

Reviving Your Heart



By
Jim Wheat

INTRODUCTION

As Christians in society today, we have become complacent in our stewardship as disciples of Christ. I am the head trespasser in this category which is why I did this study and wrote this book. It was a lesson to remind myself about God's love for me, His promises to me, and how much I am indebted to Him. We ALL are indebted to God for what He has done for us. We get caught up in the daily grind and take for granted His love, mercy, and kindness to us.

When I was first saved, I was on fire for God. I saw Him in everything I did and was excited to dive into His Word every day. I would study the Bible for hours every day, I would share Jesus and what God was telling me every day. Then I selfishly and slowly allowed Satan to divert my attention from God to myself and my selfish desires. I am ashamed to admit this, but it is the truth. I have wasted a lot of time in pursuit of the pleasures of this world and pursuing things that the world says are important.

Then I realized I had left the path God had provided and ended up lost in the woods. I believe that the majority of Christians today have taken the same path. Christians have lost their excitement, zeal, and absolute love for God. They have become comfortable sitting in the pew and selfishly dropping the cross they are supposed to be carrying. Christians have forgotten the promises of God and His desires for how we should live our lives. **A majority of church going Christians have become sidelined, backslidden, apathetic, and self-serving . A people neither hot nor cold for Jesus-** which God says He will vomit out of His mouth.

So the Holy Spirit prodded me until I gave in to get back into God's word and study all I could find about Jesus in The Bible. I want to share my discoveries with you in hopes of reminding you what God has done for you through Jesus. He wants you to live a life empowered by His Spirit. I pray you walk away with a revived heart, rekindled fire, and a zeal for your relationship with God. **And I pray you will walk away with an understanding of who you are in Christ and live The Kingdom Life He has set aside for you!**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	pg 2
Chapter 1- In the Beginning.....	pg 4
Chapter 2-Jesus and God's amazing love in the Old Testament.....	pg 11
Chapter 3- The blood covenant.....	pg 16
Chapter 4-Understanding how God sees you.....	pg25
Chapter 5- Jesus in the New Testament	pg 29
Chapter 6-Living the Kingdom Life.....	pg 34

Chapter 1

In the Beginning

In order to **really** understand what Jesus has done for us and the Kingdom Life God has in store for us, we have to go back to the very beginning. Understanding the beginning of mankind and earth will give us a firm foundation in knowing who we are in relation to God.

Why did God create us? After all, He did not need us for anything. He is the one and only, all powerful, all knowing, just and Holy God. Did He need us for companionship? Did He need us to love like we love a pet? Did He have a special plan that He needed our help with? NO!

Let's see what the Bible has to say about all of this. But before we dive into this, I just want to remind you of some things about God's word and who He is. Sometimes it is impossible for our mind to fully understand some things in God's Word and His plans as we do not have the ability to comprehend them, we just have to accept them as true. The Bible tells us that His plans are not our plans. In Isaiah 55:8-10, it says "My plans are not your plans nor are your ways my ways , says the Lord. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my plans than your plans. " And His Word tells us that His works and His Words are perfect , just, and Holy in EVERY way. In 2 Samuel 22:31 it says , "As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless.." AND in Psalms 19:7-10, it says " Yahweh's Word is perfect in every way: how it revives our souls! Yahweh's laws lead us to truth, and His ways change the simple into wise. Yahweh's teachings are right and make us joyful: His precepts are so pure! **Yahweh's commands challenge us to keep close to His heart!** The revelation-light of His Word makes my spirit shine radiant. Yahweh's decrees are trustworthy. The fear of Yahweh is pure, enduring forever. The rarest treasures of life are found in His truth. That's why God's Word is prized like others prize the finest gold. Sweeter than honey are His **living Words**- sweet words dripping from the honeycomb!" HALLELUJAH! Doesn't that just paint the perfect picture of how precious , sweet, and true God's Word is?

Even though we may not understand why God does or says something, it has to be accepted as just and true according to His own

promise in His Word. AND remember, the Word of God-the Holy Bible, IS God's word. It was written by men but EVERY word was inspired by God. In John 14:26, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will come and teach them and cause the disciples to remember all Jesus said. In 2Timothy 3:16-17 it says, "ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

So let's look at God from the beginning. In Genesis 1 it says that God made the Heavens and the earth and all living creatures. He made man in His image. Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;'. What does this mean when He said "in Our image" and "likeness". This is one of those things that I said earlier is hard for us to fully comprehend. There is only one God and yet he speaks as if there are several with Him. Here He is speaking about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All are God and yet all three are one. This is a very difficult thing to wrap your mind around. Theologians, pastors, and priests will all tell you they do not fully understand the concept. Yet many have come up with several analogies to try to describe this fact in layman's terms. Some have said it is like an egg; there is the shell, the yolk, and the white. All are separate, but all make up the egg. Another example is an analogy to the universe. The universe is made up of space, time, and matter. All three are separate and yet all are the universe. Also in each one of those there is another analogy. In space we have length, width, and height- all are separate but all are needed to create space. In time there is past, present, and future- yet all three make up time. In matter there are protons, electrons, and neutrons- but all three make up matter. Yes it is a difficult concept to wrap the human mind around. But God said it, so it has to be true (as we saw earlier His word is true). So, which one (Father, Spirit, or Son) can we pray to? We can talk to any one of them for help and guidance because all are God.

God the Father is from the beginning and Jesus spoke what He heard from the Father. Jesus the Son was also from the beginning and all things were created through Him. John 1:1-5 says "In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God.

He (Jesus) was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.” And John 1:14 says, “And The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Holy Spirit is God too. The Spirit was present in the beginning of creation. Genesis 1:2 says, “The earth was without form , and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Also the Holy Spirit is in us as believers. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.” Also, another example of the Holy Spirit being one of the Holy Trinity of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is in Acts 5 where Ananias tells a “lie to the Holy Spirit (vs 3)” . Then in verse 4 it says “ you have not lied to man but to God”. Then just a little later, Ananias’ wife Saphirra is asked in verse 9, why she has “ agreed (with her husband) to test the Spirit of the Lord?” So you see in these verses that the Spirit was lied to, but then it says he lied to God and they tested the Spirit of the Lord.

Anyway, we could go on and on listing scriptures supporting the fact that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all one and the same God, yet independent too. This fact is important to understand how God works and how we were created as mentioned in Genesis 1 and John 1. You must get this into your heart, so that later in this book you will understand how God is working in your life today and always.

So back to the question, why did God make you and me? Afterall we have seen he created the Heavens and the earth, all the stars, the waters and the lands, all living plants and animals, and he created us in His image. We have seen in His word that He is also all knowing and His word is True. So why do you think He who is so perfect created us?

Well for one thing, He created us to reflect His glory because He created us in His image. We will dive into exactly what His glory and what His image is as we dive deeply into things more in the pages to

come. You will see His glory in how He loves us and in His precepts. This will all be very evident in the chapters to come. I am so excited, I can't wait to share these with you, but let's finish here first.

He created us to have dominion over all the earth and to multiply- see Genesis 1:26-28. In Psalm 139:13-14 King David says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." We are wonderfully made by God. Another thing He has created us for is that He has good works for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

These are some of the scriptures indicating why God made us. Greg Laurie of Harvest church puts it very well when he wrote, "Our lives are not some meaningless creation made by a disinterested Creator. Even though God does not need us, He is still intensely interested in our lives. He deeply and tenderly loves us beyond comprehension- not because He has to (out of need), but because He **chooses** to (out of love)." That's it, we exist because God chose to create us. That really is all we need to know! It is the almighty, just, righteous, loving, perfect God's desire to create you and have a relationship with you. How blessed we all are indeed! Stop and think about that for just a minute and think about how that should shape how we should live our lives.

So we also saw above that God has created good works for us to do. Why? Well we also saw above that we were made in God's image, so we are a reflection of Him. And we know He is just, righteous, holy, true, and loving. So the works we were created for should reflect His loving kindness, truth, and righteousness period! Are you living your life this way? Stop and honestly think about whether you are reflecting the attributes of God in your life. If you asked your family, friends, and co-workers this question about yourself, how would they answer?

When I asked myself this question, I thought they would definitely say they do not see God in me- because many times I am an impatient, short tempered, selfish person who was a hypocritical Christian. Don't get me wrong, I am not Charles Manson or some bank robber. I go to church, have a good job, a great wife, and a great life. But I have drifted

into the typical American Christian who goes to church Sunday all Holy Ghost spirited, and Monday through Friday live not much differently than the typical non-Christian American. All caught up in the troubles of life and the pursuit of the American dream, forgetting about God until next Sunday. What happened? I slowly drifted away from meditating on God's word every day. Have you noticed that on the days you skip reading God's Word in the morning, your day goes way differently than the days you do read His Word. Those skipped days, I find filled with more anxiety, self-absorption, less compassion..... (you can add your own adjectives here). That's when I decided it was time to get back on track and dive into God's Word again- to rebuild that relationship and have the Holy Spirit revive my heart. I pray you would too- so the world could see the Church that Jesus Christ originally desired in His heart.

You know Satan will pull the wool over your eyes and tell you that you are ok when you drift away from God. But here are some scary thoughts. As mentioned in the introduction, God says if you are neither hot nor cold, He will vomit you out of His mouth. Think about this, what comes out of God's mouth? His Word comes out of His mouth- He spoke all of creation into being, He speaks His promises, He speaks healing, and He speaks truth. God's mouth is the release of His power. So if He says that He will spit you out of His mouth if you are Lukewarm that is a very scary thought. Are you hot for the Lord or just lukewarm ?

Also , listen to this scripture from Matthew 7:21- .”Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 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 I will declare to them, I never **knew** you: depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”. This I fearfully think is the condition of many who claim to be Christians today in America. They think that because they go to church, volunteer in church, teach Sunday School, and try to do good works they will be going to heaven. But many have missed the mark and missed the foundational principles of what God has done for them and who they are in Christ. A pastor I know once said that on judgment day, the most surprised people on the planet are going to be people in

the church. He said they know more about the chair they are sitting in than about God the creator of everything.

This book is not written to judge anybody but as a wake up call to us all- me included. Do you really know God and have a relationship with Him like you do your wife or good friend? Really think about this. Jesus said that His followers are obedient and love. Do you wake up in the morning and think first about the God who created you and the world? Do you talk to Him in prayer and read His Word? Do you love God with all your heart, soul and mind? Do you love others as yourself? If you answer yes to these, then great. But let me ask you a few more questions. Did you or do you tell lies to get out of trouble or out of a situation? Did you feed your ailing neighbor? Did you stop by the old widow's house to say hi and check on them? Did you give to the homeless person on the corner? Did you read your Bible today? Did you pray before your business meeting that God's will be done? Did you talk and judge your co-worker who is irritating and lazy? Did you condemn the murderer on the news today? Did you break the law today by speeding in your car? Did you give the finger to the driver who cut you off, or slow down for the tailgater? Did you pray for and love your enemy today?

What would God have wanted us to be able to say as the answers to these questions? You are probably saying, there is no way we can be perfect every day in every situation- only Jesus could. You are correct, but if our hearts are in right relation with God, we would be answering the questions the way God would want us to- yes I stopped at the widow's house, yes I prayed God's will be done, no I did not give the finger to the driver, no I did not get aggravated with the slow checkout person.....OR we could at least answer with a heart desiring to do good in God's eyes and with a heart desiring intimate relation with God all day, every day.

I am not judging or being self-righteous because I myself am so imperfect. I am just pointing out the shortcomings of American Christians today- me included. Which is why I wrote this book- to remind you and me that we need to think about where our relationship is with God right now and what we need to do to get it right. A forever in heaven as a victorious believer or a surprised eternal separation from

God in hell. Be sure where your heart is then go full blast in the direction God is calling you.

God has given us a Savior , a way to Him forever, in Jesus Christ. Really understanding this will give us a new outlook on how much God loves us and what He has done for us. In life to fully comprehend something, you must know all the facts and details about it. If I am going to be a mechanic, I will have to study all about engines and all the components in the engine and have some hands-on training. Otherwise I will not be able to repair anything on a car (and I will not be a mechanic, even though I may be called a mechanic). The same is true of being a Christians. If we are to **be** Christians, we need to understand everything about God and His Word (which is His plan for how we should live- it is like the book a mechanic would study). So let's get started and learn everything about Jesus our savior so that we can be sure of our salvation and live the Kingdom Life he has for us. It is a rewarding life filled with joy, hope and love.

We will dive in deep and look at what the Bible says about Jesus. He is the key to having a heart right with God, and Jesus is the designed plan God has for us. We will see this throughout the Bible from the creation (where we see Jesus was from the beginning) to His crucifixion and resurrection.

Chapter 2

Jesus in the Old Testament

Before we get into the life of Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible, it is important for us to discover that Jesus is mentioned throughout the Old Testament - thousands of years before He lived on earth. We already saw that He was in the beginning in the books of John and Genesis. But did you know that Jesus was in the plan from the beginning when man fell out of Grace when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden? Jesus is our way back into favor with God, to an eternal relationship in Heaven with Him. God loves us so much that he keeps giving us a way back to Him rather than shaking His hands and saying I give up on you. Hallelujah, thank you Jesus! Just think about it for a moment- God desires so much for us to succeed into a position where we are in Heaven with Him for eternity.

Some scholars have stated there are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus. It is important to understand this so that we know how God's plan was based on Jesus from the beginning. The fact that there are so many prophecies, it shows that this impossible plan is only possible if God did it. AND it shows just how much He loves us that He would take the impossible and make it possible just for us. To understand the magnitude of this revelation, a mathematics professor, Peter Stoner, did a statistical study on the possibility of just 8 of these 300 prophecies coming true. The study determined the probability for just 8 of the prophecies to come true would be 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000 (that's 1 in 10 quintillion-not million, not billion, not trillion, not quadrillion, but quintillion). To put it visually, if you took that many silver dollars and covered the entire state of Texas, it would be two feet deep. Then mark one of the coins and mix all the coins together and spread them back out. Then trying to find that one coin would have the same probability- basically impossible. Now think about the probability of all 300 prophecies being possible- the odds would exponentially decrease to zero.

So let's look at some of the prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. Micah 5:2 says "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one

who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Did you notice the last part of that verse-” from ancient times”. Just a confirmation that Jesus is from the beginning and was to be born in Bethlehem. And in 1 Chronicles 17 Nathan is speaking God’s word to David. He says in verse 11-14, “...when you (David) must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons: and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son: and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forever.” So we see here that God has established Jesus through the lineage of David as we see also in the New Testament in the books of Matthew and Luke. We also see that Jesus is the Son of God referred to here and His throne and mercy is established forever. Another prophecy that is fulfilled can be seen if you read all of Psalm 22. It shows the anguish Jesus goes through in His persecution and crucifixion just as it really happened. You should really read the whole psalm but here are a couple of verses: verse 1- “My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” Verse 6-8” But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag heads; He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him; for he delights in him!” We see in these verses a foreshadowing of the great persecution of Jesus and how, when He bore our sins on the cross, that He was totally alone and separated from the Father (because at that moment, Jesus was baring our sins and sin separates a person from God- see Isaiah 59:2). Then in verse 14-” I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet- I can count all my bones- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” Then in verse 22-” I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the Lord , praise him! All you offspring of

Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.” Boy this really paints a powerful picture of what actually happened to Jesus on the cross and the victory of Jesus- **and it was written over 600 years before Jesus walked the earth!** I really recommend you stop here and read the whole psalm (Psalm 22).

Other Old Testament verses that prophecy about Jesus: Ecclesiastes 12:11 speaks of ONE SHEPHERD giving the truth; Isaiah 53:5 says” But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed”. Lamentations 2:11 predicts the killing of the infants when Herod was seeking to kill Jesus as an infant. Hosea 11:1 predicts Jesus coming out of Egypt (which He did when Joseph and Mary were moving around as told by the angels of God). Jonah 1:17 shows a prophetic comparison of Jonah in the belly of the whale 3 days and three nights; just as Jesus was in the tomb 3 days and 3 nights. Zechariah 9:9 speaks of Jesus humbling coming on a donkey (just as was written when He entered into Jerusalem just before He was crucified)- also written about 600 years before it happened. And Malachi 3:1 tells of the coming of John the Baptist and of Jesus.

There are many, many more inferences and allusions mentioned in the Old Testament that depict pictures of many things during Jesus’ time on earth. There are too many to mention but if you look into it, you will be amazed.

Throughout the Old Testament, we also see that we have always had the freedom to choose how we live our life. And that , in turn, determines our destiny. But one thing is clear, we are a fallen species. Mankind has always had the freedom to choose right and wrong from the beginning of time with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Yet once they ate of the tree of good and evil, mankind has been born with a sinful nature (read Romans 5 - it clearly sums it all up in a clear and concise manner). The ancient Israelites and nations of the world have always drifted away from God and started worshiping other gods or idols (statues, money, jewels, land, herds, people or today the list might be new age religions, cruises, boats, fancy cars , bigger houses,

promotions at work, money, approval of others....). The Israelites turned away from God as He led them out of Egypt. It was not very long and they doubted His promise and built the golden calf statue. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah became so immoral because they turned from the ways of God- just as America is turning away today and allowing sinful practices to be accepted as being tolerant and ok. Time after time we humans have turned away from the ways of God to pursue our own desires. It is very easy for the devil to distract us and for us to drift away. And before you know it, you don't even recognize where you are any more. And that is the devil's plan! He wants to separate you from God and destroy the good works God has for you! 1 Peter 5:8 says," Be sober, be vigilant, because **your adversary the devil** walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour".

So we see from the fall of Adam to today, we have always drifted away from God. But what happens each and every time? God loves us so much that He gives us a way out. But what is the way? Every circumstance in the Bible, God says He will pour out His wrath on sin. **BUT**, in every circumstance, He says if we turn from our sinful ways and REPENT, then He will show His mercy and forgiveness to us.

God would be just in pouring His wrath out on us for our sinful deeds. But Hallelujah, His desire is not to punish and destroy us but to have relation with us so much, that He gives us a way out and back to Him every time. Even Sodom and Gomorrah which were so VERY wicked were given a chance. This city was full of wickedness and immorality. So much so that the men of the city pushed into Lot's door to get to the two male visitors (angels sent from God). They were like cats in heat trying to have sexual relations with them. Have you ever seen and heard a cat in heat? We had a female cat when I was a teenager. My older sister came home for Christmas with her two unfixed male cats. One night I heard this terrible, loud and screechy meow and moaning. Then there was a big thud. It kept repeating over and over. I went to check on it. My sister's male cat was in heat and it was running down our long hallway and running into the closed door of my parents bedroom where our female cat was being protected. It was funny. But when I think back on it, this male cat had an uncontrollable lust for our female cat. This uncontrollable lust was the same as the men of Sodom who were trying to force their way onto the men from

God. They were pushing in the door trying to have sexual relations with them. This is how bad the immorality of the city was- it was considered okay in their eyes and accepted as normal by the society as can be seen because so many men of the city were in this mob. Does it sound familiar to you in America, and the world today? In Acts 1:24-28 says” Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions, For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.....” Leviticus 18:22 calls it an abomination in the eyes of God. This was the state of Sodom. Yet God did give them a chance as Abram asked if there were 50 honest men, would God spare the city. God said yes. And Abram asked again and again until it got down to 10 people and God said yes He would spare the city. God desires us to live righteously according to His Word, He desires us to love Him, and He always loves us, even when we drift away. He loves us so much that He always gives us a way back. He also says we can avoid them by keeping His Word (Lev 18:30).

Chapter 3

The Blood Covenant

So we just saw that we are of a sinful nature, yet God loves us and gives us a way back. How? Well to understand what God has done for us through Jesus, **it is very important that we understand the foundation and importance of blood and the blood covenant.**

In the old testament, a blood offering was made to make peace with God (Lev 17). This offering was so important TO GOD that He said if any man did not make the offering at the temple door, he would be cut off from the tribe. Why is blood so important to God? His Word says in Leviticus 17:11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” He goes on to say “Its (living creatures) blood sustains its life.

So God, who created all life, is all knowing, says that all living creatures have blood and it is the source of their life. And God’s creation is important to Him since He made it, right? So if life is important to Him, and blood is the source of life, then it makes sense that blood is very precious to God, right?

So let’s look at what a blood covenant is. In the old Testament, God uses blood in a covenant where He promises to cover up the shortcomings of the people. There is a blood offering by the people at the door of the tabernacle as we saw earlier- it was for peace with God. There was a blood offering for the sins of the nations of Israel at the altar of the Holy Tabernacle, that was performed by the priests. These were commands by God himself. So if it is from God, it must be true, holy, pure and we must do what God commands us to do.

Let’s try to understand a blood covenant more fully by looking at it from the perspective of the ancient Hebrew civilizations. There are several descriptions of blood covenants being entered into by two parties back then. It was like the ultimate binding contract. In fact it was so binding and important to keep the contract, that if you didn’t, you would lose EVERYTHING you owned, including your reputation and life.

In researching this, I found some outlines for ancient blood covenants used all over the middle during Biblical times. Here is an outline of a typical blood covenant:

1)The two people would exchange robes which represented the person himself in Hebrew culture. So by offering your clothes to another, it represents offering yourself to them.

2)Then they take off their belts (or girdle)which would hold their knife or sword and offer them to each other. This symbolized offering your protection to the other party. So that if somebody attacked you, then the other person would stand up for you too and they would have to fight them too.

3) Then an animal was killed and cut in two right down the middle. The two halves are laid opposite of each other and the blood allowed to trickle down together to a stream between them. This symbolizes that if one of them breaks the covenant, that they too should be ripped in half.

4)Then the two people would cut their palm or wrist and clasp each other's hand and mingle their blood which represented them becoming one in this covenant.

5)Then they might exchange names, taking part of each other's names into their own name in order to sow a deep, almost familial, unity.

6) Then they might make a scar or mark on them so that people would see outwardly that they are in a covenant together and if you mess with one party , you mess with both.

7)Both parties would then state the terms of the contract before a witness. They would list all their assets and liabilities as each takes on all of these assets and liabilities together. You can see there is no messing around with this contract- you are all in with the other person!

8) Then they would eat a meal to memorialize their covenant. They would break bread and feed it to each other and say, "this is my body I give to you". Then they would drink wine and say this symbolizes my blood which is now part of your blood.

9) Then they would plant a tree or make a tel to memorialize the covenant and sprinkle it with the blood of the animal that was offered up earlier.

These were typical steps in a serious blood covenant and it was well known amongst the peoples of the Middle East back then. Some blood covenants in the Bible pretty much follow this outline- like the covenant between David and Jonathan (see 1 Samuel 17 and 18 ; also if you would like to look into this more, Adrian Rogers has a very good sermon on it at Love Worth Finding.com). Other blood covenants tell of only parts of the steps being used because the covenant was so well known and used.

So let's look at the blood covenant God had with Abram because this is basically a prelude to the blood covenant with Jesus (which we will get into later in the chapter). Without this covenant, Abram would have been childless and his descendants would not have included Jesus. We must understand from this covenant with Abram, that God is not only blessing the Jewish nations but ALL peoples forever.

So let's think about life during the time of Abram. People were very nomadic and would travel about from place to place for trade. These people had to be self-sufficient and independent, basically living life on their own reliance. There were no ambulances to call if you got sick, there was no sheriff to call if somebody robbed you, there was no court in the desert to take your neighbor to sue him if he cheated you, etc. You were basically on your own, you had to figure things out on your own. So when God came to Abram with a promise of protection and blessings, promises of an offspring and descendants numbering as the number of stars, that must have been very special to him. He had the almighty and faithful God on his team to protect and provide for him.

The promise starts in Genesis 15 where right off the bat in verse 1, God promises Abram protection and blessings. God says to Abram, "I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward". Also, Abram and Sarai, his wife, had no children of their own, so they had no heir to Abram's inheritance. God tells Abram he will have an heir from his loins and Sarai's womb. AND God tells him in verse 5, "Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them" And He said to him, " So shall your descendants be". Could you imagine God coming to you with a promise like that? How awesome that would be- yet you will see in a little while, that God has made a similar promise to you. And Abram

believed the promise and accounted it to him for righteousness (verse 6).

Then starting in verse 9, God makes a blood covenant with Abram. The Bible says, “ So He said to him, “Bring Me a 3 year old heifer, a 3 year old female goat, a 3 year old ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He (God) said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not complete”. And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates-the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites,the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

So we see a blood covenant between God and Abram. It is a beautiful picture indeed. God the Father sends Abram to gather up these animals for a covenant that God wants to do with Abram. Abram must have been so excited, happy, jubilant, and nervous all at the same time. We do not know why God chose these specific animals and ages, but God wanted them for some reason is all we know now. BUT that being said, this covenant really is a one sided covenant between them. God is making a commitment to Abram, all Abram has to do is to believe it and receive it. And how beautiful it is, God takes Abram and gently puts him to sleep. But it also says horror and great darkness fell upon him. What is this horror and darkness? I believe it is the fear and trembling that comes from being in the presence of God. In Job 4:12-17 it says, “Now a word was brought to me stealthily, and my ear received a

whisper of it. Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, Dread came upon me, and trembling, and made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed by my face; the hair of my flesh bristled up. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; a form was before my eyes; There was silence, then I heard a voice: Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?" Every person in the Bible that has had an experience or vision with God has trembled in fearful reverence to Him. I think this "horror" experienced by Abram and Job was just such a thing. Moses, Paul and many other heroes in the Bible all trembled before the Lord. So God, probably knowing this emotion would arise, put Abram in a deep sleep like a father or mother would do gently rocking and putting their baby to sleep. Also, note that God walks between the carcasses alone. Why? Because it is His promise to mankind through Abram and God knows man could not keep such a covenant either- a sign of great love for us.

Later in verse 17, God again speaks of His covenant with Abram and God renames Abram, Abraham. A word study of these two names is really interesting. Abram means exalted father. But Abraham means father of a multitude. Also of note is Sarai, Abram's wife, is renamed Sarah. The two names are fairly similar but the one difference is that Sarah means princess. So we see in these name changes, that they have taken on a new name, a name given them by God (just as in the outline of a blood covenant stated above).

Recapping this blood covenant with God, we have the blood of the animals, the exchanging of names, promises of the contract, a promise from God to protect Abraham and his descendants, both parties entering into agreement to honor the contract (God with His promises and Abraham with his faith), and Abraham is scarred or marked in his heart with the magnitude of the entire event.

And the importance of this event is that it tells of his descendant who will bless the whole world- Jesus. In Genesis 12:3, God's Word says "And in you (Abram) all the families of the earth shall be blessed". Also in the previous scriptures God tells Abram that his descendants will be as the number of stars and another time God tells him his descendants will be numbered as the particles of dust. Of course God is talking about the believers in Jesus - Jesus who is also Abraham's

singular seed. Galatians 3:16 says, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.” These scriptures show us that we all are blessed and accounted as Abraham's offspring because Jesus came through Abraham's lineage. And Jesus is God's promised covenant to us all. So through God's promise to provide Abraham a child, an heir, God set the ball rolling for Him to give the final blood covenant with us through Jesus.

So why did Jesus have to die such a horrible death on the cross? Why does God not just do some spectacular event for all to see His power and presence? Think about this for a minute and see if you can come up with the answer. God has done such works throughout the Bible- parting the waters when the Jews fled Egypt, pillar of fire and smoke in the desert, manna for food given to the Jews in the desert, lepers cleansed and restored, blind made to see, even the dead raised from the grave. Yet man quickly forgot these signs and turned away from God back to his doubt and disbelief every time.

So what did you come up with for why Jesus had to die on the cross? I believe we see the answer in the scriptures we have just studied so far. First He says it is important to Him, so it is so. Second, due to God's strong statements about blood as the life source, when He includes it in a covenant, then that covenant is the strongest, most binding covenant there is (as we saw in the examples above).

In the Old Testament, there were blood sacrifices for atonement of sins. Again in Leviticus 17:11 God speaks to Moses , “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by life.” The word ‘atonement’ here in Hebrew is ‘kaphar’ which has the idea of covering but not taking away. This explains why the people had to continually give sacrifices for sins, peace offerings, etc. Just a side note here about blood offerings for sins. We saw how God places extreme importance on the value of blood since it is the life source. So this would indicate the importance of repentance of sin and how distasteful sin really is to God. Think about that for a moment- our sin is so disgusting to God that it took the blood sacrifice of animals to cover it up in the Old Testament. **BUT THE ULTIMATE BLOOD SACRIFICE FROM GOD took away our sin penalty, once and for all.** It

did not just cover it up, but it took it away forever. Hebrews 10:10-12 says, “ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God”. HALLELUJAH!!!

We now see how this final and most glorious blood covenant with God was God’s plan all along (remember the Old Testament references to Jesus from chapter 1). And if you breakdown the life and ministry of Jesus you can clearly find the steps of the blood covenant.

Step 1- OFFERING ONESELF TO THE OTHER: Jesus willfully offers himself for us by sharing God’s Word and going to the cross to pay for our sins. John 19:17 says,” And bearing His own cross, He went out to the place called the place of the skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.”

Step 2- OFFERING ONES WEAPON / PROTECTION TO ONE ANOTHER: Jesus gave us His belt and sword for protection. The Bible says that the Word of God is like a two edged sword. Hebrews 4:12 says, “ For the Word of God **is** living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” And Jesus brought us God’s Word which He says he heard from God the Father.

Step 3 BLOOD OFFERING OF A SACRIFICE: -Jesus was the blood sacrifice and by His stripes we are healed. In Matthew 26:28 Jesus says, “ For this is my blood **of the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Step 4 BLOOD MINGLING TO BECOME ONE WITH THE OTHER: - Jesus became one with us and us with Him. Ephesians 3:17 says” That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in Love”. And Galations 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Step 5 EXCHANGING NAMES: - We exchanged names by becoming heirs to become sons of God- to be part of God’s family in heaven through Jesus. Romans 8:17 says, “ Now if we are children, then

we are heirs- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”

Step 6 MAKE A SCAR OR IDENTIFYING MARK TO LET OTHERS KNOW ABOUT THE COVENANT: - to have a scar or outward evidence of the covenant. We have that through baptism where we make an outward statement of our profession of faith in Jesus. Colossians 2:12 says, ..”having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through your faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” And Acts 2:38 says, Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Step 7 MAKE TERMS OF COVENANT BEFORE A WITNESS- Jesus gave us terms of the covenant by giving us God’s word that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). Also all that is His is ours and all that is ours is His- He gave Himself to and for us and we are commanded to give ourselves to Him. The Holy Spirit and His works are witness to Him as well. In John 15:26-27 and 16:1 , the Bible says, “ But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. These things I speak to you so that you should not be made to stumble”.

Step 8 EAT A MEMORIAL MEAL: - eating the memorial meal which is the last supper and Communion. Matthew 26:26-29 says, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body. Then He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of **the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” Hallelujah we will have communion with Jesus in heaven- ISN’T THAT GOING TO BE WONDERFUL?!!

Step 9- PLANT A MEMORIAL TREE AS MEMORIAL TO THE COVENANT AND SPRINKLE WITH THE BLOOD: the two parties make a memorial. We use the ichthys, or fish symbol, and the cross as memorial symbols of our belief in the covenant with God through Jesus. But the Bible , in Acts 5:30 says that “The God of our fathers raised up

Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.” AND in Galatians 3:13 it says, “ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” The tree is the cross which would have been made out of logs from a tree and that is the memorial tree- the cross reminds us of what Jesus did for us.

So we see that the entire ministry of Jesus fulfills these 9 steps of a blood covenant. Again, we see the importance of this covenant and that it was God’s plan all along. And, similar to God’s blood covenant with Abraham, it is God who makes the covenant with us and walks the so-called blood trail - all we have to do is believe in our heart that it is true and accept the gift of His promise! He carries the burden of fulfilling the promises, our part is easy.

Think about this for a little bit. Think about the magnitude of all of this: God has created us in His image to reflect Him and to be in relationship with Him. He has continually given us a way back to Him throughout history. He has always had Jesus in this great and detailed plan of His for our salvation (because He wants to be with us). He wanted this promise to be so bold and binding that He did it through a blood covenant with Jesus.

Chapter 4

Understanding How God Sees you

The foundation of any relationship is based on an understanding of each party involved and their viewpoints about the relationship and the boundaries and expectations of the relationship. So for you to fully understand God and His promises to you, it is important to first understand how God sees you and to reflect on who you are in Christ. Then we can look at the expectations in the relationship too.

This foundation of your relationship with God has many aspects to it. And once you really take the time to think about them, I believe you will deepen that relationship and rekindle a fire for God.

First, you must fully understand how much God loves you. We have all heard that God is love and that He loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”, John 3:16. But Christians have heard it so many times that the meaning has lost its power in their spirit. It's like blah, blah, blah- yes I have heard that many times. It's like when you tell your teenager to be careful when they go and take the family car to go to the movies. After about the 6th or 7th time, they sarcastically say “okaaaay Mom (or Dad), I know, I know. I'll be careful.” You honestly mean what you say, but your ‘know it all’ teenager only hears blah blah blah- not that what you are really saying is that you love them so much and do not want anything to happen to them. The same is true of God- when He tells you He loves you, He really really really means it! So stop and listen to what God is saying to you- meditate on what He is saying and why. If you do this, your life will change for the better.

So going back to the fact that God loves you- He really does! He gave His Son for you as payment for your sins. Think about this scenario, would you give your child to go to prison for the crimes of another person that you do not know? Because that is basically what God did- but He knows you. In Romans 5:8 God's Word says, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were **still** sinners, Christ died for us.” So think about that in this analogy; your neighbor who is a mean, foul mouthed drunkard who is always yelling at you for

no reason, steals your brand new \$2000 electric bike out of your garage. And you go over to his house, knock on the door and tell him that you love him and want to pay off his home mortgage and have him come to dinner at your house every night for the rest of his life. Would that be your reaction? Well that is the reaction God has towards us- we were still sinning but He wants to spend forever in a relationship with us so much so, that He paid our 'sin debt' because we could not. It is hard to wrap your mind around that kind of love, but that is the love that God shows to us. So know that you are loved very very much by God- that is the first characteristic in our relationship with Him.

Secondly, know that you can trust God fully in everything that He says and does. Remember in Chapter 1 we saw that God's ways are perfect (2 Samuel 22:31) and God is trustworthy (Psalms 19:7-10). Also in Deuteronomy 32:4, God's Word says, "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He". And "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.", Hebrews 10:23. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of examples in the Bible where God is faithful and trustworthy to His promises. Do you understand this? That every promise God has ever made, He has stood by it and it is true. Therefore, every time God says something to you, you can take that promise to the bank and count it in the deposit. Like when He says He loves you and nothing can separate you from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

Thirdly, God sees you as a masterpiece, not some inferior creation as the world will tell you. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Let's look at this verse more deeply. "For we are His workmanship"- everything God creates is perfect because He is a perfect God who makes no mistakes. Like when Leonardo DaVinci or Michaelangelo- their works were masterpieces. You are a masterpiece created by the greatest creator ever! Then the verse goes on to say that we are created for good works that God created just for you before you ever were. God has a purpose for you if you follow Him. Only He knows what those works are and He reveals them to you when you are in relationship with Him. The works may not be considered grand in the eyes of people, but whatever they

are, they are great in the eyes of God because He made them for you. The work might just be a smile and a hello to a cashier at the grocery store, or taking a meal to a neighbor in need physically or spiritually, or it could be sharing what God's word said to you in your devotion today. Whatever the work, remember God created you for it and it for you!

Fourth, God sees us as co-heirs with Jesus to the Kingdom of Heaven. God's Word says so in Romans 8:17 we saw above- "Now if we are children, then we are heirs; heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory." So God sees you as family, and family is seen differently from just friends. God does not allow sin into heaven, so how can we go to heaven if we still mess up from time to time. Well first our hearts have to be in the right place in relation to Him. We have to truly believe in our hearts God's promise of salvation. The promise that if we believe that Jesus paid for the price of our sins and was raised from the dead, then we will be saved (Romans 10:9). When we do so and meditate on it deeply, we have the promise of being saved and being justified. Justification is the act by which God moves a believer from a state of sin to a state of grace and mercy (salvation). Then we become sanctified as well. Sanctification is when God sets you apart (because of your faith) for a special purpose that is holy and sacred. It is a process of becoming more like Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." And Acts 26:18 says, "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me". We still are not perfect, but God (through the Spirit) comes to live in your heart. Ephesians 3:17 says, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love.." Jesus Christ dwells in our spirit. He is the source of our lives." So if God is in your heart, He gives you the power to overcome sinful ways and to live a righteous life. Righteousness is the state of being morally correct and justifiable which is how God now sees us when we are saved. Hallelujah! 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our sake He made Him to be sin who

knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” Wow! Stop and think about all of this for a minute.

We once were sinners saved by grace, but now we are the children of God, heirs to His kingdom in heaven. God has made us whole-justified, sanctified, and righteous which is something we can not do on our own. Only by faith in God’s covenant through Jesus can this happen and it makes us heirs to His kingdom. So look at yourself as God views you- loved, in grace, set apart for special things, and clean!

Fifth, is a question to you, what is your role in the relationship? We saw that earlier in Chapter 3, we are to love God with all our being and to love others as yourself. This can be difficult sometimes as people today live very busy lives. But if we believe what we just read in the first four characteristics of our relationship with God, should we not make an effort to put Him at the top of our priority list? Sometimes I worry about that in my relationship with Him (yes, I know worry is a sin). I often wake up and the first thing I think of is the busy day ahead. Instead I should desire to say good morning to God through prayer and reading His Word. Every relationship takes effort, and the more you desire to be in a particular relationship with somebody, the less it is like work. You have an overwhelming aspiration to be with that person in every way-physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The desire for this with God comes from the fact that He loves you, He is trustworthy and faithful, He is perfect in every way, He desires good for you, and He created you perfectly! So strive to spend time in the Word every day, that is the only way to know Him and live a life filled with His promises- which we are going to look at in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Jesus in the New Testament

So just to recap, we have seen that Jesus was in the plan for us from the beginning of time. We have also seen that God has made an unbreakable promise to save us from our sins and an eternal anguish in hell, to an eternity in heaven with Him where there will be no more tears and we will worship with great joy forever! This promise that we have through Jesus can never be changed- it is written in blood. And God sees us today as we will be in heaven- justified, righteous, and sanctified!

Now let's look into the details of this covenant with God. Let's look at God's promises and the great love He has for us. This will allow us to look at His purpose and the life He has in store for you and me which will lead us to live a Kingdom Life here on earth.

First, God loves us so very very very much! The God who created everything, who is so wise and true, who is so good, who is so just, who hates sin , LOVES us with all our baggage! Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were **still** sinners, Christ died for us." Thank you Jesus!!! For we do not deserve God's love but He **chooses** to love us anyway! Think about that for a minute.

So we have salvation through Jesus. John 3:16 is a very well known verse. It says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." So is that all we have to do for salvation , just believe in Jesus and God's promise? Well sort of. Just believing doesn't do it. Even the demons believed and knew that Jesus was the Son of God. In Mark 1:23-24, Jesus was teaching in a synagogue and a man with an unclean spirit was there. The unclean spirit said to Jesus, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are- the Holy One of God!" Also satan knows who Jesus is and he believes it. And remember in the beginning of this book, we saw that Jesus said to the people that he did not know them (even though they said they believed and cast out demons and did works in Jesus' name). So what else must be done to be saved other

than believe? Well nothing. But that contradicts what I just said earlier that there is something else other than just believing that we must do. Well really the issue is that it must be in the heart and the spirit that we believe **and accept the free gift**. If you believe with all your heart and believe in faith that Jesus saves and you accept that, then you are saved. Are you for sure saved? Take a moment and think about all you have read and what you truly believe in your heart. When we truly believe, we turn from our old sinful ways and are raised to a new Christ like nature. This repentance automatically comes from our faith in Jesus. It creates a desire for us to live differently in a way pleasing to God.

Jesus makes many comments in scripture about His followers, those who believe. He describes them in the scripture. In John 14:23 it says, “Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” In John 17: Jesus says “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” God desires you to know Him- how do you do that? By reading His word because His Word is God (see John 1:1-4). Matthew 16:24-25 says” Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” So if you truly believe, then you will have a desire to follow Jesus. And this is seen when we give up our own personal desires and obediently follow God’s will. For instance, if you make a mistake, as a follower of Christ, you will own up to it because you wish to glorify God because God desires honesty. You will tell the truth no matter the consequences to you. Jesus also said in John 13:35, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” That is one of His two commands that He left with us- “you shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. And with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second **is like unto it**, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang

all the law and prophets.”- Matthew 22:37-40. We have all heard these over and over but do we truly understand and live them?

After all that God has done for us, to give us forgiveness and to die for us to have forgiveness even while we were still sinners, should we not live our lives thanking Him? We saw at the beginning of the book that God’s Word is true- if He said it, you can believe it. Sometimes we get complacent and take all these scriptures and God’s promises for granted- I know I do. So sometimes I have to stop and remember what He has done for me. When we do, and when we spend time in His Word, we are reminded of His love for us. God’s Word is so beautiful, it gives such peace to the soul. It contains so many jewels about how to live life, that if we just stuck to His instruction, we would have paradise here on earth. Anyway, back to His two commands. When we truly believe John 3:16 in our hearts, we will want to live a life where love rules and shines brightly- that is how you know you are a true believer in Christ. In the two commands He says to love God with all of your being. And did you notice that He said, the second is “like unto the first”? That means loving one another is like loving God- it is a reflection of God’s love so it is very important for us to do so. It is like unto loving God.

So let’s list some of God’s promises that we can count on throughout the day to help us focus on how much God loves us so that we can show Him how much we love Him:

1) **God promises a life with peace:** John 16:33 says, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Romans 14:17 says, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit.”

2) **God promises a life of hope:** Romans 15:4 says, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”

Proverbs 23:18 says, “There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”

3) **Jesus said He will be with us always:** Matthew 28:20 says, “.....and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,”

Amen.” John 14:6 says, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper; to be with you forever.”

4) God will give you wisdom for every situation:

Psalm 111:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.” James 1:5 says, “ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

5) God will help you through troubles: Romans 8:28

says “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” James 1:12 says, “ Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

6) God will meet your needs: Philippians 4:19 says,

“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Matthew 6:27-34 says, “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, o you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat? Or ‘What shall we drink? ‘ or ‘ What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (the

Words of Jesus)

7) God promises us forgiveness when we mess up:

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

8) God will prepare a place for you in Heaven:

John 14:3 says, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, you may be also.” And heaven will be full of joy, peace, no more tears, and such a beautiful place with streets of gold (see Revelation 7:15-17 and 21:9-11).

These are just some of the many promises from God to us. We can stand firm in knowing they are true because His Word is true! And there is a promise and instruction for every situation we come across in life. The answer to any situation, issue, problem, or need can be found between Genesis and Revelation.

Chapter 6

The Kingdom Life

So what have we learned? We learned that the Bible foretells Jesus in God's plan from the beginning. We have learned that the blood covenant with God is unbreakable and all binding. We have learned that we are made justified, sanctified, and righteous in God's eyes through faith in Jesus and what He has done for us. We have learned that God loves us VERY much, He has made an everlasting covenant to forgive us and be heirs of heaven, He provides for us, He has cleansed us and made us whole, He promises peace and hope, He promises to help us through trials and temptations, He has promised us wisdom and understanding, He promises to meet our needs, and He promises to prepare a place for us in Heaven.

Now what? Will you live your life differently knowing all of this? Will you spend time with God first thing every day? Will you pray and talk to God throughout your busy day- asking for guidance, wisdom, blessing? Will you live a life that will bless God with your thoughts and actions? Will you live your life basing it on the promises of God?

It is easy to ask these questions and I am sure we all would like to answer these questions in favor of living like God desires. But the reality of it, is that we are weak and our faith is very weak according to Jesus. He said if our faith was but of a mustard seed (the smallest seed), we could literally move mountains. So the only way that I can see to answer these questions as 'yes I will' is to spend time reading God's Word every day for that is where the power of God is. The power to overcome the attacks and lies of the devil and the power to live a Spirit filled life for Christ. Letting God's Word and His Spirit be absorbed into every fiber of your being and into every aspect of your life. If you do you will have a Kingdom Life- a life that strives to be like Jesus and is pleasing to God. So become a 'Jesus Freak'- it is ok! Afterall, that is what God desires so it can only be good to live this way!