

Forward

¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power.

(NKJV 2Timothy 3:1-5)

There are more threats against Christians in our society today than ever. The enemy does not have any real new arguments to weaken our faith so much as he can use modern technology and the resulting competition for our time to launch more frequent and confusing attacks as well as keep us away from deep study of God's Word. Now more than ever we must be ready and willing to make the sacrifice of time to prepare ourselves for battle with the enemy through both deep study and uninterrupted prayer. We must not do this not just for ourselves but also to have any hope of convincing our next generation to stay strong in the Faith.

¹But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

(NKJV 2Peter 2:1-3)

A Disciple Whom Jesus Loves

²³Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.
(NKJV John 13:23)

Part One Path to Discipleship

Introduction

1. To Begin
2. Understanding the Battlefield
3. Understanding the Spirit
4. Understanding Faith
5. Understanding Worship
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Part Two From Disciple to Called

1. Understanding Discipleship
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3. Understanding the Call
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5. Understanding the Commission

Appendix 1 Understanding Salvation

Appendix 2 Understanding the Tabernacle

- ¹ O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.
- ² Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.
- ³ Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways.
- ⁴ For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
- ⁵ Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
- ⁶ *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.
(KJV Psalm 139:1-6)

Introduction

¹Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. ²For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, ⁴God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

(NKJV Hebrews 2:1-4)

During our Christian walk we learn a lot about the Bible and our spiritual life as followers of Christ. For those that are fortunate enough to come from Christian homes we start learning at a very early age. We learn from parents, Sunday school, and sermons we attend. But, unlike a formal education, most of us don't ever get to take a class that teaches us step by step the basic fundamentals of becoming good disciples. The purpose of this study is to organize things we learn in such a way as to become a step by step instruction. To see where this can be of benefit consider the following verses:

*¹The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. ²And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. ³And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, **Behold, a sower went forth to sow;** ⁴And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: ⁵Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁶And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: ⁸But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. ⁹Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

(KJV Matthew 13:1-9)

¹⁸Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. ²⁰But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. ²²He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. ²³But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

(KJV Matthew 13:18-23)

Notice that type three is unfruitful but not dead. If someone who cared were to come along and do some weeding, maybe add some fertilize, this plant still has a chance to become very productive. This study would be of direct help to those in this condition. But also, it could be a lesson in gardening to the type fours, which, after a little weeding around themselves, could assist their choking brothers and sisters. It is even possible that it could help those that are type one, by hearing a little more maybe a deeper cultivation will occur and the ground become ready for a new planting.

The Word is your sword for battle. As the Word is your weapon the Holy Spirit must be your instructor. No person can teach you the Bible; it must come from the Spirit. I might add that with the Holy Spirit as your teacher it would be a very good idea to stay in good communication with him, by prayer!

¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
Amen.

(NKJV Matthew 28:18-20)

Part One: Path to Discipleship

1. To Begin

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

(NKJV John 1:1-5)

As Christians most of us remember well the beginning of our walk with God, through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus and the strength of His Holy Spirit. Our beginning did not start with those trips to Sunday school or other church activities. It began when we realized we were sinners in rebellion against God and accepted Jesus as our Savior. Does this mean all the activities in church before we accepted Jesus were meaningless? No, they helped plant the seed of truth within us so that we could realize that we were lost and in need of a savior. If you are not sure of when or how your life with Jesus started, I strongly suggest reading the appendix one of this study and making sure all the steps to receiving salvation have been taken. It does not matter how long we have known that God is real, if we have not repented of our sins and asked for forgiveness. It does not matter how long we have known that Jesus is his only true Son, if we have not accepted Jesus as our Savior. It does not matter how long we have been attending church, if we have not accepted Jesus as our Lord and Master. Just like the original disciples, we must begin our walk with Christ.

Once we have started it becomes essential that we continue to grow in our relationship with God. We must become disciples of Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to mold us into a vessel that is pleasing to our Creator. This is often hard to try to do alone. Our Sunday school classes can appear to teach us more about how to deal with the things of this life and less on how to come closer to God. The sermons we hear seem to tell us where we need to be, but not how to get there. This can lead to two dangerous conditions, discouragement or complacency.

¹⁴“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

²²“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”” (NKJV Revelation 3:14-22)

Even if we started down the road to discipleship, it is so easy in our modern environment to find ourselves living our lives for our own interest without realizing how far we have gotten from the will of our Creator. We can spend some time in worship, a little time reading the Bible, and a bit of prayer time thinking things are good in our lives. But we need to realize this is exactly the attitude of the Laodiceans as recorded by John in the book of Revelation (3:14-22). When faced with the message of the lukewarm church it comes to mind how important a message this is for others to hear. But the problem is that we can often deny that we ourselves are lukewarm.

By the way, even if you are a believer and feel you are on the path that the Lord has set before you, I would ask if you know how to teach someone the steps to becoming a devoted disciple. If not, this study will still be of value as the Bible teaches us all to become teachers:

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

(NKJV Hebrews 5:12-14)

¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

(NKJV 1 Peter 3:15-16)

²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

(NKJV 2 Timothy 4:2)

Regardless of where we think we currently are spiritually, what we need is a good examination. Our opinion of ourselves often does not match the opinion that God has of us. We cannot know where God wants to take us until he is ready to reveal it to us. All we can do is be ready and waiting. How can we be ready if we do not know where it is we will go? We must allow him to do the preparations in us. He is the one who must search us and reveal what needs to be done in our lives so that we are prepared and ready.

At times it does not matter if we have any noticeable symptoms; an examination by a skilled physician will reveal medical problems. How much more so is God qualified to do a spiritual examination into the very depths of our hearts? The key is will we listen to the results? Will we make the necessary changes? Will we even ask for the examination or avoid it feeling more comfortable in ignorance? Just as we cannot afford to wait too long before seeking medical help we also cannot afford to wait too long for spiritual help. Are you ready to pray and ask?

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (KJV Psalm 139:23-24)

It was after having Psalm 139 brought to my attention from three separate pastors in three separate churches in a very short time span that I knew God was speaking to me. At the first occurrence, in my home church, I thought how good this is for us to hear these words we need them. But no real thought of change came to mind. The second occurrence happened the next Wednesday night in a prayer session at another local church. As the pastor there started sharing some insights on prayer he began reading in Psalm 139. Even though I was the only one there from my home church my thoughts were God must have been delivering the same message to our whole community through multiple pastors. Again no real need for change came to mind. The next day I received a call to come to work temporary at a location over a thousand miles away. Having worked at this site before, I already had a church home away from home. On the first Sunday I was there the pastor stopped in the middle of his sermon to read from Psalm 139. I felt such a move from The Holy Spirit that I had to repent right there. I understood fast how Peter felt when The Lord asked him three times: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? (Ref. John 21:15-17)

At this point I still did not know what needed to be changed but I knew it was there. Often we think of wicked ways as only meaning having desires to do evil. But to God wickedness can mean no more than our resistance to follow his leadership. Much like a parent whose child is disobedient, not by bad actions, but by ignoring instruction we can find ourselves out of God's will. In my own situation I begin to wonder if God had something to share with me but I had not been willing to listen.

Over the next few weeks and months, I felt compelled to learn and understand the true meaning of faith and how it should be working in The Church. I also knew this first had to sink into my own heart and then shared with others. But it didn't stop there. Almost immediately, I begin to see this was only a step in what God really wanted to show me. His true desire was to show me how to become a disciple whom He could love. In all my years as a Christian I had not taken all the steps to become the disciple he wanted me to be. I had been on the right path at times but had gotten sidetracked. Part of the problem was that I didn't really know how. With all my studying, with all my experience teaching Sunday school, I still didn't know how.

Just learning what I needed to do seem such a large task. But as all task it is just a series of smaller steps. What it takes is the desire and determination to keep going. As all things we must start at the beginning and to begin we must allow God to search us. Then we can follow this with self-examination. This self-examination must come after God's search because in reality it is not the true exam but our listening to the results of His search.

***⁵Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.
(NKJV 2Corinthians13:5)***

To begin this self-examination we should start with looking at three areas in our lives; our Worship time, Bible time, and prayer time. These three areas may not be the only things that need examination; but, for most of us, it will give us a good idea of where we are in Christ. In listing our efforts for God we must focus on how we are doing currently not how we have done in the past.

Starting with worship and church time we must we should ask the following questions:

1. Do I focus on Him and who he really is during worship?
2. Do I feel the true humility of who I am during worship?
3. Do I come before Him willing to be changed for His service?
4. Am I actively involved in His works (in the church and/or out)?

5. Am I actively involved in His commissions of spreading the Gospel and making disciples of the less mature in Christ? (Note: For those who are new to Christ, are you actively seeking training from others on how to become a better disciple?)

Now on to our Bible Time:

1. How much time do I spend studying the Bible alone or with others?
2. Do I spend any time in prayer asking The Holy Spirit to provide me with knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that I can become a more valuable servant?
3. Am I ready to change my mind and my heart if, through study, I find a difference in what I read and what I currently believe?
4. Do I share with others what The Holy Spirit is teaching me?

Move on to prayer time:

1. How much time do I spend praying each week?
2. How does my prayer break down into the following categories?
 - a. Worshiping Him, Praising Him, Thanking Him.
 - b. Focusing on His will.
 - c. Focusing on changes that need to be made in my life.
 - d. The needs of others.
 - e. The needs of my church and The Church.
 - f. For my pastor and teachers.
 - g. For those under me in the church.
 - h. For the non-believers and the lukewarm.
 - i. For my own needs.
3. Is the attitude of my prayer time to one who is far from me or to one whom loves me and whom I love?

I know as we read the list we can all find areas of improvement. But, more importantly how many of us will begin to see a larger gap between where we are and where we need to be than we would have thought. Many of us may not even know where our lives should be or how to get there. Unlike the world there is no self-help method. We can not do it on our own. We are going to have to focus on His Word and His Spirit to get where we need to be. That is going to be the focus of this lesson. We are going to learn from the Bible how to become the disciple whom Jesus loves. At first this may seem that it is going to be too hard to accomplish, but Jesus promises just the opposite.

²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

(NKJV Matthew 11:29-30)

How can we change from what we are to someone whose life is completely in line with the perfect will of God? Our first step is willingness. We have to understand that we our created with free will and have the choice to serve, ignore, or deny our Creator. We will need to understand this will require a relationship with him that is under his terms not under our terms. This very point is where many people fail due to their own stubbornness and desire to be in control. It isn't easy to give it up even after we have committed ourselves to him. We will fight His Holy Spirit to retain as much

of our own will as possible. We not only fight from our own desires but we are surrounded by a world that desperately tries to convince us that we have the right to our own freedom.

The truth is that God as the Creator has the full right to demand our obedience. But as a loving and caring God he prefers that we choose to serve Him. He promises that by giving ourselves to him we benefit, for His way is better for us than our own way. His way is in fact the way to true freedom and our own way will lead to slavery. Are you willing? Do you trust Him? Have you accepted him as Lord and Master? Those who have never accepted him as Lord and Master can at any time turn to the last section of this study and find the steps that lead to the promise of salvation and beginning of the road to becoming a Christian. If you are not ready I still encourage you to continue in this study to learn more of what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

If you are willing let's get started one small step at a time. The next step is to open our hearts and our minds to hear, receive, and act on His Word. Or as Jesus said '**Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me**'.

⁹ *“Whom will he teach knowledge?
And whom will he make to understand the message?
Those just weaned from milk?
Those just drawn from the breasts?
¹⁰ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept,
Line upon line, line upon line,
Here a little, there a little.”*

¹¹ *For with stammering lips and another tongue
He will speak to this people,*

¹² *To whom He said, “This is the rest with which
You may cause the weary to rest,”
And, “This is the refreshing”;
Yet they would not hear.
(NKJV Isaiah 28:9-12)*

⁸ *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.*

⁹ *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

¹⁰ *“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.
(NKJV Isaiah 55:8-11)*

2. Understanding the Battlefield

¹⁰Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of ^othe darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—¹⁹and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

(NKJV Ephesians 6:10-20)

When we read the above message from Paul we can see that our battle is not going to be one of flesh and blood but against the devil. The enemy is described here as a principality or chief from the beginning. His rule is described as being over spiritual wickedness and darkness of this age. His method of attack is described as wiles or the Greek word *methodeia* meaning: travesty, trickery, and lying in wait. He is not weak over the unprotected but described as a power or in Greek as *exousia* meaning: a force, with mastery, superhuman, having strength, and authority. It is not an easy thing for many people to accept the fact that if God is all-powerful, why does he allow Satan to keep this authority over the world? We may not understand it but we must accept that the Bible teaches that it is true and we must be prepared.

If we back up to the beginning of this passage we find that we can be strong and in the power of the Lord to protect ourselves. The Greek word used for strong is *endunamoō* meaning to empower, enable, increase in strength, or be made strong. From this we can see that we are not expected to be able to resist with our own abilities but by being strengthened from the Lord. Paul continues to teach that we receive this additional strength through tools provided

μεθοδεία

methodeia

meth-od-i'-ah

From a compound of *meta* and *hodeuō*; *traveling over*, that is, *travesty*, *trickery*: wile, lie in wait.

ἐξουσία

exousia

ex-oo-see'-ah

From *exesti*; *privilege*, that is, *force*, *capacity*, *competency*, *freedom*, or *mastery* (*magistrate*, *superhuman*, *potentate*, *token of control*), *delegated influence*: authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength.

ἐνδυναμώω

endunamoō

en-doo-nam-o'-o

From *en* and *dunamoō*; to *empower*: enable, increase in strength, be (make) strong.

by God. In addition to be fully prepared we need to understand the true nature of this battle. The best way to do this is to look at the armor used for its defense.

Armor of God		
Item	Description	Characteristics (these add up to Wisdom)
Belt	Truth	Knowledge, Understanding, and Belief
Breastplate	Righteousness	Character and Actions
Boots	Preparation of Gospel	Knowledge, Understanding, and Belief
Shield	Faith	Belief and Actions
Helmet	Salvation	Belief and Trust
Sword of the Spirit	Word of God	Knowledge, Understanding, and Belief

Looking at the characteristics of the armor and weapons we can see that they are all controlled by or are in control of our mind. If these characteristics are all mind related than we can conclude that the battlefield is in fact our mind. The goal is simple, the control of our will. What will happen if we don't take up the full armor of God? According to the Bible we will not be able to keep our free will from the enemy.

²⁸Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” ³⁰As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

³¹Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³²And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

³³They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. ³⁶Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

(NKJV John 8:28-36)

¹⁶Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

(NKJV Romans 6:16-19)

¹⁸For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

(NKJV 2 Peter 2:18-19)

We must prepare ourselves for battle. We must take up the Armor of God and become trained in their use. We must make sure we have a different mindset than that of the world.

The world does not take this battle with any seriousness but the outcome for each of us has eternal consequences. We can see just how the world makes fun of this battle by its use of the portrayal of a little angel and a little demon both trying to convince a cartoon or comedy actor to choose their way over the other. Although it is true, the Holy Spirit in us does work to convince us of the ways of God, and the servants of the ruler of darkness do try to lure us to corruption: this battle is neither trivial nor comical. The world must picture a little angel, in fact one that is just part of them, because they cannot even conceive the true nature of the Holy Spirit. The problem we face as Christians is that we can start taking this battle all too lightly ourselves. Many, especially immature Christians, get caught up with the idea that forgiveness is easy so what does it matter. We ignore the Spirit of God and begin to trust in our own judgement. This can be a fatal mistake. Once willing to become disciples we must prepare ourselves for battle with all seriousness.

So what does God's Word teach us about this battle and what to do to prepare? The good news is we don't have to fight this battle alone. The Bible teaches us that as believers we have received the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Later we are going to study more about the nature of this Spirit but for now we are going to look at what the Spirit is going to do to help us through the battle.

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

(NKJV Romans 12:1-2)

As we read this passage what we want to concentrate on for now is the transformation by the renewing of our minds. Paul is teaching us that we cannot win the battle until we have changed the nature of our thinking. This is one of the primary functions of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This renewing cannot be accomplished on our own. One of the best ways we can examine ourselves is to see if our perception of the world is changing. If we see more and more error in the direction of the world's thinking we can be assured that the Spirit is at work in us. If we find it easier and easier to tolerate the new order of world thinking we had better consider hard if we have truly committed ourselves to Christ. We cannot allow ourselves to be conformed to this world. As times change we are going to find ourselves more and more in conflict with the world around us. It is no time to become lukewarm. This statement of the world getting worse is not a matter of personal opinion but is taught in the Bible.

¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,

disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

(NKJV 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

¹But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

(NKJV 2 Peter 2:1-3)

¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

(NKJV Matthew 7:15-20)

¹⁶These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. ¹⁷But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁸how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. ¹⁹These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

(NKJV Jude 1:16-21)

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

(NKJV 1 Timothy 4:1-3)

⁹“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹Then many

false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

(NKJV Matthew 24:9-14)

¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

(NKJV 2 Timothy 3:12-17)

Of all Satan's tools the false prophets and false teachers are often his most powerful. As the verses above show they are driven by the love for their own desires. Most of them don't even realize Satan is using them. We can look at their own actions to see they are slaves to powers above them. Why would they be so upset with the words of the Ten Commandments on a courthouse lawn or wall? Why can't they just ignore them if they don't believe? The truth is they can't stand the idea of anyone believing or being influenced by the Word of God. For the same reason they cannot consider having voluntary prayer or mention of a designer of the universe in our schools. The very thought that some child might be led to believe in God, makes them sick. And yet they have no idea that this is from slavery to the prince of darkness. They are not content with their beliefs by themselves but want everyone to believe like them. This is not from them but from a principality that has them captive and desires to capture more with his lies.

They have even entered our churches to destroy the good works going on there. They are there ready with lies and deceit to speak with any that will listen. They will deny Jesus as the one and only true Son of God. They will deny the power of the Holy Spirit. They will deny the truth of the Holy Scriptures. They will have a form of godliness but deny its power.

To protect ourselves we must continue in a path toward discipleship being transformed by the renewing of our minds. But this renewing must come from the Spirit of Truth and not from false information. The last passage given above gives us a good idea of what to do to avoid being deceived. We must know and believe in the Holy Scriptures. We must believe that the Bible is the infallible, inspired, and true Word of God. Even further we must learn this Word. We must know what we believe, why we believe it, and that it is agreement with the Bible. This requires reading, reading, and reading. It also requires opening ourselves through prayer to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal its meaning and interpretation. To reaffirm what we have already learned and to get an idea of where we are going we are going to look at one more passage from the Bible:

¹Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

²*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,* ³*as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,* ⁴*by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

⁵*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,* ⁶*to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,* ⁷*to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.* ⁸*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁹*For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

¹⁰*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;* ¹¹*for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

(NKJV 2 Peter 1:1-11)

What we want to look at is how Peter confirms that our battle is one for control of the mind. Right from the start he mentions that this message is for those *who have obtained like precious faith with us*. Faith is not an easy concept to understand and we will take an entire section to study it. However, most of us will realize that it does have to do with our mind battle. In fact, it is the very first step towards *the renewing of your mind*. But, that initial faith is not going to be our stopping point if we truly desire to please God.

Look at verse 2 and note that he tells us that grace and peace can be increased through knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Grace is another of those hard to understand concepts but what would surprise many Christians is the idea that it can be increased. If we look grace up in the dictionary we can find the following definitions: divine mercy or forgiveness, divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification, or the state of being pleasing to God because of responsiveness to grace (in response to the first two definitions). The first two definitions cannot be increased because we are either forgiven or not, we are either sanctified or not. Anyone who doesn't understand these first two definitions should see the appendix on salvation. Getting back to our study we can conclude that what can be increased is our level of pleasing God. The problem here is that Peter seems to be saying something should be increased back to us and none of these dictionary definitions would seem to fit this idea. What we need to do is look at the original Greek word that was translated as grace and see what it means. This is the word *charis* and has the following characteristics that can be increased: benefit, favor, gift, joy, and pleasure. How much would we like these to be increased?

χάρις
charis
khar'-ece

From *chairō*; *graciousness* of manner or act: acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).

εἰρήνη
eirēnē
i-rah'-nay

Probably from a primary verb *eirō*; *peace*; by implication *prosperity*:—one, peace, quietness, rest.

In addition to grace we can also increase in peace or *eirēnē* in Greek. This translates to peace, quietness, rest, and even implies prosperity. More things that most of us would love to have multiplied in our life. If all of these can be increased in our life by God in response to our becoming more knowledgeable about God and our Lord why aren't we excited about Bible study? The answer is simple, the enemy is there ready to convince us with his lies that we have little to gain and our time would be wasted. Their increase can end up being another casualty of the war in the battle for the control of our thinking. There can be a high price to pay if we are not prepared to do battle.

We are also reminded here that he *has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness* again through knowledge. We should by now start to see the true strength we gain with knowledge. By verse 4 we are going to start learning that these *exceedingly great and precious promises* are not given with just an increase of knowledge but by its use. This is because spiritual knowledge is not of a trivial nature but of a working nature. Specifically here it is referring to using this knowledge to overcome corruption that comes from lust. Lust is something that exists within our own fleshly nature. But the enemy increases its effects on us through temptation, another of his favorite tools. Peter uses verses 5 through 7 to show us how this knowledge should step by step change our mindset and attitude. Starting with our original knowledge that led to faith we progress as follows:

Faith – Virtue – Knowledge – Self Control – Perseverance – Godliness – Brotherly Kindness – Love

Now is when the devil can really let loose his arguments. He is going to tell you that those promises made about peace, joy, favor of God, etc were not real. That you can't have them because you aren't or won't change your thinking and you won't act on the knowledge of God. And he will even try to tell you that you're undeserving. These are all lies; they are *the fiery darts of the wicked one* that were mentioned by Paul in the passage we read at the very start of this section. Paul told us we would need *the shield of faith* to quench them. We had better learn a lot more about our shield of faith since no weapon of war is of full value without training. To do this we must first understand more about the main author of this shield the Holy Spirit.

Let's take one last look at what Peter has to say before moving on. In verses 10 and 11 he speaks of increasing in Christ to make our call and election sure. It seems that if we don't want to increase or to gain benefits we should still consider increasing out of fear. Our teaching in churches of today just doesn't express the absolute need to mature as is taught in the Bible. Perhaps this is one reason that we are losing so many of our children, as they become young adults. We may need to really teach some healthy fear before it is too late.

¹My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; ²So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; ³Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; ⁴If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; ⁵Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. ⁶For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. ⁷He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. ⁸He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. ⁹Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

¹⁰When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; ¹¹Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: ¹²To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; ¹³Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; ¹⁵Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: ¹⁶To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; ¹⁷Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. ¹⁸For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. ¹⁹None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. ²⁰That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. ²¹For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. ²²But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

(KJV Proverbs 2)

¹²Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

(NKJV 1 Timothy 6:12-16)

3. Understanding the Spirit

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

(NKJV Genesis 1:1-2)

The focus of this section is going to be the Holy Spirit, that wonderful and mysterious third person of the Holy Trinity. Like God the Father or Jesus Christ our Lord, the Holy Spirit has many names (Holy Ghost, Spirit of God, Holy Wind, or even the Breath of God) but is one being. When speaking of the Spirit the title of this section can be a bit deceiving since we can not even begin to conceive the deep mysteries of the Spirit. What we must do is study, that we may understand the teachings of the Holy Word concerning Him. Many of us as Christians know that the Holy Spirit is a separate Person of the Holy Trinity and have at least some knowledge Him. But, unfortunately many others of us have not had the opportunity to gain much knowledge. Many churches don't put much emphasis on teaching about the Spirit even though they believe in His presence. I am not quite sure why this is, but it needs to be corrected. We need to be prepared to teach others about the Spirit and so must know what we believe and why we believe it. The following verses should help.

First he is spoken of as being a separate person, with His own will, and performing His own functions:

¹⁵“If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

(NKJV John 14:15-18)

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

(NKJV John 14:15-18)

⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

(NKJV John 16:7-15)

²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

(NKJV Romans 8:26-27)

¹⁰But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

(NKJV 1 Corinthians 2:10-12)

¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

(NKJV 1 Corinthians 12:11)

¹³These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. ¹⁶For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

(NKJV 1 Corinthians 2:13)

Second he is from the beginning, involved in the creation, has divine attributes (omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and eternity), and like Christ considered equal with God:

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

(NKJV Genesis 1:1-2)

***¹³ By His Spirit He adorned the heavens;
His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.***

(NKJV Job 26:13)

***³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
And You renew the face of the earth.***

(NKJV Psalms 104:30)

⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

(NKJV Ephesians 2:17-18)

¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴For in fact the body is not one member but many.

(NKJV 1 Corinthians 12:13-14)

¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

(NKJV Romans 8:11)

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

(NKJV Matthew 28:19-20)

⁴John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

(NKJV Revelation 1:4-5)

There is a lot of scripture here but it is only a portion of what is written about the Holy Spirit. We cannot stop here in learning about the Holy Spirit for he is our teacher and our intercessor -- along with Jesus our High Priest. He is that precious part of the Holy Trinity that we have received and dwells within us. We need to continuously remind ourselves of the verses above until they have become completely imbedded into our thinking. For without the Holy Spirit of God we cannot know of heavenly things. He must become the master of our faith. We must realize that we have been born again:

⁵Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

(NKJV John 3:5-8)

These precious words are not my teachings, nor the teachings of this or that denomination: they are the very words of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. He teaches that without the Holy Spirit of God we cannot enter the kingdom of God – we must be born again! This is nothing we have done but was received when we accepted Jesus as our Savior. What we do need to do is allow him to work

within us. Look again at verse 8, where Jesus is teaching us that the Spirit is going to move where it wills and that we must go with it. We should no longer be moving and doing as our desires lead us but as the Spirit takes us. He is not there to go with us but to take the lead. We must stop resisting and quenching the Spirit within us!

¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit.
(NKJV Thessalonians 5:19)

So how do we avoid resisting and quenching the Spirit? First we must get a better idea of who He is and how He acts so that we can recognize his voice within us.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

(NKJV John 16:7-15)

Why can't we just go to church, pray, read some in the Bible and be ok? Jesus taught this was not acceptable. Consider the following verses and look to see if you can think of anyone this could describe:

²³Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?”

And He said to them, ²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ ²⁶then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ ²⁷But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ ²⁸There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. ²⁹They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

(NKJV Luke 3:23-30)

²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²²Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

(NKJV Matthew 7:21-23)

From these teachings from Jesus we can see it is essential for us to be doing the will of the Father. But this will is more than just a set of do's and don'ts. There is a personal will of the Father for each of our lives. The only way to do His will is to know His will. To know this will we must be in personal communication with God. This comes through the Holy Spirit. We must have the Holy Spirit within us! We must be born of the Spirit!

Now we are going to cover some verses that can give us a little more insight as to the nature of this Holy Spirit that is in us. In the first five chapters of the book of Revelation there are multiple references to the fact that the Spirit of God is referred as seven Spirits. All four of the gospels give account of the Spirit of God descending on Jesus, like a dove, after he was baptized. And the book of Isaiah gives a prophecy of this event and names exactly seven spirits.

⁵And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

(NKJV Revelation 4:5)

¹⁶When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(NKJV Matthew 3:16-17)

***¹ There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
² The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.***

(NKJV Isaiah 11:1-2)

Isaiah has given some wonderful insight through the revelation of the names of the seven spirits of the Holy Spirit: the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of might, the spirit of knowledge, and the spirit of fear of the Lord. If we had any doubt as to where the battle was we can see that we concluded correctly. Of the seven spirits four are for the strengthening of our minds: the spirits of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and counsel. Even the others are for the strengthening of our minds just in a more indirect way. Before we can truly appreciate how the Spirit is going to help us we need to have a little more knowledge and understanding of ourselves. For this the place to start is the beginning. What makes man different than all the other creatures?

²⁶And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

(KJV Genesis 1:26-27)

***7And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.***

(KJV Genesis 2:7)

The word “God” in the above verses is 'ēlôhîym, which is the plural of 'ēlôahh or deity. In this form it usually refers to supreme deity. Next we take a look at the word “image”, or tselem, meaning resemblance or representative figure. And, the word “likeness”, dēmûth, means like fashion or model. Using these word translations we come up with: And the gods (or Godhead) said let us make man in resemblance with ourselves as a model. I have added Godhead here because we have already seen that creation was through three and only three supreme deities: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These cannot be separated for although they are three they are in truth one perfect will. In fact, it is this very concept of three being one that was used as a model so that we resemble the Godhead. For we are three; soul, flesh, and spirit, and yet we are a single being.

Our soul is modeled after God the Father himself. It can be thought of as our free will. It is composed of our personality, our reasoning ability, our memories, and is the source of most of our emotional actions or reactions. It's only sources of communication with the outside are through either the flesh or the spirit. The soul is what makes each of us a unique person. Before, I stated that the goal of the battle was the control of our will; but the ultimate prize is our very soul.

As the soul is modeled after the Father, the flesh is model after the Son. All our contact with the physical world is through the flesh with our senses. The flesh is full of desires for pleasure through these senses and is driven by little else. Even if every one of our senses were receiving pleasant input our flesh would soon be bored and desire another pleasing form of entertainment. We can often wonder how can this be modeled after Jesus. The key is our flesh is weak and his is strong.

Through him we can replace worldly pleasure with some things that are even more satisfying such as true joy, true peace and true brotherly love. Nor does it mean that all pleasure from the senses is bad. There is no reason we have to deny ourselves beauty, soothing sound, pleasant fragrance, enjoyable taste, or soft texture. It becomes bad when it drives for selfish control of our actions and our will is too weak to stop it. If we could control our flesh we could avoid sin; the problem is our will is not strong enough. One of the ways the world attempts to deny Christ is through the lie that as a human he was not able to overcome sin in the flesh and cannot therefor be equal with God.

Last we have our spirit modeled after God's own Holy Spirit. It is through our spirit that we can have communication with a whole new realm of existence different in nature than the physical realm. It is a realm that we do not know as well as the physical realm. It is hard to understand and seems even harder to put into words. But, we can learn more about it. In Genesis 2:7 look at the word "breath" in the phrase "breath of life". This comes from the Hebrew word n^eshâmâh, meaning

אלהים

'ēlôhîym

el-o-heem'

Plural of 'ēlôahh; *gods*, angels, God, very great, judges, mighty.

צלם

tselem

tseh'-lem

From an unused root meaning to *shade*; a *phantom*, *illusion*, *resemblance*; image

דמות

dēmûth

dem-ooth'

From dâmâh; *resemblance*; *model*, *shape*; likeness, manner, similitude.

נשמה

n^eshâmâh

nesh-aw-maw'

From nâsham; a *puff*, that is, *wind*, angry or vital *breath*, divine *inspiration*, *intellect*, blast, *inspiration* soul spirit

divine inspiration or intellect. This breath of life was given to man alone of all the creation. It is what makes us different than the animals. It makes a tremendous change to our soul by making us a living soul. It changes our thinking by changing the nature of our intellect giving us the ability to have insight and understand things that are not of this world, it is even is the source of our ability to have an imagination. Without going into additional biblical proof here, I will even make the statement that this is what makes our soul eternal due to eternal nature of the spiritual realm. This is the true breath of life.

For the world to deny God they must deny creation. For them to deny creation they must deny any significant difference between man and the rest of the living species. They are in a situation that requires them to choose between denying that the spirit realm exist or to assign a spiritual nature to all living things. False teachers of both types are all around us, in our schools teaching our kids, and even in our churches. What seems so strange is that even though they don't agree they will accept one another but refuse to accept us. We must prepare a defense against their attacks.

Those that choose to deny a spiritual realm must show that all life has the same type of intellect that we do only in smaller capacity. They are constantly trying to devise experiments to "prove" this type of abstract thinking in monkeys, dolphins or some other animal. They even spend tremendous amounts of time and money to show "thinking" in plants or lower life forms. They must show an evolution of thought not just evolution in form to accept evolution. They try to prove a lie and fail.

The ones who claim all life is spiritual will desire to worship the creation instead of the creator. They are often referred to as new age thinkers but their idea is definitely not new. Paul speaks of it in the first chapter of Romans as thinking that was very old even two thousand years ago. They seek spiritual guidance but not from God or His Holy Spirit. They operate in the areas of witchcraft and divining spirits. Their way is the way to destruction.

Now we can return to our study of the seven spirits and see what each of them has to offer us in our walk with God. We are going to look at them in a different order than Isaiah listed them. We are going to cover the first one and then the last one because these have impact on non-believers as well as believers. Using only their name they are a little more confusing to figure out their purpose so we will depend on some extra scripture.

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

(NKJV John 6:44)

⁶⁵And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

(NKJV John 6:65)

⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

(NKJV John 16:8-11)

²⁷My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

(NKJV John 10:27)

When we look at the scripture above we see that Jesus teaches that no one can come to Him unless the Father has drawn him. We also see that Jesus taught that the Spirit would convict the world of sin. From our own experiences we should remember how we ourselves were convicted of our sin before we accepted Jesus as our Savior. The spirit of the Lord, the first of the seven, does this conviction and drawing. Jesus also taught that we would hear his voice and know it. So the Spirit of the Lord continues to speak to those who accept Christ. He will give us all the instructions from Jesus as to His will for our lives. But those who were drawn to Christ through conviction but decide not to accept his gift of salvation no longer recognize His voice because they do not become his sheep.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

(NKJV Philippians 2:12-13)

²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹For our God is a consuming fire.

(NKJV Hebrews 12:28-29)

¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

(NKJV 1 Peter 3:15-16)

The last spirit whose name was revealed by Isaiah, the spirit of fear of the Lord, can work very closely with the first. When I said above that the spirit of the Lord drew and convicted us of our sin, I was speaking of conviction in terms of realization. For some of us this was not enough to be willing to give our lives up for Christ. It took a second spirit to place enough fear of the Lord's power to fully convince us of the need to accept. This spirit of fear of the Lord does not stop there. He is going to keep reminding us to stay humble. All that we do for the Lord we do as lowly servants. If we begin to feel big in ourselves the spirit of fear of the Lord will be there to remind us of our place. There may even be times He reminds us in a more powerful way. But, it is much better to face this spirit in service than to have to face him later not having accepted Jesus.

¹⁰But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

¹¹For it is written:

***“As I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God.”***

¹²So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.
(NKJV Romans 14:10-12)

²² *“Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.*
²³ *I have sworn by Myself;
The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,
And shall not return,
That to Me every knee shall bow,
Every tongue shall take an oath.*
(NKJV Isaiah 45:22-23)

From our discussion on the first and last spirits revealed to us in Isaiah, we have been drawn to Jesus, allowed to accept salvation from him, are being told what we should do, and are being kept humble. What more do we need? Well, God’s will for our life is above what we can do in our own ability. We need empowerment, not just a little but five more spirits worth. If you think that most of the work you see Christians doing is possible on human abilities you are unfortunately right. This is not because of God’s desire for us but because of our lack of willingness or know how of allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us.

¹²“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. ¹³And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.
(NKJV John 14:12-14)

We need more of the empowering spirits in our lives. We are going to cover the three that will do the most towards that renewing of the mind we covered earlier. They are the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of understanding, and the spirit of wisdom. Let’s take a look at what is meant by these three titles. Although we already know what these words mean it may be of benefit to focus on those meanings for a minute.

Knowledge can be defined as the awareness of facts, data, or any type of information. It can be awareness that a particular statement is true or awareness that given information is in fact false. This information can be of any subject and could be vital, of no practical use, or anywhere in between. Put simply it means to know. The ability to memorize and to recite are characteristics of being filled with knowledge. Recognition is another characteristic of possessing knowledge.

Understanding is to know the relationship between different pieces of information. Once we understand we see how one piece has effects over the other and how they work together to form a bigger truth. We have to have knowledge available to understand but we have added the concepts of analysis, reasoning and logic. If you try to do math in school by memorizing techniques you will reach a point of failure. There will come a time that you can no longer recognize what needs to be done. Knowledge without understanding has only limited value. What can be interesting about our ability to understand is that as humans we are a highly diversified group. Our abilities may be very

high in one area but much lower in another. How valuable this diversity is when it gives us people of many different skills and talents that are forced to depend on each other.

An example of the difference between knowledge and understanding is the case of a badly running car. Would you be satisfied if your mechanic knew every part of your engine, their function, and how they went together; but did not know from the awful sound of your engine which part was bad? He would have to take the entire engine apart to see if he could recognize a part as being damaged. Would it be better if your mechanic could hear the sound and know what part was not functioning correctly without even seeing it? Understanding turns our knowledge into a more valuable asset.

Wisdom has two parts; the ability to know the result an action would have before doing that action, and the decision to take an action that will have the most positive effect. Many times reasoning ability alone won't get us here. Wisdom is often gained through experience, and perhaps at a very high price. Let's take a closer look at the example of our mechanic we used above. We have probably come to the conclusion that we would prefer a mechanic with understanding over one with just knowledge. Do we really want to stop there, or would we prefer one with the wisdom to know what action to take to fix it? Even further perhaps we would want one who would make the decision to fix it correctly.

From looking at the above definitions can you guess why most of the section titles in this study begin with the word understanding? Any one who attempts to teach can only help organize and present the information in a way that assist the student in learning (gaining knowledge) and seeing how the facts relate (gaining understanding). Wisdom requires a decision on the part of the student to take what has been gained and apply it. When the student decides to do this with all his heart, all his mind, and all his will he becomes a disciple. When the subject is the "things of God" then the human instructor isn't even the true teacher but just a minor assistant. The true teacher is Jesus through the Holy Spirit and the discipleship is to Christ.

Before moving on to what the Spirit is going to do for us we need to see how we would think without Him by looking at how the world thinks. The world is very knowledgeable and is growing in knowledge continuously. Every field of research is producing more information and this information is much easier to get our hands on in the age of electronic communication. Lack of data is certainly no problem today but lack of understanding is for several reasons. First, the world seems to have fallen in love with knowledge to the point of reducing its emphasis on understanding and wisdom. Second, there is so much knowledge that we have a very difficult time filtering it and sorting it out that our minds have little resource left for reasoning and logic. We have had to specialize our field of expertise down to a very narrow area. This leaves us dependent on others to provide us with truth in areas we aren't as familiar with. As a result we are forced to be too trusting of others without being able to verify things for ourselves.

There has always been a stumbling block when it comes to having understanding to the point of truth. That is that we want truth to match our opinion. We will attempt to start with understanding and try to force data and information to match it. A good example of this is that those who deny God want to prove that we came from a natural (non-divine) event because they must justify their belief. As research and observation produce data they must distort any that would not fit their preconceived idea. They do this to the point of even trying to discredit or suppress information that is contradictory to the result they want. This problem is not limited to the world. If you were to read a passage in the Bible that was in conflict to your current religious or spiritual beliefs how would you react? Would you attempt to change (distort) the interpretation of what you read? Would you deny (discredit) the Bible as being the one hundred percent true inspired word of God? Would you try to ignore (suppress) what you just read? Would you assume (justify) that the truth of God's Word was

relative only to the time it was written in? Or would you think, maybe I need to change how I believe?

If understanding does not lead to the truth then wisdom cannot be of the truth. Does that mean that there is no wisdom? No, but what wisdom the world has is corrupt. Take for example our mechanic, if he were wise in the corrupt thinking of the world he would perhaps fix our car to last for only a month. He could easily see extra income from new work as being the most positive result. Other corrupt wisdom could include decisions that would attempt to justify behavior that is based on laziness, stubbornness, or emotional state. Look at how many felony trial lawyers attempt to use a defense based on the accused being a victim of their own circumstances. In today's world where can we find wisdom based on truth? In fact, the world wants to tell us there is no single truth. Let's look at some scripture that deals with the worlds thinking:

⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

(NKJV 2 Timothy 3:6-9)

⁵²“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”

(NKJV Luke 11:52)

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

(NKJV Romans 1:28-32)

¹Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

(NKJV Romans 10:1-3)

⁴“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

(NKJV Daniel 12:4)

Now let's review how the spirits of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom should be working in our lives to make a difference in how we think as opposed to the world.

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

(NKJV John 14:26)

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

(NKJV John 16:12-15)

¹⁰But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

(NKJV 1 Corinthians 2:10-12)

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

¹⁵These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

(KJV Titus 2:11-15)

¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

(NKJV Peter 3:15)

Except for the passage from Titus these verses are just a review of verses we have already read. However, we are going to look at them from a slightly different view. The first three show us that since we have the Spirit in us our “thinking abilities” are going to improve over what we possess.

within our own capacity. The Spirit will bring remembrance or improved capacity for knowledge. Also through the Spirit we will be told more things that are the deep things of God, which is highly improved understanding. The point here is that God will empower us mentally to achieve any task he will ask us to perform. If he asks us to preach or teach he will provide us with the ability. However, consider the word remembrance, we are expected to put in the effort to study and be trained. This increased ability does not even have to be limited to Bible study. Ability will be provided for anything that is in God's will. An example might be learning more about creation science in order to help our children or grandchildren overcome the lies they will be exposed to in the school system.

Now let's look at the last two verses to see how we should appear to the world. The passage from Titus indicates that we should appear as ***a peculiar people, zealous of good works***. We should have the power to ***speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority***. Peter tells us to ***always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you***. This has two parts. First the world must recognize we have something they do not, hope! Does your hope show through? We have studied earlier that through knowledge and understanding concerning the Lord we should have increased joy and peace. This is what the world should see and desire. If they don't see anything different they will never be moved to ask. Your witness is going to be more powerful when you are asked for it than when you just try to force it on to someone. Now to the second part which is being ***ready to give a defense***? Do you know what you believe and why you believe it? Can you back your belief up with scripture? If you found yourself on trial for a crime you did not commit how well prepared would you want your lawyer? We must be ready to give them good defense advice. Only Jesus can defend them against judgement but we must convince them of their need.

If we do not see the results of these spirits acting in our lives, or in the lives of our fellow Christians, the problem is our lack of effort not the lack of work by the Holy Spirit. We read certain passages in the Bible over and over without taking them to heart. One of these passages that we tend to ignore or assume is not applicable for us is the parable of the talents from Matthew (25:14-30). We tend to think of this parable dealing with only major talents or abilities that we were given at birth but in reality he is speaking of any gift including revealed knowledge and understanding we get from Bible study. If he gives us insight into his word then it is not just for our own use but to be applied in helping others as well. If we are not willing to share and help others grow then the Spirit is not going to give to us. Just as a good reminder let's read the last two verses of that parable.

²⁹For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

(NKJV Matthew 25:29-30)

It is time to move on to the next spirit, the spirit of counsel. Wise actions are so important in a Christian's life that God has provided an extra helper for our benefit. Even though we have a great advantage over the world with the spirits of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom there are still times when we do not know all the circumstances. It would still be very difficult to reason out the best course of action. Unlike the world we should not worry for we have access to the spirit of counsel. This spirit is there to provide us with the ability to make wise decisions if we will listen. Like the spirits of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom this spirit is for the benefit of the whole body of believers. God will often use one Christian to give counsel to another. How wonderful it is that we can receive advice from the Spirit to give to someone else without having to know the detail situations in their life. If we as Christians would learn to rely on the Spirit more in our decision making we would find our lives and our church functions running much smoother.

The last spirit of the seven is the spirit of might. We can be absolutely sure that if God gives us something to accomplish he will empower us to do it. Far too often, church leadership will only look at existing abilities of their members to determine who should be doing what. Although it is a wise idea to take this into consideration to a degree, we need to understand it is most important to put the person of God's choice in each position. He will empower a person of his choosing, but he is not obligated to empower who we would choose.

We did not spend any time in study of these last two spirits of the Holy Spirit. This is not because the Bible lacks teaching about them. In fact there is so much to learn about how these two spirits operate that we need an entire section for them, understanding the gifts. Before we can truly begin to understand their use we need to finish our study of becoming a true disciple. After that we can begin to seek God's specific will for our individual lives. These two last spirits will work with each of us in a unique way to allow us to become seed that brings forth fruit.

¹“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

⁶“And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

¹¹“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹²But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

¹³“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

(NKJV Matthew 25:1-13)

I am going to share what I truly believe this parable means. I believe that any time virgins are used as a symbol they represent believers as opposed to those who are in the world. I also believe that oil is always symbolic of the Holy Spirit (ref Exodus 25:31-40). With these representations, we can see that the difference between unwise and wise believers is how much of the Holy Spirit they allow to work within them. This is not just one part of the Spirit or another part, but all seven of the spirits. Whether you agree with this interpretation or not you should still have come to the conclusion that it is important to allow the Spirit to have full influence on our lives. The main question is how do we improve our ability to hear the Spirit when He speaks? We should find much improvement as we learn and practice our next three topics: faith, worship, and prayer.

*¹ “Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD,
“Who take counsel, but not of Me,
And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit,
That they may add sin to sin;
(NKJV Isaiah 30:1)*

⁷*“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*

(NKJV Matthew 7:7-8)

⁵*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him*

(NKJV James 1:5)

4. Understanding Faith

6But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

(NKJV James 1:6-8)

6But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

(NKJV Hebrews 11:6)

Even before we read this verse from Hebrews we probably knew we had to have faith. But do you have a clear definition of what faith is? Could you describe what it means to a non-believer so that they would know? To give a short definition would not do justice to its true meaning. To really understand faith we must look at its characteristics as they are taught in the Bible.

In the original Greek version of the New Testament there are two forms of the concept of faith, a noun form and a verb form. These words are as closely related to each other as the words song and sing. Just as you can not sing without having a song or know a song without singing, you cannot understand believing without understanding faith. In the Greek, the noun form is *pistis* and is translated faith. The verb form is *pisteuō* and is translated as believeth or believe. We should never confuse this verb with the verb meaning to have knowledge, which comes from the Greek word *ginōskō*. The difference between these two words is that believing is always tied to the willingness to take action where knowing is not. Knowing can only have three states: you know something is true, you know something is false, or you are not sure if it's true or false. Believing, however, is based on how much you are willing to risk on your opinion of something being true or false.

When we start talking about faith, and belief, in the Biblical sense we are going to find additional meaning to the words. The three main enhancements we will look at are trust, obedience, and yielding. Adding these attributes

to the concept of faith and believing is not out of context to the original Greek text. The words *pistis* and *pisteuō* come from the Greek root word *peithō* which can imply all three of these traits in addition to the concept of conviction. But even the Greek forms were sometimes limited to a

πίστις

pistis

pis'-tis

From *peithō*; *persuasion, credence; moral conviction, assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.*

πιστεύω

pisteuō

pist-yoo'-o

From *peithō*; *to have faith, to entrust, believe, commit, put in trust with.*

πέθω

peithō

pi'-tho

A primary verb; *to convince; to assent to evidence or authority), to rely, agree, assure, believe, have confidence, be content, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield.*

γινώσκω

ginōskō

ghin-occe'-ko

primary verb; *to "know" absolutely, allow, be aware, feel, have knowledge, perceive. be resolved. be sure. understand.*

more secular concept of faith in their everyday use. The writer of the book of Hebrews knew that as followers of Christ we needed to have a full understanding of what faith and believing should mean to a Christian and therefore, gave us a definition we could use.

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

In many of the newer translations of the Bible this verse has been translated in a way that I feel doesn't match the context of how faith is used in the rest of the scripture. We need to take a very close look at how two separate meanings could have been developed from the original Greek and which seems to match teachings from other verses. As an example let's look at the first half of this verse as translated in The Living Bible:

¹What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.
(TLB Hebrews 11:1)

What this implies is that we start with something we want and faith makes it happen. But, is that what the writer was trying to say? On the other hand, I am going to start with looking at the same half of the verse as it is translated in the New King James Version. Compare the following sentences and see which one makes the most sense:

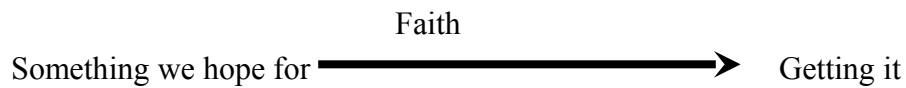
1. Sugar is the substance of cotton candy.
2. Cotton candy is the substance of sugar.

Although most of us would find the choice of words a little odd, we would probably agree sentence number one makes more sense. We would also most likely agree that this is because the sentence is saying that sugar is the fundamental ingredient of cotton candy; but, cotton candy is not the fundamental ingredient of sugar. We know that we start with sugar and using power (static electricity) cotton candy is formed.

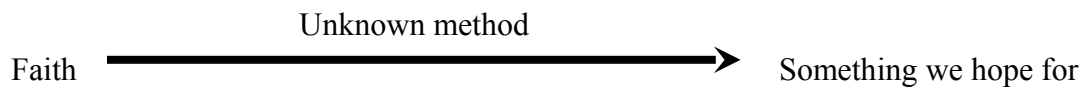
Doesn't our verse say the same thing when it comes to faith and things hoped for? Which does it imply is the prime ingredient and which is the final product? Did the writer (at least in this translation) seem to be saying that we start with our "faith" and (maybe with power) end up with our "things hoped for"?

These two translations are not exactly opposite but they are definitely headed in opposing directions. Which are we to believe? To help decide which to believe we are going to look at the Greek for clues and then compare with other Biblical teaching. But first, we should symbolize these translations to see how opposing they are:

1st Idea



2nd Idea



For better understanding we need to review the original text:

δέ	πίστις	ὑπόστασις	πρᾶγμα	ἐλπίζω
de	pistis	hupostasis	pragma	elpizō
<i>Now</i>	<i>faith</i>	<i>is the substance</i>	<i>of things</i>	<i>hoped for</i>

ὑπόστασις
hupostasis
hoop-os'-tas-is

From a compound of hupo and histēmi; a *setting under (support)*, that is, *essence*, or abstractly *assurance*—confidence, confident, person, substance.

πρᾶγμα
pragma
prag'-mah

From prassō; a *deed*; an *affair*; by extension a material *object*—business, matter, thing, work.

πράσσω
prassō
pras'-so

A primary verb; to “practice”, that is, *perform repeatedly* or *habitually*; implies to *execute*, *accomplish*, etc.

We have already looked at what *pistis* meant in the Greek dictionary and now are going to look at what the writer of Hebrews wanted to add or clarify in its meaning. Let's start with *hupostasis*. This word literally means a setting under (foundation), a support, or essence (build blocks). It had a secondary or abstract meaning of assurance or confidence. The difference between the King James Version translation and the newer translation begin here with KJV using the literal form and the newer translations using the abstract form. Either could be the best and we must use the context of the surrounding scripture to determine which to use.

Before we look at the surrounding scripture it will be of value to look at the meaning of *pragma*. *Pragma* is a business affair or deed. It can be extended into referring to a material thing needed for a deed. If we look at the root word *prassō* we find that it especially refers to deeds done in habit not as a onetime thing in other words a practice. Although neither of our translations directly states that “things hoped for” are repeated deeds and affairs, it is more easily associated with the KJV translation than with the newer translations. As to the last half of the verse both translations are similar and express that we can trust God as to an outcome, without having to see how He is going to do it. We use our trust in Him rather than the need of concrete proof. For the last step in determining the true meaning the author wanted to convey lets look at the rest of the chapter.

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ²For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

³By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

⁷By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹¹By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that

they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," ¹⁹concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

²⁰By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

²¹By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

²²By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

²³By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

²⁴By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

²⁷By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

²⁹By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

³²And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—³⁸of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

(NKJV Hebrews 11:6)

We see a repetition here, all these verses show people who chose to do the will of God and stood fast doing it no matter what. If we take the new translation that implies faith is the ability to get the things we want it doesn't match the entire rest of the chapter. We must see that faith requires us to change our hopes to match those of God. Does this match the rest of the teachings in the Bible? What did Jesus teach about faith?

⁵And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

⁶So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. ⁷And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? ⁸But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

(NKJV Luke 17:5-10)

When the disciples asked about faith Jesus examples had nothing to do with believing something desired was going to happen. He used the faith of a mustard seed as an example of great faith. A mustard seed has no belief, it doesn't plan, it doesn't check finances, form committees, vote – it just sprouts based on the will of its Creator. How wonderful it would be if we could trust God and do as the mustard seed! But Jesus didn't stop there he answered the original question of how to increase our faith by simply using what faith we already have. The example He used was a person performing humble obedient service. Specifically, He used someone doing the will of the Master without expecting so much as a thank you.

If this concept of faith were to be presented in our churches today there would be objection that this doesn't match what Paul taught about works. To study this we need to look closer at what Paul said to make sure we are not misusing his message. Let's look at an example:

¹⁶knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

(NKJV Galatians 2:16)

Paul is actually supporting our definition of faith. What he is saying is that we are justified by doing God's will through faith not by following a predetermined set of do's and don'ts. The attitude that arises if we are under a set of laws is that we want to follow our own desires as long as they don't violate the rules. Very soon we will do one of two things: bend the rules to our fit our desires, or add to the rules to try to control others. Neither of these situations is pleasing to God.

The next objection to our definition of faith is to question whether it violates the teaching of salvation by grace. Notice above that we are not talking about salvation here we are talking about justification. Both come from Christ but salvation is an initial gift given to us by Jesus when we start our walk with him. WE can't earn it – no matter what. Our faith will never be perfect nor were we without sin before we asked for forgiveness. Justification is a continuous state that we have as long as we maintain an obedient (faithful) walk with him.

Who receives this wonderful gift of grace? Most of us have been taught that we receive this gift when we first believe and repent of our sins. What we must understand is that this belief is the Greek form *pisteuo* and has all the same traits as faith. Remember our Greek word study at the start of this section? The key here is to look at what repentance really means. It is a state where we ask forgiveness for our past sins and commit to having a change of heart to no longer desire to live in a sinful condition. Under the law, sin meant breaking the law; but, under faith, sin means to not do the will of God. This is what Paul continuously taught about being free from the law. However, it is God's will that we maintain a certain moral life style. Jesus did not abolish the law; he fulfilled it!

²²But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(NKJV Romans 6:22-23)

¹³For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

(NKJV Galatians 5:13-15)

Am I saying here that we should not ask God for things we just want? No, we just must understand he isn't forced to give us all our desires just because we think we're going to get them. The Bible teaches we are rewarded for our faithful service not because faith is a magic power to make our desires happen. In fact if we are in faithful service we may be pleasantly surprised at gifts God may have for us. Some of which we may not even know we wanted until we receive them. He knows us much better than we know ourselves.

Am I saying here that the idea of faith given by the newer translations of Hebrews 11:1 is false? Not really, it may just be out of sequence. There are two parts of this verse separated by the comma.

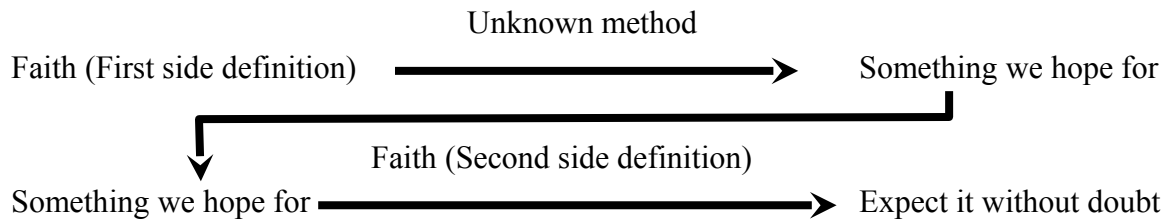
¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (NKJV Hebrews 11:1)

The newer translations seem to take the concept of the second half and make the first half match it. The King James Version translates them as two separate concepts. Lets go back to our diagrams and do a little manipulation. First reverse the order.

Faith $\xrightarrow{\text{Unknown method}}$ Something we hope for

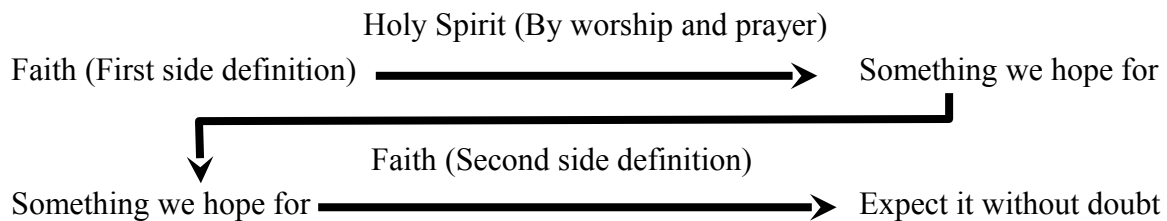
Something we hope for $\xrightarrow{\text{Faith}}$ Getting it

Now modify a few words:



We see that faith is a two-part concept: changing our desires by faith and then having no doubt because of our faith. The problem with the new translations is leaving out part one and emphasizing part two. We can run into danger if we expect that just thinking it is so is all there is to faith and to belief. We would become a people who do not seek God to call us to action and would have no works. Remember the parable of the sower and the difference between the choked plant and the fruitful one?

Next I want to further complete our diagram by adding what we are going to study in the next two sections:



We have not covered the second definition of faith very deep. For our purpose now, we need to concentrate on the obedient nature of our faith, later we will come back and study the power side of faith. In fact, when we come back to look at the second side definition we are going to find just how powerful faith is.

Before we can leave our study of faith we need to look at its opposite, doubt. In English, the word doubt can have multiple meanings. In Greek, these meanings are represented by different words. The Greek word that would best fit as the opposite of faith is used by James as follows:

⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

(NKJV James 1:6-8)

διακρίνω
 diakrinō
 dee-ak-ree'-no

From dia and krinō; to *separate thoroughly*, to *withdraw* from, or *oppose*; figuratively to *discriminate*: contend, make differ, discern, doubt, judge, be partial, stagger, waver.

The original King James Version is probably a little clearer here when it uses the word waver:

⁶But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
(KJV James 1:6)

In verse six the Greek word for doubting or wavering is *diakrino*. Just like the word *pistis* it is tied to our actions. If the enemy, or even our own flesh, causes our thoughts to temporarily question our firm belief that God is going to take care of something does not make us double minded. It is only when we start to allow these thoughts to change our course of action that we become both double minded and unstable.

Once we understand the true meaning of faith and belief we can read the book of John and see the wonderful promises made to believers, those who have faith. In fact once we understand how faith is tied to obedient action we can have a much deeper understanding of many verses we read in both the Old and New Testaments. Here are just a few examples:

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(NKJV John 3:16)

***⁴Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.***
(NKJV Habakkuk 2:4)

²³Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

***²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears,
"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"***
(NKJV Mark 9:23-24)

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.
(NKJV James 2:18)

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
(NKJV Philippians 2:12-13)

⁵And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."
(NKJV Luke 17:5)

5. Understanding Worship

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

(NKJV John 4:21-24)

Up till now the only “how to” we have covered is repentance. We must choose to follow the Lord’s will. Yet we ask, how do I know God’s will? This is a question that faces even the most willing Christians in today’s churches. Our failure to know what to do often comes from our lack of understanding of the next two topics: worship and prayer.

As broad a meaning as the word worship has, it is necessary to define more precisely what we are going to study. We are going to look at getting into a personal state with God where we acknowledge: His great and divine nature, our meek and lowly position, and our willingness to change our will to match his. These three can be summed up as praise, humility, and submission. From meeting these three conditions we reach a place where The Holy Spirit can renew our minds.

Before going any further we need to understand some basic thoughts about worship. Although I may not be able to directly back this statement up with scripture, I do believe that worship is totally for our benefit. **God is The I AM!** He does not need our worship to feel important. The very concept of this would be ridiculous. It makes no sense that worship is for His benefit. Jesus didn’t demand worship from those around him. But, those around him who chose to worship Him benefited beyond measure. By using Jesus as an example, we find that worship is a blessing not an obligation! Once we begin to see this we can begin to worship in truth and in spirit. Although I said that God doesn’t benefit from worship, I really mean in a direct manner. He greatly desires to have a deep relationship with us and this requires change in us that comes from worship. For this reason he strongly desires our worship. Isn’t God a jealous God? Yes, but His jealousy is not at the other things we worship. He created those other things and can also destroy them just as fast. His jealousy is for us to have a relationship with Him. So, even this jealousy is to our benefit! In essence: worship from desire is going to yield a tremendous blessing, but worship from obligation (no relationship) is of little value. What is this tremendous blessing that comes from worship? It is the start of discipleship.

The only problem is that too few Christians understand this. Our churches are forced with making the decision of getting out on time or having the time to offer a chance for extended worship. We feel we would lose so many of our attendees if we tried to spend extra time worshipping during our church services. What do we do? For our own blessing we can worship in our own homes, on our own schedule, but I think we cannot reach our potential in church unity and direction without spending worship time as a body. I wish I had an answer on how to wake up more people around me to the need for worship. We find that the first step is going to have to be worship on our own. To do this effectively we need to learn as much about worship as possible.

Several years ago, I was required to attend a management class at work. I don’t remember most of it, but one thing that stood out is the idea that research shows people don’t change unless they have a significant emotional experience. I did not think about this very much until recently when I started flipping through the TV channels and saw just a couple minutes of a segment on emotion during praise and worship. The show was about an experiment where a Christian singer was wired with electrodes to monitor brain activity. During the singing of praise and worship a part of the brain

associated with strong emotional responses became very active. Based on the channel I would say that the intent of the program was not about experiencing a close encounter with our Creator. It most likely was intended to show that the emotion we experience during worship comes from our own brain. Although I didn't watch any more of the show it got me to thinking. Here were two secular scientific studies: first we can't change without significant emotion, second worship triggers extreme emotion. You need emotion and from worship you get emotion. I find this to be very interesting.

⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

(NKJV James 1:6-8)

Reading the above verse you would probably say, isn't that verse from our study on faith? The answer is yes, but it makes a point about stability. If we were easily persuaded to change we would be very unstable and double minded. We need to be resistant to change to have any courage of conviction or faith. However, we also need to have the ability to be changed by God in order to become like Christ. As our Designer and Maker, God has given us the ability to overcome our resistance to change by giving us worship. He has also given us free will so that we can choose who or what we worship. It is strange that the secular world can not see that worship stirs us emotionally because of design not chance. Now it is time to study more on how to properly worship Him and only Him.

⁶“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!

(NKJV Jeremiah 18:6)

The first step of worship we mentioned above is to acknowledge His great and divine nature. There is so much scripture we could use here that it is difficult to choose from. I am going to use some of my favorites and would suggest everyone to choose their own. Just take the time to contemplate on Him and worship will soon follow.

***⁸ “For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.***

***⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.***

(NKJV Isaiah 55:8-9)

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ...

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” ⁷Thus God made the firmament, ...

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. ...

¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. ...

¹⁴Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; ¹⁵and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. ...

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.” ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. ...

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so....

²⁶Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

²⁹And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. ³⁰Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so.

³¹Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

(NKJV Genesis 1)

⁶Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

*⁷ “Now prepare yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall answer Me:
⁸ “Would you indeed annul My judgment?
Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?
⁹ Have you an arm like God?
Or can you thunder with a voice like His?
¹⁰ Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor,
And array yourself with glory and beauty.*

***11 Disperse the rage of your wrath;
Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him.
12 Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low;
Tread down the wicked in their place.
13 Hide them in the dust together,
Bind their faces in hidden darkness.
14 Then I will also confess to you
That your own right hand can save you.***
(NKJV Job 40:6-14)

***1 O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
2 You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
3 You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
4 For there is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
5 You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain it.***
(NKJV Psalms 139:1-6)

***29 Give to the LORD the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come before Him.
Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!
30 Tremble before Him, all the earth.
The world also is firmly established,
It shall not be moved.
31 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
And let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
32 Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
Let the field rejoice, and all that is in it.
33 Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the LORD,
For He is coming to judge the earth.***
(NKJV 1 Chronicles 16:29-33)

These passages from Job, Psalms, and 1 Chronicles not only emphasize the highness of God but our own lowness. The second line of 1 Chronicles 29 says to bring an offering and come before Him. Isn't the time of offerings and sacrifices over? Consider the following:

***1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you
present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your
reasonable service.***
(NKJV Romans 12:1)

The time of offering animal sacrifices is over, now it is time to worship in spirit and truth by offering our own selves as a sacrifice. Isn't this the third condition where we had to acknowledge our

willingness to give up our own will and accept His will for our lives? Maybe scripture is beginning to show a relationship between praise, humility, and submission and that this relationship is worship. Let's take a closer look at the "how to" aspect of worship.

One issue I have heard concerning peoples comparison of churches is their praise session. Some like load praise and worship songs. Some like the old hymns. Some like prayer and Bible verse readings. Some services it is formal, some services it is not. The key is to praise, not worry about the method. What is praise anyway? It is simply to come to a state of acknowledging God for who He truly is; that He is above all else. We need to stop criticizing each other on how we get there and focus on Him. Praise should not be limited to just the Father. It is equally important to give praise to Jesus the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

⁴John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

(NKJV Revelation 1:4-5)

⁶And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

⁸Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying:

*"You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth."*

(NKJV Revelation 5:11-14)

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice:

*"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

¹³And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

"Blessing and honor and glory and power

***Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"***

***¹⁴Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four
elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.***

(NKJV Revelation 5:11-14)

As we read the Bible more and more we will find deeper and deeper reasons to praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But praise is easy compared to realizing our own insignificance and failure. Many people attending church today will get involved in singing Praise and worship but don't seem to leave with any real change. Often the problem can be thinking that things are good and we have no need for any more change in our lives. The question is what does God's Word say?

***¹⁸For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to
will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹For
the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I
practice. ²⁰Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but
sin that dwells in me.***

(NKJV Romans 7:18-20)

***¹⁷Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of
nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind,
and naked—¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that
you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the
shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with
eye salve, that you may see.***

(NKJV Revelation 3:17-18)

¹⁰As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

***¹¹ There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.***

***¹² They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one."***

(NKJV Romans 3:10-12)

These verses should be enough to stress the point, although there are plenty more examples we could cover. Do we begin to feel a state of humility? A key point to remember is that our sin may not be from violating the dos and don'ts but simply not doing His will. Often we don't even know what He would have us to do because we haven't brought ourselves to a point in worship for Him to tell us. Staying ignorant by not worshiping Him is not an excused event. Is that feeling of failure getting stronger? If we do we are getting closer but are not yet there. Why? No matter how bad we feel about our own condition God is not going to step in until we decided that we wish to be changed. You can call it submission, yielding, repentance, or obedience just as long as you are ready to allow His Spirit to work on you. This is our blessing for worship.

Is this the only purpose for worship? The answer is no and we are going to look at how worship brings attention and focus on Him. Yes, our worship can be a witness unto others as long as we are worshiping correctly in spirit and in truth.

³⁷Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, ³⁸saying:

***“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”***

³⁹And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

*⁴⁰But He answered and said to them, **“I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”***

(NKJV Luke 19:37-40)

*³⁰Jesus answered and said, **“This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” ³³This He said, signifying by what death He would die.***

(NKJV John 12:30-33)

This passage from Luke is from the description of Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The most important event that has happened since creation is just a few days away. It is a time for attention. Jesus who never asked for worship and even avoided it many times tells the Pharisees that if the disciples stopped praising the very rocks would cry out. For God’s will to be done and His desires to be accomplished requires eyes and ears be turned toward Him. We must be willing to praise and worship to draw attention to Him. I find it very hard to even imagine having to be replaced by a rock because I wasn’t ready or willing to worship Him.

How important is our worship, or lack of it, to God? To answer this we are going to study a little deeper into an act of worship that most of us know The Lord’s Supper. We are going to start at the beginning to look deep into it’s meaning to see how it fits the description of worship we have already mentioned and then look at how God expects it to be done.

³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

(NKJV Genesis 9:3-4)

²³Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. ²⁴You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water.

(NKJV Deuteronomy 12:23-24)

What is meant by ***the blood is the life*** is not real easy to understand from these scriptures. But, from interpretation we can find that eating or drinking blood is symbolic of desiring to take on the characteristics of the life the blood came from or even to possess part of the life itself. This was common practice in many of the false religions being practiced around Israel. There are still those in the world today that practice these beliefs. Israel was repeatedly commanded not to consume the blood.

⁴⁷Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

⁵²The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”

⁵³Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. ⁵⁸This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

(NKJV John 6:47-58)

When Jesus started teaching this message He lost many followers because of their lack of understanding. They had been taught not only the sin of eating human flesh but of the drinking of any living creature's blood. They could not see that Jesus was teaching about a spiritual food and drink not physical ones. Jesus was teaching us that He as The Word feeds our spirit just as meat or bread feeds our body. But the idea of drinking blood was even harder for them to grasp. What Jesus is teaching is that what failed in natural practice held true in the spiritual. The false religions would drink blood hoping but never getting characteristics like courage, strength, etc. But in the spiritual we can receive the characteristics of Christ through worship by spiritually drinking His blood. Jesus referred to this as abiding in Him and Him abiding in us. We already realize that with out His blood we are not worthy to live in Heaven with the Father. But here Jesus is saying we need more than a covering from His blood, we need to internally consume his blood just as we consume his word.

²⁶And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

²⁷Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”

(NKJV Matthew 26:26-29)

Jesus went further and put into practice the taking of the Lord's Supper with the eleven disciples. The early church would practice this act of worship on a regular basis. To many it became just a ritual instead of a true worship.

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁵In the

same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.

²⁷Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

(NKJV 1 Corinthians 11:23-32)

God’s response to those who participated in this act of worship with out having a true attitude of praise, humility, and submission was harsh. Just how much weakness, sickness, and even death are occurring in our churches today for this same wrong attitude about worship?

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

(NKJV Matthew 7:7-8)

To seek takes more effort than to ask, to knock takes more courage than to seek. Worship will be rewarded by the effort we put into it.

⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say:

*“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You”?*

And again:

*“I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son”?*

⁶But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

(NKJV Hebrews 1:5-6)

6. Understanding Prayer

¹⁴if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

(NKJV 2 Chronicles 7:14)

If we take a close look at the above verse we can find the exact same qualities in prayer as we found in worship. Praise, humility, and submission are required for prayer to be effective. Prayer is worship. Once we realize this and change our attitude about prayer it is going to be so much more effective. Many Christians don't think of prayer time as worship time, but rather think of it as time to communicate to God their needs and their wants. Many can remember such verses as:

¹⁵And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

(NKJV 1 John 5:15)

Or

²... Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

(NKJV James 4:2)

Then these usually get remembered as “if we ask we will get” or “we don't have because we don't ask”. But as in most situations we can go back to study if that was what was really meant. Let's take a minute to further examine the first verse above by looking at the one previous to it.

¹⁴Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (NKJV 1 John 5:14-15)

The phrase, ***that if we ask anything according to His will***, changes the whole meaning here. It leads us right back to the idea of being in submission to His will. It fits right in with our definition of faith as a word of action in His will not ours. This stresses the point that we must look at the Bible in context with surrounding verses and even as a whole unit. I would tell anyone that with anything they read, including this study, it is extremely important to check out how it fits with the rest of scripture. Let's look at the second example:

²You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

(NKJV James 4:2-3)

I have heard people use the second half of the verse 2 because they want something that would end up being excluded by verse 3 anyway. How do we get so far off base? The problem is we are both greedy and have the desire to stay in control. Some may ask what is James talking about? If it isn't asking for the things we want than what is it? He has just called us evil for doing those things that

are of our own desire and is telling us we don't have an escape route because we haven't asked for it. The escape route consists of things such as knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, or forgiveness. He is further telling us in verse 3 that when we do pray it is totally in the wrong frame of mind, one of pleasure not of praise, humility, and submission. This verse is not an argument against prayer as worship but in support of it!

So far we have spent more time showing what prayer is not than we have supporting the concept that prayer is meant to be worship. To get back on track we are going to study the teaching of Jesus Himself on prayer. Before he even taught us how to pray he told us the Father already knows our needs. Our prayer should focus not on what we need or want but on the Father Himself.

⁶But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹In this manner, therefore, pray:

***Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.
¹²And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
¹³And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.***

(NKJV Matthew 6:6-13)

The first two words of the Lord's Prayer have very important meaning. He started with the word "**Our**". Although we have a personal relationship with God, we must see ourselves as part of the group of all His believers. We need to pray in a way that is for the benefit of all. Even when we ask something for ourselves we should be looking at how it will be of benefit to our fellow Christians. We also need to lift up each other and learn to put others ahead of ourselves. To really see how prayer, and worship, can work in one accord for the benefit of the whole body is a whole new topic and we will stop here for now.

The word "**Our**" is followed by "**Father, in heaven**" further indicating a relationship between God and us. So often we can find ourselves thinking of God as so distant, or so powerful, that we can't really have a personal relationship with Him. In verse 6 from the passage above Jesus said to pray in a private place and the Father is in a secret place indicating that we should not see heaven as a distant location but as a place that will allow intimate contact with the Father.

We then see how quickly Jesus moved to praise with "**Hallowed be Your name**". The word hallowed comes from the Greek word *hagiazō*, meaning to make holy or sacred. Looking at the root word *hagios* we can begin to see the qualities of God that are emphasized by just this single word. Until we begin to feel in our hearts the true purity and worthiness of the Father we cannot come to Him in prayer with the right mindset. The true attitude of our hearts makes the difference in

the power of our prayer. The power does not come from the intensity of our belief but from the power of the One we are praying to.

Does this mean that when we don't feel the right attitude toward God that we shouldn't pray? The answer is definitely no; this is a very important time to pray as long as we come willing to submit. There may be times that we are discouraged, angry, or just being rebellious and need to concentrate on the fact that He is **The I AM**. We may go into prayer being able to do no more than acknowledge His right as the creator. Jesus taught us to pray "***Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven***". No matter our attitude if we come into prayer willing to submit and begin saying these words and reflecting on their meaning the Holy Spirit can begin working on our attitude. The mindset of praise we talked about above may be the attitude we finish with not the attitude we started with. Even if we start ready to praise we still need to reach the point of submission. We can see more and more how Jesus taught that prayer has the same characteristics as worship.

I have mentioned several times how prayer is not about asking for the things we want and that faith is not the power to get them. We have even covered how Jesus taught that the Father already knows what we need and want. Does that mean that we shouldn't ask of the Father during prayer? Again the answer is no. As we read "***Give us this day our daily bread***" we see Jesus taught us to bring our concerns to God. I feel this is another of those situations that is for our benefit. We can easily get lost in the worries and concerns of this worldly life. We require someone to let us cry out to concerning our cares, worries, and frustrations. God already knows what we require, both physical and of the heart, but He also designed us to speak out our feelings in order that the worry does not continue to eat away at our hearts. This by design so that we have a reason to be drawn to the comfort of God's love and care. The Father draws us because He and He alone has the power and ability to provide for all of our needs.

One of the most difficult areas of our will to surrender to Him is forgiveness. By our nature most of us just don't have a forgiving nature, we are much to self-centered. When Jesus taught us to ask "***And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors***" He was both reminding us that we need forgiveness and we must forgive others. We may not have the ability within us to do the forgiving but we must be willing to ask that the Father that the Holy Spirit change us so that we can. No matter how horribly we have been offended the Spirit is able to bring peace back to our hearts and empower us to forgive. This is an area where much prayer over time may be required but He is faithful to change our hearts as we allow Him. We do not want to face God with out forgiveness in our hearts. This would have to include not forgiving ourselves. Guilt can weaken our spiritual life just as much as not forgiving someone else.

¹⁴“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(NKJV Matthew 6:14-15)

We know that we must depend on God. I sometimes wonder where I would be if it were not for His guidance and protection. I can think of those near misses while driving to wondering if I would have followed a life style after pleasure. Jesus knew that we needed to be reminded of God's

ἁγιάζω

hagiazō

hag-ee-ad'-zo

From *hagios*; to *make holy, purify or consecrate*; to *venerate*:—hallow, be holy, sanctify.

ἅγιος

hagios

hag'-ee-os

From ἅγιος *hagos*; *sacred*

(physically *pure*, morally *blameless*, ceremonially

leadership and protection and taught us to pray ***“And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one”***. It is our duty to try to avoid tempting situations as much as possible but we can only do so much. We are completely dependent on the Father’s protection and leadership. We can not be reminded enough of this because we have the tendency to forget and head out alone. In modern times things seem to go so well that we forget that the enemy is there ready to attack. If he cannot destroy us he wants to at least divert us or to bring us to a position we cannot support others. In our prayers we need to remember to add a request for the Father’s guidance and protection from the enemy more than ever.

Last Jesus taught us to end just like we started, with praise: ***For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*** Praise is an essential part of our prayer life. The more we understand about how prayer is another way of worship the more opportunity the Holy Spirit has to help change our attitudes to bring us into line with God’s will for our lives. Should we not use prayer to ask for things we need or even just want? Of course we can, but the point is what is the amount of our prayer time is spent in worship compared to the amount of time spent asking for these things. As we worship and develop a closer relationship we will soon find we sometimes pray just to have a conversation with the Father or with Jesus, maybe just to tell them how we feel. These times are special and a blessing but we cannot reach this type of relationship until we get ourselves in line with His will first. What we are learning here is putting things in order of priority that we may grow in our discipleship.

If we come to the Father in prayer with the right attitude and desiring His Holy Spirit to change our hearts to align ourselves to His will, are we assured He will answer? If we look at the Lord’s Prayer as given in chapter 11 of Luke we find just a few verses down this promise:

⁹“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

(NKJV Luke 11:9-13)

Again we must remember that to seek takes more effort than to ask, to knock takes more courage than to seek. But he has promised to give us as much of the Holy Spirit as we ask, seek, or knock for.

Our main goal as Christians is to grow that we can be of value in helping others. We studied earlier how Peter taught a path of change that started with faith and ended with love for others. To help others we can’t just become knowledgeable and then teach it, we must have true love and compassion. I am not trying to change the subject from prayer to love but trying to show that prayer as worship leads to be becoming more loving. Our prayers become much more effective as we become more obedient and loving.

¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. ²⁰For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. ²²And whatever we ask we receive from Him,

because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

(NKJV 1 John 3:18-23)

Verse 20 shows us that if we are not where we need to be in our hearts and minds that God is greater than us and by coming to Him through worship and prayer He can change us. Later when we have come into obedience and we become filled with love and compassion the power and authority of our prayers increase. If we wonder why our prayers do not seem to get anywhere what we need to do is examine our own hearts. We must be willing to eat the flesh of Christ and to drink of His precious blood.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

⁵Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

(NKJV Philippians 4:4-9)

We can see that we need to come into prayer time with a joyful and thankful attitude. By sacrificing our free will to follow Him we gain in that we no longer have to let the cares of the world work to bring us down. He is ready to protect us and lift us up. He is ready to fill us with peace and joy. This is beginning to sound like what we studied from 2 Peter chapter 1. We can see how faith, worship, and prayer all work together to lead us from one level of growth to the next. Now that we have an idea of the attitude of prayer the next question is how often. I will let Paul answer that one:

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

(NKJV 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The last point on prayer that we are going to cover is sacrifice. Prayer, like worship, is sacrifice. If nothing else you give up your time, although if this is all the sacrifice you offer you may be disappointed. We have already shown that for your prayers to be effective you must sacrifice your free will. But the Bible teaches us that we may have to go further and sacrifice part of our fleshly desires.

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?”

¹⁵And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

(NKJV Matthew 9:14-15)

²⁰So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ²¹However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

(NKJV Matthew 17:20-21)

We are not going to do a deep study on fasting in this section. But I did need to point out that God honors proper sacrifice. When times arise where we are searching for a deeper spiritual level, have a great burden, or are fighting a hard battle with the enemy we may need to consider fasting if we don't feel we are getting the response we desire. Fasting is not a common part of worship in our modern churches and we need to consider if this is part of the reason why we can seem to be so weak in the Spirit. As we force the flesh into submission it allows our spiritual life to have more control. We need to pray for more guidance from the Holy Spirit on when and how to fast. We must remember that Jesus taught that after He was taken those who would choose to follow Him would fast. He also taught that some battles with the enemy could not be won without fasting.

This section is by no means a complete study on prayer. We could look at types of prayer, praying for others, praying for our leadership, effective group prayer, etc. What this study is intended for is to begin to see what prayer means as we move through discipleship. Prayer can take on much more specific meaning as we move from discipleship to being called to our own personal position in His Church. We can really let The Word sum it up for us:

³¹“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

(NKJV Matthew 6:31-34)

¹⁴if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

(NKJV 2 Chronicles 7:14)

7. Understanding Jesus, The Word

³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

(NKJV John 17:3-5)

Like the Holy Spirit we cannot really start to understand all there is to Jesus, but we do need to look at what we can learn from the Bible. In fact, once we realize He is the Word, we see that we would have to study the entire Bible to start to understand Him. For this study we are going to narrow this down to what is required to become a good disciple. First we need to know enough to teach others who Jesus really is. Satan loves to try to convince as many as possible who are starting to look for spiritual answers that there are many ways to find God. He wants to hide the fact that only through Jesus can we find the truth. That Jesus is the only way to get to the Father. Satan attacks the Bible trying to convince man that Jesus never actually made the claim to be the Son of God, but that it was much later that others made this claim for Him. I am not going to spend the time going over how Jesus fulfilled prophecy or the evidence that supports the truth of the Bible. It would take an entire book on the subject, and good ones have already been written, and that is not the purpose of this study. But I would like to strongly suggest that every Christian should read as much as possible on this subject in order to be prepared as a good witness. All too often, we think that type of study is for someone else and then we find we have no evidence to help us show our own loved ones the truth. Getting back to our study we are going to focus on what we can learn once we accept the fact that the Bible is the true and infallible Word of God. So what does the Bible teach us?

⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

⁷“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

(NKJV John 14:6-7)

Jesus was speaking to His disciples and answering their questions when He made this claim to being “***the way, the truth, and the life***”. He made it perfectly clear that there is no other way except through Him. He also made it perfectly clear that if we know Him, then we know the Father. There is no other way. Paul backs this up many times including this bold statement:

⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

(NKJV Galatians 1:7-9)

Jesus went further teaching His disciple that He was in truth the Son of God.

¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

(NKJV Matthew 16:15-17)

Any Christian should be well aware of all these claims about Jesus; they are the very basic fundamentals that we accept. They are also our start in getting a deeper understanding of the full purpose behind the life and death of Jesus. Studying this purpose is our primary need in order to become a good disciple. We are going to get started with what Jesus Himself taught.

²³But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

²⁷“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

(NKJV John 12:23-28)

Jesus taught that by His death He would be glorified (verse 23). Jesus taught that He must die to be fruitful in His purpose (verse 24). Likewise, He taught that if we love our life in this world we will lose it, but if we hate the world (and love the ways of God) we will have life eternal (verse 25). He went further to show that to receive honor from God requires us to become servants (verse 26). Service is so important that we must continue no matter the cost to pay (verse 27). Finally, we learn that the Father might honor our service but it glorifies Him (verse 28). I have emphasized verse by verse here to stress Jesus’ statements about His purpose. He did not indicate His purpose was to allow people to be saved from hell or even to get to Heaven. His purpose was to make followers that become servants, worthy of honor.

³⁰Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

(NKJV John 12:30-32)

Judgement of this world has already been made. We must make the decision to choose to follow Jesus under His terms or to be judged with the world. There is no third option or any negotiation to be made. God’s voice was to encourage us to make the best choice. Jesus also made it clear that this choice was for all peoples, not for the Jews only. He will draw all to make the choice, but it is still our decision.

³⁵Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

(NKJV John 12:35-36)

Just as Jesus was only around His followers for a time, the Spirit will provide the light to draw us to God for a time. While we have it we can choose to follow it or ignore it. From the parable of the sower we find that some, the second example, will become excited about the light for a while and even appear to be following it. The problem is that they do not want to let go of the darkness because they love their life in the world. When they find the truth, that they cannot have both, they are soon overcome by the darkness. We must do as much as we can to encourage them to stay in the light, that they may see that the world is not worth losing the price. We must become faithful to the light in order to become sons of light. It comes down to understanding that to believe is the same as to have faith and requires us to allow the light to change our desires.

What happens to us, as we become sons of the light? Paul helps with some answers:

¹²giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

(NKJV Colossians 1:12-14)

Verse 12 says He, the Father, **has** qualified us. Verse 13 says He, the Father, **has** delivered us and that He, the Father, **has** conveyed us. There is no future tense used here, it **has** been done. We **are** in “***the kingdom of the Son of His love***”. It isn’t just about going to Heaven; it is also about where we are now. Why has the Father done these things? It is because “***we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins***”. Jesus didn’t shed His blood so that we could go to heaven, although getting to go is one of the benefits; He shed His blood so that we could be redeemed. This means we are qualified, delivered, and conveyed as soon as we accept Jesus as our savior, lord, and master.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

(NKJV Colossians 1:15-17)

What a wonderful thought, we may not be able to see God but we have an image of Him recorded through the Bible accounts of Jesus. Most of us would say we already knew that, but have we considered how many people in the Old Testament times would have loved to have as much insight into God as we have available. Even today we can think of so many people we know that don’t have as clear a picture of their creator as we do. Even people in our own churches who don’t want to take the time to study the teachings on Jesus miss out on being able to see what the Father is like. But for those of us who would become disciples we have a living image of the Father Himself. What else does Paul teach us about Jesus?

¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

(NKJV Colossians 1:18)

We must remember that we were conveyed to the kingdom of the Son. He is the head of the Church. We can find ourselves planning, organizing, selecting people for projects or ministries, etc without ever asking Him what is Your will or who would You choose. Then we want to present the whole package to Him and say, look what we have done for You. This is not what preeminence is about. Preeminence is about letting Him have His will. He is the head, the beginning, and the firstborn. We need to learn to take all things to Him and allow His leadership.

As we learned that the Holy Spirit can speak for the deepest part of our spirit we learn that Jesus is our High Priest. It is through Him that our prayers can reach the throne of the Father. Through Him we can pray of our weakness and failures as well as ask for strength and guidance.

¹⁴Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(NKJV Hebrews 4:14-16)

We must be honest and understand that although He understands our weaknesses and failures He is also looking for those who seek Him in truth of heart. He is looking for a people ready to allow themselves to be molded into a vessel, as He desires.

¹¹Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

(NKJV Hebrews 4:11-13)

Jesus shed His blood that we might be redeemed from our sins. This is a wonderful gift freely given. It is our responsibility to respond by diligently seeking a change in our hearts worthy of being included in His kingdom. We are accountable for our actions or lacked of them. Discipleship is not an option but an expectation. We are expected to become fruitful.

⁵"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (NKJV John 15:5-8)

A few verses back, Colossians 1:18, we found that Jesus is the head of the Church. If we study a little more we find that He is not only our teacher but that He will choose for us what is to be our personal ministry. We need to allow Him to tell us what He would have us to do, not try to decide what we want to do. Often the two will be the same, but not always. If we ever find ourselves in a situation where we don't seem to fit then we need to go back to Him in prayer and find if we are really doing His will.

¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

(NKJV Ephesians 4:11-13)

We must be careful what we do, for it is only when we are in obedience that we build on our foundation with that which is precious. Anything that we attempt under our own authority and our own power will not stand up to the test of fire.

¹¹For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

(NKJV Corinthians 3:9-15)

One last teaching about discipleship comes directly from the teachings of Jesus.

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

(NKJV John 13:34-35)

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

(KJV Titus 2:11-14)

8. Understanding Relationship

¹⁴But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁵Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” ¹⁶And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

(NKJV Mark 10:14-16)

You may have already seen what this study is all about. Jesus did not suffer on the cross so we could go to Heaven. Jesus did not shed His blood so that we could avoid hell. Jesus did not die so that we would feel compelled to come every so often to a place of worship and offer a little ceremony to honor Him and the Father. He was the sacrifice so that we could have a relationship with God, the Father, and with Him, Jesus the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. These other things may be benefits, but they are not the reason. These other things may have originally drawn us to accept Christ, but we can not stop there.

¹⁹For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

(NKJV Colossians 1:19-20)

What does it really mean to have “***peace through the blood of His cross***”? I do not want to get off the subject here to describe the tabernacle, but its description can be found in appendix 2. What I want to show here is just how wonderful this peace is. You can now walk in spirit into the courtyard of the tabernacle. You can pass the Bronze Altar for burnt sacrifice having Jesus as your lamb. You can move past the Laver of Bronze for washing having been cleaned by His blood and into the Holy Place. On the right is the Table of Showbread, which you have partaken of from eating His flesh and drinking His blood. On the left is the Golden Lampstand of the Spirit, which is within you, having been born again. You can walk up to the Altar of Incense and offer up a sacrifice of worship and prayer in spirit and in truth. This allows you access with Jesus as your Priest to the Holy of Holies, the very Mercy Seat of God. Here you have direct access to the Father through Christ. Here you will find that peace. What you will find there is personal meant only for you, but for all of us, we will find our lives can never be the same.

⁶And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” ⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

(NKJV Galatians 4:6-7)

When the Bible teaches us that we are saved by grace through faith it does not say that we are automatically taken into the presence of God. When the Bible told us that we were qualified and that we were delivered it said we were conveyed into the Kingdom of the Son; but did not say we had entered into the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies. Remember the last verses we studied under worship, Matthew 7: 7-8, where Jesus taught us to ask, to seek, and to knock? God desires us to come into His presence, but to get there we must understand and practice the true meanings of faith,

worship, and prayer. We have learned we can seek His presence through Jesus our High Priest. We have access to the Most Holy Place if we will seek it, but we must ask and we must knock.

¹¹But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹²Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

(NKJV Hebrews 9:11-12)

With Jesus the Word and the Holy Spirit as our teacher our relationship is going to grow as much as we allow it to. We must keep asking, seeking, and knocking to continue to go deeper and deeper into this relationship. We must allow the Spirit to work within us without quenching it. We must keep reading and studying to gain a higher understanding of our Lord and Savior. We must continue to grow in our love for one another.

Our relationship with the Holy Spirit can be seen as we gain knowledge and understanding. But it is even more apparent as we grow in the fruit of the Spirit.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

(NKJV Galatians 5:22-23)

Our relationship with Jesus will become apparent as we become better servants in His kingdom.

⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

(NKJV Romans 12:6-8)

Whatever he calls us to do, may we be found willing to serve diligently in faith and in love. If we follow what we studied here we can be assured that we will become the type of disciple that Jesus would have us to be. We will be prepared to move into any ministry He would choose to call us into.

²³Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

(NKJV John 13:23)

Part Two: From Disciple to Called

1. Understanding Discipleship

¹⁵So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “**Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?**”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “**Feed My lambs.**”

¹⁶He said to him again a second time, “**Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?**”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “**Tend My sheep.**”

¹⁷He said to him the third time, “**Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?**” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “**Do you love Me?**”

And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “**Feed My sheep.**

(NKJV John 21:15-17)

Like Peter we reach the place where Jesus is ready to use us. The first part of discipleship is for us, to receive what we need to stay strong in faith and in relationship with Him. However, the time will come when we are expected to follow His will for our lives and become productive for His kingdom. The verses above show that this is by His timing not ours. Although a few, especially those that are young, are eager to get started; most of us are comfortable with enjoying our own salvation and resist having to change our lives to fit His desires. This chapter is going to look at how we should handle this situation to the benefit of all. Unfortunately, we as a church body are not always ready to perform as Jesus expects us to. This causes many, especially the less mature, to suffer in their spiritual growth. Before going much further, let's look at the conditions of many our churches today.

First we isolate our youth into a department of their own, believing that they will be more comfortable there. The accepted idea is that they will want to attend more often and get a “better” foundation if taught at their own level by a youth pastor. There are a few problems with this theory. The first and biggest problem is that we only give them a couple of hours a week. This is just enough time to try to encourage them to avoid the temptations of the world with almost no time left to give any training on the fundamental concepts of staying strong in the faith. Real training on understanding faith, worship, and prayer is missing not because our youth ministry is unable to teach it, but because there is no time left for it. They are encouraged to talk to other kids about Christ without having enough basic understanding to answer any questions other youth might ask. From my observation, I believe that this separation also leads to inadequate interaction with the adult members of the church. When it is time for them to move out of the youth group there is no desire to move into the adult group. The result leaves an unprepared group that has no desire to come back for deeper training as young adults. This time of transition is the point that we lose the vast majority of our next generation.

Were we completely wrong in thinking that the youth need different instruction than adults? Absolutely not, from the beginning youth have responded better to teaching than to preaching. In fact most immature Christians regardless of age are going to resist preaching because it requires submission and accepting the authority of the pastor. It is human nature to resist submission to

authority. That is the very reason those in the world will resist God's authority in the first place. To submit requires the changes in our lives that we kept discussing in part one of this study.

How do we address this problem? The answer is that we must look to the Bible as our example for how we need to organize and accomplish this task. The root cause of not only this problem but many others is that we do not understand how The Church is supposed to run, how each individual is called to work within the organization, how God has provided every one of us with gifts that are meant to add value to the whole group, and what the group is suppose to ultimately accomplish. Does this mean that our leaders don't understand what to do? Again absolutely not, but they are powerless to change things until everyone is willing to perform their role. Until then, our leaders do the best they can with what little help they have. This is not going to be good enough until the majority are ready to stand up and take the place they are called to take. Part two of this study is about, understanding how The Church should be operating. Chapter one is going to look at the initial problem of the less mature, the need to disciple them.

How does the Bible teach us to deal with this problem? By many examples the Bible teaches us to become mentors. Mentors teach without preaching at a one on one level or in very small groups. Mentors can work without getting frustrated by realizing that understanding comes from precept upon precept, here a little there a little. We cannot expect parents to fill in the whole gap that is left from what our youth ministry doesn't finish. Parents are most concerned with the behavior part, the resisting of temptation, and the choosing of good friends by their kids. Often parents aren't going to see what teaching and training their child needs to mature in spiritual things. There is also a little more resistance from the youth to listen to parents since they have to be an authority as well as mentor. Within the Church we must be prepared to work with our kids and our young adults. We need to establish relationships between the mature and the immature within our churches. The Bible teaches that this is even more important today, as we approach the end, then it was before:

²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

(NKJV Hebrews 10:24-25)

Why is it so much more important today? I think there are two major reasons; modern technology has both allowed so much competition in how much conflicting information there is reaching us and also demands our time as individuals that we do not seek others. We can now entertain ourselves with so many high tech devices that we do not need to seek others out of boredom. But what we entertain ourselves with draws us away from sound doctrine trying to convince us of the lies of the world. When we studied in part one, we saw a lot of scripture warning us of these times.

How have we allowed our churches to get into this state? This same modern technology has changed our society by drawing even the more mature away from the things of God by competing for our time. We are being driven into being a two worker family structure to afford to pay for more high tech living. When we aren't working we have to spend so much time to maintain what we have gained in possessions. We keep trying to find a balance but end up finding frustration that leads us to feeling that we need more time for ourselves to recover. How do we do this? We seclude ourselves with our toys, the very things we are trying to gain balance from. We end up developing a pay someone else to do it attitude. If the car needs work, pay someone. If the grass needs mowed, pay someone. If the kid needs mentored in math, pay someone. If the kid needs spiritual mentoring, don't we already pay the church? NO, financial support of the church is absolutely not paying someone to take care of our own or our families spiritual needs, nor is it paying for the needs of the rest of our

church members including youth, elderly, sick, or those who need emotional support through tough times. We are responsible for giving up our own time and energy to fill these needs.

Let's take another look at our verses above. Regardless of the sacrifice required, the writer of Hebrews is emphasizing the need for us to not only to assemble ourselves together but to do so in a productive manner. It is not easy to give up the sacrifice of time needed to do God's work! But, in order for us to stir up love and good works we must take the time to study and understand the meaning of love and good works as the Bible teaches us. We must also understand what it means to exhort one another and how to accomplish it. To give the dictionary meaning of these words would take only a few minutes but to truly train someone how to stir them up takes much time and effort.

One last point before leaving these verses, look at the phrase ***as is the manner of some***. We must encourage the young that they require the assembling together. Although it may surprise some of the immature, to feel that we would prefer to go our own way is not a modern concept. The early Church had the same issue, an issue that was repeatedly addressed by the writers of the New Testament. I cannot stress enough to the young the warning of pulling away from attending a home church.

What is mentoring? From a Christian stand point we should see mentoring as development of personal relationships with other believers that allow us to both give and to receive spiritual training, as well as to hold ourselves accountable to one another. From this definition we can see that we need to have a relationship on three levels:

1. Someone to whom we pass down knowledge, understanding and wisdom.
2. Someone to whom we can confide and share our thoughts and feelings with as well as share our failures so that we maintain accountability.
3. Someone who is more mature than us so that we stay in training our entire life.

All of these levels are essential for each one of us in order that we may take our proper place in God's plan for the Church. Failure to maintain any one of these levels will lead to a weaker spiritual condition.

¹You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

²And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

(NKJV 2Timothy 2:1-2)

²⁴And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,

(NKJV 2Timothy 2:24)

¹But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ²that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ³the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—⁴that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

⁶Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

(NKJV 2Titus 2:1-8)

From verses like these many of us may begin to see the need for being willing to help train those less mature than us but we may not be quite to the point of admitting that we need to maintain a personal relationship with someone at our own level and someone above us.

¹⁶Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

(NKJV James 5:16)

The truth is we need prayer from others. Not just from unspoken request but from someone we can trust and share the very areas we need help with. Examine your own spiritual life and concentrate on areas of failure especially those that you did not really talk to anyone else about. Now think about how you would have to answer the following questions. Did I get a fast answer to what I needed to change in my life? Was I able to make the change quickly and permanently? Did I make excuses for myself when I failed to make or maintain those changes? Has my spiritual life stayed in a growing mode or have I stagnated? Would I have accomplished more faster if I had someone praying for me, and checking up to see if I was progressing? Do these answers help convince me the need to maintain someone I can trust to help me in my walk with God?

If we become convinced we don't need someone more mature than ourselves to mentor us than we have really reached the highest point we can in our spirituality. We have reached a point where we cannot be taught! At least until our attitude is changed.

***²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight!***

(NKJV Isaiah 5:21)

²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

(NKJV 1Corinthians 1:27)

¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

(NKJV James 5:16)

I am going to finish with just a few closing thoughts that I have learned in my Spiritual walk. If you have no pupil you have no desire to dig deeper for answers. If you have no partner there is no drive to keep working. If you have no teacher there is no motive to improve.

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

(NKJV John 13:34-35)

2. Understanding the Church

¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

(NKJV Matthew 16:15-19)

The first thing we need to do is find the answer to the following questions. What is the Church? Who belongs to the Church? We need to understand that man cannot decide these answers because the Bible teaches that the Church belongs to Jesus. Jesus made this claim when he said ***I will build My church***. We can start any type of organization we want but it will not be part of His Church unless it is under His control. We are going to start with these verses.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

(NKJV John 3:16)

¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

(NKJV Colossians 1:18)

¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

(NKJV Ephesians 2:19-22)

¹¹For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

(NKJV 1Corinthians 3:11-15)

The Bible clearly teaches us that the Church is made up of all who believe (to the point of obedience) and that it is Jesus Christ Himself who is the head and the cornerstone. This belief is the foundation upon which the Church is laid. All believers need to see themselves as only a small part

of the whole and that we need to accept each other and work towards the common goal of spreading and strengthening His Church. As we break into smaller organizations we cannot let differences of opinion separate us to the point that we are seen by the world as a bickering, self centered people. We must even accept those believers who would not accept us as believers. All of us build on our foundations with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw. Consider wood, when sanded, oiled, and polished it can look very beautiful yet it still burns. Let's look at the lesson of the following verses.

³⁸Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us."

³⁹But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰For he who is not against us is on our side. ⁴¹For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

(NKJV Mark 9:38-41)

Does this mean that we should not try to teach others in areas where we feel their belief is in error? The answer is no but with a warning. We must study the Bible very closely, making our best effort to know that we ourselves are not taking something out of context. Next we need to pray and wait for an answer. What we must make sure of is that we are trying to teach them to improve in their spiritual life and not trying to convert them to our group. Last we must do so in love not in selfish desire. The Bible gives us a good example.

²⁴Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; ²⁸for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

(NKJV Acts 18:24-28)

In my own experiences I have had people from other denominations to point out some very valuable lesson I needed to learn. I often wonder how much less my knowledge and understanding of the Bible would be if the had decided not to make the effort to show me the way to a more accurate explanation of scripture. On the other hand I have also had people who have tried to change my beliefs when they themselves did not know where in the Bible anything was recorded that would back up those beliefs. What we must realize is that we need to reach the point that we know what we believe and why we believe it based on the Bible and not the teachings of a group or a leader. This is why we must understand that the Word of God is the ultimate authority to teach us.

From the time of the New Testament there were differences of opinion about how the Church should function. With this occurring even while the original apostles were still alive and teaching, it is no wonder how these differences would cause divisions within the Church. We can wonder if it

was within God's plan for different organizations to form under the claim of being part of the Church. But, that is defiantly not the issue of this study. We are going to look at how we fit into this whole structure known as the Church. So far we have looked at the point that our ultimate purpose is to match the ultimate purpose of Jesus. The most common way that Jesus will use us is within our own church organization. At this point we are going to change focus from the Church to our church.

By observation we can see that there are many organizations; each may have a little different interpretation of parts of the Bible, yet God can be seen working within them. We can tell this by seeing their fruits, by seeing spiritual growth in its members, and by prayers of the church being answered. We normally will become part of an organization whose interpretations most closely resembles our own beliefs, and we feel welcomed and accepted as part of the organization. Over time we may be led by the Holy Spirit to move from one organization to another but we ourselves should be careful to not develop a habit of just jumping from here to there. What we are going to study is that we need to be productive where we are.

In the previous chapter we discussed the need to assemble ourselves with other Christians. We are going to pick back up on that study to find that it is not enough to do so through personal associations, we also need to have a home church.

²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

(NKJV Hebrews 10:24-25)

We are going to look deeper at the same verses from Hebrews that we read earlier. For those that have not done a study of the book of Hebrews, I am going to give a little background. The book of Hebrews gives us, as believers, five warnings and includes teaching of basic doctrine that is needed to avoid the consequences of these warnings. Those five warnings are: danger of neglect, danger of unbelief through hardening of the heart and rebellion, danger of not maturing, danger of drawing back, and danger of refusing God. Hebrews 10: 24-25 are the verses the writer chose to finish warning three, danger of not maturing, and lead into danger four, danger of drawing back. These verses make a key point about our human nature. Left to ourselves we will only study deeper and move forward in those areas of our life where we have a passion. For the vast majority of us, the things of the Bible are not naturally something we have a great passion about on our own. We can stay passionate about them only when we are stirred up by one another through assembling ourselves together.

We need to dig a little deeper into the meaning of verse twenty four. The King James Version uses the word provoke instead of the word stir. The actual Greek word used is *paroxusmos* and means incitement, dispute, contention, or provoke. These are all very strong based words indicating that we often require a very strong encouragement in order to do that which we should be doing; this is not a gentle stir or reminder. Likewise, we can look at the meaning of the word exhorting used in verse twenty five. The Greek word used here is *parakaleō* and means invite, invoke, beseech, call for, comfort, desire, or exhort. If you study these words in the dictionary you will again find them to

παροξυσμός

paroxusmos

par-ox-oos-mos '

From *paroxunō*; *incitement* (to good), or *dispute* (in anger):—contention, provoke unto.

παροξύνω

paroxunō

par-ox-oo'-no

From *para* and a derivative of *oxus*; to *sharpen alongside*, that is, (figuratively) to *exasperate*:—easily provoke, stir.

be very powerful words. Invoke means to call upon for aid or protection. Beseech means to entreat with urgency, to ask from others even to the point of begging. Exhort means to advise or warn earnestly. From these words we can see that this assembly is to both seek from and to give to others. From the intensity of these words we find that it may require some "stepping on toes".

In today's society no one wants to accept being corrected by anyone else. We feel we have the right to be who we are and should be accepted as such. We even carry this attitude into the church and expect to give or receive a little encouragement but resist giving or receiving any real correction that might offend someone. The problem here is the same as it was when the writer of Hebrews gave his warnings to the Church. Without correcting, or even offending, each other we risk both failing to mature and starting to draw back from God. The attitude of society today does seem to lead to the need of *so much the more as you see the Day approaching*.

Another major issue today is that so many people in our church believe that they can't really do anything of value to help. The final three chapters are going to address how this is not true. Every Christian who is willing is going to be given something to do that will be of benefit to the whole body. If you don't think this applies to you than consider this:

³⁷On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ³⁹But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

(NKJV John 7:37-39)

Jesus made it clear that what He offered here was open to anyone, but that it was a promise made to those who would chose to believe. From our previous study we found that the word believes means to the point of being obedient. So, if we have come to Him and are willing to do His will then He has promised us that rivers of water will flow out from our heart. The key word here is **out**. He is not saying that He is giving us something just for ourselves; but, something that will flow out from our hearts that can then be to the benefit of others. That something is nothing less than the power of the Holy Spirit. This outflow can be of benefit to those in our church, our family and friends, coworkers, or even strangers we meet in our lives. The point being that we must be willing to obey and allow it to flow.

The final few chapters of this study are going to dig deeper into what the Bible teaches us about this out flow of living water in our individual lives. But, first we need to cover just a little bit more about what all members of a church share as common obligation to the church itself.

¹²And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

(NKJV 1Thessalonians 5:12-13)

παρακαλέω
parakaleō
par-ak-al-eh'-o

From para and kaleō; to call near, that is, invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation):—beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give)

exhort (-ation) intreat pray

Paul gave a list of instructions for holy living in the fifth chapter of 1 Thessalonians. The verses above are the very top two verses of that list. The original Greek word translated here as urge is *erōtaō* and has a slight different meaning than other words translated as urge or beseech. The difference is that it adds the quality of being of personal importance or a favor. When we look at the rest of Paul writings and realize he was always asking for prayer we can see that he was making this request for our church leaders based on his personal experience as to how important the need.

The next clue to how important Paul felt on this issue is by his choice of the word translated here as recognize. This word is *eidō* and carries the meaning to know and understand the significance and sacrifice required to perform this laboring that is for your benefit. It is not just a normal job requiring normal effort. What Paul wants us to understand is that if we ourselves who are concerned only for our own spiritual well being must face attacks from the enemy, how much worse do our pastors and teachers come under attack?

Once we understand just what our pastors go through, Paul teaches us what we should do to help build back up what the enemy tears down. We are to do this by holding our pastors and teachers in high esteem. We would normally consider esteem to be the honor and respect that we are to give a leader due the position they hold. But if we go back to the Greek we find the word Paul uses is *hēgeomai* which is a level above *agō*. What this actually means is to honor and respect them to the point you would a governor or other high official not just the same level as you would a boss or supervisor.

But Paul does not stop with this; he adds two more words, very and highly. These words are *huper* and *ek* which mean superior to (very) and exceedingly while considering the origin (highly). This is difficult to understand but it breaks down to this. Start with the honor you would give to the high position of governor, exceed that considering the

appointment was made by Jesus, then exceed that. This comes out to be an extreme amount of honor and respect that Paul is asking us to hold for our leaders. Do we even start to actually come close? Do we even know how to hold them in this much esteem?

ἐρωτάω

erōtaō

er-o-tah'-o

Apparently from *ereō*; to *interrogate*; by implication to *request*:—ask, beseech, desire, intreat, pray. Compare *punthanomai*.

εἶδω

eidō

i'-dō

A primary verb; properly to *see* (literally or figuratively); by implication to *know*:—be aware, behold, consider, (have) known (-ledge), look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand.

ἡγέομαι

hēgeomai

hayg-eh'-om-ahēe

A strengthened form of *agō*; to *lead*, that is, *command* (with official authority); figuratively to *deem*, that is, *consider*:—account, (be) chief, count, esteem, governor, judge, have the rule over, suppose, think.

ὑπέρ

huper

hoop-er'

A primary preposition; “over”, that is, (with the genitive case) of place, *above*, *beyond*, *across*, or causal, *for* the sake of, *instead*, *regarding*; *superior to*, *more than*, exceeding (above, -ly), for, + very highly.

ἐκ, ἐξ

ek ex

ek, ex

A primary preposition denoting *origin*, *from*:—after, among, exceedingly, (+ abundantly above), heartily, heavenly, very highly, in, vehemently. Often of *completion*.

Paul gives us a couple of clues on what to do. First, we are to hold them in esteem with love. The Greek word here is the same one used over and over in the New Testament and translated as love or charity because it means both. We need to surround our leaders with both affection and benevolence for their work remembering that much of that work is in the form of hard battle with the enemy. We make a huge mistake if we try to compare their hours or efforts in comparison to our own worldly hours and accomplishments. Yet this mistake is made repeatedly by members of the church to the disadvantage of all.

<p>ἀγάπη agapē ag-ah'-pay From agapaō; love, that is, affection or benevolence; specifically (plural) a love feast:—(feast of) charity ([-ably]), dear, love.</p>

Paul's second clue can be found by example. If you study the openings and closings of his letters you will find a repeated request for prayer. Prayer made for our pastors and teachers needs to be strong and often. This is not just for their sake but for ours. Remember our study of Luke 11:9 where we are to ask, to seek, and to knock? Many of the things we desire are going to be received through our pastors and teachers. Even things we haven't thought of, but the Spirit knows we need, will be given to us through them! If we don't feel we are being fed or experiencing enough spiritual growth in our church then the problem may be our lack of prayer for our leaders!! The strength of the anointing that falls on them when they preach or teach doesn't come from their strength or their prayer but ours!!! Yes they must be willing to work and prepare but in their own ability and prayer they can only go so far. This amount will never satisfy those under them who are hungry. If you want more than pray for them more honor them more and more and more! Also, remember this applies not only to the pastor but to the youth ministry and all teachers too.

I must make one last point. This very high honor is due them for their obedient and hard labor they have been called to do for and by Jesus Christ as Head of the Church. It is not due them for any title or work they do on their own authority. Today we have a rise in the number of false preachers and teachers. We must look at the fruits of the labor that is being done and compare it to the Bible and consider Paul's warning:

⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

(NKJV Galatians 1:6-9)

I feel the real purpose of this study is to cover some basic Christian concepts that are not always taught in detail in many of today's churches. There may be things not discussed in depth whose importance is just as high but are usually well taught within our churches. Included in this group is the responsibility of every church member to make the sacrifice of their time, talents, and material resources (including finances) to the church. Good stewardship is just as important a responsibility to the church as any other responsibility.

¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

(NKJV Galatians 6:10)

3. Understanding the Call

¹Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

(NKJV Philippians 2:1-3)

All Christians are called to the service of others. Each one of us has our particular place and ministry. When we feel like we have no place or calling we need to consider what Paul taught in Galatians 5:13.

*¹³For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”***

(NKJV Galatians 5:13-14)

We need to study a couple of words from verse 13 above. The first word is liberty and comes from the Greek word *eleutheria* and freedom in the terms of being free from slavery with the liberty of being able to go where we will unrestrained. This is given to us when Jesus sets us free from the bondage of sin. Now let's look at what Paul says we should do with this freedom.

In the very same sentence Paul tells us that we are to take that freedom, not for our own desires, but through love serve one another. The word he uses for serve is *douleuo* and means to become a slave voluntarily. The word does not mean to serve to the degree we want to, but to choose to become a slave and serve as we are told. In other words we are freed from slavery so that we can by choice become a slave!

Is not obedient service what we covered in our study on faith? Absolutely, but that was to look at the theory of the definition and now we are going to look at the application. Many of us, including myself, require a second helping (or even more) when it come to understanding just how much obedient service is required from us. Even Paul added a repeat statement right behind verse 13 by saying we shall (not should) love one another as we love ourselves. This is *agapē* love which also means charity. We must serve one another in a sacrificial way.

ἐλευθερία

eleutheria

el-yoo-ther-ee'-ah

From *eleutheros*; *freedom* (chiefly moral or ceremonial): liberty.

ἐλεύθερος

eleutheros

el-yoo'-ther-os

Probably from the alternate of *erchomai*; *unrestrained* (to go at pleasure), (as a citizen) *not a slave* (whether *freeborn* or *manumitted*), or (generally) *exempt* (from obligation or liability):—free (man, woman), at liberty.

δουλεύω

douleuō

dool-yoo'-o

From *doulos*; to be a slave to (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily): be in bondage, (do) serve (-ice).

To remain as equals there are three ways we as humans can function together: each person selfishly grabbing as much as they can for themselves, each person deciding they must compromise and divide equally to avoid conflict, or each person choose to serve the others to the point that all are served equally. Many people with a worldly attitude would believe there is nothing wrong with inequality, that the strong should dominate the weak. They would believe that equality should only happen when each person has equal strength and condition one occurs due to this natural balance of power. Others in this world do believe we would all be happier and better off if we lived by condition two, compromise and sharing. This even sounds good to most of today's Christians. But the reality is that God demands that we shall live by condition three, each person trying to be the most serving! The world should see us as a peculiar people.

¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

(KJV Titus 2:14)

⁹But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

(KJV 1Peter 2:9)

In order for us to truly be a peculiar people implies that we need to hold this serving attitude in all situations. It is not to be just an attitude at church but is to be lived at home, at work, any out in public. In fact it is not meant to be an attitude at all; it is meant to be a new lifestyle.

Why is it so important to have the right attitude? It is because God tells us to do it. Consider the following verse:

¹⁰He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

(NKJV Luke 16:10)

Attitude is one of those least items; although, it may not be one of the easiest. Why then am I calling it one of the least? The reason is that it is a simple command, a command for every one of us to follow. Why is it so hard to do? The answer here is that it is a continuous behavior that must be maintained. The Bible has several of these not so easy to do "least" items, many of them we have already studied in previous lessons and so I want to look at just a couple of others.

⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? ¹²Can a fig

tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

(NKJV James 3:6-12)

¹⁴And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

(NKJV Titus 3:14)

We are never going to be in complete control of the tongue, but that does not mean we shouldn't make every effort to try. With practice we can always improve. It is never wrong to do good works. This is a very simple and seemingly self evident statement. The problem lies in the fact that we just don't get around to doing it as often as we should, which is again continuously. The least begins to appear so impossible we can begin to wonder; how can we do more? It is a good thing that nothing is impossible with God.

When it comes to doing good works, Christians often wonder what it is that they can do. One of the first things we should consider is we need to show our new attitude. It can be amazing just how much it can mean to another person's day just to get to work with someone that has a positive outlook, a hope that seems unwavering. This can even lead them to feel that this is a person that I can trust and ask for help when I am in trouble. We can look to the Bible to get more understanding on what these attracting attitudes are.

²⁰But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. ²⁶"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. ²⁹Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

(NKJV Ephesians 4:20-32)

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

(NKJV Galatians 4:20-32)

To those that have been Christians for any length of time these are passages that have been heard over and over. The first question is, do we show these traits to the world, or have we heard them so often they have become only words? The next question is, do we realize just how powerful an impact these traits can have on others?

In addition to a positive nature we need to remember also to encourage and build up the outlook of others with our positive words. Ephesians 4:29 instructs us to this when it said "**but what is good for necessary edification**". This verse instructs us to do this even when the other person does not deserve it. This is the "**that it may impart grace**" portion of the verse (grace means unmerited favor). Ok, we now have good attitude and encouraging words, is this enough?

¹⁴“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. ¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ ²¹His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²²He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ ²³His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

²⁴“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’

²⁶“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

²⁹‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

(NKJV Matthew 25:14-30)

As we study this parable we can clearly see that God expects a return on what he has given us. The world believes we should use our natural abilities for our own gain. But the truth is that our natural abilities were given to us by God. He has chosen what talents we are going to have before we are born, whether we choose to use them for His benefit or not. He has given talent to those who will

choose to accept Jesus as well as those who never will. He has also given control of what we do with those talents to us, but He will one day make a judgment of what we have done with them. It does not matter how great or how small our talents are as long as we choose to use them for good works. For those who do not choose to serve and only use their talents for gain, He has given warning as to the outcome of that judgment. God's expectation of us using our talents is to help others. We cannot always see how God is reaping a benefit from us just doing good to other people but we need to realize that He does and that this then comes back to us as credit for service during the judgment. We need to consider the following command:

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

(NKJV Matthew 5:14)

The point is that when we do good works just for the sake of doing them He will ultimately use it for His credit whether we see how or not. Too often we can feel we are doing nothing for Him and that He will be angry with us for not having accomplished anything. But the truth is we can always do good works! Now that we have seen we can be of good attitude, have good words to say, and use our talents to help others we may wonder is this enough?

Let's go back to our study of Titus 3:14

¹⁴And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

(NKJV Titus 3:14)

Consider the phrase "***to meet urgent needs***", in order to cover urgent needs we may have to sacrifice a little bit more. For one thing, we may have to take a little time to help others but once the need is urgent we might have to sacrifice something that we all value so much, convenience. Urgent does not always come at a good time for us. Today's world has gotten so busy and prioritized that spare time is a hard enough asset to find, but to take it at the moment it may be needed is real sacrifice. It may not seem like much, but this is not a lesson we want to learn the hard way. We must be ready when we are needed. Last we must also realize that urgent needs may also require the sacrifice of our personal resources and finances.

I have heard it said that there is no reason to sacrifice time and money if God did not lay it on our heart, because we would not get rewarded for any thing that He didn't ask us to do. We need to go back and look at a passage we studied quit a while back.

⁵And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”

⁶So the Lord said, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. ⁷And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’ ⁸But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ ⁹Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰So likewise you,

when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'

(NKJV Luke 17:5-10)

Previously we were seeing how this helped to give us a good definition of faith. Now we want to look at two things; first, certain actions are just expected, and second, that we are not supposed to serve with the expectation of reward. What seems to confuse some people is that when it comes to performing ministries or volunteering to take positions such as teaching in the church, we need to seek an answer from Jesus as to what position He wants us take, because He is the head of the Church. But, when it comes to doing good works, then if we can do them with our own talents and resources we just need to do them.

¹⁰He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

(NKJV Luke 16:10)

We need to look at this verse again and understand the difference between least and much. I included all the above concepts about good works under least because they are expected of everyone and are not always part of any special, personal ministry. For Jesus to use us in a ministry He expects us to show Him our faithfulness in what is least, then He knows that He can trust us with what is much – a special ministry we can perform for Him. Does this mean we must be perfect in good works? No, no person, except Jesus Himself, can be perfect. What we can be is faithful in our efforts.

To sum it up, we need to have the heart of a servant. For most of us, this will require God to change our hearts through worship and prayer. We need to examine ourselves to make sure the good works we do are with the right attitude. They should not be with expectation. They should not be done to the fear that God will punish us if we don't do them. They should be done with humility and not to build our own pride. They should not be compared with the works of others. These attitudes can lead to the enemy using our works against us so that our focus is removed from true service for Jesus.

By now it may have become clear why this chapter is called "Understanding the Call" and not "Knowledge of the Callings". Our purpose has been about allowing God to change our attitude to an attitude of service. Now we are going to start looking at the attitude that is expected once we know our special ministry.

¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

(NKJV Ephesians 4:11-16)

Although, the above verses are directly speaking about the purpose of the five ministry offices, they do make a point about proper attitude for all ministries. The ministries are given to the ministers, but the purpose is for the edification of the rest of the body of Christ. What this means is that any ministry is a gift to the one who is called, but the benefit or blessing it produces is for the ones that are ministered to. This same concept is going to apply to our next main subject, the gifts.

We are going to get just a little jump on the subject of ministry gifts by starting with a definition. In a broad sense the gifts are abilities above and beyond our own natural abilities or talents. Their primary purpose is to allow us to perform ministry above and beyond our own capability. Some of the gifts are constantly present and some will come as the Holy Spirit wills us to have them. What we want to realize is that gifts are meant for ministry and like ministry the ones who are going to benefit from them are not the ministers, but those who are ministered to.

In the world's opinion if someone were to receive a gift then that gift should be for their benefit or pleasure. God sees things differently than the world for He considers you to have received a gift when you are empowered to serve others! The world could never understand how it can be a gift to have the privilege of serving especially when we are to do it without reward!! God does give us things just for us, things that we alone can take joy in, but these are considered blessings and not gifts. In God's view it appears that He considers us to have received much more when He gives us something to allow us to bless others than when He gives us something to bless ourselves.

The attitude problem with gifts arises when we want one of the ministry gifts for selfish reasons. We cannot allow the world's view of a gift to overcome us. This results in jealousy, confusion, and total disorganization within the church. We must consider Paul's lesson to the Corinthians.

⁴There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

(NKJV 1Corinthians 12:4-7)

²⁰But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

(NKJV 1Corinthians 12:20-26)

³³For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

(NKJV 1Corinthians 14:33)

Are we ready to minister? Have we truly changed to a servant's heart? If yes, we are ready to study what God's Holy Spirit is preparing for us so that we may become empowered. If not, then we need to pray and worship more with the desire to become a good and faithful servant.

¹²So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

(NKJV John 13:12-16)

4. Understanding the Gifts

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ²You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. ³Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

(NKJV 1Corinthians 12:1-3)

One thing that we must understand from the previous chapter is that our "good works" do not earn our right to receive gifts from God; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We cannot earn them. We can only show our faithfulness without expectation of reward. To better understand this we need to look at the meaning of the original Greek.

To begin we need to look at what they are not. They are not presents. If something was given to us as a present then the proper Greek word would be *doma*. An example of this can be found Luke 11:13 where Jesus talks of men knowing how to give good gifts to their children. This word is even used to in Ephesians 4:8 to describe that Jesus Himself gave the ministries to men, not to the ministers themselves but to the people who would benefit.

However an entirely new word is used in the Greek to describe the Gifts. This word is *charisma* and has several characteristics we want to study. These special characteristics include: deliverance, endowment, qualification, faculty, grace, and joy.

Deliverance as a characteristic of the gifts may surprise some Christians. But two of *charisma* gifts are eternal life and justification.

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(NKJV Romans 6:23)

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶And the gift is not like that which came through the

δόμα

doma

dom' -ah

From the base of *didōmi*; a *present*: gift.

χάρισμα

charisma

char' -is-mah

From *charizomai*; a (divine) *gratuity*, that is, *deliverance* (from danger or passion); a (spiritual) *endowment*, that is, religious *qualification*, or miraculous *faculty*: gift.

χαρίζομαι

charizomai

khar-id' -zom-ahee

From *charis*; to grant as a *favor*, that is, gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue: deliver, forgive, give, grant.

χάρις

charis

khar' -ece

From *chairō*; *graciousness*, of manner or act; *gratitude*: acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace, joy liberality, pleasure, thanks.

χαίρω

chairō

kah' ee-ro

A primary verb; to be full of "cheer", farewell, be glad, God speed, greeting, hail, joy, rejoice.

one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

(NKJV Romans 5:16-16)

These two gifts are the most important gifts we can receive at the very start of our Christian walk. However, we can not stop with just these gifts. Looking further we can see that if God gives us deliverance, whether from our own self created problems or from outside dangers as we serve Him, then His deliverance is a gift and carries the other characteristics of the *charisma* gifts. Two of those we should always keep in mind. The first is grace, simply because we don't deserve God's gifts. The second is the one we learned by example, that the true beneficiary of God's gifts is others that we can serve.

Endowment is the next characteristic. By definition endowment is the act of providing or equipping with what is necessary. Jesus is never going to ask us to do anything that He isn't prepared to provide or equip us to perform. Likewise, He will qualify us to accomplish the task. We do not need the approval or acknowledgement of man. This will include faculty, the ability and the power to accomplish. When these three characteristics are put together we can see that He is providing the resources, the authority, the ability and the power. All we need to do is to trust and to obey. No Christian should say that they can't accomplish an assignment for Jesus based on lack of resources or abilities yet we so often do. These three characteristics are the main characteristics of anointing.

Anointing is such an important part of our ability to perform what Jesus would have us do that it cannot be overlooked. If we totally rely on only our personalities and our talents to accomplish what needs to be done in the church, then we can only succeed to the degree of a well run secular organization. We cannot choose who anointing will fall on to accomplish the task unless we seek the answer from God. Yes, we can end up with having good Sunday school teachers, but do we want good or anointed? I have seen many churches that have announced a shortage of workers, but I have seen few that have asked for their congregations to gather together for special prayer to seek who Jesus would appoint.

This is so important I would like to use a good example to see the problem we can face in the church if we do not seek from God who the correct person is for each position. If a church were to test everyone to judge their strengths and weaknesses for serving in various positions then the following could happen. Some people would score high in a particular "job" because it falls in their natural preferences and abilities even though they are not Jesus' choice. Someone may score high in the same "job" because they are the correct person and the Holy Spirit is changing their heart and mind to start taking on the work. Someone who is the correct choice could score low because the Holy Spirit has not yet changed their heart or empowered them yet because He is waiting for them to step out in faith. If we were to use the test results alone we could make mistakes assigning or not assigning person one and person three. This type of test is a good tool but its limits must be known, this mainly being that the test will not measure anointing.

We need to dig a little deeper to better understand the three vital characteristics. First let's look at some verses to help understand endowment:

⁹But as it is written:

***“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”***

¹⁰But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knows the

things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. ¹⁶For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
(NKJV 1Corinthians 2:9-13)

¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

(NKJV Matthew 16:17)

¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;
(NKJV Ephesians 4:11-13)

Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are three of the most important parts of endowment. From the above passages we find that we can receive them by two methods, either directly or through the teaching of others. Both require that we receive by gift, because even if we are to receive through others our hearts must be prepared by the Holy Spirit. We also receive the gift to be able to discern that which we hear. This is not a process that we are capable of by our own power but only through His Spirit. We must be willing to listen through the Spirit when we are hearing spiritual things or we will find that we can easily be led away. How often have we seen those who have received the teaching of spiritual things and have a lot of worldly intelligence yet cannot seem to see such simple spiritual truth? The problem is because they choose not to listen through their spirit to what God's Spirit is saying.

There may also be physical needs to be met in order to accomplish what Jesus may ask us to do. We are not to concern ourselves with these things but to step out in faith that they will be provided.

¹After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ²Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the

laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. ⁵But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. ⁷And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' ¹²But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

(NKJV Luke 10:1-12)

³¹“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

(NKJV Matthew 6:31-33)

One of the things that we must understand is that our path is guided by God. He places us on a path that will endow us through learning and experiences so that we can be prepared to share and assist others. Even our trials will provide us with strength and understanding as we latter need them. When I taught Sunday school, I was always amazed at how it seemed that He would place me in a situation or having a conversation with another Christian within just a week or so needing to share what I learned with my class. All of this is part of His plan to endow us. Some situations are not pleasant or enjoyable but all things are for the greater good.

Next we must realize that if He ask us to do then He has qualified us.

¹ *“Listen, O coastlands, to Me,
And take heed, you peoples from afar!
The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.*
(NKJV Isaiah 49:1)

⁴ *Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:*

⁵ *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*

⁶ *Then said I:*

*“Ah, Lord GOD!
Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”*

⁷ *But the LORD said to me:*

***“Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’
For you shall go to all to whom I send you,
And whatever I command you, you shall speak.
(NKJV Jeremiah 1:4-5)***

***¹⁵But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb
and called me through His grace, ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me, that I might
preach Him among the Gentiles, ...
(NKJV Galatians 1:15-16)***

***⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me
His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to
the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not
according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which
was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,
(NKJV 2Timothy 1:8-9)***

We can see that the Bible teaches we are qualified before we are born. We are designed and given all that we will need to perform our service from the womb. We do not need the approval of anyone other than Jesus to be qualified to perform our service.

Just as endowment is the supplying of our needs to perform, faculty is the supplying of the power and abilities as we need them. These gifts will often seem supernatural in nature. They can be a spiritual influence to the mind such as a word of knowledge or wisdom, or discernment of the spiritual nature or source of someone or something. They can also be physical such as faith, healing, or the working of other miracles. They can be a direct communication from God through the Holy Spirit such as prophecy. What we must understand is that what was used by God in the early Church is still used today by God to empower us.

***⁴There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are differences
of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but
it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit
is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸for to one is given the word of
wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the
same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings
by the same Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another
prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of
tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But one and the same
Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He
wills.***

(NKJV 1Corinthians 12:4-11)

***¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men
will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,
disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving,
slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors,
headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a
form of godliness but denying its power.***

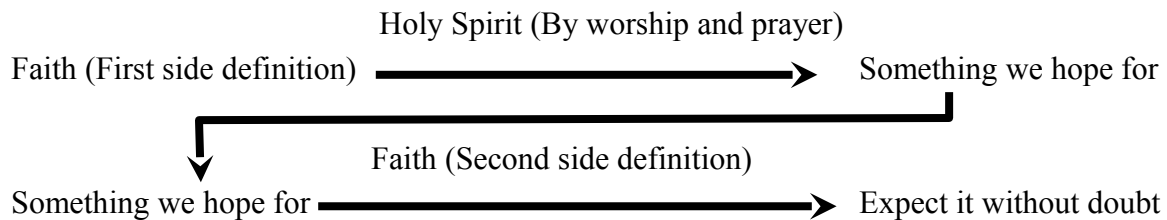
(NKJV 2Timothy 3:1-5)

I am not going to try to define what each of these gifts are but I strongly suggest that the reader pray and seek revelation from the Holy Spirit and to study the twelfth chapter of 1Corinthians. However, I do want to study about one gift, the gift of faith. 1Corinthians 12:9 mentions faith as a gift and we need to understand the difference between this gift and our personal faith. All of us probably realize that the power of God is such that what He speaks happens. This is the faith of God. It is filled with absolute power. When we are in His will He can give us the ability to speak through His faith and miracles happen. This was taught by Jesus in the following passage:

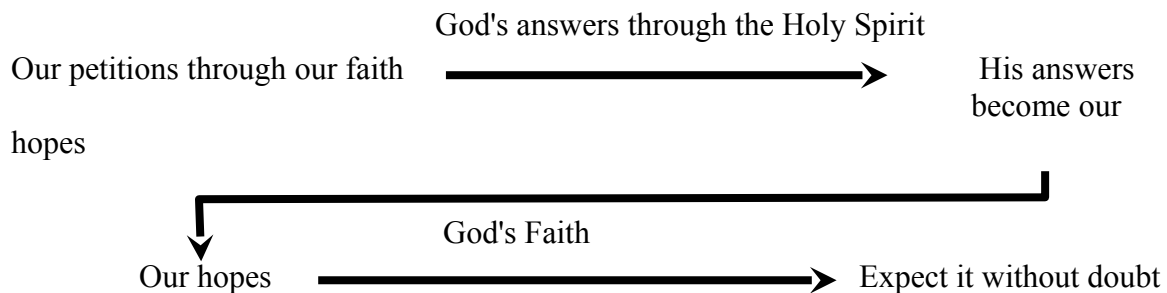
²²And Jesus answering saith to them, 'Have faith of God; ²³for verily I say to you, that whoever may say to this mount, Be taken up, and be cast into the sea, and may not doubt in his heart, but may believe that the things that he saith do come to pass, it shall be to him whatever he may say. ²⁴Because of this I say to you, all whatever—praying—ye do ask, believe that ye receive, and it shall be to you.

(YLTB Mark 11:22-24)

I have used Young's Literal Translation of the Bible because it uses the most literal translation and says "Have faith of God" where the King James says "Have faith in God". It is not that I feel that the King James is incorrect but only that Young's shows the point a little more clearly. In either version we can see that supernatural events come from God, not the power of our human faith or ability. I want to show this on our diagram of faith from earlier:



Now we can see how God's faith fits in:



When we start with our petitions and ask by our personal faith through prayer then God will answer, yes or no, and change our hopes to match His will. Then we can be assured that we can speak by His faith and receive. The only real difference in looking at the Young's translation verses the King James is that we can see that we use God's faith as a gift as opposed to just waiting on God to act. What this means is that it becomes important to speak out and act on our convictions. We can finally understand that when we act in obedience how powerful a faith God is ready to give us. The

reason we had to wait until the section on gifts to complete our understanding of faith is because we needed to see that God's faith is a gift and not for selfish fulfillment.

We are finally ready to look at the last of the characteristics of the gifts. Repeatedly, I have brought up that the main ones benefiting from the gifts is others. This is because it is such a key point. However, the gifts do bring us at least two wonderful benefits, grace and joy. Grace we have already talked about but we still have joy to go. As a Christian can we ever really feel peace and joy if we are not following His will for our lives? If a deep joyful satisfaction of life is missing maybe we need to seek His direction for our lives. Without joy we get so burdened with the cares of this life that we even begin to lose hope. Nothing else can change this around like serving Him. We may have to seek Him through prayer and worship, we may have to be willing to allow Him to change us, we may have to repent of not being faithful in what is least, we may even have to battle the enemy, but we can receive joy for faithful service.

¹⁶Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

(NKJV Romans 14:16-18)

We must never forget the source of true joy!

***¹ There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
² The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.
³ His delight is in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.***

(NKJV Isaiah 11:1-5)

5. Understanding the Commission

¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

(NKJV Matthew 28:18-20)

Appendix 1 Understanding Salvation

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

(NKJV John 3:16-17)

The Bible is very clear that all men are sinners and fall short of being worthy of living in the presence of God. But, God desires our presence and has a plan that we may be made presentable to Him. This plan is outlined throughout the New Testament from the Gospels of Jesus, the Acts of the Apostles, to the letters of Paul, through the General Letters, and into Revelation. This plan was that through the blood of Jesus we have a sacrifice worthy to pay the price of our sins. Although this plan is consistently presented through the Bible, one of the most straightforward ways to outline it is known as the Romans Road to Salvation, which is what I will use here.

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
(NKJV Romans 3:23)

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(NKJV Romans 6:23)

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
(NKJV Romans 5:8)

⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.
(NKJV Romans 5:9)

¹³For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”
(NKJV Romans 10:13)

⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
(NKJV Romans 10:9)

¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
(NKJV Romans 10:10)

We need to take a close look at what these verses mean. To begin, we must realize we are sinners. Sin is not just committing acts that are against God’s rules. Sin also includes failure to do what God would desire us to do on a daily basis. We could live our life never doing anything bad and always ready to do good for others and still we are in sin if we are not fulfilling His plan for our life. In fact the Bible teaches that we are born in a sinful state because we have inherited this nature from Adam’s original sin. Next, we must understand that this sinful nature keeps us from being able

to have a relationship with the Father. Without this relationship we are doomed to death and destruction for the price of sin is death.

As we continue to study we learn that God still loved us even as sinners and sent His Son to die that we might be saved, having the blood of Jesus Christ to pay the cost of our sin. If we will accept this offer of the blood of Christ than we can escape from God's wrath against sin. This offer is open to anyone who will accept it and call on the name of the Lord Jesus. It does not matter who we are or what we have done in the past; we will be saved if we call on Him. But, we do need to know what it means to call on Him.

We learn in verse 10:9 that calling on His name means that we confess our sins including our failure to do His will and that we believe that Jesus died for us, and that God raised Jesus from the dead. Now this word believe comes from the Greek word *pisteuō* and means not just accepting that God raised Jesus from the dead but believing to the point of action or willingness to change. This is what repentance is all about. Not just being sorry for what we have done or failed to do, but desire to change so that we desire not to repeat our actions. We will continue to fail, but we are committed to doing our best. Our best is going to be allowing Him to change us not something we ourselves can do. This study on discipleship is about how to allow Him to do this.

If we accept and believe in our hearts we are ready to confess through prayer. Our prayer can be as simple as:

Father I realize that I am a sinner, having committed wrong and having failed to do your will. I accept the fact that your Son, Jesus, died by shedding His blood for me that I might live. I repent of my sin and am ready to commit my life to You through Him and ask forgiveness of my sins in the name of Jesus. I thank you for having sent your Son for me. Amen.

Anyone who prays a prayer similar to this one and means that they are willing that He may have control over their lives from this point is immediately saved by being born again. This is just the starting point in a long relationship with our Creator.

²⁰But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

(NKJV Ephesians 4:20-24)

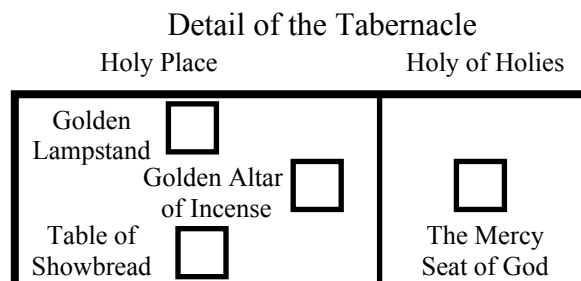
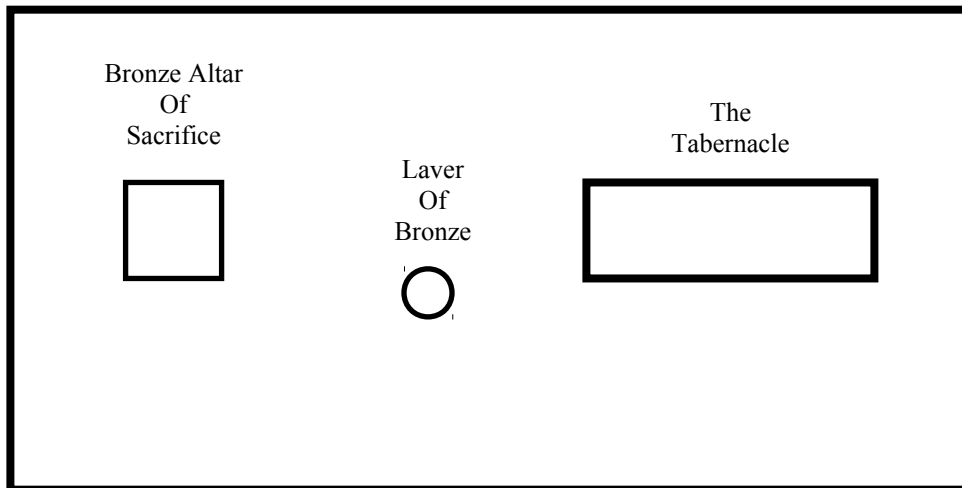
Appendix 2 Understanding the Tabernacle

*⁸And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.
⁹According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and
the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.*

(NKJV Exodus 25:8-9)

God instructed Moses to build a place of worship for His people Israel during their time of travel to the Holy Land. The general plan for the construction of this place of worship, the Tabernacle, was outlined in the 25th through 31st chapters of Exodus. Instead of listing every detail God instructed Moses to use particular men to be in charge of its building and that He would reveal to them every detail of it's design. When we look at a sketch of the Tabernacle we can see a model symbolizing God's plan for our salvation.

The tabernacle itself was a tent structure with curtains for walls about 45 feet long by 15 feet in width. The inside was partitioned into two rooms, the front room was the Holy Place and the rear room the Holy of Holies. Curtains were also used to create a court around the Tabernacle that was about 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. As you entered this court there was an altar used for blood sacrifices as a sin offering for the people. Also within this court was a laver or basin for the priest to wash before entering the Holy Place itself. Only the priest could enter into the Holy Place and care for the Table of Showbread, the Golden Lampstand, and the Altar of Incense. Once a year the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies to offer atonement for the people.



We need to do some study to see how the Tabernacle represented the New Covenant to come with the death of Jesus:

The Bronze Altar of Sacrifice –

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

(NKJV Romans 5:8-9)

The Laver of Bronze –

⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

(NKJV Titus 3:4-7)

The Golden Table of Showbread –

⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

(NKJV John 6:51)

The Golden Lampstand –

⁵And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

(NKJV Revelation 4:5)

The Golden Altar of Incense –

³Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

(NKJV Revelation 8:3)

The Mercy Seat of God –

¹⁹This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, ²⁰where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(NKJV Hebrews 6:19-20)