stationed in Stuttgart, Germany. Even though I was running from the Lord at the time, He somehow led me to visit several cathedrals in Europe as Joyce and I traveled on vacation.

One of our more memorable visits was to the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican. It was here that I saw a fresco (a painting put on wet concrete rather than a dried surface) by Michelangelo. On the ceiling, Michelangelo painted "The Creation of Adam." God is portrayed on a cloud with many angels. He is reaching out, extending His finger toward Adam to transmit the gift of life. At the same time, Adam is reaching toward God to receive the gift of life. Although the picture was painted in 1511, it still has a powerful message for us about how God works. He is reaching down from Heaven to touch us, and all we have to do is receive. God has not changed. He is the same today. In His love, He reaches out to us and offers us a choice. He wants to impart His love, power and presence to us so that we experience His promises and fulfill His purpose for our lives.

In His Image

Genesis 1:26 makes it clear that we are created in the image of God. I Thessalonians 5:23 makes it clear that humans are tripartite (three part) beings, just as God is Trinity. Each of us is a spirit with a soul housed in

a body. Romans 8:9 tells us that we must have the Spirit of God dwelling in us, or we are not born again. Romans 8:16 makes it clear that when we are born again, the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. John 16:13 states that the Spirit of Truth guides us in all truth. In short, God's children are led by the Holy Spirit. Even though the works of God are recognized in circumstances, relationships and Scripture, God works through His Spirit to touch and transform our lives.

His Plan

God has one plan, Plan A, which is for us to live in fellowship with Him by accepting Jesus and living in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is no Plan B! This means that we must understand that God expects us to live by faith. Basically, faith is belief (Romans 10:17). It is a total trust. This comes from the Spirit of God to your spirit. It is developed by obedience to the Word. It is confirmed in direct correlation to the Word in you that is released (spoken or acted upon).

The reason that God does not work is often because of Romans 10:15, which is that people do not believe what they hear. It is essential to believe in the authority of the Word of God if we are going to expect God to honor and act on His promises. To fail to believe the Word is the same as calling God a liar. Most of us would not think of doing this verbally, but do it anyway by worrying and failing to believe that His solemn promises are true. Sometimes people's eyes, ears and hearts are closed, and they do not want to hear from God because they will have to change some of their sinful or selfish lifestyles and priorities. Hebrews 4:12-13 makes it clear that God's Word is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

In Mark 9:23, Jesus heals a man's son and talks about the effects of faith. In Mark 11:22-23, Jesus insists on our having the God kind of faith. This means that you must see the thing you desire spiritually—in your heart—and not doubt, then speak. Believe in the heart first, and speak second. The Word is the will of God, and when you believe without doubting and then speak it, God responds! It is imperative that each person have his or her belief system lined up with the will of God, which is His Word. Choose to believe and hold your tongue until you do. Only then—when

you believe the Word without doubting it—should you speak. Only then will you walk in the supernatural with the Lord.

You can't speak the word and get Jesus. Most of the time, people speak before they believe, thinking that if they “speak it enough,” they will believe and it will occur. Not so! This sequence is wrong because the *Bible* says to believe in your heart first, and then speak. When you change your belief to match the Word and then change your speech, God will trust you with His awesome power and presence.

Your Heart's Desire

Psalm 37:3-5 tells us:

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

This means entrusting everything about our lives into His care and control. All too often, people are motivated by feelings and neglect the spiritual reality that comes from God. It is entirely possible for someone to be “moved in the soul” because a speaker is eloquent or passionate, yet not be touched spiritually, because the message was never “anointed by the Spirit of God.” This can result in a person's knowing about Jesus, but lacking a personal relationship with Him.

Our heart's desire should be to do the will of the Father, just as Jesus did (John 5:30). When this happens, our desires will be in line with His, because we are filled with Him. His glory and anointing flow through us to others as He uses our abilities and personality.

Once God has placed His vision in our hearts, it is our responsibility to respond by being obedient and trusting Him to perform His Word. The vision is maintained by abiding and living in total reliance on Him. The result will be a fulfilled life in which the supernatural is normal and God is able to do what He wants as we maintain our fellowship with Him.

God loves us so much that He allows us to choose. He is a gentleman and will not force Himself on us. He works in cooperation with you as your spirit responds to His Spirit.

Summary/Review

1. We are created in God's image. His Spirit speaks to our spirits.
2. God's plan is for us to live in fellowship with Him by accepting Jesus and living in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
3. Your heart's desire should be to entrust everything about your life into His care and control, knowing that He will personally and supernaturally enable you to fulfill your potential.

Bottom Line

God will not work on earth unless it is through people.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by following "head knowledge" about Jesus, or you can be committed by speaking God's Word—and He will trust you with His power.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God is waiting and willing to work supernaturally in your life as you allow His Spirit to touch your spirit.

Chapter 19

MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD

About five minutes before the close of a Sunday morning service, the woman in charge of the fellowship luncheon informed me that there was not sufficient food for the group. Normally, there is so much food that we could not begin to eat it all, but on this day a number of people who usually cooked were absent, and the food on the tables did not even make one solid line down the center. A person standing nearby offered to go to the local supermarket and get some items. The woman in charge said there was no need because we were going to pray and God would provide.

I was asked to agree with this proposal, which I did—by praying. In the few remaining minutes before the close of the service and the beginning of the meal, we did not see any “additional dishes appear.” To further complicate the situation, after the close of the service, several people looked at the crowd and mentioned the apparent absence of food. There was almost a look of bewilderment and question as to what was going to happen, since we turned down additional offers to go for food.

We continued to thank God for His provision, prayed a prayer of blessing over the food, and began to serve the people. Interestingly, there were never any additional dishes of food visible, but everyone ate as much as they wanted. Some people had seconds, and one person even went back three times! When it was all over, there was almost as much food in the dishes as when they were brought from the people’s homes.

The result was that we gave as much as we could away—and still people had food to take home. God is so good. He manifested His presence through multiplying the food because of two factors: our need and our trust in Him.

God Has Not Changed

God still works today. It is just that some people do not believe He does. Others do not believe that He will, so they do not expect the wonder working power of the Living God. Still others do not believe that the Word is alive and worthy of our full trust. This amounts to telling God that He lied and that His Word isn't true. The God kind of faith is not limited to believing a fact, but also involves trusting in your heart, without a doubt, that the Living God is going to fulfill His Word.

The reason many never experience living in the supernatural—which is natural for God and what He intended for us—is basically threefold:

1. **Lack of Vision**—They do not know where they are going, but seem to be swallowed up in activities of the world, including Church activities and programs. We know that without a vision the people will perish (Proverbs 29:18). This vision is from God. It is His desire for you, which He reveals. He places it into your spirit, even though it may come through your head and out your mouth!
2. **Lack of Hope**—People are not certain about the present. They have no hope concerning present circumstances. They either trust their own abilities, or decide that nothing else is available. Hope—certainty—comes from knowing Jesus, knowing His promises are for today and knowing that He offers them. You must simply receive.
3. **Lack of History**—They do not realize the relevance and power of their experiences to affect and assist in life. In short, they do not recognize where they have been, nor do they see any benefit from their experiences. (One definition of a “neurotic” is: a person who does not learn from his or her mistakes.) Most

people are viewing their life situations from a worldly perspective rather than from a spiritual one.

Manifest

Manifest means “clear to the sight or understanding (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, 2002, p. 665).” It means that something is revealed or brought into the open.

Revealed is defined as “uncovered (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 964).” Simply put, I believe that the word “manifest” refers to an occasion when God reveals either Himself or a spiritual truth to a human's physical senses.

The form in which God manifests Himself varies throughout Scripture, based on individuals, circumstances and His choice. Some examples from Scripture include:

1. God came walking in the garden in the cool of the evening to fellowship with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8).
2. God led His people out of Egypt by cloud during the day, and by fire at night (Exodus 13:21-22).
3. God parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16).
4. God engraved the stone tablets with His very own Finger (Exodus 32:16).
5. God showed Moses His glory (Genesis 33:19).
6. God revealed Himself through miracles in the lives of His prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha.
7. God revealed Himself through the mighty works of His apostles, including Peter, Paul and John.

8. God revealed Himself in the life of His only begotten Son, Jesus (John 1:14), through His presence, miracles, teaching and obedience to the Father.

These are a few examples of God's working today:

1. God continues to manifest Himself through the work of the Holy Spirit in the anointed lives of believers today. The examples are numerous as you look at various well-known ministries such as those of Oral Roberts, Kenneth E. Hagin (1917-2003), T. L. Osborn, Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland.
2. God manifests Himself in the lives of individual believers through supernatural occurrences in worship and ministry. This happens not only in worship, but also in the daily lives of people as they are willing to risk and reach out in the Name of Jesus.
3. God provides strength for those who are being persecuted. This is documented through such publications as *The Voice of the Martyrs*. The Voice of the Martyrs organization keeps a current list of martyrs and those being persecuted for Jesus' sake and the Gospel's, and provides assistance to believers being persecuted in countries throughout the world.
4. God manifests Himself through His glory, directly in the lives of believers who are seeking Him. This is not a miracle involving others, but it is a miracle involving you. It is a moment in time (which can occur more than once) when you have a divine encounter that is truly life-transforming. It tends to occur more frequently as we spend an increased time in fellowship with God, just listening to what He has to say about our lives in Him.

God Still Comes to Us

In the best-selling book, *The God Catchers* (Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, 1999), Tommy Tenney begins by describing how God came in power in a service and actually split a pulpit! He describes the Manifest Presence of God and how people just wanted to be in it because it was so awesome. In short, God came

because of the hunger of the people and the fact they made room for Him.

Bringing the Manifest Presence of God begins with repentance and a desire for His presence more than anything else. This means that we must give up our pride, a controlling spirit and our pre-conceived notions of how He will work. Further, it involves submission and obedience, which means that Jesus is our "First Love." Oswald Chambers, in his devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest*, makes a profound observation about human nature:

Today we have substituted doctrinal belief for personal belief, and that is why so many people are devoted to causes and so few are devoted to Jesus Christ. People do not really want to be devoted to Jesus, but only to the cause He started. Jesus Christ is deeply offensive to the educated minds of today, to those who only want Him to be their Friend, and who are unwilling to accept Him in any other way (Discovery House Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1935).

Jesus is either Lord of all or not at all in our lives. This is a simple statement, but a true one, with which we must come to grips. It tells His place in our lives—either He is the center or He is an addition.

God's Manifest Presence is His glory touching your life. It is not simply the Holy Spirit working, but also the Father Himself. The Manifest Presence is not restricted to worship services. It is available in every area of your life and in all that you do. His Manifest Presence is the single most important treasure you have in life, for from it all else flows.

Do You Really Want His Presence?

Have you noticed that more people talk about God than talk with God? More people talk about faith than exercise faith. There are more people who talk about making room for God than there are those who are making room for Him. Just look at most Church services and the way they are structured. People are so busy trying to reach God through comfortable activities in an accepted order that it is hard to find a place for God. God is indeed a God of order, but He has been structured out of

worship. He should be the Object of our worship. He should be the focal point. He should be able to move and speak as He desires. This means that believers should come prepared to worship, rather than expecting to be "spiritually pumped up."

Many people seem to want a "good feeling," or merely signs, wonders and miracles, rather than the Giver. It is crucial to make some very personal decisions about life, in terms of Whom we serve and Who is in control. Bruce Wilkinson, in his book, *Experiencing Spiritual Breakthroughs* (Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, Oregon, 1999, p. 31), describes three different levels of commitment toward God by sharing about three chairs. He summarizes a person's spiritual state and describes levels of backsliding through generations:

1. Chair one is commitment, saved and spiritual. The First Generation is in the first chair, knows God firsthand, faith has "works" and submits to the *Bible*.
2. Chair two is compromise, saved and carnal. The Second Generation is in the second chair, knows of God, has secondhand faith, has seen the "works" and respects the *Bible*.
3. Chair three is conflict, unsaved and natural. The Third Generation is in the third chair, knows not God, has no faith, doesn't believe in "works" but owns a *Bible*.

In summary, what Wilkinson says is that each of us lives in one of the three chairs as related to God and that it is our choice. The first chair has an intimate relationship with Him. The second chair knows Him, but operates on a second hand faith, gratifying the carnal (sensual) desires and appetites. The third chair does not know Him at all and lives to fulfill the natural (inborn human) desires.

After reading about this, I prayed and asked God where most of the Christians were seated. He said, "Second chair." The second chair is where the cares of this world have choked out the Word. The result is that most are living far below what God has available, even if they are Baptized with the Holy Spirit and have experienced spiritual gifts. There is no way that a Christian can experience His Manifest Presence, as did

Moses and Jesus, if he or she is not in the first chair, where He is Lord, the focal point and Source of life.

Make the Lord God your priority and your Source and give Him time in intimacy. Make Him first place in every area of your life and worship. If you do, you will experience His Manifest Presence. His Manifest Presence is not merely an experience but HIM in His fullness. In it, we lose all concept of time and even the need to sing or pray. Man's "order of service" is gone as we immerse ourselves in His Manifest Presence like little children sitting on our Heavenly Father's lap, receiving all that He is and has to give. All else flows from this! The supernatural will automatically occur because of His presence, and transformation will take place beginning with us and extending to everyone with whom we come into contact.

Summary/Review

1. God hasn't changed. He still manifests Himself in worship and daily life.
2. To manifest is to reveal Himself. The form of this manifestation varies, based upon what God decides.
3. God manifests Himself through the work of the Holy Spirit, through supernatural occurrences in worship and in lives of individual believers.
4. God responds to spiritual hunger and repentance.
5. Prepare yourself by seeking the Lord with all your heart and be sure to make room for Him as the Guest of Honor.
6. The Manifest Presence is God the Father in His fullness and results in supernatural ministry and transformation of all who encounter Him.

Additional Reading

Tommy Tenney, *The God Catchers*, Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, 2002.

Bottom Line

God hasn't changed. He still manifests Himself in worship and daily life.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by being satisfied in your relationship with God, or you can be committed by seeking Him with all of your heart and making Him the Guest of Honor.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God responds to spiritual hunger and repentance. He is waiting for your invitation.

Chapter 20

RUNNING THE RACE TO COMPLETION

Recently, my wife, Joyce, and I were driving to a wedding rehearsal in a rural location and became lost. We were within two miles of where we were supposed to be, but had missed a road. I looked at the map and recognized the landmarks as well as the road we were on, but somehow I had missed a turn. I returned to a place that I recognized then looked at the map once more. Joyce held the map and said, “Aren’t we supposed to follow this road?” as she pointed to it on the map.

My reply was, “Yes, and we are on the correct road... right about here,” as I turned the map and pointed to the location. Even though we both recognized where we were, I didn’t know why the road I was following didn’t seem to match the map, when all of the landmarks did. After taking still *another* look at the map, my wife asked whether I had the map turned correctly. When I looked again, I realized that she was right. Although I was looking at the correct road and recognized the landmarks, I had not “oriented” the map and had followed the wrong curve.

Within minutes, we made the necessary adjustments and were back on track for the proper location of the rehearsal. God showed me something about the situation that is much like our lives. First, even though you are on the correct road (His road), you still need to use the map (His Word)! Second, when you use the map, you may recognize the landmarks, but you *must* have the map turned (oriented) correctly. This means that you

must be lined up with His Word and His directions based on your current situation, even though you may have had similar experiences in the past.

It is not sufficient to be on the right road. You need to be going the right direction on the road and make the correct turns. You also need to follow the “map” and not just the familiar landmarks.

Completing the Course

The message of Matthew 24:12-13 is clear:

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

There are many distractions that can cause us to either get off course temporarily or not complete the race.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us about the race of faith that each of us must run:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Completing the race means having the right priority and daily reaching toward what is most important. You should prioritize your life in this way:

1. God in Christ
2. Spouse
3. Children
4. Job
5. Church

In our high-tech world, we are accustomed to instant results. This is not always how God works, so people become discouraged or disenchanted and go for a “quick fix” or on to the next project. We have been given the wrong impression that “we can have it all” by working harder or longer.

We make choices on what is important to us and that is where our time, energy and money go. Observation of our society reveals that we often start more than we complete. Even if we complete an activity, we are so preoccupied about the next activity that we miss the moment. By doing this, we do not adequately nor effectively complete a project with passion, integrity and total commitment of our resources. We flit from one activity to another, much like a butterfly on flowers. You might even compare the process to dating, as opposed to marriage—there is not a total commitment and focus.

Whether you are completing the courses required for a college degree, filling out your income-tax forms, dumping into a bowl all the ingredients of a recipe and following the directions, mowing your lawn, meeting someone for a scheduled appointment or something as simple as getting dressed each morning, it is essential that you finish what you begin if you are to reach the goal you have set.

What God Expects

God expects each believer to have an intimate relationship with Him and to fulfill the purpose for which you have been called. Even though our part of our Covenant with God may only be one percent, and God's part is ninety-nine percent, we are still expected to do our part to complete the Covenant and fulfill the purpose for which we are called.

The world tries to get people to develop their potential to the fullest, set goals and become what they consider successful. To do this, you must “stay the course.” Have you noticed that:

1. Many people do not know where they are going? They have no vision and are merely swallowed up in activities. They have mistaken activity for accomplishment.

2. Others have no certainty about the present? They have no hope concerning present circumstances. They have no assurance that they are even involved in the correct activity. There is merely an effort to exist. Did you know that a survey revealed that approximately 80% of the population work in jobs they do not like? Further, most people are looking forward to retirement!
3. Still others have no history? They do not know where they have been nor have they benefited from the experience.

God expects us to have a clear vision if we are to complete the race. It is the vision that causes us to press in. Specifically, it is God's vision for us that He has put in our hearts. Do you have God's vision for you in your heart? When you do, the goal will be clear, the victory certain and the journey one of expectancy and joy.

The Desire of Your Heart

Psalm 37:4 tells us to delight ourselves in the Lord and that God will give us the desires of our hearts. The desire that He is speaking about is HIS DESIRE in your heart! The more of God's desire you have in your heart, the less you have of yours. His desire is His vision for you. He places it within you as you fellowship and have intimate times together with Him. When you are obedient and act on His vision, then His Kingdom comes on earth as it is in Heaven!

1. Do you have a desire to see God's vision made manifest? Jesus did, and so should we. Miracles, signs and wonders are the order of the day when we allow God to work. This is essential for Church growth. People recognize the working of God and come to see what is happening—then God touches them. Don't be afraid to allow God's desire to come through you.
2. Do you have a desire for spiritual life? It is time for the Church to have more than man-made religion and rules. The world is in desperate need of the Lord, and it is time to have power rather than merely form. This begins with seeking and allowing God to bring our "dry bones" to life, even if we are spirit filled. It means

worshipping in spirit and truth. It means submitting to Christ in all things and having Him as our number one priority in life.

3. Do you have a desire for your life and the Church to be totally controlled by the Holy Spirit? This means families being in the order He set forth, as parents live their faith and share it daily with their children. It means taking God at His Word and being the “head and not the tail.” It means being debt free and having all of your needs met according to the Word. It means accepting and living God's promises for health and fulfillment. It means doing things God's way so He will manifest Himself in glory, anointing and miracles. It means that the world around us will be transformed by His presence in and through us. Like Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15), God will use our presence, our speech, our touch and yes—even our shadows—in bringing healing to a hurting world. It will and must be through His supernatural power, rather than through our human efforts alone.

What is your heart's desire? It is reflected in your lifestyle, goals, priorities and activities. What are you about? Your Father's business? Continuing the Ministry of Jesus? Running the race to completion?

The “high calling” is to allow Him to live supernaturally in us as we live our lives for Him. It is also to maintain that intimate relationship whereby we will be in His presence continually.

Bottom Line

It isn't enough to start the race. You must complete it.

Comfort or Commitment

You can be comfortable by going through the motions of faith, or you can be committed by allowing the Holy Spirit total control and finishing the race.

Basic Scriptural Truth

Matthew 6:33:

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Chapter 21

CONTINUING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Several years ago, I was asked by a member of my congregation to visit a relative in the hospital. Then the person added, “Don't be surprised if he is not too receptive. He doesn't like preachers.”

When I arrived, I was greeted rather gruffly and informed that I was the fourth preacher to visit that day! I informed him that his family requested that I stop by to check on his health. Then I asked about the report from his physician. He told me that he had cancer, but that he did not expect to die soon.

I asked him whether he was afraid to die. He replied that he was a bit apprehensive. I asked whether he had accepted Jesus as his Savior. His reply was that he had not—because he did not trust preachers. He said that a preacher had cheated him out of ten dollars, years earlier.

The Lord quickened my spirit, and I reached in my billfold and handed him a ten dollar bill and said, “Here's your ten dollars. Now you have no excuse not to listen to me.” As he accepted the ten-dollar bill, he said that he did not know how to accept Jesus, so I presented the “plan of salvation” in personal terms.

Next, I asked him whether he would like to pray and receive Jesus as his Savior. Gruffly, he said, “No, not right now, but I'll think about it.”

I told him I had to go, but would come again another day. Then I asked him whether I could offer a closing prayer.

He replied, "If it will make you feel better."

I said, "It will. Bow your head." He did, and I closed with prayer, assuring him I would not ask God to save him against his will. Further, I asked the Lord to touch him with His loving, precious presence and become real to Him. As I departed, I asked him whether he remembered how to receive Jesus and he said that he did. I returned four more times to visit him in the hospital, and each time I asked him whether he had accepted Jesus, and his reply was, "No, not yet, but I'm getting closer."

A few days after he returned home from the hospital, I received a telephone call. It was this same gentleman. He said that the evening before, he and his wife had gotten out of bed and knelt together on the floor and received Jesus into their hearts and lives! Before he died, I had the privilege of visiting with and ministering to him. He was so hungry for the Lord and open to His Manifest Presence, just like an innocent child.

Our Calling

Our calling is not to try to bring people to Jesus. The Holy Spirit does that. Our calling is to bring Jesus to people, wherever they may be, so they may experience Him and receive.

Just as Jesus walked the earth and ministered in the anointing, so we are called to do the same. There are countless Scriptures that tell about promises and power, but they are of little effect for us personally unless we recognize our relationship and use our authority. I used to think this was an arrogant attitude, but no longer.

It is essential that you recognize God's love for you—that you are important to God, and that He loves you. God has a specific plan for your life. He *needs* you to fulfill His calling on your life, and He wants to trust you with His Word and power. God lives in you and wants to work through you in a mighty way.

CHAPTER 21 – CONTINUING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS NESTER

Greater things...

John 14:12 tells us specifically:

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

Today, it seems that Churches attempt to bring the Kingdom by earthly understanding and means, such as logic, understanding and programs, rather than by the anointing of the Lord. It is time for the Church to wake up and continue the ministry of Jesus as He intended. Believers are called to continue the ministry Jesus had, in the power Jesus had, with the results Jesus had (Hebrews 13:8). This comes from the Manifest Presence of God, not merely His gifts. Our focus should be on our relationship and fellowship with Him—then all else will follow.

The supernatural presence of the Living God will be evident in:

1. Our worship—which will be with passion and complete abandon, desiring nothing else but His Manifest Presence.
2. Our witness—which will be directed to the goodness, faithfulness and availability of God.
3. Our warfare—by using His authority to restrict satan and loose God's Kingdom on earth.
4. Our work—because we are merely vessels, through whom the reality of God flows as we are submitted and obedient.

Preparation

To continue the ministry of Jesus, we must live as He did, which is in the realm of the Holy Spirit. God is Spirit and we are created in His image; therefore, we are spirits that have souls and are housed in bodies. When the Spirit of God speaks through us today, His power is made evident in what we call “miracles.” This is natural for Him.

Genesis 1:26-28 tells us that God gave man “dominion.” Dominion is a Biblical fact. The spiritual world has dominion over the physical, whether it is from God or Satan. This is why it is essential for Christians to know the heart of God and to speak His Words into existence. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho in his book, *The Fourth Dimension* (Logos International, Plainfield, New Jersey, 1987), discusses and describes the power of the spiritual over the physical, and shares this spiritual truth from the Word of God.

In Matthew 6:9, Jesus prays:

Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

I have found what the “key” was for Jesus—and it is the key for us also. John 5:19 is clear:

Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

God placed His vision in Jesus’ heart and brought His Kingdom on earth by Jesus’ speaking the vision. Just as Moses knew God’s ways (heart), not just His actions, so Jesus spent time with His Father and knew His heart. John 5:30 continues:

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Whether it is sight or hearing, it is called heart knowledge, or *Rhema*. For the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in Heaven, we must speak *Rhema*—which we can only get directly from God—by spending time with Him.

Application

Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:16-20 both contain what we call “The Great Commission.” This is indeed the Word of God, but it is a general commissioning for all believers to reach out. If you were to decide—

CHAPTER 21 – CONTINUING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS NESTER

based on the recorded Word, which we receive by *Logos* (head knowledge)—to go to the mission field in Hawaii because you read the Scripture and liked Hawaii, you would be wrong. You need to listen to God and receive His direction (personal instructions) for you as to where to minister (see Acts 16:1-6).

What God honors is the vision He has placed in your heart as you act in obedience. Sometimes, Christians take the “general directions” from Scripture and try to use them without asking their Covenant God for the specifics of their particular situation. Just because Peter walked on the water doesn't mean you should—unless Jesus calls you! *Logos* is for all people to gain knowledge and establish a relationship. *Rhema* is for those who decide to be obedient and desire to truly know God's heart. As believers mature in the Lord, they retain and use *Logos*, but live by *Rhema*—which leads to the anointing and manifestation of God.

Your speech should reflect God's desire for your life rather than the circumstances you see in the world. It is through speech that the Spirit of God is released to move and minister. Your speech should be bold. Obedience should be instant—anything less is disobedience. God cannot and will not bless in circumstances in which there is willful disobedience.

The Family Name

The name “Christian” was first used in Antioch (Acts 11:26). It refers to those who are united in one family by a personal faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God, who was raised from the dead. The name identified the early followers of Jesus as “disciples,” which meant that they were devoted to the person of Jesus, rather than to a cause.

Not all people who claim the name “Christian” are truly disciples. Romans 5:5 tells us that the Holy Spirit has poured out in our hearts the very love of God. The Christian life is characterized not only by devotion to Jesus, but also by Jesus' being the passion of our lives. The name reflects an intimate relationship, whereby we live in the Spirit and speak *Rhema*, which God has placed in us because we seek Him and wait on

Him. The result is His Kingdom coming on earth as it is in Heaven. In Him we live and move and have our being!

It is possible to receive Jesus as Savior but never want nor allow Him to be truly the Lord of our lives. It is true that we receive based on *Logos*—which is what God has said—but sometimes it is possible for us to not actually want what the Lord is saying concerning his current circumstances.

It is time to get serious and put your trust and entire life in His control. It is time to be radical in faith and do literally what God says. This means a change in priorities, focus, expectation and having God's vision. This involves:

1. Seeking Him with all your heart.
2. Listening with your spirit.
3. Believing the Word of God—this is essential if you intend to live by it.
4. Grasping the vision the Lord gives you.
5. Speaking and acting in instant obedience.

Stepping Up

Much of the Church talks theology, but have precious few miracles to show for it. God will give you the desire of your heart (Psalm 37:4)—which is the desire God put there—but you must act on it. Ministry is birthed by vision in action. Surrender totally to the Holy Spirit. Desire only what God desires, speak only what God reveals and do what God shows you (Psalm 37:5).

The Church needs to reclaim its original purpose, power and the presence of God. It is time to step up and do what the Lord is calling you to do—so that His Church can be the most powerful force in the world. It is time to take a close look at living in the supernatural by knowing Him and the power of His resurrection! Many are being martyred today for the

CHAPTER 21 – CONTINUING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS NESTER

Christian faith. What are you doing for Jesus? Are you continuing His ministry, in His anointing?

Summary/Review

1. Our calling is to bring our Heavenly Father to the people wherever they are and whatever their condition, so that they may experience Him and receive.
2. Believers are called to continue the ministry Jesus had, in the power Jesus had, with the results Jesus had.
3. The “key” is found in John 5:19. We are called to act according to *Rhema* (the current, personal Word from God about our specific situation, which will always align with the recorded Word), not merely *Logos* (which is the recorded Word for everyone).
4. When you spend time with God and receive His desire or vision in your life and speak it, God will honor it.
5. God's promises are potential and available according to *Logos*, but are not reality and literally yours until they become *Rhema* to you.
6. The name “Christian” was first given to disciples in Antioch. Today, not all people who carry the name can truthfully say they are disciples, because the Lord's lifestyle and presence are not evident in their lives.

Bottom Line

Believers are called to continue the ministry of Jesus.

Comfort or Commitment?

You can be comfortable by being worldly in fulfilling commitments, or you can be committed by receiving God's vision and acting in obedience on it.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God equips all believers and expects them to continue the ministry of Jesus in His anointing and bring the Kingdom.

Chapter 22

A WORD TO PASTORS

Several years ago, I received a telephone call. The caller frantically described how a family member attempted suicide and was in need of immediate help. I was close enough to be able to get a nurse from our Church to go with me, and we transported the person to a hospital in time to reverse the physical situation (God was already at work spiritually). There was an urgency in the situation that demanded immediate attention and action if effective intervention was to be accomplished.

Urgency

I am certain that you, as a pastor, have experienced similar situations. You have likely responded with an urgency expressed in faith, intensity, quick action, gifts and personal involvement of “pressing in” to meet whatever needs existed to bring help, hope and deliverance to the person who was in a dire, destructive or deadly situation. While we should never be motivated by fear, we should be motivated by our epoch in history, as we watch Biblical prophecy unfold before our very eyes.

This is a glorious time to live, but also an awesome one in which we—as believers—have both the privilege and the responsibility of bringing the Light of Jesus into a world of spiritual darkness. Luke 4:18 is the key:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.

Opposition

When pastors get together, they almost always talk about the ABC's of the ministry:

A-ttendance

B-uildings

C-ash

Would that the subject that grasped our hearts was Jesus as King and Lord! What preachers generally talk about has much to say about the institutional or organized Church, its direction and power—or lack of it—in bringing the Good News of God's light into a world of darkness.

Nowhere does Scripture tell believers to count numbers, incur great debt for building enormous buildings or to become preoccupied with bank accounts, as though they were our source. This type of thinking, planning and dependency is in direct contrast to the Word of God. The supernatural world of our Lord Jesus functions by faith, not by sight. Yet the Church has, throughout the ages, attempted to bring the Kingdom through earthly means. By its very nature, the organized Church becomes involved in surviving rather than bringing the Kingdom in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

One of the greatest oppositions to the Church is the false idea of security based on worldly standards and procedures. Another is the smug and almost condemning attitude that personal preferences and Church tradition are Biblical, and anyone who does not see it "as we do" is lost.

Years ago in the cartoons there was a character who said, "I found the enemy—and he are us!" A profound statement, when you think about it. We are indeed our own worst enemy and can hinder the Kingdom more

from within than any enemy can from without! This is true in our own lives as well as in the life of the Church.

Compromise

There is a tendency to compromise the Word of God when confronted with the pressures of the world. One of the greatest pressures to compromise is the control of a pastor's finances, housing and retirement, because all of these directly affect his family. Although the pressure may be great, the reprisal immediate, the inconvenience certain, the consequences seemingly devastating and resources apparently gone, God is in control. You are with Him in the eye of the storm where there is peace, and you are about to experience His care, provision, power and glory. The cost of refusing to compromise may seem high, but the cost of compromising is even greater. Compromise affects your spirit, your calling and His Kingdom. God did not call you to comfort, but to glory!

On February 1, 2002, at ORU's Homecoming Chapel Service, I heard Richard Roberts, President of Oral Roberts University, encourage students, alumni and faculty to "Trust God no matter how hot the fire is." He delivered his father's extraordinarily powerful and anointed sermon entitled, "The Fourth Man," which identifies Jesus Christ in all 66 books of the *Bible* and delivers a clear message of "No Compromise." No compromise—regardless of how hot the fire gets. I heard Dr. Roberts challenge me to get in the fire—because that's where Jesus is. You cannot entertain the ideas of the world—you cannot stand for Christ only half-heartedly—or you will fall, even if you do some good things. You will compromise and lose everything you sought to gain.

When you are obedient to the anointing that God has placed upon you, you will not compromise and you will not lose. The question is, "How willing are you to refuse to bow down to things that come between you and God?" There are things that destroy the soul and hinder the Kingdom, though they may appear good, religious or even—at a cursory glance—appear to have a Biblical basis. Jesus did not compromise, nor does He expect His disciples to compromise, because His power and presence are available to make you an overcomer.

Focus

Recently, I saw an article about a denominational leader who spoke at a school of theology and publicly rejected the authority of the Scripture. This individual also rejected the deity of Jesus, the virgin birth, Jesus' bodily resurrection and His atonement for the sins of the world. When confronted, he did not apologize, but insisted that critics might be "narrow-minded," "theologically bankrupt" or even "ethically complacent."

Still another pastor, a non-denominational one, was in the news and quoted as saying that all people, regardless of religious belief, will be saved, because Jesus died for all people. People, listen! Jesus died for the sins of the world, but there is no such thing as universal salvation. Every person must make a personal decision to accept what Jesus did for him or her. How do our leaders sometimes get so far off track? They do not rightly divide the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15) and they want to tickle the ears of people by telling them what they want to hear (II Timothy 4:3-4).

In a survey of pastors a few years ago, the results indicated that—regardless of denomination—85% did not believe in the Orthodox Christian Faith, specifically, the Virgin Birth, Bodily Resurrection, Atonement, Authority of the Word and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Only a small percentage of schools of theology—which supposedly prepare individuals for ministry—actually believe or teach the *Bible* as the Word of God. The rest quibble, attempt to intimidate or overwhelm with academic gymnastics, and in some instances even state that the first five books of the *Bible* are "myth" and proceed to re-define what they mean by "myth." From this point, there are usually further "logical explanations" of other miraculous events and rejection of the Word. Little wonder that there is a lack of power in segments of the Church today. What ever happened to anointed, Holy Ghost ministry (Acts 4:13-14 and Mark 16:20)?

God did not call you—as a believer and pastor—to build great buildings, accumulate earthly wealth, have the correct theology or even save souls. He called you to make Him the Lord of your life and live in obedience to

His Word, which will result in discipleship, provision of all needs, joy of His supernatural Manifest Presence and advancement of His Kingdom.

Relationships

It is possible to be so busy doing good things that you neglect what God originally called you to do. Remember that activity is not synonymous with accomplishment. People are more important than things or programs. Jesus thought so. The ultimate importance of people should be reflected in your ministry. Some pastors describe this as “having a heart for the lost,” but I am talking about having compassion for people—lost or saved. This means that you are going to take action—under supernatural anointing—to alleviate pain and help set captives free to walk with Jesus in newness of life and power (Philippians 3:10). Remember that no one has a ministry. There is only the ministry of Jesus, released through you by obedience. Through you, He is reaching out to every person around the globe.

Family

We have all heard the sayings, “the carpenter fixes others’ houses, but his is in need of repair” or “the man at the shoe shop repairs others’ shoes, but his children need theirs repaired.” Do not overlook your own basic relationships with your wife and children. It is possible to spend so much time with others in what you think is ministry, that you neglect your own.

When your priorities are out of order, your life is out of order. Biblical priorities help set life in order, put things in proper perspective and enable fulfilling of our potential and calling. When you stand before God and give account of your life, it will be about you and not anyone else. What are your priorities? Are they the same as God’s? Are you following them? Biblically, they are:

1. God in Christ
2. Spouse
3. Children

4. Job

5. Church

As you increase in relationship with the Lord, these other areas of relationship will increase, also.

Fulfilling Potential and Calling

When my youngest son was only four years old, his older brother and sister were planning to run a five mile race, so he decided that he wanted to run it also. I told him that he had to finish what he started. Needless to say, after only a few blocks, he thought he ought to be finished. Other runners encouraged him, and his mother went along side. She said that he stopped to look at bugs, roadkill, smelled the flowers and accepted drinks from people who thought it was cute to see the little boy running. He had plenty of distractions, but he managed to complete the race.

In our spiritual life, it is easy to become sidetracked by things along the way. We have to remember our original purpose, as revealed by God. We also need to remember to ask Him how He wants us to do things so that we will remain in His anointing and not merely be working in the natural. Remember that anything God calls you to do, you will not be able to accomplish in or under your own power and abilities. Those whom God calls, He equips and supports so that the task can be completed. There is no failure in Jesus—there is only failure by not being in Jesus (under His control, anointing and direction). Just as most people live mediocre daily lives, so do many also live mediocre spiritual lives far below their potential and calling.

Dare to step out, to trust, to obey, to serve, to be bold, to love, to have compassion and to minister under the supernatural anointing of your Covenant God. Dare to dream the dreams of God and see His vision for your life as He reveals it. It will come to pass (Psalm 37:4-5). Know that in Him you can do all things. Nothing can separate you from His love nor hinder His plan from working except you, yourself.

Fulfilling your potential and calling in Christ Jesus is a matter of dying to self—daily—in all areas. You must live under the control and anointing of Jesus. (Matthew 16:24).

Dying to self is somewhat like window shopping. We may want what we see, but be unwilling to pay the price. Some people attempt to make a deal with God and reserve the right to put limits on what they are willing to do. Still others are willing to die to self and meet God, but only on their own terms, not His. Are you fulfilling your potential and calling?

Being Anchored and Overcoming

I have found that much of what we do is pleasing to us, and not necessarily what God wants from us. Stop trying to be religious and become passionate about Jesus! Seek His Manifest Presence. Seek Him. Seek Him first. When the storms of life come, you need to be anchored in Jesus—not merely in thought, idea or knowledge—but by an intimate daily relationship. You will be an overcomer and conqueror, just as Jesus was. Either He is Lord of all or not at all in our lives. Which is it?

Judgment begins in the house of the Lord (I Peter 4:17) and it begins up front with the pastor. Only after He works through the pastor does He work with the people. He is refining, renewing, reshaping and restoring. I urge you to allow God to work through you in any manner He chooses, including the way you worship.

Some supposedly powerful preachers stand around like knots on a log, letting the rest of the Church bring down the glory of God through their worship, then browbeat the people for being hearers and not doers of the Word. Preachers are not exempted from worshipping the Father in spirit and truth. Be a God pleaser. Even though you may initially be uncomfortable, watch the glory of God flow to a dry and parched people. There is such a mighty move of the Spirit of God at hand today that it is breath-taking. We pastors must be prepared, sensitive and seeking. Do not miss the day of visitation, nor the call to arms to bring the Kingdom. Pastors are accustomed to being in charge—now it is time to allow God to be in charge! You are not responsible for the outcome, but only for your obedience and declaration according to the Lord's direction.

Much of the time, God works in a way we least imagined that He would. He builds by tearing down and gives abundant life by receiving broken ones. His Kingdom works in juxtaposition to the world. Do not look at your faults any more than you do your strengths. Instead, look to the Lord, from whence your help cometh. Your faults may be forgiven and your strengths supernaturally enhanced, but only through the presence of Jesus. Allow yourself to be emptied by Jesus and then filled by Him! Your treasure is experiencing His fullness—what else is there (Matthew 6:19-20, 33)?

You can either do good things and give help from a limited worldly perspective, or you can live supernaturally and give much more. What is your choice? Are you anchored to Jesus or to the world? Are you merely a survivor, or a conqueror in Christ? Just as Jesus could do nothing but what He saw the Father do or heard Him say, neither should we—for in Him we live and move and have our being.

In a television commercial for Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty said that evolutionists proposing the big bang theory make as much sense as a tornado hitting a junk yard and producing a 747 jet! God was in charge of creation and He is still in charge of the world, even when we try to be. When we allow Him, He will show us how He works, but we must be submissive to Him and allow His Spirit to move. While we know that God is in charge, there is a tendency to go with the world by following old ways, habits, traditions and understandings. I urge you to not grieve or quench the Spirit of the Living God, but to be sensitive to the mighty move that is at hand. Step out in expectancy and obedience and see the glory of the Lord.

Everyone has a tendency at some time to quench the Spirit of God. Often it is not because of "fear of man," but merely that we are so "locked in logic" that we think like the world, rather than like our Heavenly Father. Recently, the Lord told me that I was hindering Him from moving in my own life and in the ministry He had given me because I quenched His Spirit. He further told me that I was to repent and begin speaking only those things He said and doing only those things He called me to do. He promised that as I was instantly obedient, a breakthrough would occur, the floodgates of Heaven would open and His Spirit would flow from His Throne. The Word that He spoke to me was also confirmed at World

Ministry Fellowship in Addison, Texas, as He gave the message to every pastor present.

Praise God! As I have begun to step forward with only Him in mind and to speak the vision (desire) He has put in my heart—regardless of the situation—His Manifest Presence has been revealed and lives have been transformed physically as well as spiritually. There is an anointing and presence of God beginning to break through in these last days—such as the world has never seen before.

Prepare for it by time alone with God, seeking His face and heart as your priority on a daily basis. Be bold and do not be afraid to let Him have your heart. It may break, but He will fill it and use you as a vessel to impart His Kingdom because He has called you specifically. Minister in His anointing as He intends, regardless of what the world says or does. The supernatural will be the order of the day and the glory of God will fill the earth as the water covers the sea! Don't let the people leave like they came. Usher in the anointing and glory. Be bold and live Mark 16:15-20.

All the Lord is waiting for is for us pastors to lead the way by being obedient to Him and by allowing His anointing to flow supernaturally. I urge you, challenge you, plead with you—step into the river and allow the glory of God to move unrestricted. He will flow through you, not because of your goodness, but because He has called, anointed and appointed you for such a time as this! Expect His presence, His miracles and His Kingdom. Watch Him honor His Word as we glorify Him.

Conclusion

I believe that God's anointing is on these very words that you have been reading. You now have a clearer understanding of the Christian faith from a Biblical perspective. A definite response now needs to be made to God's offer of salvation, anointing and Manifest Presence. This will enable you to fulfill your calling, experience life abundant, minister under the anointing, live in the Manifest Presence of the Living God, and bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

We live in one of the most blessed nations on earth, the United States of America, but just because we are Americans doesn't automatically make us Christians. Our nation was founded not merely on the freedom of religion, but rather upon a personal faith in Jesus Christ, the Son the Living God. God has used the United States in helping others. As a nation, though, the United States—in the name of freedom and individual rights—has been turning from God to the world. We need to get serious, repent and return to God.

II Chronicles 7:14 is meant for Israel but it also applies to Christians today:

If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves and pray, turn from their wicked ways, and seek My face, then from Heaven will I hear, I will forgive their sins, and heal their land.

When this happens, you will see miracles of healing and restoration of both spirit and body, and the glory of God will cover the earth as the water covers the sea.

It is a costly matter to be a disciple of the Living God, but God is calling the Church forth to supernaturally transform the world. It means that we, as Christians, need to be so consumed by the love, desire for and presence of Jesus that we shall not compromise the Word to the world. Rather, we shall live and move and have our being in Christ. We shall be bold as we minister in the anointing, love and power of our Covenant God. This will begin as the Church does the following:

1. Truly repents (individually and collectively).
2. Receives the vision (revelation knowledge) of God's perfect will and ministry.
3. Makes God's priorities its own.
4. Seeks the fullness of the Spirit (not merely the gifts, but the fruit and Manifest Presence in love and power).
5. Reaches out in supernatural anointing to a hurting world.

The Lord Jesus Christ is calling His glorious Church to wake up and be prepared for His coming (see Matthew 25:1-13). Based upon the current events in the Middle-East and Israel, there is a greater urgency than ever to be spiritually prepared and to participate in the end-time harvest and revival that has already begun for those who are spiritually hungry, sensitive and responsive. God has a wonderful menu for you. Come to His table daily and receive, so that you can give.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Have you heard what God's Spirit has spoken to you? Have you understood what God's Spirit has given by revelation knowledge? Are you ready to live in the fullness of the Living God? If you are, then speak this prayer from your heart and receive—as the floodgates of Heaven open wide.

Father God, in the Name of Jesus, I know that You hear me always and I have listened as Your Spirit spoke to me and I want to be one with You as You are with the Father.

I want Your Kingdom to come on earth as it is in Heaven. I repent and give up pride, a controlling spirit, religion, worldly idols and worldly priorities.

I submit my will to Yours and my life to You. I trust You for not only life eternal, but also life abundant. I trust you now and from henceforth in spirit, soul, body, finances, possessions and relationships.

Let me hear You clearly when You speak. Let me be a channel of Your glory, grace and power. I desire the fullness of your Holy Spirit and anointing.

Above all, Heavenly Father, let me have a passionate heart for You and live in Your Manifest Presence. I commit myself to You without reservation—all that I am, have or ever hope to be—because You and You alone are my Source. I desire your Kingdom to come. Open the

floodgates of Heaven and let Your living presence roll forth, that You may be glorified.

Amen—and now a new life begins!

Bottom Line

You either serve the world or Jesus!

Comfort or Commitment?

You will either be comfortable and go with the world, or you will be committed and flow in the supernatural anointing of God, as He intended.

Basic Scriptural Truth

God will use you supernaturally if you are willing to serve Him in total obedience.

The End

POST SCRIPT

The material in this book is not merely academic and factual. It is scriptural truth, which produces life. The reason I have labored over it is that it is from the Lord Jesus and it has worked for me. Since He is not a respecter of persons and wants to be involved in every life, it will work for you.

I was once asked what I was most thankful for in life. In a split-second, the Lord touched my spirit and gave me the answer, "I am most thankful that God did not quit on me."

I have found in life that you can expect no better from the world than what Jesus received. Likewise, you can expect no less from our Heavenly Father! In John 17, Jesus prayed that we would not be taken from the world but helped through life. It is in Him that we live, move and have our being.

When I entered the ministry, God gave me Psalm 37:5 as a Scripture for my life:

Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He bring it to pass.

Through the years I have experienced struggles, difficulties and disappointments—the same as anyone. Some experiences have been more trying than others. Serving in Vietnam and seeing friends die (I would go again if needed), questioning God's call upon my life (because

I was looking at things from my perspective rather than His), being rejected and feeling betrayed by the denominational church (this was also hard on my family), and having cancer surgery.

While you may have had worse things happen in your life, the worst for me was watching my son Neal and my daughter-in-law Holly hold their still born son Gabriel Jaxson and seeing the shock and pain, realizing that I could do nothing as a parent to ease the hurt. So I cried out to the Lord and He gave me the answer, recorded here:

GABE

Hey, Little buddy...
I know that you're not there,
But it's Memorial Day,
And there's something that I want to say.

I wanted you to see the creek,
So I brought you some creek water.
But the Lord said you had Living Water.

I wanted you to see the rocks,
And play like little boys do,
But the Lord told me that you were on the Solid Rock.

I wanted you to hear the birds sing,
But the Lord told me that you hear the angels sing.

I wanted you to feel the breeze on your face,
But the Lord told me you feel the breeze of the Holy Spirit.

I wanted you to see the pretty colors God created,
But the Lord told me you had the beauty of Heaven.

I wanted you to see the brightness of the sun,
And feel its warmth,
But the Lord said He is your light and comfort.

I wanted to hear you laugh as you played with a toy,

But the Lord said you laugh with joy.

I wanted to see your mom and dad smile with joy,
And not hurt inside,
But the Lord said one day they would see you smile,
And He will hold them in His care just like He does you.

As a boy, your dad was a joy,
And I wanted him to share with his little boy.
There were so many things I would like to share,
But the Lord assured me I could when I get there.

I have other grandchildren, like your sister Danielle,
That I love too,
But I just wanted to say that I miss you.

Love,
HaPa

In it all, God has never failed me, and I commend Him to you.

I have had many blessings and they far outweigh the other. There has been the victory of seeing people come to Christ. Many have experience deliverance from demons. Human bodies have been physically healed. Many have been filled supernaturally with the Holy Spirit.

I thank the Lord for Christian friends. God has given me a faithful precious wife, Joyce, to whom I have been married for over forty years. I have three wonderful Christian children (Brenda, Neal, and Eric) who are reaching out to make a better world.

I couldn't ask for a better son-in-law than Jeremy or daughter-in-law than Holly. My grandchildren (Brendan, Brett, Jordan, Jenna and Danielle) are a treasure from the Lord. It is a blessing to share with them on a regular basis.

Be assured that whatever your circumstances, God will see you through, for He has plans for your life (Jeremiah 29:11). While I have never liked

"Red Sea Experiences," I have come to know with a certainty that God's Word is worthy of my full acceptance and application in life.

Our journey is never complete. We are sojourners on our way home and our Heavenly Father is with us step by step. There is only victory, not defeat. God is good all the time! Press in. Acts 4:29-31:

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Blessings.

Jack Nester

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Jack Nester, Jr. has served as pastor for 31 years. He was originally ordained as a United Methodist. He was baptized with the Holy Spirit in 1977 and this experience changed his vision about what God intended for the Church and what it was to be a Christian.

Jack has had the privilege of ministering God's love, deliverance and healing power in Africa, Haiti, Mexico, among Native American groups in the United States, mining communities in Kentucky, and in many other churches and settings. In addition, he has been active in ethnic minority churches and in prison ministry.

Dr. Nester emphasizes Four Truths:

1. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8) in willingness to minister and in power.
2. People hunger for a personal relationship with Jesus regardless of age, education or nationality.
3. The Manifest Presence and supernatural power for meeting daily needs is increasing in these latter days as God is pouring out His Spirit.
4. No one should miss the day of His visitation because of preconceived notions or traditions of men. All you have to do to receive the Basic Scriptural Truth of His Word is to open yourself to His revelation knowledge, seek Him above all else and be instantly obedient to what He reveals.

Jack Nester, Jr. left the denominational church and is now ordained by the World Ministry Fellowship in Plano, Texas. He is pastor of the Fellowship of Believers, a non-denominational church in Langley, Oklahoma, which God called into existence in 1997. The church continues to experience the supernatural provision of God as well as His anointing which is available to all believers. The focus is on living in the Manifest presence to be the most effective disciples possible.

Pastor Jack holds a bachelor's degree in Human Relations from Missouri Valley College, a Master of Theology degree from Southern Methodist University and a Doctor of Ministry degree in Charismatic Studies from Oral Roberts University. The most important credential he has for ministry is the anointing from God that is available to all believers—including you, if you want it. Do you?

A Bible-based book that challenges 21st Century Christians to move from comfort to commitment!

The Church has compromised the Word of God, and the world has not seen the Church operate in power. It is difficult to tell the Church from the world.

God is calling the Church to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. Sadly, many Christians are confused about their faith and its application to life.

This book challenges Christians to live in power and anointing as Christians did in the 1st Century by leaving the comfort of personal preference for a commitment to Scriptural truth.



Jack Nester, Jr. has served as a pastor for 30 years. He was originally ordained by the United Methodist Church. In 1977 he was baptized with the Holy Spirit. This singular event changed his understanding about what a Christian really is as well as how a Christian should live.

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ISBN 0-615-12630-8



US \$12.95

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