

The Angels In Heaven Rejoice!

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The Angels in Heaven Rejoice!

Introduction

Welcome to God's Family!

Welcome to the Family! Did you know that when a person accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord, all the angels of heaven are throwing a party right now in honor of YOU? It's true! The Bible, God's Word, says that there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).

When you ask Jesus to forgive your sins, come into your heart, and be the Lord of your life, you become a "child of God," part of the family of God...a Christian"

Christianity is not just another religion. Christianity is a personal relationship with a *living* God! God is real. He is alive, and He loves you very much.

Because He loves and knows you, He wants *you* to know and love *Him*. That's why He has given you the Bible...to help you develop a relationship with Him. For this reason, the Bible is the most important Book you will ever read.

As God's personal Word to *YOU*, you will discover that the Bible is full of rich, wonderful truths to help you live successfully in this life and in the life to come. I encourage you to read for yourself what the Bible has to say to you. As you read God's Word and your relationship with Him grows stronger, your understanding of Him and His Word will also grow.

I have written *The Angels in Heaven Rejoice!* as a simple explanation of what it means to be a Christian. This is basically a guidebook to help you learn and understand how to live as a Christian. In it, I share with you some of the important building blocks of your new faith and the awesome privileges that have come with your decision to follow Christ.

I pray that *The Angels in Heaven Rejoice!* equips you with practical insights for developing a personal relationship with God as you choose to walk through the rest of your life with Him.

“We Are Here for You!”

Chapter One

The Great Exchange

God loves you so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to Earth in the form of a man to pay the penalty for the sins and disobedience of the entire world.

He offers us a gift, the opportunity to make a “Great Exchange.” God offers to exchange our sinfulness for His holiness, to exchange our sickness for His healing, to exchange our eternal death for His eternal life. This Great Exchange is a free gift He offers to every person.

When God created mankind in His own image, He made us perfect. He created us to have a relationship and perfect fellowship with Him.

God never intended for us to get sick. He never intended for us to sin. He never intended for us to die. But something happened that changed all that. Simply, the first man and woman He ever created, Adam and Eve, made a choice to disobey God.

You know from your own life experiences that there are always consequences to your actions, your choices, and your decisions. And the consequences of Adam and Eve’s decision to disobey God brought sin, sickness, and death into the world. The Bible says that the wages (the reward, the compensation) for sin is *death* (Romans 6:23).

Without God, We Are Without Hope!

Because Adam and Eve decided to disobey God, all of us are separated from Him. And their decision condemns us all to spiritual and eternal death.

The Bible teaches that each one of us is separated from God by our own stubbornness and sin, and that because of this, we truly are without hope and without God. We deserve to suffer eternal death as the punishment for our

sinfulness.

Yet, despite what we deserve, God loves us so much that He made a plan to bring us back into fellowship and restore our relationship with Him. The plan is simple: God sent His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, to earth as a man to be punished for our sins in our place.

Jesus came as a baby born to a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. He lived a sinless life and then died a torturous death by being nailed to a cross and allowed to hang there until He died. While Jesus was on the cross, the sins of the whole world were on Him, and God in His holiness had to turn away from Him as He was crucified. But then wonderfully, miraculously, God raised Jesus from the dead after He had been buried for three days!

When you believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He was punished for your sins in your place; when you believe that God raised Him from the dead; when you accept Jesus as your Savior and make Him the Lord of your life; and when you choose to walk in obedience to God and His Word, then you receive the right to spend a glorious eternity in heaven with Him!

You exchange your will for His. You exchange eternal condemnation without Him for eternity in heaven with Him. You exchange a life of fear, anxiety, and worry for a life filled with His peace beyond our human ability to understand (Philippians 4:7).

Paying the Ransom

If a dearly loved child were to be kidnapped, the desperate parents would pay any price asked by the kidnapper to free their stolen child. They pay a "ransom," which is a payment made in order to free something precious that has been stolen from them.

Well, as far as God is concerned, we are His creation and we have been kidnapped! We are victims of His enemy, Satan, who has stolen and intends to

hold us as his captives, bound by the chains of our own sin. We can't set ourselves free, and we can't pay the ransom. We are completely helpless, trapped by Satan and our own sinful natures!

God could have left us in His enemy's hands. He could have been content to just create us and then leave us alone to fend for ourselves. But He so desires to have a close relationship with us that He sent His Son to set us free. This is what distinguishes us from the animals He created. He doesn't just want us to be His *creatures*...He wants us to be His ***Children***.

The good news is that Jesus Christ, God's Son, paid the price for our freedom with His own blood so that we could be God's children. By His death on the cross Jesus paid the ransom for your life and mine. Even though our sin condemns us, He died in our place to set us free and satisfy the sentence of eternal death that we deserve. When we accept Him as our Savior and Lord, we are ransomed and set free from our sins and from Satan's chains!

Get Out Of Jail Free!

Imagine you are locked in prison, convicted of crimes you are guilty of committing. You have been sentenced to death and are waiting on death row for your execution. Suddenly, you learn that someone has offered to take your place on death row and to be executed in your place.

Would you choose to stay behind bars and await execution? Of course not! You would be thrilled to be set free! You would go running out of that prison and never look back!

Well, this is what happens when you become a Christian. Even though you are on "death row" awaiting the execution you deserve, Jesus offers you a "Get Out of Jail Free" card! You can escape the prison of your sins and never look back, except to thank the One who has delivered you from eternal death!

There's a chorus that says, "We had a debt we could not pay; He paid a debt

He did not owe.” We can’t pay the price to redeem ourselves because God doesn’t recognize any of our efforts to remove our own sin. Why? Because as the book of Isaiah says, *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment”* (64:6).

The word “righteous” means having “right standing” before God. None of us is righteous on our own. We cannot stand before God and defend, excuse, or justify our sinful behaviors and thoughts. But God’s Word declares, *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (II Corinthians 5:21).

The Simplicity of the Gospel

The story of the Gospel is simple. It’s admitting that you need a relationship with the God who made you. It’s accepting God’s judgment that you are guilty of sin as charged. It’s facing the truth that you are helpless to save yourself or set yourself free from your sins.

It’s acknowledging that God’s solution to your sinfulness is the ONLY answer: His Son, Jesus Christ. It’s recognizing that when you invite Him to come into your life, forgive your sins, and be the Lord of your life, your sins and God’s sentence of death are transferred from you to Christ. And in this Great Exchange, you transfer your trust from your ability to save yourself to trusting Christ *alone*.

When you invite Christ to be the Lord of your life, you are inviting Him to have authority over *every* area of your life. By exchanging His righteousness for your sin, you inherit His salvation. “Salvation” means to be set free, to be delivered, protected, healed, and made whole from sin, sickness, and death.

Have You Made the Great Exchange?

Perhaps you’ve already made the most important decision of your entire life...the decision to invite Jesus Christ into your life...to forgive your sins...and to be the Savior and Master of your life.

On the other hand, if you haven't received God's free gift of salvation....if you haven't invited Him to be your Lord...if you haven't made this great exchange with God, you can!

How? It's simple. The Bible says, *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

You see, it's not your way or my way. It must be God's way. Jesus says, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me"* (John 14:6).

Choose Whom You Will Serve

The Bible says that we can't even come to Jesus unless God, our Heavenly Father, helps us to come to Him (John 6:44, 45-65). That pull you may be feeling in your heart right now, that desire to fill the emptiness in your life, is God's Holy Spirit drawing you to Jesus Christ.

God loves you so much! He has so many wonderful blessings, promises, and gifts He wants to share with you. He has chosen you to be a part of His family forever. But you must choose *Him*. He will not make up your mind for you, nor will He force Himself on you. If there were 100 steps between you and God, He would take 99, but He would leave that last step to you.

He has given you a free will so that you can make your own choices. You must choose whom you will serve...yourself or God. Will you ask Jesus to be your Lord? Will you make the decision today, right now, to give Him authority over *every* area of your life? When you choose God and His Son, then you will be able to experience His Power, Presence, and Peace in your life.

The Greatest Miracle

If you would like to experience the greatest miracle in all the world...the miracle of salvation...you can right now. Simply invite Jesus to come into your life and forgive you for all of your sins. Ask Him to wipe away your past and be the Lord and Master of your life. Then choose to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. It's that simple.

Would you pray this prayer with me right now?

Dear Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner. Please forgive me for my sins and wash my heart clean. Thank You for dying on the cross for me.

The Bible says that if I confess with my mouth and believe in my heart that You are Lord then I will be saved. Jesus, I believe that you are Lord and that God raised You from the dead.

Please come and live in my heart. Be the Lord of my life. Teach me to walk with You and live for You for the rest of my life. Thank You for saving my life and giving me the opportunity to live eternally in heaven with You. Amen.

If you just prayed that prayer and now believe in Jesus as your Savior, you are "born again" into a new life. and you are saved by God's amazing grace! The angels in heaven literally are rejoicing right now over **YOU** and your salvation! Welcome to the Family of God!

I am so glad you have made the decision to follow Christ. With that simple prayer, your name is now written in a special book, which the Bible calls *The Lamb's Book of Life*. This is a book containing all the names of those who have accepted Christ into their hearts (Revelation 3:5). God Himself has written your name in His book, forever confirming your salvation! You are now a child of God!

God's Plan for Your Life

The Bible says, “*For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:13-14). God loves you so much! He has designed a special plan for your life...a plan for His special purpose for **YOU!**

The plan God has for your life is to prosper you and not to harm you in any way. His plan is to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11). God has great things in store for you!

As you begin your new life with Him, this great adventure, this exciting journey, I encourage you to spend time with Him. Talk to Him. Sit quietly and listen for His voice to speak to you.

Reading your Bible every day helps you learn to recognize His voice. Referring to Himself as a Shepherd leading His sheep, Jesus says, “*The sheep follow him because **they know his voice***” (John 10:4). To recognize His voice, you need to become familiar with His Word.

As you grow and mature in your new faith and in your knowledge of the Bible, you will learn to hear the Lord’s voice in your mind and heart. He will bring you tremendous comfort and direction for your life as your understanding increases of Scripture.

As you learn to recognize His voice, God will begin to reveal His plans and purposes for your life. Don’t be afraid of what the Lord has in store for you. God’s plan for your life is exciting and good!

Don’t Be Overwhelmed!

God is not going to show you every plan for your life all at once. He says in His Word that He will be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). This means that the Lord will shine the light of His love and the light of His Word and reveal just what you need to know in order to take the next step for

your life. You must learn to *trust* Him day by day, moment by moment. This is *faith*.

Faith simply is responding in obedience to what you believe is God's will for your life. You will not always be 100% accurate in your understanding of what He is saying to you, especially in the beginning of your new walk with Him. But that's ok. Just the fact that you *want* to obey Him and are trying to hear His voice pleases Him!

Your new life with God in control and Jesus as your Lord will be a daily pilgrimage, a step-by-step journey which you are traveling. As you draw near to God, the Bible says that He will draw near to you (James 4:8). He will lead you where He wants you to go, one step at a time. Take courage in knowing that God's plan for you is best and that His ways are always right. Trust His hand to guide you.

The Potter's Hands

God knows your heart. In fact, He knows you better than you know yourself. So, it's important that you learn to trust God and allow Him to shape your life.

This truth is illustrated in the Bible when God speaks to a man named Jeremiah. God tells Jeremiah to go to the potter's house, and Jeremiah obeys God and goes.

When he arrives, he sees the potter working at his potter's wheel. But the clay he is shaping becomes damaged, so the potter begins forming a different pot. The Lord then spoke to Jeremiah and says, "*Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand*" (Jeremiah 18: 6).

It is impossible for clay to take shape without the potter. Clay has no purpose in and of itself. It cannot take form or shape or achieve the potter's design and purpose for it until the potter has molded and shaped it.

Even after the clay is molded into the potter's plan for it, the clay still must remain in his hands to fulfill its purpose. If the potter makes the clay into a pitcher, it cannot draw water on its own. The potter is the one who must fill the pitcher up and pour the water out.

There is a wonderful hymn written in 1907 by Adelaide Pollard called, "*Have Thine Own Way Lord.*" Here are some of the words to this wonderful classic:

"Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way;
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

"Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way,
Hold over my being, absolute sway.
Fill with Thy Spirit, 'till all shall see
Christ only, always living in me."

Doesn't it make sense to yield to the Creator who designed you? Like clay in the potter's hands, you must be moldable in His hands. Trust God, and as the Bible says, "*He who began a good work in you will perfect it (complete or bring to maturity) until the day of Christ Jesus,*" (*Philippians 1:6*).

"The day of Christ Jesus" is the day when Jesus will return to earth to take His followers home to be with Him in heaven. And what a glorious day that will be!

(Note: If you don't already have a Bible, I encourage you to get one right away. When you start reading your Bible, I suggest that you start in the book of John in the New Testament. This book will teach you a lot about who Jesus Christ is and what your new life with Him will be like!)

Chapter Two

This New Road

Have you heard people use words like “born again” or “saved”? These words may not make sense to you as a new Christian.

To be “born again” does not mean that you experience a second physical birth! Being born again speaks of a *spiritual* birth. Your new life begins as you start your walk with Christ. When you prayed and asked God to forgive your sins and for Jesus to be the Lord of your life, you started that new life!

There was a man in the Bible who had a hard time understanding this truth. His name was Nicodemus, and he was a Jewish leader in Jesus’ day.

When Nicodemus comes to Jesus with questions, Jesus tells him, “*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

“*Nicodemus says to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born!, can he?’*”

“*Jesus answers, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,’*” (John 3:3-6).

Jesus was explaining a *spiritual birth*. When you are born again, God’s Holy Spirit breathes new life into your spirit. Christ is then born in you *spiritually*.

Paul, a follower of Christ and a powerful leader in the early Christian Church, describes this concept when he says, “*Christ **in** you, the hope of glory,*” (Colossians 1:27).

When you ask Christ to come into your heart, He gives you a fresh start in life. In fact, the Bible even calls you a “*new creation.*”

If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone and behold, God has made all things new! (II Corinthians 5:17). The Spirit of God, Himself, has

now come to live inside of your heart. This is the mystery and wonder of the Gospel!

This new life you have begun as a Christian is similar to your natural birth. In fact, there is a great parallel between a newborn baby in a physical sense and a newborn baby in the spiritual sense.

When a child is born, several things need to happen for him to survive and grow. A baby must be fed and nourished. Without food and nourishment, he would soon starve.

A baby is dependent upon his parents for the basic necessities of life. He cannot care for himself. Someone has to feed and cloth him. Someone has to love and shelter him. A baby needs loving arms to hold him close so he feels comforted and safe.

A baby needs a gentle voice singing to soothe his fears. Without care, a neglected baby could not survive. A baby must also receive love. Doctors say that without affection babies tend to withdraw and even lose the will to live. In short, babies are very fragile.

When a baby is born, he doesn't begin talking and walking and caring for himself on day one. No, it takes time for the baby to grow and mature and learn.

Spiritual Nourishment

These same parallels can be made to a new born spiritual life. A "baby" Christian needs food, shelter, clothing, warmth, caring, and loving in the spiritual sense. Spiritual maturity doesn't take place overnight any more than physical maturity takes place overnight. It takes time. It is a process.

How does a newly "born again" person receive spiritual nourishment? By reading God's Word and obeying it. Just as a newborn baby must be fed often in order to thrive and grow, so must you feed your spirit so that you will thrive and grow as a Christian. The Bible is the Bread of life, and its words are food for

your soul! When you read the Bible, pray and ask God to help you understand His words to you.

Your spirit will also be fed by spending time talking with God and worshipping Him. You need to fellowship with other Christians in a Bible-believing church or study group that believes in the truth of the *whole* Bible. Within a community of Christian Believers, you will find love, support, protection, and shelter.

Every day is a learning experience for a child, with many new objects, faces, sounds, colors, and movements. He encounters new foods and places, words and ideas. A child learns that life is a process of growing and learning.

All these principles apply to the spiritual world. Your new life, and your relationship with Christ, is a process of growing and learning as well. Your relationship with Him will mature and grow deeper with every lesson and experience you face.

The Journey

Remember, your relationship with God is a journey. It is a process of learning and growing into all that He has designed for your life. As you find yourself spending more time with the Lord, you will discover that you are being transformed more and more into His perfect image. This is the primary goal of a Christian...to become more and more like our Savior, Jesus Christ. As we take the time to get to know Him, like the potter with the clay, He will mold you into the image of His Son.

Your life will be a journey of high points and low points. There will be times when you follow God's Word and times when you fail to follow His Word. Even the great men and women of the Bible struggled with sin at times in their lives. Paul talked about a war waging inside his body and his struggle to do what was right versus what was wrong. And he did not always choose to do the right thing. He said in Romans 7:18, *For the willing [to do good] is present in me, but*

the doing of the good is not.” When you get a moment, read the whole chapter of Romans 7 to help you understand the battle that rages between sin and God’s righteousness, and between your flesh and your spirit.

Living for Christ does not make you perfect. But the more you develop your relationship with God, the easier it will be to trust Him and rely on His grace to see you through times of temptation and testing. Despite his struggles, Paul could say with full confidence, *“Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ” (II Corinthians 2:14).*

Even when you struggle or fail (and we all do!), God’s heart is always to restore us and set us back on the right path.

Sweet Surrender

You will find that one of the most important things you can do is to recommit your life to Christ every day. In Romans 12:1, Paul wrote that Christians are to *“present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.”* This means that you learn to surrender your will and your decision-making to Him. This is what it means for Jesus to be in control of your life. When you live with Jesus as Lord, you finally discover the true meaning of joy and peace!

The book of Proverbs gives us this practical advice to help us yield our lives to the Lord: *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

As you begin yielding your life to Christ more and more, you will find His Holy Spirit becoming more evident in your life. When you come up against a temptation or a trying circumstance, you will discover that your fleshly desires are diminishing and that God’s Spirit is active in your life.

This is 2 Corinthians 3:18 at work. This verse states, *“We are being transformed into the Lord’s likeness with ever increasing glory.”* “Glory” means splendor, honor, and magnificence, and God will take your life from glory to glory to glory until one precious day, you will be standing in heaven with Jesus

completely transformed into His glorious image!

Your Inheritance!

Now that you have accepted Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior, you have become a child of God. Galatians 4:6-7 says, “Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba, Father.’ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has also made you an heir through Jesus.”

The word *Abba* is Hebrew for “daddy.” God has adopted you into *His* kingdom and into *His* family as *His* child. You have inherited eternal life with Him. Wow! What an awesome privilege!

An heir is a person who is entitled to receive property, possessions, or qualities from someone who wants to give something special to that person. Our children will inherit whatever we choose to leave them after our time here on earth is over. We make them our heirs because we love them and want to bless them.

As God’s child, you are now entitled to all the blessings and benefits of being a part of His family. God has made you a “*joint heir with Jesus Christ*” (Romans 8:17).

As His child, you have the right to claim all of the promises of Scripture *right now!*

What have you inherited? Well, as you walk in close relationship with Him, you have the promise of His Presence, His Peace, and His Provision. You are entitled to His joy, His patience, and His comfort. As His child you have the right to go to Him at any time to talk to Him or just be with Him. And when you die, you inherit an eternity of living in Heaven with Him...an inheritance that no one can ever steal from you!

Do you understand that this inheritance, these gifts and blessings, are only

for God's *children*? Those who do not choose to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord are *not* God's heirs. Therefore, they are not entitled to His Presence, Peace, or Prosperity! These blessings are reserved as an inheritance for God's sons and daughters ONLY!

Life Won't Always Be Easy

However, just because you now are a child of God and entitled to the Kingdom of Heaven does not mean your life on this earth is going to be perfect and easy. Even when you are trusting God with all of your heart, there still will be difficult times. The Bible says that the sun shines on the evil and the good, and that the rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). There still will be rainy days and hard times in your life.

"So what's the point in believing?" you may ask. Well, now that you are a Christian, in those hard times you can count on a Faithful Companion who will never leave you nor forsake you. You will never be alone again!

God will always give you the strength you need to make it through any circumstance, good or bad. His strength is made perfect in your weakness (II Corinthians 12:9). His joy will be your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). In the book of Isaiah, God speaks to us saying, "*Do not fear; for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand*" (Isaiah 41:10).

What could you or I possibly have to worry about with the Creator of this incredible universe on our side? If you ever have a problem that is weighing heavily on your heart, just "give" it to God. The Bible says, "*Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken,*" (Psalm 55:22).

Whether the situation is big or small, God cares. He cares about every detail in your life. He even has the very numbers of the hairs on your head counted (Matthew 10:30).

Be Encouraged

You are so special to God. No detail in your life is too small for Him to care about, and no problem is too big for Him to handle. Scripture says that “*God is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us*” (Ephesians 3:20). I know that I can imagine great things, and this verse assures me that my God is able to do far more than you or I can imagine!

When it feels like the foundation of your life is on sinking sand, take courage. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus describes a storm that assaulted a man whose life was founded on a firm foundation. Jesus says, *The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.* You now have a solid Rock on which you can firmly stand.

When the winds of calamity blow in, relax. You now have a shelter in the midst of the storm. It says in Isaiah, “*God is a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in distress a shelter in the storm and a shade from the heat*” (Isaiah 25:4).

If you are feeling deserted and in despair, take heart. Proverbs 18:24 declares “*A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.*” Jesus is your best friend, and He will stick closer to you than a brother.

Who Is God?

The Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, uses several phrases to describe God. The following names for God and verses give us a clearer understanding of His nature:

If financial strains and pressures seem overwhelming, know that God is your “*Jehovah-Jirah,*” which means “*God our Provider.*” He is on your side!

If sickness, disease, or pain overshadows you or your family, you are entitled to a second opinion from the Great Physician. He is "*Jehovah-Rapha*," which means "*the Lord our Healer*." Isaiah declared, "*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*" (Isaiah 53:5).

If you are trapped in a lifestyle or habit that has you enslaved to its desire, there is hope because your God is a "*Strong Deliverer*" (Psalm 140:7).

If depression, tragedy, or loneliness leave your heart feeling broken and weary, please know that God is able to comfort you. II Corinthians 1:3 declares, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God.*" He is our "*Jehovah-Shalom*," which means "the Lord is our peace."

God is able to fill you with a supernatural joy that will be your strength. "*The joy of the Lord is your strength,*" (Nehemiah 8:10).

When you need wisdom, direction, and guidance, you can simply ask God and He will give it to you (James 1:5).

If there is something you do not understand, take comfort in knowing that "*The Holy Spirit will teach you all things*" (John 14:26).

If life seems hectic and stressful, trust in God. Isaiah 26:3-4 states, "*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord Forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the Rock eternal.*"

When hard times come, and they will, know that God has a peace that surpasses our human understanding. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*"

An Eternal Perspective

I encourage you to always maintain an “eternal perspective.” Having an eternal perspective means not living for just the moment and the difficulties it may hold. No, as Believers, we live with the end in sight...knowing that one day Jesus Christ will return for us to take us to our heavenly home. How glorious it will be for Believers when we finally see Him face to face!

Because of this, when hardships come, we can say with Paul, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).*

No matter what the situation is in which you find yourself, God is able to meet you at your point of need! He is sufficient for you; in good times and in hard times God will be your strength. Even if it feels that He is all you have, rest assured knowing He is all you need!

God Is in Control

All of these promises from the Bible provide us with great hope. We may read them and get encouraged or excited as we feel our faith begin to grow inside of us. However, sometimes God’s promises are too easily forgotten as the pressures of life begin to press in upon us.

When you are faced with decisions or trials in your life, you now have a new way to approach them. Instead of taking matters into your own hands and facing your problems with your limited strength, trust in God and look to Him first.

I know this is not easy! It can seem much more natural handling life on your own. For years you have been used to dealing with problems on your own; you may feel in control that way. But the truth is that you do not know what is best for your life. God has the advantage of knowing the end of your life from the

beginning. The outcome of our difficult circumstances is so much better when we pause and look to God for supernatural wisdom, guidance, and direction.

You have the Creator of this amazing universe on your side. He knows all things and made all things. What awesome privileges you are entitled to as a child of God, a Christian! He loves you more that you will ever understand here on earth. He has adopted you into His Kingdom and made you His child.

He is always with you to help you, guide you, teach you, comfort you, give you peace, joy, patience and strength. Whatever you need, God's grace and provision will provide. This sure sounds like an exciting, abundant life, doesn't it?

Soon you will be wondering how you ever lived without the Lord. Not only will you reap benefits in this life on earth, but you will also store up for yourself treasures in Heaven where you will one day dwell with your Savior in Paradise!

Chapter Three

Why Jesus Had to Die on the Cross

You may wonder why Jesus had to die for us so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life. I know I often have wished there were another way for Jesus to save us, but there was not. How grateful I am to Him for laying down His own life for me!

When God created this world, it was perfect and without blemish or sin. Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden and walked with the Lord daily. There was no sickness, no pain, no death.

God gave them a free will, the ability to choose for themselves what they wanted to do. God did not create puppets. He wanted His children to serve Him and obey His guidelines because they loved Him. God had given Adam and Eve full reign over His creation with one command. God told Adam, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:17)

Forbidden Fruit

Then Satan came to Eve in the form of a serpent in Genesis 3 and asked, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”

Eve responded and said, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’ “

Then Satan lied to Eve and told her God didn’t mean what He had said. “You surely will not die!” He told her that if she ate the fruit, “you will become like God, knowing good and evil.” The devil said you will be equal with God and then urged her to go ahead and eat the fruit.

As a new Believer, you need to be aware of the devil’s strategies. He did not tell Eve outright to disobey God. He introduced doubt about God’s integrity

and His goodness. From there, it was a short step to disobedience. We'll talk more about temptation later in the book, but I want to encourage you to guard your mind and heart against doubt and unbelief.

Eve believed the lie and gave into the temptation. Then she persuaded Adam to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit. As a result of their disobedience sin was brought into this world.

God never intended for His creation to experience the effects of sin, but He did want them to have a free will and be capable of making their own decisions. God didn't make Adam and Eve puppets.

He didn't want them to worship or obey Him because they had strings attached to them that He could pull and say, "Now it's time to worship Me!" No, he wanted them to worship him because they chose to.

When Adam and Eve used their free will to disobey God, sin came into this world. So did sickness, sadness, all forms of evil, and even death. And not only did physical death come into the world, but more importantly, spiritual death and eternal separation from God became the end for all those who do not know Christ as their Savior and Lord.

The Shedding Of Blood

Because of their sin, Adam and Eve could no longer be in God's Presence, so they were cast out of the garden. Time went on, and generations passed. But God had a plan!

God planned that a day would come, when in His Divine timetable, He would send His perfect Son to this earth to die so that by His blood, God could forgive our sins. I don't know why God established the shedding of blood as the method for the forgiveness of sins, but He did.

Hebrews 9:22 tells us, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood;

and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Simply put, sin brought death, life is in the blood, so spiritual life is restored by a blood sacrifice. In Jesus case, the sacrifice accomplishes our salvation—once and for all to those who believe.

The only way for us to be reconciled to God is by a blood sacrifice to make atonement for our wrongs committed. “Atonement” means to “cover” or to “cleanse.” When we sin, a simple “I’m sorry” is not enough. Justice must be served so that sin can be covered and cleansed.

Offering Blood Sacrifices

From the earliest books in the Old Testament, the people of God were given very specific guidelines on how to offer animal sacrifices to God to atone for their sins. God established a Covenant with them, a holy irrevocable promise, that if they offered the blood sacrifice of animals for their sins, He would forgive them. Their offerings had to cost them something; they were true sacrifices.

There were many types of sacrifices made to God for many different purposes. Some were for the cleansing of sin. Others were for guilt. Burnt offerings signified dedication to God. And there were even sacrifices of fellowship offerings.

This idea of offering animal sacrifices can be strange to modern society; nevertheless this was what God established. But ultimately, there was no sacrifice that could possibly be substantial enough to fully pay for our sin.

The process of sacrifices and offerings to God was daily and went on for hundreds of years. But Scripture tells us the Covenant was insufficient to atone for sin. *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’” Hebrews 8: 7 & 8.*

A New Covenant

Out of His great love and mercy, God was willing to establish a New Covenant. God, Himself would pay the highest cost and make the ultimate sacrifice. He would send His one and only Son, Jesus, to the world. Jesus came to take on the sin of the entire world. With His perfect, precious blood spilled on the cross of Calvary, He died our death and paid our debt.

Jesus became the final sacrifice to God. His task was not a simple one. He had to leave behind His home in Heaven, come to earth and take on flesh and blood in the form of a man. Then He had to die one of the most painful and torturous deaths there is to die. Even moments before the soldiers came to take Jesus away to be crucified, He wondered if somehow there was another way.

Beyond the physical pain was the knowledge that the sins of the whole world were going to be on Him. He knew that sin separates us from God, and the thought that He would be separated from His Heavenly Father for those hours on the cross was almost unbearable. He prayed and asked His Father if there was some way for Him to avoid the suffering and humiliation of the cross. But He concluded His prayer, saying, *“Not my will but yours be done” (Mark 14:35-36)*.

I am so grateful that Jesus yielded to His Father’s will. Had he not yielded, we would still be bound in our sin and without hope. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8)*.

As Jesus hung on the cross, darkness fell over the earth as Jesus literally took the sins of the world (both the penalty and the shame) upon Himself. God cannot look upon sin and Jesus felt His Father’s Presence leave. In that moment of agonizing separation between Jesus and the Father, He cried out in anguish, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46-54)*.

And then it was finished. Jesus had paid OUR ransom with HIS own blood; then he died on that cruel cross. What a great price Jesus paid for our sins. God

loves us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His own dear Son so that we could spend eternity in Heaven.

I encourage you to read Hebrews (chapters 8 & 9) to learn more about the priesthood of Christ and the Covenant He made with us through the shedding of His blood.

A Torn Curtain

In Jesus' day, the Jews gathered to worship God in the Temple in Jerusalem. Inside the Temple, there was a great curtain which separated the outer room from the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies is where the high priest sprinkled the blood from the animal sacrifices on the altar of God on behalf of himself and the people (as "atonement" for their sins). Not just anyone could enter this holy place because the Presence of God dwelt there. Only the high priest was permitted by God to enter into this Most Holy Place, and he was only allowed in once a year on the Day of Atonement.

According to the Talmud, a book containing sacred Jewish writings, when the high priest went into that room to offer the sacrifice to God, he had to wear a robe with bells along the bottom and a rope tied around his leg. That may sound funny, but there is a reason for why he dressed that way and it is no laughing matter.

The noise of the bells was for the people waiting outside. If they heard the bells ringing they knew the priest was still alive and moving. More to the point, the sound of the ringing of the bells signified the fact that God has received and accepted their sacrifice and offering. How did they know? Because the presence of Almighty God Himself would come upon the priest so strongly, the priest literally and physically shook in His presence. It was that shaking that caused the bells on the bottom of the priest's robes to ring. It was that ringing, that let the one bringing the sacrifice and offering know that it was acceptable to God.

If the person's offering and sacrifice were not acceptable, God's presence would not descend upon the priest and the bells on his robes would not ring.

Or, if the priest was unclean or his heart was not right before God, the sacrifice was not accepted and the priest would drop dead!

Since the people outside could not enter into the Holy of Holies without perishing themselves, the rope allowed them to pull the body of the priest from the holy place. Not a job I would be happy to have; not a time I would like to have lived.

God had a plan for His people, a more intimate plan that was made possible through His Son Jesus. When Jesus laid down His life for us, He was the final sacrifice, perfect and blameless. His blood covered the whole world's sin. When He died, the curtain in the tabernacle was torn from top to the bottom. It was impossible for any to have torn this curtain. It is described as being a "hand's breadth" thick. That's 4 – 6 inches thick of woven fabric! Only the very hand of God, coming down from heaven, could tear the curtain in two. This is so significant because on the other side of that curtain is where God's Presence previously resided on earth. Jesus' death not only paid for our sins and brought forgiveness and eternal life in heaven, but it gave us direct access to God, and it made a way for the literal Presence of God to reside in each follower of Christ.

Now we do not have to have to go through a priest, because Jesus became our High Priest. We do not have to rely on anyone else to seek God for us. Now there is a much better way. God wanted a personal relationship with each one of His children. He wanted them to walk with them and talk with them like He did with Adam and Eve.

Because of His sacrificial death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, when He is our Savior and Lord, we can come to the Lord just as we are. What a privilege we now have to come into the very Presence of the Most High God!

As we offer our praise and worship to Him, we can enter right into the Holy of Holies, with no bells on our cloths, and no rope tied to our leg. We can come before Him and lift our prayers before His throne in Heaven! We can walk and talk with our Savior and great High Priest, who made a way for us to “approach His throne of grace with confidence” and fellowship as friends both now and forever. Now, instead of bringing the endless sacrifices of bulls and goats for “atonement”, we come to Christ offering the “sacrifice of praise.” Thank God for the new Covenant!

Chapter Four

Amazing Grace

One of the most common lies with which Satan tries to attack a new Believer is through guilt and condemnation. But I want to remind you of something: when Jesus died on the cross for you, He did not pay to redeem *half* of your sins. He did not pay for only *some* of the world's sins.

God would never have allowed His Son Jesus to take on the form of man, go through all the pain and agony of crucifixion, and be separated from His Heavenly Father just to pay for partial freedom. No way! The blood of Jesus covers every sin, great or small. The blood of Jesus covers them **ALL**. Jesus paid for all the sins of the world: more than you could commit in ten thousand lifetimes.

Listen to the words of Psalm 103:1-3 “*Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who pardons all your iniquities.*”

This Scripture passage says that He forgives **ALL** your sins—both the penalty and the shame. Not 10%. Not 50%. Not 75%. **ALL!**

Don't ever allow yourself to wallow in guilt, feelings of insecurity, or condemnation. This is just an attempt by the devil to undermine the death of your Savior and His life within you. When you feel the God's conviction about a sin in your life, confess it, and trust that Jesus will completely wash away both the penalty AND the shame. Don't let the devil lie to you and tell you that the power of your sin's stain is more powerful than the power of Jesus' blood to forgive your sins and wash you clean.

Satan will try to condemn you and bring negative thoughts against your mind to damage your faith. Stand firm on the Word! Romans 8:1-2 says, “*Therefore there is now **no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,***

who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Can you see how silly it is to be trapped in guilt or condemnation as a Believer? You are completely free in Christ! When the Son sets you free, you are free indeed! (John 8:36). Stand on God's promise to you.

God's Grace Is Amazing!

You cannot live your life in the past or be weighed down by its guilt. It would be a lot harder trying to drive a car while looking in the rear view mirror! Guilt and condemnation are tools of the devil to keep you bound up, depressed, and useless for building up yourself and the Kingdom of God.

The truth is that the devil is right that none of us are worthy of God's mercy and Jesus sacrifice on the Cross. We must all learn how to rely on and trust in God's amazing grace. Grace is God's undeserved favor and blessing. By His grace, God has given us something we don't deserve - mercy and forgiveness. We don't have to beg for it, but to receive it with gratitude and joy—this pleases God's heart.

Good News!

The following five verses are often referred to as the "Romans Road", because they are all found in the Book of Romans and together they form a clear "road map" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Romans 3:23 *"All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."*

Romans 6:23 *"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Romans 5:8 *"God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us."*

Romans 10:9 *“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

Romans 10:13 *“Whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved.”*

There’s Only One Way to Heaven!

We are sinners, but God loves us enough to offer us the gift of eternal life by allowing Jesus to die for our sins and offer us the gift of life. All we have to do is confess that we are sinners and believe in Him!

No one will get to heaven because they are a good person. *There is no good deed you can do to earn your salvation.* Not even keeping the 10 Commandments and following God’s law can get us into Heaven. Going to church or Sunday school does not offer us the right to go to Heaven either. Not even believing there is a God will allow you through Heaven’s gates of glory. The majority of people who believe there is a Heaven probably think that one of these reasons is going to get them through the gates. Sadly, they are mistaken!

There is only ONE way to Heaven, and it is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone that we are saved for eternity. *“There is salvation in on one else; for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)*

Grace—A License to Sin?

When you were saved, you received God’s amazing grace. But just because He has given you His grace doesn’t mean you should try to take advantage of His mercy. The book of Jude talks about godless men who, exchange the grace of God as a license for immorality, thus denying Jesus Christ as Lord (Jude 4). We cannot go around carelessly sinning because we know God will forgive us. The grace of God is by no means a license to sin. Galatians 5:13 reminds us that, *“You were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your*

freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another.”

When the Spirit of God comes to live in you, there is a change that takes place inside of you...a change you may or may not be able to feel, but a change that people around you will be able to notice.

Paul writes, *“Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

In a parable Jesus taught in Matthew 7:20, he likened us to fruit trees. Just as we can recognize one tree from another by its fruit, and would not try to pick a fruit from thistles, God said that we would recognize His children “by their fruits” (Matthew 7:20). Your actions will set you apart from others.

Please do not misunderstand me....I am **NOT** saying that you can earn your salvation by what you do. Remember nothing you **do** can earn your salvation. Your salvation has been completely paid for by the blood sacrifice of Jesus alone and sealed by your prayer of faith to receive Him as Savior and Lord. You now are motivated to do good things and have a cheerful attitude because of your gratitude and thanks to God for having mercy on you and saving you. Your “good fruit” is an outward expression of the “good work” God has begun in you.

Walking in His Grace

Our walk with Christ is a journey of learning to live God’s way. Jesus said, *“If any one would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23.)* You learn to follow Christ by daily laying down the fleshly desires of this world and walking in His grace alone.

There will be times when you fall short and need to ask God to forgive you and then renew your strength to walk in His grace. In these situations where you “miss the mark” do not be overcome with guilt and condemnation. God knows we will sin at times, “if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us and we make Him (God) out to be a liar; but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8,9).

God's process for dealing with sin is to:

- 1) bring conviction into our lives
- 2) we confess the sin
- 3) we repent of (or "turn away from") the sin
- 4) we forget it and so does He!

Paul and Timothy said in Philippians 3:13-14: *"But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

Once you have confessed your sins to God and asked Him to forgive you, it's time to move on in the renewed power of the Holy Spirit. This is both a gift from God and your right as a Believer. Psalm 103:12 says that God removes our sins from us *"as far as the east is from the west."* No matter where you find yourself along the journey of life always remember this:

"By grace you have been saved, through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one can boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Spiritual Growth

Water Baptism

Once you have decided to follow Jesus, you now have an exciting opportunity to let others know about your new faith. Water baptism is the Scriptural example that God gave us of how to publicly declare your relationship with Jesus.

There are several reasons why Believers are baptized with water, and the first is obedience. Before Jesus began His public ministry, He declared His total allegiance to God by submitting to water baptism at the hands of a reluctant John the Baptist. In response to John's anxiety over baptizing the "Son of God", Jesus said that His baptism was "fulfilling all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). In that same sequence of events, when Jesus is actually immersed in the River Jordan, God responded with an audible voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). God has called us to be "imitators" of Christ. Baptism is one of the special ways that we can be Christ-like.

Jesus said to His disciples, *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus commanded His disciples to go and teach the world what He had taught them, and He specifically told them to baptize those who believed. So baptism is an act of obedience toward God.

The Symbolism of Water Baptism

Baptism is also an outward expression of an inward experience. When you are baptized with water you are making the statement to all those around you that you are a new creation, that you love the Lord, and that He is the Lord of your life.

Baptism is symbolic. As you go under the water, it is as though you are laying down your old life. You are, in a sense, dying as Christ died on the cross for your sins. Then you rise up washed and cleansed, resurrected to a new life. You are a new person by the faith you have in God. Colossians 2:12 says that we have “*been buried with Him(Jesus) in baptism* in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” The act of water baptism is a symbol of your repentant heart and your conversion into Christianity.

In the book of Acts, the apostle Peter was preaching to a large crowd. When the people were moved by his words and asked how they should respond, Peter replied, “*Repent, and each of you be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” In verse 41 we read that those who accepted the message of salvation were baptized and about 3,000 were added to the early church that day! (Acts 2:38-41)

If you were to continue reading throughout the book of Acts, you would see that as people accepted the message of Jesus Christ, they were baptized with water as an outward demonstration of their new faith.

So water baptism is significant because Jesus wanted us to do it as a public declaration of our love for Him. Therefore, this is an act of obedience toward Him. Water baptism is an expression of a repentant heart and a symbol of your conversion into the Christian faith.

The Holy Spirit

God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are often referred to as the “Trinity”

because there are three separate and unique persons or natures. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father and God the Son often receive the most attention. But the Holy Spirit is a vital part of the Trinity and must not be neglected.

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is our teacher who “guides us into all truth.” (John 16:13) He is our Comforter and our Teacher (John 14:26.)

To understand the Holy Spirit it is best to study the book of Acts. Throughout this book-you will see the roles that the Holy Spirit plays in the lives of Believers. When the Holy Spirit is mentioned, many times He is giving instruction and guidance to the disciples. Some examples are found in Acts 1:2 and 10:9-22.

The Holy Spirit also strengthens and encourages the churches. For example, in Acts 9:31 we read, “*So the church throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.*” This verse is so significant because it shows how the Holy Spirit helped people after the outpouring of His Presence as recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

In fact, the Holy Spirit had never resided within people until Jesus returned to His Father in Heaven (Acts 1). You see, in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon people for a brief period of time and a specific purpose only. One example of this is in the book of Judges, where on four separate occasions, Scripture comments that the “Spirit of God came *upon* him (Sampson) mightily” (Judges 14:6 and 14:19; 15:14). This occurred when the Holy Spirit worked through Sampson with incredible strength and power to accomplish a task. This pattern is true throughout the Old Testament.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

All of this changed when Jesus left earth to return to Heaven. Jesus tells His

disciples to go and wait for the promise of His Father. “He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which, ‘He said,’ you heard of from me” (Acts 1:4) What was this promise that Jesus had spoke of? He gives the answer in verse 5: “*For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*” The gift of His Father is the blessed Holy Spirit!

The incredible news is that now the Holy Spirit is not coming for a specific moment and purpose. He is coming to fill all Believers everywhere and at all times!

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that two things would happen after they received the Holy Spirit:

1. He will give you power
2. You will be my witnesses

This word “witnesses”, is originally a Greek word, indicating that with the Holy Spirit’s power, people will “give evidence to”, and “testify”, that Jesus is who He claims to be. And this is exactly what happened!

Empowered!

The disciples did just what Jesus told them to do; they went to Jerusalem and waited in an upper room. As they waited they began to praise God and the Promise came. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit then gave them boldness to preach and testify of God’s greatness, and, when they did, miracles and wonders followed.

Paul even told people that he was not going to use eloquent speech or enticing words of wisdom to persuade them, but that he would come in a “demonstration of the Spirit and the power ” of God. In that way the people’s faith would not rest on man’s wisdom, but in God’s power (1 Corinthians 2:1-5.)

The Holy Spirit was all over the early church. The early disciples practically evangelized the entire world without having a Bible or any of the modern technology we have today like printing presses, radio, television or the Internet. History records that the entire known world was evangelized within the first 200 years after the death and resurrection of Christ.

Everywhere the early Christians went, they shared the Gospel; it just flowed out of them as a result of being filled with the Spirit.

Even Greater Works!

The very shadow of the apostle Peter brought healing to the sick (Acts 5:15). This was not because of Peter himself, but was because Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus said that we would do even “greater things” than He did when He walked on the earth. How? Why? Because He was going to His Father in heaven and would send the “Comforter,” the Holy Spirit.

The same Holy Spirit who filled, empowered, and equipped Jesus at His baptism in the River Jordan would now fill **US**...and empower and equip **us** to do the work of the ministry (Acts 1: 4, 5 & 8; John 14:12). Jesus healed the sick, He opened the eyes of the blind, the crippled arose and walked, lives were restored, and even the dead were raised to back to life! Of all these miracles, Jesus said that we would to even *greater works*. We are able to do these things only through the empowering Spirit of God, and He intends for us to access His power. He has delegated His power and authority to **US**.

In Acts 3, Peter and John said to a lame man, “*I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-walk!*” What did Peter and John have? Power! Where did they get it? The Holy Spirit.

At least twice Jesus says, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 17:18, John 20:21). How did the Father send Jesus? With all power and all

authority. Jesus says in Matthew 28:18, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*”

All Authority!

Since Jesus was sent here by His Father with ALL authority, and He sends us as His Father sent Him, then we have been delegated the same power as was delegated to Christ! 1 John 4:17 says, “*As He is, so also are we in this world.*” Wow!

Would God intend for only the first century Church to walk in His power? No, certainly not! These gifts the disciples and the early church experienced did not die out thousands of years ago contrary to what many “theologians” preach today. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8.) God intends for us to walk in the same power that Jesus did when He dwelt here on earth.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

You may wonder how all this power could ever be possible. How could Jesus say that we would do even greater things than He did? The answer is found in the Holy Spirit. I have already talked about water baptism, but there is a second baptism I want to share with you. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Here are two examples from Scripture that verify the fact that salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are two separate experiences. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to Believers there.

When they arrived, they prayed for these Christians to receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on the Believers, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

So these born-again Christians, who had been baptized with water, were

later baptized with the Holy Spirit as Peter and John prayed for them.

Later in Acts 19, Paul came through the city of Corinth where many had become followers of Jesus Christ. Paul asked them, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” Why would he ask this question if believing on Jesus as Lord and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit were one and the same experience?

They said to him, “*No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*” (verse 2). Clearly, they were Believers. Clearly, they were called disciples (verse 1). Then Paul “*laid his hands upon them.*” When he did, “the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying” (verse 6).

Empowered for Ministry

John the Baptist said, “*I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire***” (Matthew 3:11-17).

When Jesus was baptized with water in the river Jordan the heavens opened and the voice of God spoke, “*This is my son in whom I am well pleased.*” Then a dove descended on Jesus, as the Father was filling His son Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit. It was only after this experience that Jesus begins His ministry (Matthew 3:11-17).

The same Holy Spirit who filled Jesus as He was baptized before He began ministering also filled the disciples in the upper room and then their ministry began.

The good news is that the same Holy Spirit fills the Church today! The Holy Spirit is a gift from God, He is for all Believers, and I believe God intends for His whole Church to be filled.

Jesus is seated at the right hand of His Father in Heaven and eagerly waits

to pour out His Spirit upon those who obey (Acts 5:31-32).

God did not give birth to an anemic church. God intended for His Church to be filled with His Spirit and His power. The Bible says that God gives to us His Spirit without limits! (John 3:34.) God wants you to arise and take hold of His power. This is His gift to you, and it is your destiny to be His witness.

God has placed within us the seed of Christ. It's the mystery of the Gospel; "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Yet, while the seed of Christ is placed within us when we are born again, I believe that the Scriptures encourage us to pursue the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which gives us the power to live victoriously for Christ.

Some Important Attributes of God

As you become more established in your faith, it is important for you to understand some foundational truths about the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, and He was baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Scripture says that "*in Him dwelled the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (Colossians 2:9). Jesus said, "*if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father, for I and the Father am One*" (John 10:30). Jesus clearly reflected the heart and the character of the Father. His behavior and speech reflected the Father, and His essence was also fully God. In fact, one of Jesus' names is Emmanuel, which literally means "God with us."

While Jesus said that He only spoke and did what the Father desired, He also had a distinct personality. This is one of the great "mysteries of the faith" that Jesus is both the Son of God and God the Son. The personality, nature, and attributes of Christ are born in us.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit did appear, but it came upon people for a specific task and purpose. The Spirit of God often gave extraordinary

strength in battle to men like David and Samson and supernatural insights to prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. In fact, the writers of all the books of the Bible, including the Old Testament, wrote the sacred Scriptures as they were lead by the Holy Spirit.

However, with the resurrection of Jesus and His return to Heaven, came the “permanent” ministry of the Holy Spirit—literally taking up residence within each Believer. Your body is now the “temple of the Holy Spirit.” What an amazing mystery that each of us who knows Jesus as Savior also has the Holy Spirit living in our mortal bodies? He is our Guide and our Counselor. He leads us into all Truth. He interprets Scripture for us, and He empowers us, just as He empowered Jesus for His earthly ministry.

Jesus is our example for the Christian life. He was filled, empowered, and equipped by the Holy Spirit, and so must we. There is a parallel here to our new birth experience. The same Holy Spirit who impregnated the Virgin Mary with the spiritual and physical seed, now takes the spiritual seed of Christ and impregnates us. With this amazing indwelling power of the Spirit, we can do the same works, and even greater works, than Jesus and the disciples did on earth.

Today there are many people in the Church with a weak and anemic faith. Despite the precious promise of God, they are not filled with the Person and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Take Hold of the Promise!

We are living in what could be the last days of human history. We may very well be the generation who ushers in the coming of Christ. If this is true, then now more than ever, we must listen to the teachings in the book of Acts. The Church must use wisdom and take advice from these first disciples. We must stand up with boldness and walk in the victory that is already ours!

We must reach out and take hold of the Father’s promise: the blessed Holy Spirit to equip and empower us to do His will! God said that in the last days He

would pour out His Spirit on all people (Acts 2:17-18). God is looking for those who are hungry for Him. He is seeking those who are willing to obey Him with boldness.

Get ready to see demonstrations of God's power like never seen before on earth. God is sweeping across this earth and pouring out His Spirit on disciples this very moment, and I know that you and I are not going to be passed by. It is time to walk in the power in which God intended for His church to walk: 100% victory, over 100% of the enemy's power, 100% of the time!

According to Matthew 28, we are commanded to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is our commission; this is our duty. It is time for the Church to take hold of this promise. And, now that you are a Believer, this includes YOU! Even if you are a new Christian, you are a part of the priestly ministry of Christ. Peter writes, "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His light" (1 Peter 2:9). As inconceivable as it may sound to you, every Believer is a "holy priest" for Christ, having received God-given authority to represent the Lord by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Please do not quickly pass over this section of the book. In the world in which we are living today, the power of God is a vital ingredient you need operating in your life. The Church has the ability to do the miracles that Jesus and the early disciples did. The question is why aren't we?

Perhaps apathy is looming over our world? Too many Christians today feel like there is nothing they could possibly do to make a difference in this world. Perhaps it's because some have been saved but not filled with the Holy Spirit. Do NOT buy into this deception.

It is time for the Church to arise and shake up our families, our

communities, our school systems, our work places, our cities, and the nations of this world with the saving grace and the power of the living God!

With the enabling of the Holy Spirit you **CAN** make a difference! The time is **NOW!** If you have not already been filled with the Holy Spirit, I invite you to allow Jesus to fill you with His Holy Spirit and power. Pray this prayer with me right now:

Dear heavenly Father, You promised in the Bible to send Your disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit. Lord, I want more of You in my life. I need more of Your power, so please send your Holy Spirit to fill me right now. Please send your Holy Spirit to me. Baptize me with your Holy Spirit. Please give me the passion to serve you and do what You did while You were here on earth. Please fill me with the power to tell others about Your great love. You are welcome in my life. I open my heart to You. Cleanse my heart and fill it up with Your precious and Holy Spirit. Thank You for this amazing gift! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Now receive God's Holy Spirit into your heart and life in all the fullness of His power.

Section 2 – ABIDE IN ME

Chapter One

Reading God's Word

You have a physical body that you feed every day. In the same way, you have a spirit that needs to be fed healthy spiritual food on a daily basis.

Think about it this way. How long could you go without eating? A day? No problem. But how would you feel at the end of that day?

How about a week? This is more challenging, but you could probably do that. Then again, how would you feel at the end of that week? Tired? Most likely. Weak? Certainly. How about going without food for 30 days---40 days...how long would it be before your body gave out completely and you died?

God established this “Principle of Self-Preservation” to keep us alive and healthy: we must eat to live. Now, you don't need to believe in this principle if you don't want to; just violate it see what happens. After 30 days....40 days...perhaps even 50 days...you will die.

The same holds true spiritually. What is our spiritual nourishment? The Word of God. The longer we go without the life it contains, the weaker our spirits become. The life of Christ within your spirit must be fed in order to grow strong and stay healthy. Reading the Bible is nourishment to your spirit. Praising Him with worship and spiritual songs is like drinking from the River of Life (Revelation 22:1).

Spending time talking with Him is an essential ingredient in developing a

strong and meaningful relationship with Christ. As you read Scripture, soon you will find that, although written thousands of years ago, its words are still so very relevant to your life today. Within its pages you will find stories of people with whom you can identify, lessons to learn, refreshment for your soul, and comfort in your times of need.

Daily Devotions

Jesus prayed, “*Give us this day our **daily bread***” (Matthew 6:11). It’s so important for you to find time when you can read the Word of God and eat “spiritual bread” every day. Christians often refer to this time as “having devotions.”

Devotions are simply a quiet time of the day devoted to talking with God, worshipping Him, and learning what His Holy Spirit has to teach you. God will speak to you through His Word, and you will find that it gives you strength for your day.

This quiet time can be in the morning or in the evening. The time that works best for you is not important; what *is* important is the *quality* of time you spend.

You are not made more holy than other Believers because you spend more time in the Word than they do. Your quiet time with God should be motivated out of love for Him rather than by the clock.

Spending Time With God

When you love someone and they are special to you, it is only natural that you want to spend time with that person. This is how it is in the time you spend with the Lord. Your time with Him is a good discipline, but it should not be a ritual. If you missed reading God’s Word one day, do not feel guilty. So many Christians are bound up with the routine of devotions that the purpose of having a quiet, quality time with the Lord is lost. This is not what God wants at all!

God understands that your life is busy with deadlines to meet and bills to pay. What He asks is that you dedicate time to be with Him as a part of your day and, that you learn to make Him a living presence throughout your day. Paul said we should “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In essence, this means that the Lord should be our holy “preoccupation”, regardless of what we are doing. Jesus said, “abide in me and I will abide in you” (John 15:4). Jesus is challenging us to stay “connected” to Him in all of our thoughts and actions, at all times, so that we can be fruitful in our service to Him.

God gave His only Son as a sacrifice so that you could have everlasting life in Heaven with Him. He loves you so much and longs to spend time with you. His desire is to have a relationship with you, and this relationship thrives and grows as you spend time fellowshiping with Him and reading His Word.

There is no doubt in my mind that your devotions will become a special time for you, a time when you feel the very Presence of God next to you, a time that you will long for daily, and a state of mind that you will carry with you throughout your day. Spending time with God in His Word is one of the practical ways to develop your relationship with Him.

Hearing God’s Voice

Remember that Christianity is a *relationship* with a living God. You cannot have a relationship with someone without speaking to them. There are several ways to communicate with God, and yes, God *will* speak back to you. You don’t have to expect a bolt of lightning from the sky or a deep voice booming out of the clouds. God speaks to His children in many different ways.

One of the ways that God speaks is through His Word. This is another reason why your devotion times are so important; they are opportunities for God to speak to you. He will reveal truth, wisdom, insights, and practical help relevant to your life if you will open your heart to receive what He has to say.

Another way that God speaks is with a “*still small voice.*” His voice does not have to be audible, although it could be. More often, it is a peace you feel in your heart, a confidence, a “knowing” that your Lord is speaking to you. God’s voice is always consistent with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures.

The presence of God’s peace in our hearts is often a way that He speaks to us and directs our lives. Philippians 4:7 says, “*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” As Christians, we are to “*let the peace of God rule in our hearts*” (Colossians 3:15).

“My Sheep Know My Voice”

One way that Jesus is referred to in the Bible is as a shepherd and we are called His sheep. You may know the familiar words of the 23rd Psalm: “*The Lord is my shepherd.*” He is our shepherd! In the book of John, Jesus said, “*The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice* (John 10:2-5).

As you spend more time with the Lord, the more familiar you will become with His voice. Just as easily as you recognize the voice of a friend on the other end of the telephone, when you spend time getting to know the Lord it will be easier for you to recognize His voice. Your Shepherd’s voice you will know and the voice of a stranger you will not follow.

If you ever have doubt or confusion in your heart about hearing God’s voice, talk about this with God in prayer. Satan would love for you to think God is not speaking to you and that the voice you hear in your head is simply your own imagination. Do not be overcome by the lies of the devil.

If you are confused ask the Lord to help you. I Corinthians 14:33 says,

“God is not a God of confusion but a God of peace.” He will give you peace and confirm His answer to you if you ask Him. You always can check what you believe you are hearing against the Bible: God *always* acts in agreement with His written Word and never contradicts His own Scripture.

You Have a Direct Line to God!

God can also speak to you through other people.

However, you must remember that, “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20). In other words, when God uses a person to speak His will, it must line up with Scripture and confirm what He has already spoken to you. It’s important to make sure that the counsel that you receive in your life comes from people who trust Christ and, who walk by the Spirit of God.

As a new Believer, it’s a sad but important thing for you to know that some Christians try to control people by acting as though they are the voice of God for others. Only God’s Spirit within you will be able to tell if someone is truly communicating God’s heart to you or not. Beware of the attempts of other people to manipulate you. And remember, people can be sincerely wrong. Godly counsel will be rooted in God’s Word.

If God has not already spoken to your spirit about what someone else is saying to you, then you can probably assume that the message is not from God. We need to have a teachable heart and, allow spirit-led people to speak God’s truths into our lives. But, we are not required to embrace every notion or impulse from others about our lives. If you don’t sense in your spirit that someone else’s word lines up with God’s Word, hit the “eject button.”

God has a direct line to you and you have a direct line to God! While He may often use another Christian to *confirm* something in our lives and to be a source of encouragement and care, God does not use people to direct our lives. God Himself directs our lives. He does so through His Word, through that “still small voice” in our hearts, and yes, as a confirmation through another person.

The Bible says, “*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1). At first glance, you may think it is easy to tell an evil spirit from something holy. But be cautious. The Bible warns us that “*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness*” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

The better you know God, the more quickly you will be able to recognize an imposter. The devil is a deceptive and devious master of lies; you must stay on your spiritual toes and always test the spirits in prayer to make sure they are truly from God. This is one reason it is so important to stay close to the Lord in your devotional times. By spending time talking to Him, listening to Him, worshipping Him, and reading His Word, you will learn to recognize His voice. In this way, you will be protected from deception in whatever form it may come!

Chapter 2

Worship and Prayer

In this chapter, I want to spend a little more time sharing with you about the importance of coming into God's Presence during your devotional time to worship Him and talk with Him. Worship and prayer are so important for Christians, because only in His Presence are we changed, and so many things become possible in God's Presence!

By spending time with Him, you will be transformed...changed...into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is God's goal for you—to make you more and more like Jesus with each passing day.

Worship and prayer will help you to surrender your fears, frustrations, hurts, and problems to the Lord. Worship and prayer are your recognition that He **alone** holds the answers to your struggles and that you cannot resolve your problems in your own strength.

If you truly want to know God; if you want Him to change and transform you for the better; if you hunger for an intimate relationship with Him; if you recognize that you need His power and strength to help you bring wholeness and healing to yourself and others....then spend time with God in His Presence, worshipping Him and talking with Him.

What is Worship?

God has placed within every human being a hunger to worship. God wants to satisfy that hunger as we direct our devotion and adoration toward Him—the one true God.

Worship is expressed in countless ways in many different church traditions and cultures. Yet, true God-honoring, Christ centered, Spirit-led worship always

involves expressions of gratitude, awe, and devotion. Simply put, worship is a marriage of two words—“worth” and “ship.” When we worship with sincerity, we are literally expressing back to God His enormous “worth” or value in our lives.

Why Worship?

God does not want you to worship Him because He needs your worship. He wants you to worship Him because You need that kind of intimate connection for YOURSELF and, because He is completely worthy of your devotion!

When you worship the Lord, you acknowledge that there is a Higher Being who is greater than you. You acknowledge that there IS a living God and that He is Lord over your life. This will cause you to draw upon His strength for victory in every situation you face.

Worship will lift you up and OUT of the troubles of this world and set you in the realm of His Spirit where the Lord can shower you with His Presence and confirm that ***HE IS IN CONTROL*** of all things!

There is an old hymn that says, “Oh what fellowship, Oh what joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.” True worship brings us to that peaceful place where we exchange our worries for the incredible joy of intimate friendship with the Living God.

How Do I worship God?

Worshipping God and praising Him are typically thought of in reference to music, but there are actually many ways to express genuine worship to God.

The Bible says, *“Shout to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn, shout for joy before the Lord, the King”* (Psalm 98: 4-6). Making music with instruments, singing, and shouts of joy are all expressions of praise to God. If you are a musician then worship the Lord with

your instrument. He has given you the talent and ability, and when you play for Him you are giving Him glory and worship. As you do this, both God and you will be blessed.

One of the best “instruments” I can play are my own two hands. “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy” (Psalm 47:1). Handclapping is a form of praise.

You can also lift your hands toward Heaven in a sign of worship to the Lord. “*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord*” (Psalm 147:2). David said in Psalms 63:4, “*I will lift up my hands in Your name.*”

The Bible is filled with verses telling us that singing is a form of worship. This one verse alone tells us to sing four times: “*Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises*” (Psalm 47:6). You do not have to be an expert vocalist to sing to the Lord. God hears you singing from your heart, not your vocal cords!

Shouts of joy are also worship. There are more than 30 references in the Bible to the people of God **shouting** (Psalm 5:11 says, “*Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.*” Psalm 32:11 says, “*Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!*” Psalm 47:1 says, “*O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*”

Although shouting to God may sound odd, think of it this way: if you were at a sporting event and your team just took the field, what do you usually do? You shout! If the team you were rooting for scored a point, or better yet, won the game, would you be excited? Can you see yourself shouting for victory? The whole stadium would be filled with loud and clapping and shouting! Well, God has fought and won a mighty battle for YOU! It is perfectly understandable why a Christian would want to shout with excitement, joy, and victory to God!

Some people dance before the Lord as they worship Him. The Bible says

that the Spirit of the Lord came upon King David and, “*David danced before the Lord with all his might*” (2 Samuel 6:14).

Giving = Worship

A special way to worship God is through the privilege of giving monetary gifts to Him. These gifts are often referred to as “tithes,” which simply means giving God back 10% of what **He** has given **YOU**.

The Bible teaches about tithing in Malachi 3:8-12:

“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will rebuke the devourer for your sake, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit before their time,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

There is a clear progression in this passage, starting with God’s command to give, followed by a promise from God, and then blessings for those who obey the Lord. It’s clear that God requires His people to give Him their tithe, and if they withhold it from God, it is **robbery!**

The core issue to God is our heart attitude. Tithing is one way that God is asking us, “Do you trust me?” A godly perspective sees that everything you own is God’s. Tithing simply is a way of returning to God a portion of what He has blessed you with. In doing so, you demonstrate your thankfulness to Him for His provision in your life and your devotion to Him in every area of your life. If you are concerned that you do not make enough money to give 10% of your income to the Lord, this is an opportunity for you to grow in your faith. Remember, God not only deserves your money, but withholding it from Him is robbery!

Don't forget the wonderful and mighty promises in Malachi! When you honor God by bringing Him your tithe, He will bless the trust you are placing in Him. God is faithful and He will honor you for your obedience!

What Is the Storehouse?

In Malachi, we are instructed to bring the tithe to the "storehouse." There is much debate about what constitutes a storehouse. I believe that in the literal sense, a storehouse is the place where PROVISION is kept for the needs of the people. When a person honors God by bringing their tithe into the storehouses, God's promise is not just to bless the crops of farmers. Your "crop" may be your family or a business or a job. Remember, God is faithful and He will bless you for your obedience!

On a parallel track, I believe that your spiritual storehouse can be the church or any ministry that is providing substantial spiritual nourishment in your life.

The apostle Paul puts it this way to the Corinthian Church, "*If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things*" (1 Corinthians 9:11)? The Believers in Corinth had great material wealth, but they did not place an appropriate value on the spiritual investment that Paul and other leaders were making in their lives.

As you grow in the Lord, ask Him to give you discernment about the ministries that are helping you grow in Christ and how you should sow into those "storehouses."

Seed Sowing

Just because the tithe is discussed in the Old Testament does not mean that God only intended for it to take place in those times. No, God still requires the tithe from His people today.

Many Christians have believed the lie that since tithing was taught under the Old Testament (the Law), they do not need to give God 10% of their income. They argue that we now live under the New Testament (grace) and no longer have to honor the principle of tithing.

I wish I could share with you in this book about God's wonderful principles of giving and receiving, of Seedtime and Harvest, of living in the Covenant Promises of God and His plan to prosper you. But for now, let me just drop this "seed" into your heart, and later you can study for yourself the principles of tithing and giving in God's Word in both the Old and New testaments.

Here are a few examples for you to consider:

- Going all the way back to the earliest chapters of the Old Testament, even before God gave the Law to Moses, Abraham made offerings to Melchizedek, the high priest at that time (Genesis 14: 17-20).
- When God makes His Covenant with Noah never to destroy the earth again with a flood, He promises him, "*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest...shall not cease*" (Genesis 8:22). God declares that the planting of Seeds **will** result in Harvests.
- Later in the book of Exodus, God gives the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai where the principle of tithing is established as a law for God's people.
- Then in the New Testament, Paul reinforces this principle of Giving and Sowing and Reaping when he writes,

“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

In the very beginning of His Word, God establishes the principle of tithing and Seedtime and Harvest, and then He carries those principles throughout the Old and New Testaments. When you give back to the Lord a minimum of 10% of what He has given you, your gift becomes a “Seed” which you are Sowing into the Kingdom of God. God then takes this Seed and uses it to create a Harvest with which to bless your life and the lives of others! The Lord wants to use you and your resources for His work. What a privilege to partner with God.

Never give your tithes to God begrudgingly or out of resentment. Giving back to God what He has blessed you with is truly an extension of your worship and love to Him.

2 Corinthians 9:7 says, *“Every man according as he has purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

Examine your heart and your motives for giving, and then when you choose to honor and obey God through your tithes, you will begin to experience God’s blessings and your provisions in a new and exciting way!

Offerings

Offerings are different from giving God 10% of your income; they are over and above your tithe. When you give a special offering to God, it needs to be a gift that *costs* you something. This is the concept of “sacrificial giving.”

An example of this is in 2 Samuel 24. King David was building an altar to give an offering to God when a man named Araunah saw him. Araunah bowed

before David and offered to give him all the supplies the King needed for his offering. King David told him, “No, I insist on paying for it. I will not sacrifice to God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” (verse 24). David then paid the man for the supplies and made his offering to God.

You see, offerings of worship that are meaningless to you or cost you nothing are not true worship at all. When you give an offering to God, let it be special to you...let it cost you something...let it be important and meaningful to you. This is true whether you give financially through tithes and offerings or you sacrifice your time. God knows your time is precious to you. When you take quality time out of your day to recognize Him in worship or service to others, He will not only bless you, but He will also reward you by giving time back to you. How He does this is a mystery. From my life-long relationship with God and countless personal experiences, I know it's true.

Worshipping God 24/7—

Worshipping God is not something reserved only for church. On the contrary, worship is an attitude. Worship is something that you carry in your heart throughout the week. A unique way you can praise the Lord is in ordinary activities you do throughout the day. This kind of moment-by-moment connection to the Lord is what we refer to as “walking with Christ.”

The Bible says, “*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*” (Colossians 3:17).

This means that whether you are doing housework, schoolwork, business-related work, or whatever your hands find to do, do the very best you can, recognizing that it is accomplished through God's strength. When you do this, you are actually worshipping and giving God glory, and you will be blessed and rewarded.

God's Word says, “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Whatever we find ourselves doing, we are to do it by the Spirit and in

recognition that we are a living vessel of worship to the Lord.

When you think of God as your loving boss, your teacher, or your audience for who you work, you will feel an incredible motivation to do your job well. When you strive for excellence to honor God in your work, you will find yourself excelling in life and you will be blessed. *“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed”* (Proverbs 16:3).

Prayer

Like worship, prayer is not something that you have to approach timidly. Prayer is simply talking to God, and you can talk with Him as you would with a close friend.

Just as there are many ways to worship the Lord, there is not one specific way to pray. In fact, the Bible has many stories of individuals who prayed for many different reasons and in many different ways. Perhaps the most common image people have today of prayer is on your knees with hands folded, head bowed, and eyes closed.

Biblical Examples of Prayer

The Bible says that three times a day, when Daniel was at home in an upstairs room, he got down on his knees and prayed. It also says that when Daniel prayed he gave thanks to God and asked Him for help (Daniel 6:10-11). Note that even though Daniel needed help with specific areas in his life, he first approached God with a grateful heart. He did not ask anything of God before he had given thanks.

Genesis 17:3 says that Abraham fell on his face before God. Abraham came to God with complete reverence and humbleness.

In Mark 11:41, Jesus told His disciples, *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And **when***

you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” He told His followers to **stand** in faith believing God.

Another time, Jesus lifted His eyes up to heaven and prayed to His Father with His eyes wide open (John 11:41).

When Hannah (a godly woman in the Old Testament) went to the temple to pray, Scripture says that she was “*speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard*” (1 Samuel 1:13). God answered her prayer for a child because of her sincerity of heart, not her posture.

However, in Psalm 142:1, David writes, “*I cry aloud with my voice to the Lord; I make my supplication with my voice to the Lord.*”

As you can see, there is no right or wrong way to pray. You can stand or kneel, have your eyes open or shut, and speak audibly to God or talk silently to Him in our heart. Prayer is not bound by stereotype or tradition or position; just allow it to be comfortable for you and a matter of the heart.

So What Do you Say to God?

When you pray, tell God how much you love Him and thank Him for everything He has done for you. Worship Him. Psalm 100:4 says, “*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name.*” Thank Him for what you are grateful for. He is the only one worthy of praise and honor.

If you are not sure how to praise God, many of the Psalms are examples of great prayers of praise you can use to help you pray. For example, Psalm 104 is a beautiful psalm of praise in which the psalmist recognizes the many things that God does for His children.

When you pray ask the Lord to forgive you for sinful thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions. Be specific in confessing to Him what you have done wrong,

and be assured that He stands joyfully ready to forgive. The Apostle John writes in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* In Matthew 6:14, as a part of Jesus’ teaching about prayer, He commands us to forgive others who sin against us. One of the greatest ways that we reflect Christ is to cultivate a merciful and compassionate heart toward others.

Beware of the devil’s desires to use the shame of unconfessed sin to rob you of your peace. God is not out to punish you. He is making a holy invitation to you, through prayers of “confession,” to become unburdened by your sins and by any offense you need to forgive others. As you boldly approach Jesus, your Advocate, to receive forgiveness, you will experience the restoration of pure fellowship with the Father and rekindle the “joy of your salvation.” Amen!

Praying With Faith Is A Must!

If you need guidance or direction in your life just ask God. In James 1:5-8, we’re encouraged to pursue God’s wisdom in a spirit of faith, *“If any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think to receive anything from the Lord; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.”* God will give you wisdom when you ask; all you need to do believe!

Hebrews 11:16 tells us that anyone who comes to God must believe that He is God, and that He will reward those who diligently seek Him. If you have a need in your life—in your family, your finances, or your health—present it to God. The Bible says we do not have to be anxious about **anything**, *but in everything by prayer and petition we can present our requests to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).*

Be persistent with your prayers, and God will reward your persistence.

Psalm 55:17 says, *“In the morning, noon, and in the night, continue to pray and cry aloud; and God will hear your voice.”* Do not give up; pray with consistency! *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”* (James 5:16). God will reward your persistence. You cannot expect a door to open without knocking first. Jesus encourages us, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8). Persistent prayer is an opportunity to express an ever-deepening hunger for God and to develop a confidence, that in “due season”, the Lord will hear your cries.

Share with your Savior about your day, and tell Him how you feel and what you need. Pray for others who need His help...loved ones...friends...co-workers...those in authority over you and over this nations...even your enemies. God loves to hear from you, His child, and wants you to talk with Him about all the concerns on your heart.

This is how I often picture prayer: prayer is simply crawling onto the lap and into the loving arms of my Heavenly Father and telling Him what’s on my heart—with honesty and trust.

Spending time with God worshipping Him and talking to Him is the single most important thing you can do, now as a new Believer and years from now when you have grown and matured in an intimate relationship with Him.

I encourage you not to allow **anything** to interfere with your devotion times with God. Determine that you will come into His Presence to worship Him and to pray. Decide that you want to be transformed into the image of His Son, your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In this way, your life will be blessed as you consistently and persistently choose His ways.

Chapter 3

Get Involved!

Reading your Bible, worshiping the Lord, and praying are all very practical ways of feeding your spirit and strengthening your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. These are all things you can do on your own. But God knows that standing alone is not easy or healthy, and He intends for you to have support. In fact, He has made us to live in the “community” of other Believers. This is why it is important to find a church where you can learn and grow with other Christians who believe the same way you do. Discipleship, protection, encouragement, and care come from finding fellowship with a body of believers.

Since you have just made a decision to follow Christ it may be likely that you do not have many Christian friends. Depending on how your family responds to your decision to serve Christ may leave you feeling like the only Christian in the world. If you find this to be the case, do not be discouraged! This world is filled with millions of believers. That is one reason why going to church helps encourage you. When you step into a room of people who love God just like you, sometimes you get a small glimpse of Heaven and the joy you feel can be overwhelming.

Why Go to Church?

The priests were instructed in the Old Testament to be sure to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. The Sabbath day is a day of worship and rest. God knew how important church would be to us and he reminds us in His Word to attend.

There is another verse that is interesting. Romans 10:17 says, “*Faith comes by hearing the word of God.*” Where can you hear the word of God? One obvious place is in church from the mouth of your pastor and friends. God has gifted, called, and anointed many people to leadership in churches. Those people are there to help strengthen you, guide you, and fill you up with God’s teaching

and His Word. Remember always to take what you hear and learn and test it with the Word of God and prayer.

The Word of God says not to forsake assembling together with other Believers, but “encourage one another all the more...” (Hebrews 10:25). God wants us to feel connected to Him with others and to be encouraged by our fellowship with people who have a common love and affection for Jesus.

In addition to offering strength, encouragement, and instruction from God’s Word, getting involved in a local church will give you a chance to worship the Lord with music and songs. The Bible says, “God inhabits the praises of His people” (Psalm 22:3). Worshiping with other Believers can be a time of refreshment, peace, and joy as you feel the very presence of God fill the sanctuary! Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). The sweet presence of God is welcomed into many churches every week as Christians join together to offer up their praises to Him.

Many churches have Sunday school classes. You might have attended Sunday School as a child, but it is not just for children. There are classes and Bible studies of all sorts for adults. These small group settings can be a great time to really strengthen your knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. They can be a time to ask questions from a mature Christian, and receive feedback from the things you have studied on your own.

Finding a local church can also give you an outlet for serving God with your time, talent, and treasures. God has given you abilities that may be of great help to your church. There are sure to be many areas to volunteer and help out. Your church is to be an extension of your family, they are your brothers and sisters in Christ. If they need help in an area in which you are well gifted or enjoy, perhaps you should pray and ask the Lord how He would like you to get involved.

The Apostle Paul says to the church in Rome, “*As we have many members*

in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another, having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us” (Romans 12:4-6). God has given you wonderful gifts and, He delights when you use them for His glory. Simply put, the Church is most healthy when all of the members are contributing their gifts for the vitality of the body.

A piano that is not played is simply a piece of furniture. When played well, it brings the joy of song. Let God play His “melody” through your life. Pray and ask the Lord to show you ways that you can serve.

How Do I Choose A Church?

You might be saying to yourself, how do I know which church to attend? There are a lot of different churches today with different “labels”. Which one is the right one? Some churches “believe” one way. Others believe differently. How do you choose?

First of all...pray. Ask God to lead and direct you to the church where He wants you to worship and serve Him.

Second, seek a church that believes the “whole” Bible. So many people and churches today have found it “convenient” or politically correct to “slice and dice” the Scripture, to pick and choose what they want to believe and “throwing out” what they want to reject. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16, “*All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.*” It doesn’t say “some scripture” it says “*all scripture.*” The Bible also says we are not to add or take away from the words in the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19).

As much as I would like to say that all ministers of the Gospel are right in their interpretation of the Bible all the time, that just isn’t so. As fallible human beings, even pastors can “miss it” at times. That’s why it is important that you always ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart about what a particular preacher

may be saying and let you know whether it lines up with God's truth or not.

Trust God to give you peace about where you are to worship.

You can also hear the word of God on Christian radio programs and stations. Here again, just because a person is on radio or television doesn't mean they speak God's truth all the time. Remember the verse that I told you earlier for 1 John 4:1, "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*"

Sharing Your Faith

Your new-found faith in Jesus is something that God wants you to feel comfortable sharing with your family and friends, or with anyone who may ask you about being a Christian. The Bible says to always be ready to give an account for the joy that you have inside (2 Timothy 4:2). People around you are sure to notice a change in your attitude, lifestyle, and behavior so you will need to be ready to tell them why you are living so differently. What God has done in your life is an exciting thing! You have been brought from darkness into light and, you are on your way to Heaven!

Sharing with someone what God has done in your life is called sharing your testimony. When you testify to someone about how God's grace and mercy has saved you, this is so important, because the person you are talking to may not know Jesus. With your help, he or she could come to the saving knowledge of Christ! How wonderful to think that someone could be in Heaven for eternity because you had the courage to share with them about the grace of God!

Sharing your testimony is not just a nice thing to do; it is a joyful responsibility. Jesus commanded His disciples to go and tell the world about him. Now that you know Christ died to forgive you of your sins and offer eternal life in Heaven with Him instead of eternal hell without Him, you will want to share this good news with others. Keeping this truth to yourself would be a great waste.

Could you imagine if there was a great medical breakthrough for cancer and the doctors kept the information to themselves? So many people who would benefit from that knowledge would perish if the doctors remained silent. The truth is that the grace of God is greater news than any vaccine or cure! His salvation message is the ultimate cure and answer for every person in this world.

Sharing the Good News of the Gospel

At some time, everyone's life will come to an end. However, few are willing to accept that their spirit will live forever.

Eternity is not a choice. Whether you spend that eternity in Heaven or hell, you will spend it somewhere. Believing or not believing in eternity does not change the fact that it will come one day. Jesus has done all that He will do to make it possible for all to spend eternity in Heaven with Him. But, He has left to us, His children, the responsibility of letting the world know this good news.

The word "Gospel" means "good news," and the Gospel is God's Word of encouragement and hope. The Bible is not only a record of history, but it also provides answers to people's struggles, and so much more.

When you write a letter to a friend or family member, you must place it in the hands of the post office, trusting that they will deliver it to the address you have designated. The words you wrote most likely are special and written with a purpose. What a great disappointment it would be if that letter never arrived, if the post office forgot or simply chose not to deliver your letter.

In the same way, God has a "letter" to be delivered to the world, and He has entrusted us with His Word and the Gospel message it contains. Like the postal carrier, we must be faithful to deliver to the world the good news about Jesus. God does not make this an option. We need to be prepared to share the Gospel, "in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

He doesn't say, "If you remember, let your friends know who I am." He

does not say, “If you get around to it, I would appreciate you telling your family about My Son, Jesus, and all He has done for them.” He doesn’t say, “If it doesn’t make you too uncomfortable, would you share the Gospel with your co-workers.”

No, actually, He makes it very clear in His Word that we are to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus says to His disciples, before He is taken up into Heaven, for them to go to all the world and make Christian disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that He has told them to do (Matthew 28:19-20). This is our “Great Commission.”

Please understand that, this verse is not commanding you to go to the nations of the world, although God may stir within you the desire to go to a foreign country to share the Gospel with the people there. But, you have your own circle of friends and family whom no one has the ability to impact quite like yourself. These people are your priority. Once you have reached others for Christ, then they will tell others, and they will tell others also, until the whole world is reached with the good news of Jesus Christ.

You may be saying to yourself, “I don’t know enough about God and the Bible to share my faith?” In the Book of John, Jesus told a Samaritan woman by a well how she could be saved. Her life was a mess, but she gave her heart to Jesus and immediately went back to her town to tell others what Jesus had said. As a result of her testimony, “many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him, because of the word of the woman who testified” (John 4:39). Isn’t that amazing? She was only a Christian for a few hours, and yet God used her to bring others to faith.

Don’t worry about what you “don’t know.” Like the Samaritan woman, God can use what you do know to lead others to Him. Rejoice that God has entrusted you with His precious Gospel; Do not be afraid to share this wonderful, life-giving message with others!

And remember, you are not responsible for someone accepting Jesus as Savior. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Your responsibility is to share your testimony of Jesus with truth and grace.

Chapter Four

Waging War

There are two spiritual forces in this world. You can think of them as light and darkness, or good and evil. Call them what you will they are very simply God and Satan. In the beginning of time when God created all the angels, He created them with a free will, including the choice to serve and worship Him. Lucifer was a very beautiful angel who appears to have been created to lead the worship in Heaven (Ezekiel 28:13). In fact, the Bible describes his very being, his body as an assemblage of musical instruments.

One day Lucifer began to swell with pride. He wanted all the attention and adoration of Heaven, and he believed he could get it. One third of all the angels sided with Lucifer in his efforts to overthrow God and take His throne, and they turned against God, their Creator and Lord. Because of this, God cast Lucifer (Satan) and the angels who followed him (demons) to an eternity of damnation and a future of destruction in the fiery pits of hell (Isaiah 14:12-15). As a result of this rebellion, these demons have been actively assaulting mankind to this day.

The truth is that God has 100% victory over Satan. Satan is already defeated. He has lost. He *will* spend eternity in hell. Satan is a liar and deceiver.

His agenda is to “*kill, steal and destroy.*” Jesus, on the other hand said that He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

A Spiritual Battle

Ephesians 6:10-12 clearly tells us that our battle is not a physical one, but a spiritual one. A battle that must be waged in the spirit realm: “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,*

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Although this may sound like a science fiction movie, I assure you it is very real.

There is a spirit world, and it is very real, just as real as the natural one in which you and I live, but this spiritual realm is invisible to your eyes. Within this realm, there was a battle raging for your soul, but God won when you called on the name of Jesus! When you asked Jesus to forgive your sins and come into your heart He did just that. Jesus now lives inside of you. God has delivered you from the kingdom and power of darkness and translated you into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:12-14).

God’s “Down Payment”

The Spirit of God is a down payment for your life. 2 Corinthians 5:5 says, “Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” One day the Lord will return. The Holy Spirit lives inside of you and Jesus blood that He shed on the cross covers your sins. Jesus has purchased your life by His blood He shed on the cross and He has deposited His Spirit within you! You are God’s property, purchased at the highest price. One day the Lord will return, and when He does, He will claim you as His own because of the seal of God’s Holy Spirit that is upon you.

Acts 20:28 says, “He bought the church of God with his own blood.” Jesus paid the ultimate price by giving His life. God would never have allowed His only Son to suffer and die for a Church that would be bound by limitations. NO WAY!

The Power Within

You must realize that you have **100%** victory over the power of the enemy because of Jesus’ power within you. At the very name of Jesus all demons on earth and under the earth tremble. However, just because you are a child of God

does not mean the forces of Satan have given up on you. On the contrary, he is aggravated now more than ever because you have left his clutches. You were once bound with him to an eternity in hell, but now you are entitled to an abundant life and an eternity in heaven with a loving God!

Satan may try to come against you, to tempt you, to entice you into sin, and try to deceive you. When you find the devil trying to steal you life, your family, your marriage, your job, or your finances, you need to do what James has instructed for believers to do: “*submit to God, resist the devil, and he must flee from you*” (James 4:7). Speak to him out loud and command him to flee in the name of Jesus. For the rest of your life, there will be spiritual battles. But never forget, God won the war with Satan when Christ paid for our sins on the cross.

Never be afraid or intimidated by the power of the enemy, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (I John 4:4).

Jesus promised us, “*Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 18:18). In the name of Jesus, you have the power to bind the spiritual forces of darkness that come against you, your family and the circumstances of your life—whatever they may be.

This is what spiritual warfare is all about: Binding the powers of darkness in the name of Jesus Christ and by the “delegated authority” He has given us. Delegated authority is what a local policeman carries. If his power isn’t sufficient, he has the entire police department behind him. If that isn’t enough, state law enforcement will back him up. And, if even more might is required, the entire US military stands behind that local officer. While you may be a single new Believer, the power of the God of all eternity is behind you, in every trial and in every spiritual battle you face.

Victory Over Sickness

Once we bind principalities and powers in the spirit world, we are to loose

the Spirit of God over the circumstances and situations we are facing.

Let me give you an example. Suppose you are facing a physical illness. Where does sickness come from? It comes from Satan. Sickness is a result of the curse that came upon the world when Adam and Eve sinned and disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. God never intended us to experience sin, sickness, or death.

But, when Adam and Eve used their free will to disobey God, and eat of the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they brought a curse upon every man and woman who would ever be born. The result was sin, sickness, and death entered the world. Thank God that He did not leave us in that state! He sent His Son to suffer and die so that we could have life, not just in eternity, but here in this life, too. Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world and paid the death penalty for man's sin.

Understand that sickness comes from Satan. God does not bring sickness into our lives. Our health is part of what Satan tries to steal, as John 10:10 reminds us. So, what can you do?:

1. Come against the spirit of sickness and disease in the name of Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit, bind the spirit of sickness over your life or the life of another on this earth.

2. Ask God to bind the spirit of sickness and disease in the heavens.

3. Release on this earth the spirit of a sound body. Release the spirit of health and healing. Release the Spirit of the resurrected Christ who lives within you to quicken your body. Romans 8:11 says, *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.”*

4. Ask God to release the spirit of healing over your body. Jesus taught about the power we have to “bind” and “loose.” He said that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in

heaved. We need to remember this scripture!

God does not always bring a miraculous healing. Sometimes He is using our hardship to create a greater dependence on Him. Yet, I can say with confidence, that everyone who knows Jesus as Savior will experience healing—sometimes it will be instant, sometimes it will be over time, and ALL sickness will be eliminated in Heaven!

If you don't experience immediate healing, you continue to press into the Lord and ask in faith.

You Are on the Winning Team!

Fear not. God is on your side. He is also living in you. Nothing can harm you unless you allow it to. And no hardship can come into your life that God cannot use to make you more like Jesus. The Bible reminds us, *“When tempted no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death” (James 1:13-15).* There is no temptation that can overtake you unless you give into it.

And remember!!! You do not have to fight alone. If you try, you will surely fail. Paul says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

When you find yourself being enticed, look for a way out. God has promised He will always give you a way of escape. Paul writes, *“No temptation has seized you except that which is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand under it” (I Corinthians 10:13).*

Do not expect the way out to be displayed in flashing neon lights or for God to mysteriously transport you to someplace else. Oftentimes, your way out is to boldly say “NO!” God has given you the strength you need to withstand temptation. It is up to you to access His strength.

You are in a spiritual war and you must now learn how to defend yourself. Just like with any battle, it is essential to protect yourself, to put on armor, or pick up a weapon. The Apostle Paul uses armor and battle as a metaphor for how we guard our hearts and minds for Christ. Ephesians 5 emphatically declares:

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand, stand firm then. With the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the saints” (Ephesians 5:12-18).

There is a war waging in the spiritual realm for your soul. When you put on the armor of God and pick up the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God), in the name of Jesus you will stand against any foe. Don't sit back and wait for the enemy to come to you. Don't fight a **defensive war** in the spirit realm. You cannot watch passively as the enemy tears at the very fabric of your life! Get on the **offensive!** Go on the attack in the name of Jesus Christ!

Spiritual Warfare

Most of the times spiritual battles will manifest itself in the natural world as the enemy tries to attack you or your family. When this happens, stand firm in Jesus name! Take authority over the power of the enemy!

There is no question that you are at war. The question is, “Are you willing to fight?” Jesus declared, *“the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12).* It is time to put on the armor of God, and

become spiritually aggressive with the forces attacking you life. As I already notes, Jesus has given us the authority to bind and loose in the earth and in the heavenlies where spiritual battles are fought. It is time to wage spiritual warfare through prayer. Call out against anything that is coming against you or your family and bind up that spirit.

Be specific about the point of battle. If it's an attack against you or your family, you declare to the devil, "In Jesus name, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of God's Word, 'get out of my life and the life of my loved ones!'" And, you continue to pray. The devil doesn't give up easily, but we have the "greater power" within us. You continue to pray through until you experience God's victory.

In Luke 10:19 Jesus said, "*Behold I give to you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*" You no longer have to handle life's struggles and problems in your own strength. Don't even try it! Now is the time to rely on God's strength and power within you to defeat every power of the enemy.

Some times your problems may be intangible. You might feel a spirit of depression, oppression, or loneliness pressing in on you. Fight these spirits in the same way. Call their name out and bind them in the name of Jesus Christ. Speak God's promises in the scriptures out loud over yourself. Fight for your life; do not give up! When you are weak, the Lord will be your strength. The devil may try to come against you but he cannot harm you! You are a child of God!

Chapter Five

The Return of Christ

Death could not hold our Savior. He went to the depths of hell and tore the keys of death and the grave from Satan. On the third day, Jesus rose again. After Jesus rose from the dead, He lived with his disciples on this earth for 40 days teaching, preaching, and proving that He was who He claimed to be—Jesus Christ the Son of the living God!

This single factor is what sets Christianity apart from every other religion. You see, all other gods died and are still dead. Not a single one of them could do what Jesus did for us. Not one of them conquered death and the grave, lived to tell about it, and offered the way to true life.

Jesus Is Preparing a Home for You!

When it was time for Jesus to return to Heaven, He did not leave this world through death. He ascended into the clouds and was taken to heaven before the disciple's eyes (Acts 1:9).

Before He died, Jesus made a promise to His disciples. In John 14:1-6, Jesus tells them, *“In my Father’s house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the place where I am going.”*

Then Thomas, one of Jesus’ disciples, asks Him how they could know where He is going so that they can be sure to get there. Jesus answered, *“I am the Way the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). Following Jesus is the way to life.

Only One Way!

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to Heaven to prepare a place for them, and that one-day He would come back and take them to be where He is. One day Jesus is returning to earth to get the Church (His “Bride”) and bring us to Heaven to dwell forever. Until that day, we are to follow the Way. That way was made clear. There is only one way to Heaven and it is through Jesus Christ. So many people stumble over Jesus as the only means of salvation. Instead, they should be thrilled that God has provided a way at all. Praise God for His marvelous provision for those of us who trust in Jesus!

The “Last Days”

When you hear people talking about the “Last Days,” the “Second Coming,” and the “Rapture” of the Church, they are referring to the day that Jesus will return. No one knows the exact day or the hour that Christ will return, but we do know that God is faithful to His Word, and one day our Savior will be back like He promised.

Christ’ return will not be like His first coming when He was born and placed in a humble manger (in fact, He was born and laid into a “cattle trough”). His return will be in heavenly glory with trumpet sounds as He comes victoriously for His children. The apostle Paul talks about this day in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, *“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”*

Paul goes on to encourage us to “comfort one another” with this good news. I know life can be hard at times, but it is important that you cultivate an eternal perspective, looking to our future “homecoming” with such eagerness that we find comfort and strength to live well for Jesus right now!

Paul assured his readers in the rest of this letter that the coming of the Lord

is not a day to be feared. In verse 9 and 10 of the same chapter he states, “*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.*” Paul urges his readers not to become obsessed with the Second Coming of Christ that they forget to live for today.

As Christians, we surely are excited for the day that our Lord will return. Until then, it is important to live as Paul explained in verse 8, “*Let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*”

We should live each day to the fullest. We are never promised tomorrow, so always share the light and love of Christ until we hear that trumpet sound!
Be Blessed and Be a Blessing

What an exciting life you have stepped into! There are so many wonderful blessings that await you not only in this life, but also in the life to come. I hope this book has helped open a door that shows you what it means to have a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, what it means to be “born again,” and what Christianity is all about.

I have tried to explain some basic spiritual truths the Bible holds. I know you can appreciate the fact that each heading or chapter in this book could have been a separate book or volumes of books in and of themselves. But, this was not my intent.

Most importantly, I hope this book has helped your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ get started in the right direction.

The angels in heaven have surely rejoice over your salvation, and I too join them with thanksgiving for you!

No matter what life’s path brings your way, remember always to trust in the Lord. He will never leave you or forsake you. God is a faithful God. He has brought you this far and He will see you through!

My friend, as you begin your new walk with Christ, I pray that...

- The light of Christ's love shines ever so brightly through you so that no one will be able to deny the difference in your life.
- You overflow with the joy of the Lord and learn to draw strength from Him.
- His unsurpassable peace will fill your heart and your mind at all times.
- You learn to rest in His amazing grace and be refreshed by His mercy each morning.
- You learn to trust God's hand for guidance and look to Him for direction in your life.
- You be filled with the power and fire of the Holy Spirit.
- You have a hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- You walk with Christ daily, living a life that draws others towards Him.

Press on, my dear friend, to win the prize to which God has called you. Shine your light brightly so that all men may see Christ in you. And one day, you will stand before your Lord Jesus in Heaven and hear the marvelous words of your Savior and Friend, "Well done my good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master" (Matthew 25:21)! *Amen.*

Always remember. ***We Are Here For You!***