

A DISCIPLE'S HANDBOOK

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Chapters For This Disciple's Handbook

An Introduction To Discipleship.....	3
Disciples, Learning the "Way".....	4
Reconciling The Spirit in the Seeker, the Spirit of Him being Sought;.....	5
Receiving True Gifts and not Counterfeit.....	6
Fellowship in Koinonia: We Are God's Family.....	7
Chapter 2.....	7
Ministry Transforms, Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses.....	9
The Encroachment of Formalism.....	10
Disciples, Learning the "Way".....	12
The Foundation Of The Apostles.....	12
Receiving True Gifts and not Counterfeit Ones.....	14
Some of The Foundational Apostolic Doctrines.....	18
Paul's Insights into the Gospel.....	20
Paul Defines the Apostolic Emphasis.....	20
The Spiritual Life.....	24
Mentors and Ministries.....	24
The Electronic Media Church.....	26
Let's Look at Some Attributes of Ministry:.....	26
Mega-Churches.....	27
What is the Glorious Church?.....	29
Professional Ministry.....	31

Basic principles identified in the Bible shed light on the subject of giving.....	32
Maturing to Minister Chapter 5.....	33
It is God's plan that every disciple partake in Jesus' ministry!.....	33
Gathering As Christ's Body Chapter 6.....	35
Expectations and Guidelines for Christian Fellowship & Worship.....	35
WHY GATHER AS A BODY? SOME GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS.....	37
Learning Christ, The Spiritual Life.....	38
Daily Life in the Kingdom of God.....	38
Jesus Models The Spiritual Life & Ministry.....	40
Yeshua, Divinely Conceived By the Holy Spirit - A "New Birth".....	41
Angels Rejoice and Give Praise at the Birth of Christ.....	41
Jesus Grows in Wisdom and Stature and in the Fear of the Lord.....	42
Yeshua, Jesus, Baptized by the Holy Spirit.....	42
Empowered To Minister Chapter 8.....	44
Spiritual Activation Through the Anointing Of The Holy Spirit.....	44
Jesus Seeks Continuous Communion and Intimacy With Father God.....	45
Meditating on The Word equates to Intimacy.....	46
Discernment and Pitfalls – Issues of Discipleship Chapter 9.....	47
Receiving The Gift of God, Power from Heaven.....	47
Biblical Issues: Doctrines and Wrong Doctrines.....	49
Poor Teaching and Misunderstandings produce Wrong Doctrines.....	50
The Church is The Body of Christ on Earth.....	50
Paul's Insights into the Gospel.....	51
THE MATTER OF MINISTRY Chapter 10.....	52
You Are Being Prepared for Ministry, Mentors and Ministries.....	53
Professional Ministry.....	54
Tithing in Faith Becomes an Act of Worship.....	57
The Prosperity Message (Giving to get).....	58
Becoming A True Worshiper Chapter 11.....	59
A form of worship is part of all religion.....	60
What Jesus said about True Worshipers.....	60
Praise and worship are the Cornerstone of the Christian Life.....	62
The Spiritual side of worship.....	63
Praise and Thanksgiving Chapter 12.....	64
Final Thoughts Regarding Praise and Worship.....	67

An Introduction To Discipleship

Chapter 1

Believers need to be nurtured in order to grow as disciples. When I use the term "church" I always imagine it in quotations because not everyone regards this word the same way. The familiar church-house model where most denominational Christians meet routinely is most commonly thought to be a church. This reference is not the original New Testament model. The term *ekklesia* (ek-kles-si'a) in the original Greek text is translated "Church" throughout the Bible. The proper connotation of *ekklesia* is *the called out, or the gathered out ones*. We tend to assume that church life in early Christian times is equal to its present day form. However, the form of the 'church' in the days of the apostles was quite unlike modern understanding of familiar religious forms built around a church house. (*you will find various spellings on ekklesia*)

In ancient times *ekklesia* was a form of gathering in which members came together to transact a specific kind of business on behalf of a community. In the case of the Christian *ekklesia* it was and is the business of the heavenly shepherd, Christ Jesus. In this kind of fellowship all members are called to participate actively. In this church body we are called out of the world by the Spirit to be a part of Christ's body, (He, Christ the Messiah, is the head over the church.) All members bring with them unique abilities, gifts or enablements. God's *grace* provides the activation or enablement of those many gifts that are needed for Spiritual fellowship and growth in understanding.
(1 Peter 4:11)

The Holy Spirit is the divine personage who brings the gifts or enablements of Grace. We who are **called out** into the Kingdom of God grow and mature, gain experience and develop testimonies in the Kingdom of God. These are our personal 'God Stories.'

These testimonies when shared, build faith among those with whom we share. Testimonies are God stories that describe the dynamics of heaven touching us individually. Spiritual gifts are enablements that bear witness of God's presence in day to day experience. Church house religion, all too often deficient in such experience of God in the present.

Among the assertions I will present in the discussion of discipleship is that we as believers, after being born of the Spirit, may not only know God, but that we all (men, women, boys, or girls) can have a spiritually *empowered* life. The "church" as Jesus Christ established it, was given this provision. But in spite of this provision, both knowing God and developing a spiritual life, is often unrealized in the institutional church. Time, circumstance and unrelenting forces of spiritual resistance (authored by our spiritual adversary) embattle believers, to derail or to side track us from attaining the spiritual life. Instead human traditions are instigated. Jesus warned his disciples in Mark 15 to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and also the leaven of Herod, superficial religiosity, and worldliness. Jude, half brother and an apostle of Jesus, writes that we must, " - - earnestly contend for the faith given to us by the apostles.

Disciples, Learning the "Way"

The foundation of the life in Christ begins as we become a disciple of Jesus. Just as he made disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) Religion has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal. It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious folk heroes. The sense of their being our brothers, sharing our same life of trials and faith has been all but lost. In our minds Bible days were another time, another faith, another kind of application. This is not the case. Religious tradition places apostles on pedestals and this should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons.

A short time after the apostolic age, lust for human rule and power and other motives undermined the apostolic foundations. Liberty and spiritual forms of worship began to erode. We are entitled to the same promises and gospel practices that New Testament believers knew. The Christian life, being Holy Spirit inspired, is not of human authorship nor human tradition. It is the way that leading to a God inspired, life-changing, fulfilling, and in perfect accord with the

Bible.

Discipleship described here was/is modeled by the saints and apostles in the beginning of this *church age*. Many denominations and religious teachers, attempt to mentor and advise others about the spiritual life. The historic trend is to promote religious traditions instead of knowing God, it is important that we look to grow in wisdom through the guidance of the *Spirit of Truth*, the *Holy Spirit*.

God tells us through the Word (James) that we may ask for wisdom or truth to be revealed to us. He further instructs us to be confident knowing that God is willing to give *good gifts* which bring fulfillment and blessings and not sorrows. When seeking the revelations which are **of** God and not false we must be fully aware of the risk of error and counterfeit. Deception and false teaching is on the increase and is everywhere. In order to discern the true from the false, test every spirit. Is it the right spirit, is it the right Jesus, the right Gospel?

It is very important to invoke the name of Jesus Christ. His is the *name above every name!* And also know that His Spirit will not lead us into bondage, fear, submission to abusive men, or lawlessness. Meekness, gentleness, compassion and service to others is the right spirit.

The Bible teaches that Jesus' name commands all powers of heaven and earth. It is above the authority of any other god or angel or worldly authority. The word states that at the name of Yeshua, Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess his lordship. It is in His name that we can consecrate any prayer or any request. It is a safeguard and assurance that anything which will be revealed or imparted spiritually will be without deceptive influence. If you ask in Jesus name *the deceiver* is unlikely to make his intrusion.

Reconciling The Spirit in the Seeker, the Spirit of Him being Sought;

The true Spirit of Christ Jesus is the spirit of love, forgiveness, gentleness, meekness, selflessness, and patience.

It is not tinged with fear, with condemnation, with urgency or panic, It is not contaminated by a lust for personal gain, ownership of another or any desire to control or manipulate another person. Check yourself if you are seeking with motives containing any of the negatives stated above for they are contrary to the nature of the God who will insure your being lead into truth.

Receiving True Gifts and not Counterfeit

Jesus instructs us about receiving gifts from God, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us that the God of heaven gives *good gifts* and not devilish or perverted ones. Christ also characterizes the fact that there are two sources who might affect spiritual results. God's gifts are good and true.

Let us look at the scripture found in Matthew 7:8-11 and in Luke 11:11-13: These shed light on Spiritual gifts.

"For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." Matt 6:8; "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" :9; "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?":10; "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" -- :11. The two gifts requested are bread and a fish, God gives things which are life-giving (bread) and safe (meat- fish). Luke chapter eleven restates the same teaching about asking from God the Father with a slightly different emphasis, and includes the gift of the Holy Spirit which is the living gift of God's power and presence: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"; "Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" -- Luke 11:11-13

The references to the counterfeit gifts are not just coincidental or random examples they represent the fact that there is a source of the *bad gift*. The enemy is Satan. He does not give good gifts, nor give valid revelations. His gifts are not life giving, they give neither joy, nor health nor liberty. Yet it is possible that he will try to come in unless you exclude him from having any part of the asking and seeking transaction (namely the spiritual search for a spiritual life.) Satan's gift is characterized as a stone instead of bread, as a serpent instead of pure food, a poisonous scorpion instead of an egg. Jesus teaches that Satan is the deadly counterfeiter who will insinuate himself into the seekers life subtly and at any opportunity. Forewarned is forearmed; for this reason we will need to initiate safe guards and precautions as I suggested above in order to keep the deceiver out of your life. There was a time when our lives were entirely under his (Satan's) control. We may not think that this was the case but the apostle is very clear about it. A couple of apostolic letters bring understanding of the nature of the unredeemed life. These apply to all, whether saint or not so saintly, before that

life is renewed *In Christ*.

Paul states in his letter to Ephesus, Chapter 2, verses 2 and 3."- - *in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, (Satan) the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation (lifestyle) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*"

Paul's letter to Colossae, Chapter 1 verse 21."*And you, that were sometime before now) alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*" Paul's letter to Corinth, Chapter 1 verses 10 and 11, "*Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*"

Fellowship in Koinonia: We Are God's Family

Chapter 2

Koinonia and Sharing With Those of Like-Precious Faith

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT PARTAKING OF THE LIFE OF GOD

It Is Also Extending The Ministry of Yeshua Jesus

Sharing, Communicating, Partaking In The Kingdom Of God

*Jesus is the living "**head** of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to both know him and follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him. During the Lord's earthly ministry, they walked at his side, conversed with him, and were both witnesses and **partakers** of his ministry. They knew his voice; saw his power; and marveled at his wisdom. On a strictly physical level they *knew* him! Yet, this was not considered adequate. These original disciples were instructed to receive a further supernatural empowerment. In order to demonstrate and build the Kingdom of God there were told to. "Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from above- -."*

Today I suspect that far too few nominal Christians are able to say they truly know Jesus on a Spiritual level. Yes they know about him have been taught doctrines but how much do they know him in the transformative power of his love and the power of his resurrection?

Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only **may know him**, but have fellowship with him **and partake** in his divine nature and *in his ministry*. When we gather as believers at any particular place of meeting can we say as we leave that meeting knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or have been empowered by his touch?" *1 Peter 4:10,11* defines God's idea of the importance of sharing the gift that is unique to each believer for indeed each has received a gift or many gifts to be shared from his or her life. Tradition has had the negative effect of barring or at least, discouraging the ordinary believer from ministry even though apostolic scripture consistently prohibits this.

All believers are exhorted to grow and mature in the knowledge of him who came to give more abundant life through the power of his resurrection. We are not to remain a novice and a baby in the faith, but that we attain "unto the stature of a 'mature man' even the stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4). The exaltation of a single voice in the role of authority **to disciple** us is limited and limiting. Pulpit ministry is an unfortunate self- perpetuating legacy of 17 centuries of the "Church" age. Those who in fact have experience in Christ's life and ministry, through the power of the Holy Spirit have a title in the Word of God; these individuals are called "**elders**." Certainly church denominations use the same term within some context of their doctrines. But those who Jesus calls elders may differ from what religious traditions might label as elders.

The apostle John, the disciple who Jesus loved, begins his letter by talking about the Spiritual **experience as the qualification** (credentials) that we must look to and lean upon.

John gives record of what he had personally seen, touched, looked upon, and handled pertaining to **the Word of life**. *(1John1:1) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, these things we declare unto you - -* I believe that this is a clue to our own personal testimonies. In these we have been touched supernaturally by the power of Jesus' resurrection.

True fellowship is elusive and hard to achieve since religious traditions tends to separate rather than unite in belonging and a feeling of one accord. Wrong motives and wrong understandings create disharmony. Correction and exhortation is necessary but must be given in the right Spirit. For we are

to have the same Spirit that is Christ's and "- say the same thing - ", seeking that there be no schisms, walls, or disharmony among us. (1Cor. 1:10,11)

Ministry Transforms, Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

After a believer's initial conversion, discipling follows. Through edification from the fellowship we mature as part of the **Body of Christ**. In a formal sort of traditional ministry experience in the normal church congregation discipling advances at a slow pace if at all. Indeed denominational religion makes little out of discipling its members.

Intimate and loving fellowship was modeled by the first apostles. The Holy Spirit was fully in evidence to empower. Individuals gave testimony of the continuous transformation of their lives in Christ. Revelations and teachings in the Word of Truth were shared with fellow believers.

We pass through various stages as we grow *in the Lord*. Just as in the natural, we begin as babies, then children, the strong young 'men', then mature sages expressing the character and spiritual nature of Jesus Christ. So is it in the matter of Spiritual growth. The Bible shows how we each are called to ***minister our individual Spiritual gifts to one another. (Rom.12; 1Cor.12. 1 Cor. 14, and 1Pet 4:11)***

The proper time to be edified and grow is in gathering with the body, and fellow believers come together in koinonia (fellowship). This is the "*one-anothering*" described by Paul in the gatherings of first century believers. Any time that two or more true believers get together the natural result is to share their common salvation and to have "fellowship" to minister "edification" to each other. When these two or more gather, Jesus 'joins' them and becomes a co-participant through the Holy Spirit! This fellowship process is not complicated, nor formal, it is not one person, an appointed leader, dominating others. It is not adversarial. Discipleship happens as we share the gifts that have been given to us as individuals.

Koinonia is about participation, communication and sharing. As referenced in 1John 1:1-3, It begins with actual experiences given as a witness of Jesus' life and resurrection. **Koinonia is about sharing what Christ has given to each believer and ministering that gift to others.**

According to the measure of God's grace, individuals have various testimonies and experiences, some have more, some fewer. There are some with musical gifts which enhance worship others have less of that ability. Some may have verbal skills, some less. Some possess practical kinds of skills,

some not so much. Some may be working through personal tragedies or rejection, while others have already had healing in these areas. All need to be encouraged to participate at some level so that **leadership skills** may be fostered in each.

The dynamics of fellowship will change from week to week. Few or more people may be present at a house or meeting place and the Spirit of God will act in accordance to the time and persons present. Fellowship should never turn into something regimented or formalistic. However it often becomes that especially when everything is controlled by one leader.

If you are unfamiliar with the kind of fellowship I have described it would be inspiring to experience for yourself what can happen in a place of meeting where the Spirit of God is given liberty! God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and even healing; Hearts and broken relationships can be restored and souls saved. The Holy Spirit administers all such actions. (See link to [Why We Gather](#))

The Encroachment of Formalism

A **religious spirit** encroaches in the form of supremacy, control or formalism. Formalism and structure stalks the believer with the aim of transforming God-life into **dead religion**. I suppose church liturgy was put together in times past, following the kind of glorious Spirit-led fellowship described above. Liturgical forms may have started with good intentions with the hope of bottling up something very good and worthwhile, perhaps to preserve some of the glory of an earlier day.

If only God's manifest presence could be captured and preserved! But alas it can not. Yet He continues to move toward his purpose just as the pillar of cloud moved ahead directed the sojourners in the wilderness in the book of Exodus.

The Bible demonstrates that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed they were left with a lifeless object (a religious artifact or idol.) The temple remained, the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained, but the manifestation of its power was gone. A cistern remained, the fount of living water was gone. God's continued glory and fellowship with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. Years and centuries past and only rituals and catechism remained supplanting the glory that had been lost. The ritual enactments remained and the liturgical trappings but the presence of God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth God's 'glory' through waiting upon Him in faith.

At the time that God's presence leaves it is replaced by man-led religion. "Ministry" follows a similar transition. Leadership becomes the domain of a very small body of liturgical experts. It has come to pass that the priesthood or the clergy only is trained and authorized to govern and rule over the flock of God. But in the new covenant as it was presented to the saints, discipleship is the domain of every believer.

A concept to re-think: Abolish the Laity!

God wishes *each believer* to be a ministering priest, just as he wishes each of us to become **a true worshiper**. What is this true worshiper and what is worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. Any one other than "true worshipers" fall short in the Divine interaction. The natural mind is not accustomed to partaking in heavenly things. The "natural man" (without the Spirit -*psuchikos man*) is an intruder *in the inner court of the temple*. *1Co_2:14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Our Heavenly Father looks at the heart. He does not regard the man who is adorned with the outward regalia of religious uniform over any common believer whose heart is open.

The natural temple, cathedral, church is no longer where God dwells

Our Heavenly Father does not require a building or cathedral but has chosen a holy dwelling site **inside of us**. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, (It is not about where you worship,) not on 'this mountain or another mountain,' **we worship what we KNOW!** Many *do not know what they are worshiping*. The truth is that worship is inseparable from salvation. Salvation is through the root and foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained, when men and women would worship the Almighty God in Spirit. Those without this Spirit receive nothing of the revelation and fellowship of God of which Jesus spoke. A divine meeting place for the first priesthood was a place behind the veil into the presence of God where no human could stand without having been made pure by scrupulous preparation. In the presence of God man does not utter a word nor risk the defilement of his own sweat.

Disciples, Learning the "Way"

The foundation of the life of Christ is laid by becoming a disciple of Jesus. Just as Jesus set about making disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) The

Great Commission is about discipleship. Too often, the Christian world has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal through religion . It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious super heroes. It is too easy to lose the sense that Peter, James, Paul and Barnabus and the host of others are our brothers and our teachers. Though now having run their race, they shared the same life of trials and faith as we ourselves. In our minds Bible days were entirely another time, another kind of faith life , another dispensation. This is not the case. Religious tradition places men on pedestals. This should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons. s many that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace

You may be interested in checking out the writing of Frank Viola and George Barna

See www.ptmin.org and listen to some interviews as sound files describing the return to open, house church. For any that have received the gift, (God Life, Grace and Power) minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace of God. 1Peter 4:11

The Foundation Of The Apostles

Chapter 3

The Apostolic Foundation of the Gospel

Learning Christ-Issues of Discipleship

God has provided that each believer who is born of the Spirit may grow in the Spiritual life. Learning Christ, in a general sense is becoming familiar with God not only through His word but also through His presence, thus gaining familiarity with His character and personality. We, in the process of time, should become partakers of His glory and His character. As it is written, we go from *glory to glory* (2Corinthians 3:18,)and *from faith to faith* (Romans 1:17.) We learn to hearken to the voice of His Spirit and respond accord to the way we are directed. I call this learning Christ. God's model for learning Christ is **imitation** of the first born Son of God, Jesus Christ. We are to model his manner of thinking, and his manner of acting. We are to duplicate his interacting with the Heavenly Father and his Spirit-directed ministry. The first disciples were given a living model but they were only able duplicate his Spiritual behavior after they had received the enabling Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

With Christ's life within us, we submit our egos and wills to him. We aim to become as he was in this world. (John 16:16; 1John 4:17) The total spiritual inability and helplessness of the natural man or woman, places huge limits upon him. We can not be the light of the world if God's light does not burn within us.

Too many nominal Christians experience a religion which could function just as is without any resurrection!

We can not be *witnesses* of his resurrection if we have not been touched by the fiery hand of God that raised Jesus from the dead who also quickened our own body and spirit. We can not reflect the goodness of God if he has not made us good who were once reprobates. We come in to this world to know God. This is our first calling and some come and go from this world not having achieved that first calling. If we are fortunate to have God reveal himself to us then we press on to the next stage; that of being a functional witness. It is also unfortunate how many are thwarted in this second stage, by the incomplete or ineffectual teachings and tradition.

As we have noted, the institutional church has either lost sight of, or failed to actualize the provisions of the New Covenant which comprises the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Time has eroded true understanding, and spiritual subterfuge authored by an unrelenting adversary has come in to subtly sidetrack our spiritual lives and foster human understanding instead of biblical, Godly truths.

Again, what I am sharing in this writing is not a unique revelation but a simple restatement of **the way** that was revealed by Jesus to his servants the apostles following Pentecost at the beginning of the church age. Any church or teacher (including denominational groups) who are attempting to mentor or direct others into a spiritual life are under divine obligation to be accurate. Private interpretation risks wrong doctrine. Since there is always a danger of deception, it is important that we proceed cautiously, both as teachers and learners. We are obligated to discern all things with the wisdom, the help, and guidance of the *Spirit of Truth* who is the *Holy Spirit*. God has told us through the Word that we may ask for wisdom and for truth to be revealed to us. He further instructs us to have confidence in this asking, knowing that God is willing. God is willing! God is willing to give *good gifts* which bring fulfillment and blessings and not sorrows. When seeking the revelations which are *from God*, it is up to the seeker to be on guard against deceptions and to discern the true from the false. If you are asking anything from God it is very important to invoke the name of Jesus Christ. This name is the name above every name and above every spiritual entity or authority. This name will consecrate or make pure anything which may transpire. It will guarantee that anything

which will be revealed or imparted spiritually will be free of any corrupt or deceptive influence. If you ask in the name of Jesus, *the deceiver* can not work his way so readily into the workings.

Receiving True Gifts and not Counterfeit Ones

Jesus instructs us about receiving gifts from God, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us that the God of heaven gives *good gifts* and not evil, hurtful or perverted ones. Christ also characterizes the fact that there are two kinds of gifts which might be tendered, the true and the false, but God's gifts are good and true.

The scripture is found in Matthew 7:8-11 and in Luke 11:11-13: *"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."* :8; *"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?"* :9; *"Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"* :10; *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"* :11. KJV The two objects which are sought are bread and fish. God gives things which are life-giving and safe (bread, and meat.) Luke chapter eleven restates the same teaching about asking from God the Father but expands the emphasis, toward the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the living gift of God's power and presence: *"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"*; *"Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"* *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"* -- Luke 11:11-13kiv. I have emphasized the word son to emphasize that relationship is the key to receiving from God. There are a whole lot of different kinds of seekers; some sincere and some less sincere. If a dabbler negotiates to receive a spiritual manifestation from God, it is uncertain what may transpire. But God wishes to emphasize that he is for blessing His family. He is the giver of Good gifts.

Counterfeit gifts are a peripheral issue. The above quote presents the possibility of receiving a *bad gift*. These kinds of exceptions bear upon the setting and environment where and with whom the "ministry" occurs and the sincerity of the hearts who seek the gift.

We have a common enemy, Satan, who is always ready to move in to block the gift of God or to substitute a counterfeit. Satan does not give good gifts, nor does he give valid revelations. His gifts

do not enhance abundant life, they always diminish joy, health and liberty. There was a time when our lives were entirely under his (Satan's) control. We may not think that this was the case but the apostle Paul is very clear about it.

A couple of apostolic letters bring attention to the nature of the unredeemed life, which includes each and every life before the renewal *In Christ*. Paul's *letter to Ephesus, Chapter 2, verses 2 and 3*. *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation (lifestyle) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."*

KJV Paul's letter to Collosae, Chapter 1 verse 21. *"And you, that were sometimes (before now) alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled"*The apostle contrasts the previous unredeemed nature our previous lifestyle with the redeemed nature. In the letter to Corinth, Chapter 1 verses 10 and 11, he lists a number of these life styles; *"-Neither - thieves, - - covetous, - - drunkards, - - revilers, - - extortionist, shall inherit the kingdom of God.; And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."*

The Foundation of the Apostles - Every Believer Becomes a Disciple

Apostles were first **disciples**. Disciples walked with the Lord in an intimate way. They learned his ways by first hand observation, through hearing his word and knowing his voice. The disciples while they were growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus were also *participants in the work of Jesus' ministry*. It was they who announced, *'the Kingdom of God is at hand.'* They showed that the Kingdom could be demonstrated by both **the spiritual power and the authority** to impact the afflicted, the oppressed, the poor and the broken- hearted. Disciples were and are called to be partakers of Jesus Christ's ministry. Each of us continues to share the same access to Jesus Christ. We share the same Spirit, we share in the same commission. *"For this reason the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil."* (1John 3:8) We aspire to attain to the **same unity and inclusiveness** as the original fellowship of disciples. There was no member of the original circle of disciples who was just like another. Yet, there was a unique niche for each of those Jesus called.

Each of the first disciples had a divine destiny and an unlimited opportunity for growing up in the fullness of the Lord. Jesus chose the original disciples. He singled them out and called them aside to

walk with him and to have a face-to-face relationship with him. Descriptions indicate that each had attributes which could label them as plain **folks** or ordinary people. Some associated with Jesus more intimately than others. Each disciple had unique traits and attributes of character; Matthew a worldly businessman, a publican, a tax collector; Peter a robust, headstrong man who generally spoke without thinking and was always competing to be someone; John a warm, compassionate and trusting youth; Nathaniel innocent and open; Thomas a scientific minded pragmatist who had to have things proven before he could be persuaded and so on. The twelve included men who we might not have chosen, including Judas the deceiver and betrayer who Jesus also called a robber. Outside of the twelve were a multitude of other disciples **including women** who traveled extensively with Jesus though were not part of the inner group of the twelve.

It is possible that those who were reasonably close and connected to Jesus may have higher, certainly seventy or several hundreds of individuals. The apostles were men with whom Jesus visited, taught and broke bread. He also imparted his life and Spirit into them. After he had risen from the dead, he breathed upon the disciples saying to them, "receive Holy Breath (Gr. *pneuma*).". The word breath and spirit are the same word in the original text. This is the same as to say, "Receive the Holy Spirit." I believe It was this action which imparted regenerated Holy life within each disciple. I believe this act before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the equivalent of the new heaven-born experience that we believers today call being **born again** or spiritual renewal. The eleven apostles and Judas Iscariot's replacement Matthias thus were 'born from above' i.e. conceived as a new spirit being at this time.

The apostle Paul (originally Saul) came on board some time later being called by Jesus for a particular revelation and ministry. Saul of Tarsus was a Jewish theologian, a Pharisee of the strictest sect of Judaic fundamentalism of the day. Saul was an intellectual of supreme discipline and credentials. The zealous Saul, set out to destroy the disciples of Jesus, persecuting and imprisoning all who preached Jesus as Messiah and the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. Saul was added to the order of discipleship but in a special way **after** Christ's resurrection.

How did Saul become a disciple and an apostle? Paul recounted his account of the encounter several times, but the original encounter is described in Acts, Chapter 9. God supernaturally intervened in Saul's life, on a journey to Damascus. His travels were interrupted by Jesus appearing to him in a brilliant light. Saul was blinded and knocked onto the ground. The voice spoke to him saying, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*" Paul answered this voice saying, "*Who are you, Lord?*" and Jesus replied, "*I am Jesus who you are persecuting.*" Jesus then gave Saul brief instructions about who he was to visit to receive further ministry and instruction. Jesus began to tutor a new disciple

after this. Jesus did not give Saul any information that he did not need to know at that time, but he told him the first thing to do. Paul was told where to go in Damascus to get further help. God likewise does not give us more information than we need to get started. He does list all of the stages of our journey, including both the trials and the victories. The journey of faith is an hour by hour, day by day program. The journey of discipleship begins with a first step forward into a new life. In the first chapter of his letter to Galatia, Saul who has been given a new name, Paul, to go along with his new nature, accounts how he was taken aside and how he began to be instructed face-to-face, personally by Jesus. For three years in the deserts of Arabia, Paul **learned Christ**, being discipled as one "*out of due time*" a description of his apostolic commissioning found in 1Corinthians 15:5-10.

The Apostles Doctrine

Why should we place an emphasis on the apostles and the disciples? Because we wish to be connected to the same authentic and pure doctrine and the same spirit and the **same manifested spiritual life** that was brought forth in the beginning of the "church". It must breathe the same purity, power and the same divine order. The apostolic teachings have been described as the foundation upon which the house of God is constructed. We who continue to build the Kingdom of God must continue building upon the same foundation which is true and sound. The foundation is the apostle's doctrine. It is based upon the essentials of the true faith. The "promise of the Father" a nation of kings and priests through Jesus Christ, designated as "the firstborn of many brethren."

Understanding the Apostle's Doctrine

The writings of the apostles constitute practical, uncomplicated, hands-on teaching of how to live a Spiritual life. The Apostles who wrote in the Bible include Peter, James, John, Paul and Luke is generally credited with authoring the Book of acts as well as the Gospel of Luke, Paul is generally credited with writing most of the other epistles. Theologians fine tune and over-process questions of authorship and have vain debates over endless issues of scholarship, but such debates bear little relevance to living the Spiritual life if we merely accept the epistles as true.

The apostle Paul brings a unique revelation. There are a number of commonalities that all the apostles share. The original disciples (apostles) received the power to become sons and daughters of God through the Spirit of adoption and the release of the Spirit of God to bear witness that we are the sons of God. The Jews of Jerusalem who believed were prejudiced to the Jewish religious traditions and the establishment of the Kingdom as a Jewish prophetic event.

Paul is given a revelation from Jesus that is directed to **the gentile** audience. The emphasis in Paul's teaching is directed to the entire world, a Gentile world. With the other apostles he enunciates the **power of the crucified and resurrected Jesus**. The Messiah's resurrection is a legacy for all mankind, not just the Jews in Jerusalem, the promise of sonship and new life as a Spiritual Creation **in Christ**. Paul's revelation speaks to a different audience, the gentile world and the concept of the “Church.”

(Ek-kles-si'-a) Paul goes so far as to call this revelation '**His Gospel**.' The original apostles, while they began outreach beyond Jerusalem, maintained a focus on the Jews and Israel. Messiah's resurrection denoted the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel who would eventually restore the Kingdom to Israel. Jesus as the risen son on God was the corner stone of both group's gospel message consistent with the revelation of Christ's grace shared by Peter, James, John or Luke. It is clear however, that Paul was not taught the Gospel by the apostles in Jerusalem but given unique revelation and instruction by Jesus personally, for 3 years after his conversion on the Damascus road.

Some of The Foundational Apostolic Doctrines

Jesus Christ, the True Son of God Almighty, Jesus Christ, Virgin born, fulfilling the Messianic Scriptures of the Old Testament, Christ Jesus, crucified, resurrected and alive;

Jesus Christ, the *only* mediator between God and man;

Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, He becomes our Passover;

Jesus Christ, offers Redemption through the blood God's of Lamb (Jesus Christ) the perfect sacrifice;

We are offered the promise of “The New Creation” in Christ Jesus;

The Holy Spirit provides enablement and reveals truth in Christ Jesus;

The believer is given authority against spiritual powers; Deliverance and discerning of the spiritual world

The potentiality of the children of God. Widely unknown or untaught who we are as children of God.

The law of the Spirit, has bought us liberty and freedom apart from the “Law of sin and death;”

**The Church calls for Unity of all believers; All blood bought believers are one in Him,
Unity produces synergistic power, peace and potentiality.**

All believers must learn to discern matters of the Spiritual life and maintain unceasing vigilance over matters of the common faith;

Believers have been forgiven therefore we must continuing to walk in Love and Forgiveness;

Rebellion and unbelief will be dealt with at the hand of the returning Jesus in divine judgment before & at His second advent;

There is a culmination of the church age; Thereafter, this evil age will also conclude after the false prophet and deceiver are revealed and the deeds of the wicked are met with judgment.

Constant vigilance must be maintained against False doctrines, false messiahs and anti-Christ; Rampaging ferocity of ascendancy of the final anti Christ.

Believers need to be alert to false teachers; and Aware of doctrines of Demons that take believers into bondage

**The redemption of Israel becomes a praise in all of the earth; With the second advent Israel will become the
head of all nations and Christ will rule in the Holy City.**

Paul's Insights into the Gospel

Paul was an intellectual's intellectual and a theologian's theologian, but he set aside his natural credentials when he began to minister the Gospel. Paul presents some of the most powerful insights

into the conflict of intellectualism and theology. Paul experienced a total turn around in his life. The features of his traditional achievements were discarded as were the merits of his classical education. Paul declared that the things which he once esteemed and considered meritorious were now no better than "dung". The Holy Spirit drew a line of division in Paul's life. He clarified the difference between the fashion of this world and the world of God. He revealed the matters which pertained to mind and soul and matters of spirit; *the thoughts of the mind* versus *the intents of the heart*. Vanity no longer had a place in his life. Personal pride and striving for status was cast down he was given another job description. A "slave" of Christ.

Paul in all his letters addresses two points of doctrine which are at times in tension or contrast. First the purely Spiritual nature of the Gospel and the God-connected source of life; and secondly teachings on leadership, headship and government impacting the long-term course of this entity called "the church," the body of believers. Contradictions have occurred in this respect, that individuals are placed in positions of leadership and authority who do not have spiritual credentials but merely human approval. Spiritual enablements allows the kingdom of God to be manifest according to the apostolic model. Even in the first years of the church age we hear accounts of men like the apostles Paul and John struggling with individuals who have assumed leadership though their motivation were entirely wrong or their doctrine was corrupt. We hear Paul describe associates who tried to undermine or destroy his ministry, or who departed because their hearts turned again to the world; or of the associates who preach for personal gain; or the associates who wanted to be pre eminent and gloried in having control over people. (See 1Timothy 1:19,20 1Timothy 4:14) regarding Alexander the Coppersmith; 2Timothy 4:10 regarding Demas; 3John 1:9 regarding the person of Diotrophes.)

Paul Defines the Apostolic Emphasis

In his first letter to Corinth Paul presses a very important foundation point in the first two chapters. This particular emphasis stressed the difference between a Spiritual message contrasted to a conceptual one. In chapter 1 verse 17 he states that his gospel emphasis is not based upon words of human wisdom but in power generated from the cross of Jesus. The cross and crucifixion is where the exchange of righteousness was made. The cross of crucifixion is where the sacrifice was made. The cross and crucifixion is where God paid the price in blood for every sinner. This doctrine of the cross does not end with a man's death but with a divinely-powered resurrection. Thus the doctrine that Paul speaks of includes the death and the resurrection of Jesus. It was Jesus who was crucified, dead, buried and resurrected. The holiday we call Easter concludes three Jewish Festivals; Passover,

Unleavened bread and First Fruits speaks of the resurrection. As Jesus became the first fruits of those who have died. (1Cor.15-2) It is truly unfortunate that so few Christians understand **the Jewish roots of Christianity**, including the fact that Yeshua and most all of the first disciples and apostles were Jews. Jesus (Yeshua) rose from the dead, *ascended on high, took captivity captive, and gave gifts to the human race*. Paul's statement of the cross does not address sorrow or loss, it addresses rather, victory, effulgence and power. The resurrection speaks of *the power of an endless life*. It speaks about the Father's plan to extend grace and peace to every man, woman and child. It speaks about the ability to *become a new creation in Christ*.

Godly Wisdom Versus Human Wisdom

Paul going on in his first letter to Corinth, introduces the theme of "wisdom." Paul contrasts human wisdom to divine wisdom. He explains that man who deems himself wise through reasoning, can't accept the wisdom of God. God's wisdom is framed in paradoxes and conundrums. For example the paradox of the least being the greatest; the weak being the strong; the first being last; the wise being foolish; the living being dead; the dead being awakened to live. If these concepts make any sense to you, perhaps God has already opened your eyes in a very significant way. God framed truth in such a way that when they are articulated sound preposterous, unbelievable and irrational. The world says, "Be someone, do your own thing, express your individuality." God says, "Decrease to yourself, take your cross and let the outward "you" be crucified so that the Divine (Christ) can have effective sanctuary and expression in you. The scientific mind requires proof. The eye measures and discerns the things which we call real or reality. Yet Christians are entreated to disregard outward manifestations, the outward world. Neither is the mind the highest organ to lead and direct, **children of God are led by the Spirit**, not by acting purely out of natural reason.

The truth is not determined according to science and rationality. God requires **faith** on our part. Paul, again in the same letter speaks to the matter of making Spiritual realities manifest, "*I did not come teaching and preaching with enticing words of man's wisdom but with demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand upon man's wisdom but upon the power of God.*" (1Corinthians 2:4,5) The Spiritual life first begins to manifest, because of the grace of God and secondarily by acting in faith. The gospel states with respect to the Kingdom of God that we are all *pressing into it*. (Luke 16:16) The Lord stands at the door knocking, the action of faith opens that door to him. Again, grace is the initiatory cause, it is God's hand in matters concerning our life, stirring, directing and empowering. Grace is the hand of God outstretched to us. Beckoning, he bids us to come forth. We respond to him and we press in to the world of Spiritual life that awaits. The

hand of grace is outstretched in love. Grace speaks of loving kindness, compassion and giving. This love is caring and constructive in nature. Love builds the bonds of faith and defines the character and the parameters of the spiritual life. It is not knowledge that defines the spiritual life although there is a knowledge component. Scripture reminds us that knowledge ultimately has the affect of "puffing up" our egos. There is an adverse relationship to our character when knowledge becomes pre eminent in our orientation to God. We will always find "knowledge" being closely linked to "religious systems". It is a realm defined by expertise and expertise is usually defined by knowledge.

How Much do We Have to *know* Before We Become Spiritual?

I began to describe the Apostle's doctrine by mentioning doctrinal content, followed by emphasizing the power (*Gk. dunamis*) that God provides, through his Spirit, to empower our lives and relationships. The attribute of spiritual relationships may lie closer to the center of Spirituality than any other factor. The apostle's doctrine has fellowship and relationship within the very heart of it. Here is a glimpse into the New Testament church of the Book of Acts, "*They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread, and with prayer.*" (Acts, Chapter 2:42) The apostles who knew the way of God fully through first hand experience were to guide the novices into the same area of common experience; the community expands, the Kingdom of God is entered by more and more converts. A community is being built and stands in the midst of a world of unbelief, carnality, and unrighteousness. God calls us into a family-like community in which *God is not only glorified but in which God continuously interacts with the community*. True fellowship is what the community of believers is about. There is a sense of family, it is characterized by the joy of redemption (salvation, the first step in pressing into this community.) This intimate fellowship of believers is the closest thing to heaven God has for us on earth. We share a common mind, a common testimony, a common hope. We are baptized into one Spirit and into a common destiny. This community is redemptive owing to the fact that the smoke and tarnish of this world can not endure in the presence of the Living God, neither can the things which defile the flesh stand in his presence. We come together in this community of faith where we find restoration, strength and edification. We come together in fellowship to repair the bumps, bruises, and blemishes that life in this world inflicts upon those who are "*not of this world.*"

Edification and Ministry as it Pertains to Community

We have been conditioned by a religious world ***to go to church*** to receive ministry. After all, the church is where the minister is. I believe this is a viewpoint which needs to be reexamined in light of true fellowship and ***the question of what true ministry ought to be***. Those to whom *church is a*

place to be ministered to, are still conditioned to think in terms of priest (clergy) and laity. In this model which has been the tradition for the past 17 hundred years, we are taught that we need someone else to do our spiritual work for us. We come to the priest; we have him pray for us, teach us, bless us, absolve us. We presume that ministry is what happens in a church (fellowship,) and this kind of ministry is some kind of a "Band-Aid" to help us salve the current bruise. I believe there is an alternative, apostolic way of viewing the community of believers in fellowship. It is the notion of coming to a place of restoration and strengthening; some have called this a "spiritual filling station." In this setting of fellowship there is rest, repose, and encouragement. There is a continuous need for teaching but the manner of teaching need not be formalistic. Those who know and who have experience victory in one kind of challenge or another, are able to share and encourage others with less knowledge or experience. Edification can occur without formalized, programmatic services. There is sharing of food and the life of God. Spiritual fellowship provides a redemptive community in which the bond of fellowship is not the bond of obligation but of the heart. Love is true and not an affectation. This kind of fellowship is far less structured, yet there is common motivation which guides everyone to seek first the things which are from God. God is the focus and reason for being of all of the people who gather. God is not necessarily first in the lives of many, but in the right community this **will** change. I do not see this kind of fellowship either taught, practiced or encouraged within the institutional church. Those who come to church for a formalistic program come in unsatisfied and they leave unsatisfied. They come feeling estranged or alienated from God and they leave feeling just as far from him. They can however, pretend to be listening while they sleep; or they can pretend to be praying while they dream of their next adventure with the girl at the office or the guy at the club. The actions of formal ministry can not touch the heart of those who need to have a spiritual heart transplant.

To summarize:

Learning Christ according to the Apostles Doctrine requires that we:
Be spiritually renewed by faith in Jesus Christ
Receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit
Renew our mind by studying scripture
Seek personal fellowship of God
Seek the fellowship of God's family - - where your loved and valued
Imitate those who have mature spirituality
Walk in faith, (the knowledge that God cares for us in our present moment)
Minister to others, the same gifts and wholeness that we have received from God

The Spiritual Life

Chapter 4

How Much Do We Have to Learn Before We Become Spiritual?

Mentors and Ministries

Part of the spiritual life is to make a connection with those with whom can interact and form valuable connections. The joints are connections to individuals in the body of Christ. We find more instruction on this “body interaction” in Romans chapter 12 and in Corinthians chapter 12. Sincere and intimate **Fellowship** supplies input to areas of knowledge which will be encouraging, and edifying. When we are born to become a partaker in the heavenly kingdom we are removed from the domain of the fallen world and its leader. We must move forward seeking the heavenly or we will retrograde back to the old life in the world.

Here according to most voices of ministry is where one would be encouraged to get connected to a "good" church. This should be a simple fact but it is not. There are few church bodies of believers who hold more than a traditional evangelical viewpoint. Most are adhering to forms and traditions as well as doctrines which do little to advance the Spiritual life to a significant level of maturity. Once in a church you are expected to "play by their rules." My best advice is to search for the church and set your sights on particular features which will allow you to be discipled and grow not in tradition but in spirituality. If one does provide "life" as witnessed by the Power of God at work, move on until you sense that it is where God would have you. In the mean time find a home fellowship where you can grow with others in an informal setting. God does not discriminate against home meetings. They are apostolic! It is how the "Church" began.

It is obvious that formalized Christian ministry is everywhere in one form or another. As I have already described a vast majority of these churches or ministries are a manifestation of institutional and traditional religion in which the expectation is at best, conformity to the norms of a Saturday or a Sunday ritual. Most offer no more than comfortable routine or ritual and little hope of gaining spiritual knowledge and understanding. Neither can they prepare us to fulfill Christ's gospel in the world.

Most churches, are struggling to maintain membership. Maintaining interest and involvement are always a primary focus. Leaders are zealous to retain their members who might go astray or get involved with meetings or activities not sponsored by their own fellowship. There was a time when such unfaithfulness could be met by excommunication, but today the usual rebukes from the pulpit are just admonitions or doctrines created out of hand which indicate an obligation to support the local body. Yet it would seem to be close to a cardinal sin to consider "church hopping" or being active in any outreaches from other congregations. This is, in effect the fruit of division which institutional religion enforces.

The Electronic Media Church

There are many other kinds of ministries that are currently accessible to us. Among these are media ministries. Men or women who have some special gift of teaching or evangelism or certain personal *charismas* have been able to share their spiritual understandings and insights with any who will watch or listen. If we appreciate the content of a given message we write to them or request their tape series or perhaps, we think that they have enough clout with God to pray for our special needs. These ministries, sometimes called the "broadcast **media churches**" are not always highly regarded

by pulpit ministries.

One hears all kinds of castigation directed toward the names of such ministries, whether Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Robert Schuler, Benny Hinn or countless others who fill(ed) the airwaves of radio and television and short wave broadcast channels. In view of practical matters of church survival and management, local preachers and church leaders need to maintain membership and viability. 'Grandma Smith' might write a check to a radio or television evangelist and forego giving her five dollar donation to the church collection plate. A pastor might make the following remark to parishioners, "Grandma Smith, if you want to support Reverend So and So on TV maybe you should call them when you need a trip to the doctor; or need someone to pray for you when you are sick; or have them officiate your funeral."

What has the Electronic Church ministry to offer? In some cases they be offer better teaching or preaching than some tradition-bound churches where so many to languish in their pews around the world? Televangelists usually have some unique strengths and certainly the ability to preach and persuade. There are important matters to consider in choosing any ministry to support whether remote or local. However, they do subsist on donations from listeners which at times becomes problematic. How may media ministries provide value and features that provide edification?

Let's Look at Some Attributes of Ministry:

- First and most importantly is the message; Do we hear the correct gospel being taught?
- How much of the appeal of this ministry is performance and dazzling rhetoric which attracts us and how much is a sense of devotion to the truth of the Gospel?
- Does the minister seem to model Jesus Christ? The best mode of discerning a minister or a ministry is to imagine Jesus behaving and saying the things as the evangelist or teacher.
- Is devotion and reverence modeled and portrayed?
- Does the person try to draw attention to themselves through colorful mannerisms?
- Does he seem preoccupied with authority and followings?
- Does the leader indicate as we listen to his messages that he wants influence, control, or worship?

- Does there seem to be more of emphasis on one aspect of the Gospel than another?
- Is it a Gospel of power and wholeness or just continually underscoring sin?
- Is it a Gospel in which we can become partakers of God's life or are we blessed because of our supporting the "Super Ministry of Brother X?" There are some media evangelists who I listen to and support because they have helped to mentor me in understanding the Word of God. I support them because they teach the full Gospel message, (more or less) and believe in the potentialities of becoming children of God, partaking in His Divinity. They teach what we should be taught in the local fellowship or church but are not.
- We need to practice discernment and note any inconsistencies in doctrine which place the teaching outside of norms of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The *Apostles Creed* is recited by many denominations in the context of a worship service, but in spite of this, the content of the Apostle's Creed may hardly be addressed in teaching and preaching in sermons. Based upon denominations which I have belonged to or visited before and after I became a believer, *unbelief and spiritual deadness till characterize most of the churches today even those who recite the Credo!*

Mega-Churches

When a brilliant preacher, teacher or evangelist proves his (her) ability to move and edify people they begin to develop a following. People are attracted to spiritual gifts or 'anointings.' People are searching for a greater revelation of God. Seekers follow men or women who have demonstrated their abilities to impact the lives of others. The largest churches today grow around the giftings of a single person. Nearly every Christian I know has a natural desire to be in the presence of "anointed" preaching. Mega-churches are built around mega-men. I believe there are in America today well over a hundred such mega-churches. I have attended a few and have seen others via telecasts and cable networks.

Positives Associated with Mega-Ministries There are both negatives and positives in following this kind of ministry. A few positives: God shows favor to his servant by anointing him (her) just as God anointed Jesus and the Apostles for ministry. God's favor indicates his approval to bring forth a minister's particular gift or understanding to the body. God's approval indicates that he foreknows

that many will be touched and blessed by this individual. God allows a such a man or woman with special abilities to reach more people with a Gospel focus than they would ordinarily hear or be exposed to. Many are born again through the mass media ministers.

Negatives Associated with Mega-Ministries The gifted minister may be persuasive or charismatic in purely human terms, without necessarily walking in a divine anointing. The media evangelist may be preaching a partial or flawed gospel, a non Christian gospel or simply traditionalism. There is no way for the novice seeker to know whether this person teaches true doctrine or not except by natural reasoning or mental judgment. There is a temptation for the minister to become puffed up in mind and think himself to be great. There is a tendency to focus on money and self promotion. Though there may be a great gift of preaching or imparting information there are serious limitations for body ministry or fellowship. To deal with this home fellowships or satellite congregations are set up to allow blessings of human interaction and loving community. Those who study under any ministry need intimacy and a human touch. *It is not good for man to be alone.* Ultimately the spiritual life is more than the acquisition of information about God.

Those who attend services in a mega church are content to be a mere audience onlooker. This is a terrible loss and limitation. *But the most serious limitation is that individual believers are never really trusted or free to lead when they have received personal testimonies or revelation. Typically, they are told that they must be submitted to a greater ministerial authority who must oversee any sharing by the 'laity'.*

Impressions of Mega-churches

I have attended worship services in several 'average size' mega-churches with bodies in attendance numbering 2 or 3 thousand. Some mega churches have numbers approaching 10 thousand and those with 10 thousand that aspire to 50 thousand. While there may be brilliant teaching and preaching and outstanding musical worship, performance; one could not help but feel that those in attendance came mainly to view the show or to hear the inspired address of the mega-minister. What I saw was an enterprise in which each person was committed to make the mega-church even more of a mega-church. Something was missing. There was little or no contact between the "pastor" and the individual members. Individuals may have known and recognized a handful of people in the auditorium but they did not seek each other out for closeness, sharing, breaking of bread or lingering in the afterglow of God's presence. It seemed that the super Christians who were attending the super church quickly rushed home to resume life in whatever form life that awaited outside of church. If

the members who number thousands each give their tithe religiously, one can only imagine the amount of revenue that affords luxury and resources of a personal and ministerial nature.

What is the Glorious Church?

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the True and authentic representation of the Kingdom of God in the world. It numbers approximately a billion persons around the globe. Is this the glorious church? Does the number associated with a church denomination make it glorious? The issue of a glorious church may well be addressed in the context of the mega-church. There is evidence that many ministries of mega-churches teach an emphasis of the gospel that introduces the concept of a "glorious church." Will the church function as a dynamic economic and political force in the earth as well as a moral power to renovate society as well? For those who judge on externals this may appear to be the case but God does not regard externals. How can the size of a building or the number of people attending a mass or a service have any bearing on Godly glory? Glorious surely must bear more on the quality of the heart and the sincerity and earnestness that allows the love of God to be shared.

See Description of the Kingdom Theology doctrine. In secular societies, Christians have been regarded as the bane of society because of their conservative and fundamental viewpoints but quite the opposite is true. The true Spirit of Christianity is compassion, forgiveness, and understanding. Moral precepts include personal honor and righteousness, integrity and responsibility; kindness, mutual support and family stability. Though the world does not like to recognize sin and unrighteous behavior as anything other than a "choice," Christians see that we humans **all share** alike, having a need for a redeemer along with the essential need of being hopelessly lost until God extends mercy upon our lives. In recent decades, Christians were too long absent and silenced from the counsel of social values and political ideas. In the present hour it is surely appropriate for those who have so much cause to rejoice and give voice to the life-changing testimony in the arena of public opinion. Men and women of integrity need to stand up publicly and politically and exercise their rights on behalf of issues of righteousness.

The Bible makes it clear that the prophetic day is coming when God's righteous kingdom will be established upon the earth. We are in this current dispensation called the church age. The church age will come to its culmination. I believe that Jesus' statement to Pilate stands; "- - Now my kingdom is NOT of this world." The church is not now chartered to extend itself as an empire of political

power. Why? The spiritual life is essentially a non secular and a non materialistic life. We are strangers and sojourners in a strange land. Social or political activism may be a Godly calling in some. Those who follow a leading to become apologists for social and political issues it should be presumed have their own foundations in correct doctrine and not equate activism with the gospel. The emphasis of the Christian life can not be focused too strongly upon the things which are social, political, or economic at the expense of Spiritual relationships. These are not lines that I draw, but lines that the Holy Spirit has drawn. These parameters have been in place since Jesus spoke these words, "My kingdom is not of this world," *and "You are not of the world."* (John 18:36; John 15:19) The nature and operation of the present world is contrary to God's ways and I do not look for this situation to change until Jesus returns to set up an unending righteous Kingdom. Just how far into the future this event will occur is open to debate, there have been hundreds of book titles addressing it but the Bible itself has "sealed up" many of the answers and insights into the "second coming" of Jesus Christ. This is another area of scholarship.

So then, this "glory" can not refer to the size, influence and authority of mega-church to rule upon the earth. Is it possible that the glorious church refers to the whole body of living believers? This glorious church is this faithful remnant who somehow remains separate, pure and faithful in the midst of a reprobate generation of spiritual pretenders and flaccid, luke-warm church goers?

Church as empire is not a new idea. It was in fact the goal of the early church since Constantine's day. The Christian empire was born on the two legs of Daniel Chapter 2, Rome and in Constantinople, where power, influence, authority and might married the political world and the religious world. For centuries church membership and doctrine was forced upon the whole world. A person was then a Christian by political decree and not by the grace of God. Such ordinances do nothing to produce the life and promises of the Gospel. In the church empire men were exalted. These held the power of life and death over others; these acted as spiritual judges over others; were mediators between God and man and who rewarded themselves with worldly luxuries while being exalted to the point of worship in their offices.

It is the nature of most men to lust for power and control. The unredeemed clamor for recognition and power. They are driven to achieve self exaltation. They lift and promote their own names as someone great, "as the great power of God." Acts 8:10)

No, I do not think this can possibly be the Glorious church. The true glory remains hidden to this world, shrouded with humility. This cloud of glory can only be penetrated by the meek, through self-effacement and kindly service. Exaltation of such is the province of God alone. These are principles of the Gospel worthy to be followed.

Professional Ministry

The concept of the clergy, professional ministry is a well establish and unquestioned paradigm. ([See the power of paradigms.](#)) The concept of **Ministry** has been traditionally connected to career or occupation. The concept of clergy as a professional career extends into the dim past of Christendom. The traditional church operates in accord with, and is enabled because of **the professional clergy concept**. The practice of institutionally accredited, "professional ministry" appointed to churches as well church giving is something that I believe each of us has to examine in light of Scripture and draw our best personal conclusion in the light of the Word. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible and to experience the potential of Christ's Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long held traditions. Every person should support the **Kingdom of God** as we judge it to be **best expressed**. We need to see the life of God as a Divine promise and a human potentiality. We need to see ministers bringing others into this potentiality. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather *to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible* and to experience the potential written of in the Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long- held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we see it best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a potentiality and the people who minister bringing others into it. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving.

Giving

Giving for the Sake of the Gospel If you want to experience anger, dissonance, or heated theological debate this is the topic to broach. Giving is the bread and butter of ministry. It is support for a man and his message. It is the financing of the Gospel to world. It is the support of both the local church missionary outreaches. Because men and women go forth with good intentions and have devoted a large part of their lives to preparing for "ministry" they proceed believing that they are now prepared to live by the Gospel. "*The Lord hath ordained that those preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*" (1Corinthians 9:14)

Giving: Giving is Blessed by God

There are no laws (Biblical rules) for giving in the Kingdom of God. God has set us free from rules

including rules about giving. People are told that the principal of tithing is mandated and it is an expected practice or a hoped for practice for members.

Giving is good, it is God's nature, and it is encouraged. Giving supports the callings of men of God but also supports people who are not necessarily "ministers" of churches but who God wishes to bless through us. Various kinds of enterprise which touch upon the Kingdom of God need support, whether it be buildings, outreach expenses, travel or any of a wide variety of needs. These best met by many sharing the cost.

God wants his will to be done through selfless sharing and contributions of money resources. But it is important that we be able to hear God leading us in our sharing of these gifts so that it is truly a work of God for the Gospel sake and not just another good sound cause or charity.

Basic principles identified in the Bible shed light on the subject of giving.

It is more blessed to Give than to receive

Give and it shall be given unto you

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven

Those who give to the poor lend to God

The Tithe is the Lord's - (Old covenant principle)

In the measure you give it shall be given to you

Sow sparingly, reap sparing

Give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven

Give as you purpose in your heart, Let no one give out of obligation

God loves a cheerful giver.

Maturing to Minister

Chapter 5

It is God's plan that every disciple partake in Jesus' ministry!

Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him. They walked at his side; broke bread; discoursed with him; and were both witnesses and partakers of his spiritual ministry. They new his voice; saw his power; and marveled at his wisdom. They new him as anyone knows someone in a natural way! By contrast I fear that few nominal Christians are able to say they know him. Yes they have heard about him, but do they know him? Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "Gospel of Grace" is that we not only may know him, but have fellowship with him and partake in his nature and his mission and calling. To reveal the rule and authority of God to the principalities and powers arrayed in the heavens. (The domain of Lucifer and his Angels) "For this reason the Son of God was manifested, that he should destroy the works of the Devil." - - John 3:8 - - We worship what we know. We know him. He called us to have fellowship with Him. We hear His voice; we see what He shows us in the Word and what he reveals in the place of his dominion. As we gather as believers in

a place of meeting can we say that we leave that meeting, knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or were empowered by his touch?

Ministry Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

It would be good for unbelieving eyes to see what things can and do happen in a place of meeting. For in such times of fellowship God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing; restore broken hearts and broken relationships and save peoples souls. Church liturgy, put together in a time far past, perhaps following shortly after the kind of glorious kind of fellowship described above may have had good intentions.

Liturgical forms no doubt hoped to preserve some of the truth or glory of those earlier days. Maybe they wished to insure the manifestation of God's presence and to provide a platform to disciple those who needed to under stand the truth of Christ's eternal ministry. But God can not be bottled and preserved! For He is alive and powerful, acting always in the NOW, never in the THEN.

The Bible shows that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of Old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed it was gone they were left with a lifeless idol. The temple remained the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained but the manifestation of its power was gone. God's continued glory and fellowship with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. With passing years catechism remained but the glory had been lost. The ritual remained and the liturgical trappings remained but the presence of God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth the glory of God through faith. Elements that remained were vainly held and became a substitution for God's presence.

In the minds of most of the world, "Ministry" is the domain of a very small body of liturgical experts, called the priesthood or the clergy. Despite this belief, it was always to be the domain of every believer. Just as God wishes each believer to be a ministering priest, he wishes us to become a true worshiper.

Gathering As Christ's Body

Chapter 6

Expectations and Guidelines for Christian Fellowship & Worship

The form of Christian fellowship and worship described here may be very different from the religious experience you are familiar with. The manner of assembling as it was known in the apostolic first century *ekklesia* (gatherings of believers) is virtually unknown in contemporary denomination churches. It is nonetheless entirely Scriptural, modeled after the Teachings of Paul in all his epistles.

What is this true worshiper and what is worshipping the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. He looks at the hearts he does not regard the man with the religious uniform over a common person whose heart is open. He does not favor a cathedral over a location which has been made ready on the inside of us. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, it is not where you worship, not this mountain or another mountain, but what and how we worship. He said to her that some do not know what they are even worshipping but the truth is that salvation is connected to worship, it is through the foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained, when men and women would worship the Most High God in Spirit. Those who do not have this Spirit can not have the revelation of God of which Jesus spoke.

Koinonia (fellowship) is the hallmark of the Christian gathering.

Traditional church gatherings are unlike Biblical koinonia that were usually home meetings. This familiar form of denominational Christianity is guided and controlled by selected leaders or overseers who are generally called the priests or pastors.

The Ekklesia (Greek word translated church) might be translated "called out assembly" consists of a relatively small group of professing and Holy Spirit empowered believers. These believers meet to regularly to share and participate in the active life of and interaction with God. Such sharing is exercised with openness and liberty.

The the essential aim of the gathering consists of sharing and transacting matters of the Kingdom of God; Koinonia would typically involve sharing food, perhaps in celebration of the cup and bread of

the Lord; As the spirit would lead it could also include making prayer, offering praise, bringing forth teachings, testimonies, psalms, spiritual songs, prophetic revelations. Such gatherings are mostly democratic with a good deal of freedom to express whatever the Holy Spirit is pleased to do in that time. We can conclude based on the truth of Scripture, that each believer has a place, a gift and an essential role to play in the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus is the rule and the authority of any Ekklesia. Where the body gathers Christ Jesus is the invited and welcomed participant. The Holy Spirit functions to point to and exalt Jesus.

WHY GATHER AS A BODY? SOME GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

- 1. To be: United in Spirit and purpose - knowing the reality of Jesus as Savior; and having fellowship with God our Father through Him and giving glory to God. After any person is reborn spiritually, they become part of one heavenly family who share the "gift of God." To continue to be United in Spirit - The same Spirit that is in Christ Jesus.**
- 2. For the body in fellowship to continue to grow (be edified) in knowledge of truth
(Holy Bible must be the surety of doctrine and a guide to revelations and practices.)**
- 3. To be bound in mutual love and acceptance. The spirit of Love denotes we are Christians.**
- 4. To seek God's manifested presence corporately. (Seeking and activating His kingdom to be manifested on earth)**
- 5. To recognize and invite the Holy Spirit to empower, lead and guide; to reveal Jesus.**
- 6. To value and build from the unique gifts and abilities that the Holy Spirit of God has given to each believing disciple. (our brothers and sisters)**
- 7. To follow the "Gatekeeper", shepherd, or the head of the home, who is practiced in following the Holy Spirit in an orderly way.**
- 8. For all to discern and guard against spiritual pitfalls, against disunity; To guard against the expression of any wrong spirit -- anger, prejudice, suspicion, jealousy that will "grieve" the Holy Spirit.**
- 9. To see to it: That all things serve to edify and build each believer**

kindly with liberty in the Holy Spirit.

10. Doctrinal purity must employ the whole counsel of God, The Word of God (Scripture) used for instruction in Godliness, correction and reproof thus contending for correct doctrine. *The Scriptural model of intimate corporate fellowship (Koinonia) is found in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 12, 14; 1 Peter 4:10*

Learning Christ, The Spiritual Life

Chapter 7

Daily Life in the Kingdom of God

"Be Ye Imitators of Christ as dear Children."

Through the power of the Holy Spirit our egos and wills become conformed and yielded to him. Christ in us is our only hope of glory. We are told that we may be **as he was in this world**. (John 16:16; 1John 4:17)

The inheritance of this world (cosmos) is Spiritual Poverty:

Our natural human state, despite what some with talent and gifts of intellect will proclaim, must eventually come to understand that we are actually helpless and without the power necessary to live a truly spiritual life. We are dead in our trespasses and sins and thus unable to ascend to the necessary status of righteous children of God!

We can not be “the light of the world” if God's light does not burn within us. We can not be witnesses of his resurrection if we have not been touched by the fiery hand of God that raised Jesus from the dead who also quickened our own body and spirit. We can not reflect the goodness of God if he has not made us good who were once reprobates. We come in to this world to know God. This is humankind's highest calling. Some come and go from this world not having realized that calling. If we are fortunate to have God reveal himself to us then we press on to the next stage, that of being a functional witness. It is unfortunate how many are thwarted at this second stage predominately by the incomplete or ineffectual teachings of religious tradition.

As we have noted, the institutional church has either lost sight of, or failed to actualize the provisions of the New Covenant which is the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ. Time has eroded true understanding, and spiritual subterfuge authored by an unrelenting adversary has come in to subtly sidetrack our spiritual lives and foster human understanding instead. I do not present any private methodology that is contrary to Biblical teaching. Nor is what I share here a unique revelation but simply a restatement of **the way** that was presented by Jesus to his servants the apostles, in the beginning of this church age. (The gospel of salvation equates to the church age.

Here is where the ingathering of the gentiles is provided.)

Any church or teacher who are attempting to mentor or direct others into a spiritual life are under divine obligation to be accurate, and of course all are certain that they are orthodox and correct. Private or incomplete biblical interpretation risks wrong doctrine. Since there is always a danger of deception, it is important that we proceed cautiously, both as teachers and learners. We are obligated to discern all things with the wisdom, the help, and guidance of the *Spirit of Truth*, the *Holy Spirit*. God has told us through the Word that we may ask for wisdom and for truth to be revealed to us. He further instructs us to have confidence in this asking, knowing that God is willing. God is truly willing!

God is willing to give *good gifts* which bring fulfillment and blessings and not sorrows. When seeking the revelations which are of God, or *from God*, it is up to the seeker to be on guard against deceptions and to discern the true from the false. In asking for anything from God it is very important to invoke the name of Jesus Christ. This name is the name above every name and above every spiritual entity or authority. This name will consecrate or ensure the authentic in anything which may transpire. It will guarantee that anything which will be revealed or imparted spiritually will be free of any corrupt or deceptive influence. When we ask in the name of Jesus, *the deceiver* can not work his way so readily into the workings.

Jesus Models The Spiritual Life & Ministry

The Typology of Jesus Life and Ministry

The Bible reveals that certain key events ushered in the power of God into the world through the Lord Jesus. I believe that the Bible reveals that we who are born of His Spirit as new creations of the Lord will replicate these same patterns in a very real way. Our replication of these surely may not be as profound or dramatic as Jesus himself experienced. Because we are still largely limited flesh bound human beings. We still manifest too much our common Adamic inheritance and having lived most of our lives under the domination of the God of this world and the reasoning system of the world.

The Traditional religious world, however, tends to discount any such parallels to God within us just as the religious world of Jesus' time accounted it blasphemy for a man (Jesus, The Son of Man) to be

made to be made equal to God. For centuries of religious life church authorities had no interest in promoting the divine potential of the individual believer who is crucified in the likeness of his death and has already risen with him in Glory and has already been placed above all things in this world in Christ Jesus.

The apostle urges believers to pray to have their eyes enlightened with respect to this amazing potentiality of the inheritance of the children of light. Reading the letter to Ephesus we find in Chapter 1 verses 18 to 22, Paul tells us to pray to have enlightenment on three specific large questions, "*the hope of his calling;*" "*the riches of his glorious inheritance to us;*" and "*what is the exceeding greatness of his power given to us.*" The chapter concludes with the nature of the church placed, over all things as as rulership and power. As yet Christians simply don't know how much has been promised and much can be accessed of the divinity of Christ within each of us individual believers.

Yeshua, Divinely Conceived By the Holy Spirit - A "New Birth"

We know that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The *virgin* birth was a supernatural birth. It was not a natural process of the flesh but a supernatural work of the Spirit. The manifestation of the Christ in human flesh begins with a divinely planted "seed" which gives rise to a "miraculous conception." After this "conception," Mary brings forth her first born and in the fullness of time, the life of Jesus is revealed in the world.

When a sinner comes to the knowledge of Christ as *a savior*; repents and asks God to make a new life available to them, a parallel miracle occurs. The Holy Spirit conceives and implants a whole new *Holy and Spiritual life* within a mortal human being. Regardless of the measure of our sins and shortcomings in previous times, even though our sins were as red as scarlet they become purged and made pure as that of a newborn. We are all part of a fallen world, typified by the "barn stall" and so the divine is again revealed in the presence of beasts and uncleanness.

We who were born in a corrupted form and are being raised incorruptible. We ascend from Glory to Glory as Christ is fully being revealed in us.

Becoming a Christian, therefore is not just about believing a concept and judging it to be true! This would be merely intellectual assent. But in reality becoming a believer, or "coming to Christ" is a miraculous new life which has been birthed in the Spirit. It is inspired by understanding, knowing our need for a redeemer. This new birth procedes from an incorruptible seed and produces a new

spiritual creation. The old ceases to be and the new commences.

Angels Rejoice and Give Praise at the Birth of Christ

(Also Within each Holy Child)

The angels surround the place of the birth of the infant Jesus Christ. They rejoiced and gave praises to God. The Glory of the Lord shown forth in the heavens. The family of God is portrayed as universal in nature, it spans heaven and earth. Its kingdom includes heavenly beings and human earthly beings. Heavenly events touch happenings upon the earth, earthly events impact things which happen in heaven. The "cloud of witnesses" described in the epistles of Paul, may probably refer to angels who continue to applaud the victories and glories of salvation as they impact humans who find their place in the family of God.

Jesus Grows in Wisdom and Stature and in the Fear of the Lord

The life of the young Jesus is described with little detail. In the briefest description we read that he grew up in the fear and admonition of the lord and grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. Jesus is aware of his divine calling though his ministry is not yet fully activated. He works and learns the Torah, the laws of Moses as any other Jewish youth.

Each believer has a Spiritual infancy, and grows in subsequent levels of maturity. In the spiritual sense there is no set number of years which allow the foundations of wisdom and understanding. Many never leave the stage of novice. It is the availability of *Spirit and Truth* which (by the Active Force of [The Spirit of Grace](#)) allows growth in wisdom and authority to occur. (*If you continue in my word then are you a true disciple, and you shall know the truth; and the truth will make you free.* John 8:31) The word of God is the guide to wisdom and understanding; the Spirit upon the Word is life and power as it is spoken into our inner Spirit.

Yeshua, Jesus, Baptized by the Holy Spirit

The gospel account begins with Christ having reached *maturity* at approximately 30 years of age. Now we read of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan river by John the Baptist. What was Jesus doing the day before, the week before, the year before? Probably finishing jobs in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth; attending the synagogue; studying the word; and praying to the Heavenly Father. The time came, however, when he was revealed to Israel. This time was precisely in keeping with God's prophetic timetable. With Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit came to rest and remained upon Jesus. This is when his ministry and teaching began. The Spirit of God descends from above, the voice of the Father proclaims, "This is my beloved, in whom I am well pleased." **In God's time** we ourselves, may partake in the same experience which Jesus modeled. We are instructed to receive the Holy Spirit. Our growth in the knowledge of truth depends entirely upon this "good gift."

The Holy Spirit Baptism causes the Holy Spirit to infill and fully empower the believer. This experience is called "*the promise of the Father*", after receiving the Holy Spirit's baptism we become "*Witnesses of Christ*." The Holy Spirit begins to take those things which are from Jesus and reveal them to each of us as we seek him in fellowship. The father is well pleased to call us into his family. We are the latter borne of many brethren. The Father in heaven has many great plans and many precious promises which he is anxious to deliver to his sons and daughters. (Read John ch.17.)

Jesus Tempted & Tested (in the wilderness)

Until the Holy Spirit Baptism we have not been fully aware of the two Spiritual Kingdoms which stand in opposition to one another, but now after this initiation into the Spirit of Truth, we begin to experience the "Mind of Christ." We now sense that the world is a spiritual place, and that thoughts and actions of others are inspired by spiritual influences and are not just "our thoughts." Satan who has possessed human flesh and human institutions and nations since the fall, is not willing to let go of his influence on the life and thoughts of human beings easily. *Jesus experiences the temptation of Satan.*

In his temptation Jesus, received temptation on three levels, of the flesh (physical), the soul (personal) and the spiritual (Described in the apostle 1 John's the epistle, as the Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the eyes, and the Pride of Life.)

Jesus response to each temptation was declaring the Word of Scripture to answer the voice of the tempter: He was tempted through appetites and responded, "*Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" He was tempted in the soul or ego when offered fame, fortune and power, and responded, "*You shall worship the Lord only and him only shall you serve.*" He was tempted in the Spirit when told that he could exercise his God-given inheritance for vain reasons, and responded, "*You shall not put the Lord thy God to the test.*"

Believers are no threat to the kingdom of darkness until we have been born of the Spirit and Baptized in the Spirit. Being religious offers no threat to the kingdom of darkness. Satan is religious too and in fact promotes [religion](#) and religiosity. Satan's kingdom is terribly at risk when a human knows his inherited rights in Christ. Jesus said, as I am so are you in this world! (1 John 4:17) For this reason there are very dramatic attacks which are leveled against believers who begin to understand our power and authority through God. Jesus through the Spirit remained victorious in great trials, Likewise, refined, and fully empowered, the man or woman of God is prepared for ministry.

Jesus returned from the wilderness experience - not weakened and discouraged but "*full of the Spirit and power.*" **Victorious in great trials, refined, the man of God is prepared for ministry;** he is *thoroughly prepared for every good work.*(2 Timothy 2:21)

Empowered To Minister

Chapter 8

Spiritual Activation Through the Anointing Of The Holy Spirit

In Luke's gospel Chapter 4, we are shown Jesus announcing the whole purpose of his ministry to the lost, the bruised and the needy of this world. "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for He has anointed me -to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (the Lord's favor.)*

This proclamation defines **spiritual ministry**. It reveals completely the purposes for which Jesus Christ was called. The same declaration may be claimed by every believer. This is a stark contrast to human religious tradition. Every redeemed soul is called to the same potentiality, the same anointing, the same ministry which is to be performed by the same unction or anointing of the same Holy Spirit. This kind of ministry is practically impossible except for the empowerment which comes from God through the His Spirit. In our own natural abilities and strength all we are able to do is to discuss concepts of ministry and the nature of God, as a theological concept. In the anointing we are enabled to be as He was in this world! This is where true ministry lies, not in services and rituals conducted in church buildings but in the power of God to impact lives whether in or out of a house of worship or any kind of building.

Jesus Seeks Continuous Communion and Intimacy With Father God.

Jesus is described as continually seeking the Father in the most intimate kind of fellowship. This is where the power came from; This is where the revelation came from; This is where the directives came from; This is where the authority came from; This is where the strength came from. This is where we who are seeking need to seek more. This is where we who are without power need to find our source of power and authority.

Without relationship in the secret place of the most high we can have no hope at all to do the works of God. The most basic of understanding requires with this 'head upon the breast of Jesus intimacy.' Only Christ can empower and direct us in being like him in the world.

Before anything like revival can happen in the Christian world, we as individuals have got to come alive in Christ. The "*waste places*" of human life and thought have got to be restored and rebuilt to make them a habitation for the life of God to make them flourish and bear fruit. The soul thirsts or longs for various things. Most of these things have no bearing on the Kingdom of God or His righteousness. These things are the pleasures and longings of the heart of man. We long for human treasures and human pleasures we do not seek for the life of God. It is the grace of God which can turn our hearts again to Him. Until we esteem the life and reproach of the "life of Christ" more highly than the pleasures of this world and its lusts and pleasures we have not crossed that river of promise, into the land of fulfillment.

Friendship with Christ is enmity to the world and friendship with the world is enmity with Christ. The meditations and treasures of our hearts can be focused on transient treasures or eternal treasures. The abiding in Christ which brings the Spiritual life is a task unmet in but few in the Christian world today.

Meditating on The Word equates to Intimacy

"In thy law do I meditate, day and night." (psalm 1:2)

The thoughts and intents of our hearts bring into focus that which we focus on in our meditations. Our *heart* has its own kind of treasure, either good or wicked, God-focus or evil intentions. We can not meditate on the word of God if we do not know what that word may be. Part of discipleship is to learn the word and the Way of God. This requires that at some time we have to delve into that source of understanding and revelation that is written in the Word, from Genesis to Revelation.

The Scriptures are an empowering force and also allow the voice of God to speak to our hearts. The Word of God speaking to our hearts which defines meditation and brings his '*light*.' Yes, we can also have meditations on any number of things, but when we see and hear things which are worldly, vain, sensuous or profane, we can be sure that God is not speaking to us but the spirit of the world, and the *god of this world*. The Holy Spirit brings help and direction in the unique issues we face in our lives from day to day. The word of God speaks to us and becomes a light to lighten our pathway. We personally must walk out the challenges, struggles and the hopes that we face daily. These individual paths are unique to each person and we were never meant to face them alone.

Responding to the Father's voice "*My sheep hear my voice, and another they will not follow.*"
(John 10:4)

To have an active spiritual life as Jesus did. The meditations of our hearts must be dealt with. We need to address the issue of double mindedness which is discussed in the epistle of James. Double minded Christians do not receive things from God (of God.) The Christian who is not different from the world in thoughts, beliefs or attitudes is certainly not the kind of Christian that Jesus encouraged us to become.

We have a benchmark or image to conform to. It is the fullness of the stature of one man, Jesus Christ. **God grant us grace to understand and know what is the greatness of your power to us who believe; empower us to become sons of God, having the same mind which was in Christ, having hearts which are ever turned toward the kingdom of heaven. Amen.**

Discernment and Pitfalls – Issues of Discipleship

Chapter 9

God has purposed that each believer *born of the Spirit* may grow in the Spiritual life. Learning Christ, in a general sense is becoming familiar with God through the Word and through his Spiritual presence. It is through the Holy Spirit that we gain familiarity with his divine nature and our place in Him. We begin to partake of his love and his understandings. As it is written, we go from *glory to glory* (2Corinthians 3:18,) and *from faith to faith* (Romans 1:17.) We learn to hearken to the voice of the Spirit and respond as we are directed. I call this *learning Christ*.

God's model for learning Christ is **imitation**. We imitate the first born Son of God, Jesus Christ. We are to model his manner of thinking, and his manner of acting. We are to duplicate his interacting with the Heavenly Father and his Spirit-directed ministry. The first disciples were given a living model but they were only able duplicate his Spiritual behavior after they had received the enabling Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul exhorts us to follow (*imitate*) me as I imitate Christ.

Receiving The Gift of God, Power from Heaven

Authentic Gifts not Counterfeit Ones

Jesus instructs us about receiving gifts from God. There are nine gifts of the **Holy Spirit** to be accessed. The Lord teaches us that the God of heaven gives *good gifts* and not evil, hurtful or perverted ones. Jesus reveals fact that there are two sources of gifts; true gifts and false, spurious and dangerous gifts. God's gifts are life-giving, good, pure and true.

The scripture is found in *Matthew 7:8-11* and in *Luke 11:11-13*: "*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" :8; "*Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*" :9; "*Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*" :10; "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*" :11. KJV The two objects which are sought are bread and fish. God gives things which are life-giving and safe (bread, and meat.) Luke chapter eleven restates the same teaching about asking from God the Father but expands the emphasis, toward the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the living gift of God's power and presence: "*If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?*"; "*Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?*" "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*" -- *Luke 11:11-13kfv*.

I have emphasized the word son to emphasize that relationship is the key to receiving from God. There are a whole lot of different kinds of seekers; some sincere and some less sincere. Some who seek do not acknowledge Christ as the source of heavenly things. If a *spiritual dabbler* negotiates to receive a spiritual manifestation from God, it is uncertain what may transpire. But God wishes to emphasize that he is for blessing His family. He is the giver of Good gifts.

Demonically inspired gifts must be recognized as *counterfeits to heavenly gifts*. The devil has power to assume a pleasant face. His normal operation is through deception. The angel of light is one of Satan's identifying names. His gifts do not accrue to God's glory. So given the possibility of receiving a counterfeit gift, how can these be recognized and avoided?

Spurious gifts bear upon the setting and environment from which and from whom this "ministry" occurs. Some minister with the wrong spirit.

The first line of defense against counterfeit gifts is the sincerity of the hearts that seek the promised gift from God through Christ. Bad trees produce bad fruit. Be cautious of those who teach the Gospel of God with the wrong motives or the wrong spirit. Such sources to mentor us can take us further from righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Such mentors may eventually take our liberty from us and enslave us in some way to this world's system.

Our common enemy, Satan, is a crafty adversary, an opportunist who is always ready to move in to insinuate his influence. His gifts are not good gifts. His revelations are not valid revelations. His gifts are not life affirming. They bring no joy, health or liberty. Satan's gift is characterized as a stone instead of bread, as a serpent instead of pure food, something infused with poison instead of food. We must make an effort to block and avoid him. Jesus has portrayed Satan as the enemy seeking the opportunity to make a prey of the seeker's life. Jesus told Peter, "the enemy has desired to sift you like wheat, but do not fear, I have prayed for you."

Forewarned is to be forearmed; it is wise to initiate safeguards and precautions as I suggested above in order to keep the deceiver out of your life and out of every spiritual transaction. There was a time when our lives were entirely under his (Satan's) control. Many of us may doubt this was the case, but the apostle Paul is very clear about this.

A couple of apostolic letters bring attention to the nature of the unredeemed life, which includes each and every life before the renewal *In Christ*. Paul's letter to Ephesus, Chapter 2, verses 2 and 3. *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation (lifestyle) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."* KJV Paul's letter to Colossae, Chapter 1 verse 21. *"And you, that were sometimes (before now) alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled"*

The apostle Paul contrasts the previous unredeemed nature our previous lifestyle with the redeemed nature. In the letter to Corinth, Chapter 1 verses 10 and 11, he lists a number of these life styles; *"- Neither - thieves, - covetous, - drunkards, - revilers, - extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.; And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."*

Biblical Issues: Doctrines and Wrong Doctrines

Poor Teaching and Misunderstandings produce Wrong Doctrines

Who is Jesus Christ? (called Christology) True son of God almighty, Virgin born, fulfilling the Messianic Scriptures of the Old Testament, Christ Jesus, crucified, resurrected and alive; Jesus Christ, the *one and only* mediator between God and man; Christ Jesus reigns from heaven as the High Priest and intercessor and true Mediator. All dominion, judgment, and all authority are given to Jesus Christ.

Redemption through the blood of the Cross, (Doctrine of Salvation, Soteriology) God's Lamb (Jesus Christ) the perfect acceptable sacrifice; The blood of Jesus Christ the lamb of God has the power to take away sin; The power of the **Cross and Resurrection** from the dead enables becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus; With No Resurrection there is no redemption! See 1 Corinthians 15.

The Power of God at work, Manifest enablement – **Grace empowers** through the **Holy Spirit**; The Spirit of Truth (the Holy Spirit) reveals all truth in Jesus and our place in Him;

The essential doctrines of Faith and Grace are verified in scripture. The Word through the Spirit provides wisdom and power.

The law of the Spirit, has bought us liberty and *freedom from the Law* of sin and death;

The Church is The Body of Christ on Earth.

One Body in Unity of all believers; This is a Spiritual body whose members roll is in heaven. All blood bought believers are one in Him; Unity produces peace and potentiality while it unites believers in love. Believers desire to build fellowship bonds, continuing to walk in Love and Forgiveness;

All believers must discern matters and maintaining unceasing vigilance over matters of the common faith; Believers must be diligent to Safeguard against false teachers; Worldly rebellion and unbelief will be dealt with at the hand of the returning Jesus in divine judgment before; deceivers and false apostles and teachers.

The Kingdom to Come

What is the timeline pertaining to the rule of Christ in this world?

Is the kingdom in manifestation at this time? What form does it take? Is the Kingdom of heaven a political kingdom?

At Jesus' second advent he returns in power to judge peoples and nations. The bible speaks of a literal physical return of the Messiah. At this time he will deal in vengeance, with all individuals and nations who are still under satan's dominion. Spiritual rebellion will be destroyed and the Messiah, Jeshua will rule and reign the nations.

The culmination of the church age; Is not the end of the world;
Judgment will be visited upon the unbelieving and the lawless,
End times will be a time of increasing evil, leading to the ferocious rule of an anti christ and false prophet.

The redemption of Israel as a praise in all of the earth;

The rulership of Christ on earth for a thousand years, The Kingdom of God in fulfillment.

The second advent. Israel will be the head of all nations; The authority of the believer against spiritual powers; Deliverance and discerning of the spiritual world

Who Are God's Children? The potentiality of the children of God. Widely unknown or untaught who we are as children of God. **The Spiritual World: The demonic spiritual world.** Awareness that doctrines of Demons that take believers into bondage;

The Cross of Jesus Christ paid the price for our sin:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead made it possible for us to become the children of God most high.

Paul's Insights into the Gospel

Paul an intellectual's intellectual and a theologian's theologian, set aside his worldly credentials when he began to minister the Gospel. Paul presents some of the most powerful insights into the

conflict of intellectualism and theology. Paul experienced a total turn around in his life. The features of his traditional achievements were discarded as were the merits of his classical education. Paul declared that the things which he once esteemed and considered meritorious were now no better than "dung". The Holy Spirit drew a line of division in Paul's life. He clarified the difference between the fashion of this world and the world of God. He revealed the matters which pertained to mind and soul and matters of spirit; *the thoughts of the mind* versus *the intents of the heart*. Vanity no longer had a place in his life. Personal pride and striving for status was cast down he was given another job description. A "slave" of Christ.

It is Paul who addresses two points of doctrine which are at times in tension or contrast. First the purely Spiritual nature of the Gospel and the God-connected source of life; and secondly teachings on leadership, headship and government impacting the long-term course of this entity called "the church," the body of believers. Contradictions have occurred in this respect, that individuals are placed in positions of leadership and authority who do not have spiritual credentials but merely human approval.

Spiritual (Holy Spirit) enablements allows the kingdom of God to be manifest according to the apostolic model. Even in the first years of the church we hear accounts of men like the apostles Paul and John struggling with individuals who have assumed leadership although their motivation was entirely wrong or their doctrine was corrupt. We hear Paul describe associates who tried to undermine or destroy his ministry, or who departed because their hearts turned again to the world; and others of their associates who preach for personal fame or gain. In John's epistle we are told of Diotrophes who wanted to be pre eminent, glorying in having control over people. (See 1Timothy 1:19,20 1Timothy 4:14) regarding Alexander the Coppersmith; 2Timothy 4:10 regarding Demas; 3John 1:9 regarding the person of Diotrophes.)

THE MATTER OF MINISTRY

Chapter 10

You Are Being Prepared for Ministry, Mentors and Ministries

How Much Do We Have to Learn Before We Become Spiritual?

Part of the spiritual life is to make a connection with those who can supply valuable spiritual understanding and companionship. These are the *joints* that support and nurture the parts of the body. Fellowship supplies input to areas of knowledge which will exhort, encouraging, and edifying. When we are born into the kingdom, if we do not move forward we will retrograde back to the old life in the world. Traditionally after being born of the Spirit through ministry we are encouraged to get connected to a "good" church. Here are where we have some issues.

There are few church bodies who hold more than a traditional evangelical viewpoint. Most are adhering to their own well established traditions, or doctrines. Most often these do not advance the Spiritual life to a significant level of maturity. Once in a church fellowship, you are expected to "play by their rules."

My best advice is to search carefully for a church and set your sights on particular features which will allow you to be discipled and grow not in tradition but in spirituality. If one does not nurture spiritual "life" move on until you sense that it is where God would have you. In the mean time if it at all possible, find a fellowship of believers who share a passion for God. In a home fellowship you can grow with others in an informal setting.

God does not discriminate against home meetings. They are apostolic! It is how the "Church" began. It is obvious that formalized Christian ministry is to be found everywhere in one form or another. As I have already described most of these churches or ministries are a manifestation of institutional religious traditions. These so called normal forms of a Saturday or a Sunday ritual mostly go unquestioned. People support the familiar and comfortable routines even though they add little to spiritual knowledge and understanding. As a result the Kingdom of God is not advanced as it was originally intended.

Churches, struggle to maintain membership so are eager to enhance interest, or involvement. A church may be jealous of their members going astray or getting involved with any meetings or activities not sponsored by their own fellowship. There was a time when such unfaithfulness could be met by excommunication, but today the usual rebukes from the pulpit are just admonitions or doctrines created out of hand which indicate an obligation to support the local body. Membership encompasses a clause to support that congregation. This result becomes, in effect, the fruit of division which institutional religion enforces.

Professional Ministry

The concept of the clergy, professional ministry is a well establish and unquestioned paradigm. ([See the power of paradigms.](#)) The concept of Ministry has been traditionally connected to career or occupation. The concept of clergy as a professional career extends into the dim past of Christendom. The traditional church operates in accord with, and is enabled because of the professional clergy concept. The question of institutionally accredited, "professional ministry" appointed to churches and church giving is something that I believe each of us has to examine in light of Scripture and draw our best personal conclusion in the light of the Word.

It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible and to experience the potential of Christ's Gospel, even if it means setting aside long held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we judge it to be best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a divine promise and a human potentiality. We need to see ministers bringing others into this potentiality.

Giving for the Gospel's Sake

My desire is not to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather *to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible* and to experience the potential written of in the Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long- held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we see it best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a potentiality and the people who minister bringing others into it. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving.

Giving: Giving & Sharing is Blessed by God

Under the New Covenant there should be no laws (rules) for giving in the Kingdom of God. God has set us free from religious rules including rules about giving. Giving is good. Giving supports the man of God but it also supports people who are not necessarily "ministers" of churches but who God wishes to bless through us.

Various kinds of worldly commitments which touch upon the Kingdom of God need support, whether it be church buildings, outreach expenses, travel or any of a wide variety of needs which can only be met by others sharing the cost. God wants his will to be done through selfless sharing and contributions of various kinds. We need to be able to sense God leading us in these gifts so that it is truly a work of God for the Gospel sake and not just another good cause or charity.

Basic Principles Identified on the Pages of the Bible Shed Light on Giving.

It is more blessed to Give than to receive

Give and it shall be given unto you

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven

Those who give to the poor lend to God

The Tithe is the Lord's - (Old covenant principle)

In the measure you give it shall be given to you

Sow sparingly, reap sparingly

Give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven

Give as you purpose in your heart, Let no one give out of obligation

God loves a cheerful giver

The above scriptures are a few of many references to money and giving as introduced in the Bible. When we grow spiritually, we can better discern what God would have us do to support special ministries or servants of God. But we would miss God will if we only gave to ministry professionals and not to individuals and especially the poor. God love is about giving. Ministry is about sharing. Koinonia is also about mutual support. This whole world thrives in the light of a generous heart. **"God so loved the world that he gave -"**

Reborn Christians do not resist giving and sharing. The unredeemed do not want to let go of anything. The world thinks that their own well-being is threatened by releasing necessary assets and resources. Believers know that when they give they are really investing in returns that are certain to come back to them, either now or later.

The Tithe

The doctrine of the tithe (a tenth of one's increase) is taught in churches often not just as a principle but as an obligation. Very few congregations actually enforce the giving of tithes by recording all receipts and maintaining scrupulous records of the income although some come very close to this. Mostly what we hear is teaching which explains that tithing is a practice pre-dating the Christian era and the era of law. We find Abraham tithing before the era of law in the Book of Genesis. Thus with Abraham giving to Melchisedek we have a type of giving which all Christians should wish to embrace. The Book of Malachi supplies the greatest picture of God's displeasure at those who withhold the tithe. God calls it robbing Him. "*The Tithe is mine*," says the Lord, therefore to withhold it is to rob him. Malachi describes the "storehouse" where we are supposed to bring our tithe to God.

Pastors love to teach that the storehouse is the local church, where all of the sheep are fed. This model has some problems associated with it, as follows:

Is God there?

Is his presence manifested?

Is His Word being taught?

Is the Spiritual life a reality and accessible?

Are the needs of the poor and needy being met?

Are important voices for the Kingdom of God being supported who also edify us individually?

The Storehouse

is associated with a view of the Levitical priesthood which existed in early Israel. The Levites were the tribe chosen to minister to the house of Israel. It was only the Tribe of Levi (Levites) who were the designated priesthood, This tribe, had no other source of livelihood and were sustained by the

rest of the tribes of Israel.

With the ascension of Jesus Christ into the heavenly temple of God it is my belief that the nature of the storehouse has changed as radically as the priesthood.

At this time in the age of grace, the church age dispensation, the people of God are supported and not fed by natural bread or by sacrifices of lambs and oxen. Now we are under a different priesthood before God; we give spiritual sacrifices unto Christ who is now King and High Priest over all. (*Read Hebrews which explains the transition from the old covenant to the new.*)

From where do these blessings flow? From a heavenly place. Unto whom are our sacrifices given? To God in heaven. What is the sacrifice? It is the sacrifice of our lips; both praise and thanks giving. Who is the overseer who watches over our gifts and measures a blessing today and in the time to come? It is Jesus The Great High Priest who takes account of those things given in his name, whether money in a church collection plate or food to a hungry child, or a visit to an invalid or a drink to a thirsty man, or a visit to a person sick and alone in a hospital.

God sees every act done and the motive of every heart in which that gift is bestowed. God loves a cheerful giver. The motive of the heart touches faith. We know that Jesus sees our love and kindness to another in need. Giving to God in faith, we also know that he will also meet any of our needs in a time of lack because we did not withhold to others. We do not give out of obligation. We are not debtors to the law. We are free to give because God is a giver. Giving is like sowing seeds. We sow bounteously in order to reap bounteously. We expect something to come from our planting. Those who sow also believe that a crop which will come at harvest time. This is surely a part of giving to the Kingdom of God. God will meet our needs at a future time because we have planted. God stores up treasure for another day in a heavenly place, because we have given.

Tithing in Faith Becomes an Act of Worship

The giving of tithes is not just a simple token gift placed in an offering plate or bag. Tithing in the scriptural sense relates to act of worship in presenting the "tithe" to God. **We find the act described in Deuteronomy Chapter 26.** "Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." "And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwellest therein;" (- 26:1-)

*"That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there." (- Deuteronomy 26:2-15) **Note** this is during the dispensation of The LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.*

Abraham gave a tithe to Melchisedek the King Of Salem two thousand years before the Church age and prior to the Age of the Law. This tithe prefigures the law of commandments, giving, as it were, to the King of Heaven who exists outside of genealogy forever. We give as unto him. *Jesus abides forever, in the order of that high priest, Melchisedek.*

Now regarding tithing as worship, don't try to memorize a ritual to recite, but it is good to have an understanding of the rite noted in the Levitus 26 text. The giving of such a gift or tithe should be something which reflects our own understanding of our previous "captivity" and God's hand at work to take us out of that place of bondage and oppression, want and sorrow. The spiritual life acknowledges that ***we were also taken out of bondage***. It is a faithful saying which needs to be voiced. Notice that all of this tithing worship is spoken to God in the place which has His name written upon it. Today we are redeemed and the house of God is not a special place it is the human house where the spirit resides. The tithing worship reminds us of God's covenant with us and how he is taking further towards strength, blessing and victorious living. Speaking these things tells God that we know what he has done for us and that we are truly thankful that he knows and remembers us each and that he will continue to be with us supplying good things.

The Prosperity Message (Giving to get)

The past several years has seen a great emphasis on the Prosperity message. Poverty and lack are seen as a curse throughout scripture. God does want us without provision. The redemption from the curse of the law also freed us want and lack. We believe that "God shall supply all of our needs according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." In gaging any matter of doctrine we have to hold it up not only to common sense and scripture but to discerning what the spiritual life needs to be. Though we should not lack nor want, God wants more of us and not less of us. Therefore anything which takes our focus away from God and places it upon unfruitful things, those things which only decay, is really a stumbling block for a believer. Those who preach riches and wealth are laying a stumbling block that can lead people away from intimacy unless they are able to handle wealth and prosperity more graciously than I. Many are able to assume possessions of wealth and money and

property without being seduced away from God's presence. But sometimes the aware of the futility and the emptiness of wealth comes too late when are already victimized by excesses, this was the case of the writer of Ecclesiastes. Solomon realized late in life that with wealth comes other griefs and spareness of the soul.

Gain is not Godliness, the apostle writes in *1Timothy 6:5, withdraw yourselves from such doctrines. but Godliness with contentment is great gain*, (1Timothy 6:6) God wishes to supply our needs, to bless us in our going out and our coming in to make us fruitful in body and in all of the pursuits of our life. (Deuteronomy 28:3-6)

The doctrine of **prosperity has blessing** connected to it to be sure; but the negative side of it is its link to selfish motives both in the giver and the receiver. Many who preach the prosperity message are in a position to directly benefit by the unrestrained giving that is encouraged in sermons and in seminars. Some of those who preach the doctrine exceed the Word of God by suggesting that gifts given to their own ministries have the greatest return connected to them. Of course faith is infused into the process to insure a greater degree of return, thirty, sixty or one hundred fold according to scripture as is described and taught as a consequence of giving. (There is greater insight in the 30, 60 and hundred fold metaphor than mere cash and assets. The prospering of the soul is accounted above all, in Spiritual richness.)

Giving, according to Jesus, should not be in the manner of the Pharisees who "sound a trumpet" to give notice that they are doing an alms deed. Jesus teaches to give in secret and for the left hand not to see what the right hand does. All of these teachings address anonymous giving rather than a public display in which people are applauding the giver for his excellent generosity. The Lord says of such people, they receive their reward by the act of receiving public acclaim and applause. It is far better to give when only the Father who sees in secret knows. He will be the one who insures a return in the best possible time. Any man or woman can give or contribute in any 'kind' or commodity. One can give a gift of service another a gift of a song. Another a gift of kindness. The same principle applies when the motive is right, God who is the author and overseer of every good and perfect gift knows when our giving is free from self exaltation. He will insure the return.

Becoming A True Worshiper

Chapter 11

Thanksgiving, Praise and Worship

John 4:23 "-But 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. 24, God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

A form of worship is part of all religion.

Certain sects believe in worshiping their ancestors; others worship or hold in reverence for creatures or objects; others worship gods, hundreds even thousands of gods with different names. Worship often consists of intricate and specific rituals and rites practiced by its believers. All of these rituals and rites come from serious and sincerely held beliefs and are fervently practiced by its practitioners.

Religious worship may be practiced in the form of the burning of incense, or the spilling of blood, sacrifices are offered in the most solemn manner. Priests, shahmen or 'holy men' wear sacred garments. In order to follow the rigors of required by worship, worshipers follow rites of purification. Supplicants bow and posture in a manner prescribed. They may fold their hands and make mystical gestures heavenward. It is easy for a *religious person* to follow a ritual and think that you are *a true worshiper*. Why? Because anyone can be taught a ritual and follow that ritual with an attitude of solemnity. All such worship is mostly a “*soulish*” endeavor but is it true worship? Is God the Almighty in it? Does such worship please the King of the Universe? Praise and worship are practiced in all Christian Churches but vary widely.

What Jesus said about True Worshipers

A foundation of understanding of the subject of worship is found in the gospel account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at a well in Samaria:

John 4:19 - John 4:24 19 - - The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20, Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21, Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22, You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23, But 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. 24, God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

We who believe call ourselves True Worshipers. We claim to know who we worship. We also have our own notions about whether or not we are worshipping 'in Spirit' or 'in Truth.' Certainly not all of the world's religions worship our God who we call "The Father" in Spirit and in truth. I am also confident that not all those who embrace the title Christian know the one they claim to worship. Moreover, I seriously doubt whether all Christians have a sense of Spiritual union with the Father.

What is required to become True Worshipers?

Following is a description of a worship service that we would see in a typical Christian church house.

Musical preludes may be performed by an organist or musicians;

The congregation sing hymns from a hymn book at intervals throughout the 'service';

An individual, usually the priest or pastor, offers a Bible lesson or homily that engages the congregation in order to enhance the spiritual life and understanding of the parishioners;

The congregation or choir sings musical responses following particular parts of the service;

Scripture readings, prayers and petitions, or collection of offerings;

A group of specially appointed singers may perform well rehearsed anthems

Individuals may perform special music (as a featured soloist.)

This sort of programmed worship service is standard fare in most Christian denominations. Such programs are performed with greater or lesser degrees of sophistication or excellence depending upon the size of the congregation and its pool of talent and resources. Churches that have access to greater pools of talent and imagination are more successful in creating performance based presentations and eventually attract larger congregations. Thus the church or ministry is considered more successful and viable.

An important point to note is that the things listed above are designed to be executed by relatively few individuals and the majority are onlookers acting in their role of an audience. How much of this seems to accrue to being true worshipers? Or, are individuals allowed to be passive and disengaged?

Praise and worship are the Cornerstone of the Christian Life

In the scripture quoted just above, Jesus makes a number of points about worship that reveal a new paradigm, the mystery of relationship of believers to the (spiritual) Father. First, worship is not about a place. While Jesus speaks of the mountains where people go to be in Holy communion with their God (God) any such seeking of *a holy place* in the present time is wrong. God meets with His children in an entirely different way.

I believe the next point that Jesus makes is that a large segment of world in their effort to worship a particular god, may affect a form of worship but have no connection to the object of their worship. Their god is unknown to the worshiper. Absent any spiritual bond no worshiper can come into union with their deity.

For Christians who would be worshipers, I think it can also be inferred that without certain qualifications *any effort to be a true worshiper is in vain!* A mere form or mechanism of worship will not bridge the gap to make you a true worshiper. I am talking about worshipping our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Father of the Messiah Jesus.

True worshipers must be true believers.

True believers must be called into the Kingdom of God. This is not a wholesale process. Each individual must approach the throne of grace seeking mercy and pardon for sins. If this seeking is sincere and *heartfelt* an individual is born of the Spirit. Now they become partakers in Jesus Christ's divine nature. They have become sons and daughters of God and come into fellowship with Him. This point will be neither understood nor agreed upon by some religious experts because of the fact that their theology precludes their ability to know who they worship.

Any who say "There is no God, or we can not know God" are simply reasoning these things and have not been blessed to become **born of God** and become that brand new creation. 2 *Corinthians 5:16 - 2 Corinthians 5:18 17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18, Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ- - "*

The Spiritual side of worship

First understand that **the mind is NOT the spirit** although some may teach this. Understand also that **the soul or personality of a person is not the spirit**. Human beings are *soulish* beings. We were entirely so before coming to Christ and tend to remain so after coming to Christ. But the soul which equates to -mind, intellect and emotion, is not the part that is born from above (or reborn) in Christ Jesus. The soul can find exaltation in various things. It can react in many ways to someone else's emotional presentation. Such is not Spiritual worship. Soul music is aptly named. Soul music comes from the soulish, personality side of human beings. Uniqueness of presentation that exalts the performer characterizes soulish worship.

Soul music says, look at me. Soulish performance is made for an audience. It says, "Aren't I a snappy performer!" Spiritual worship requires no audience but God. Spiritual worship does not have to have special gifts, ornamentation or sophistication. It is just from ourselves, from our spiritual selves. We who were in times past, entirely unworthy.

The Spiritual side of worship is about our interaction with heaven. It is free and unrestrained. It exalts in the joy of salvation and the wonder of being called forth to be called, with Christ, into heavenly places. *Colossians 3:1 - Colossians 3:3 1,"- -So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2,Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. "*

Spiritual life is about engaging the very presence of God. In the times of the Old Covenant priesthood, the high priest went annually into the presence of God through a heavy veil but only after exhaustive preparation and purification. In such a place the priest hardly dared to make a move in the presence of a Holy God. Any falling short resulted in the death of the officiate. The veil of God's temple was rent in half at the death of Jesus on the cross.

Worship within the Holy Place is now a part of the legacy of the child of God born of the Spirit. We can now boldly go into God's presence through the blood of the Messiah Jesus who has purchased this right for us. *Hebrews 10:19 - Hebrews 10:22* 20, - *by the new and living way that he opened for us through the veil (that is, through his flesh), 21, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. - -"*

Lest this topic might becomes overly heavy, let me try to make it plain and simple:

We worship the Heavenly Father with our hearts.

The heart is the very center of our passion and desires, for what the heart desires becomes its worship. Those born from heaven esteem and value the Spiritual life which is given from heaven and orchestrated from heaven. Heaven interacts with our hearts to make us true worshipers. Zeal is not the emotion of the soul it is the passion of the heart for Him who called us out of darkness into the Holy presence of heavenly things. (Mount Zion and the heavenly company of angelic beings and righteous souls.)

Our souls can be inspired and stimulated by stirring music but takes the Holy Spirit to lift our hearts to heaven. The Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) animates and empowers the worshipers with inspiration and revelation in times of worship. When some particular saint is in worship he may be at the very feet of Jesus or receiving a revelation of a truth that has been hidden from us until this very minute.

Free Worship Versus Programmatic Worship

We do not all feel comfortable about thanksgiving, praise and worship. As we gather together we should feel free to give praise or thanksgiving with the liberty that God allows. This means it does not have to be scripted or perfect to be heartfelt.

Praise and Thanksgiving

Chapter 12

Thanksgiving:

A heart of thanksgiving (Thankfulness) is called for by all who claim to be the children of God through Christ Jesus. If we are callous and have no true thanksgiving in our souls it would appear that we have not been impacted by God's loving kindness, mercy and grace:

If we were impoverished and received a legacy valued beyond all the riches of this world, would we not be happy and wish to give thanks? If we were spared an eternity of judgment and hell by God's gift of righteousness which says we do not have to pay the penalty for being unrighteous or unworthy because Jesus himself bore our sins, would we not be happy and full of thanksgiving?

If we are spared from the horrors of oppression by tyrants or sorrows of natural calamities ought we not offer up thanksgiving to God? If we are blessed to find food to eat; are comfortable while thousands go without food and shelter, ought we not give thanks? The people who do not know God are called "unthankful, unholy, etc. - - " *2 Timothy 3:2 - 2 Timothy 3:2 - - , for men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, evil-speakers, to parents disobedient, unthankful, unkind - - .*

The Psalms: Examples That Teach Us Thanksgiving, Praise

Psalms are not entirely made up of songs of praise as they include prayers and prophetic utterances.

The 150 Psalms of the Bible are the best examples of a man possessed of God's Holy Spirit (The Ruach Ha Kadesh) whose life and thoughts are turned continually God-ward. God refers to David as "a man after His own heart." While addressing the matters of trouble which surround him, David looks to the Lord as his strength, his hope, and his deliverer. He never forgets God's mercy and faithfulness. David, while praising the Lord actively (with his mouth) God at various times intervenes in the midst of his utterances and begins to speak His words through the psalmist's mouth. (Psalm 91, a good example)

Here are typical utterances of Praise and Thanksgiving.

Psalms 9:1-2 - Psalms 9:1; I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. ;2 I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. **

Psalms 111:1 - Psalms 111:1 Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.**

Psalms 34:2 - Psalms 34:3 1) I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2) My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3) Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. **

Psalms 30:12 12) To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever. **

Psalms 106:1 - Psalms 106:1 1) Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. **

Psalms 5:11 - Psalms 5:12 11 But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You. 12 For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield. **

Psalms 13:5 - Psalms 13:6 5 But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. 6 I will sing to the Lord, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.**

Psalms 31:7 - Psalms 31:8 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities, 8 And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; **

Psalms 71:23 - Psalms 71:24 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed. 24 My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; **

24 This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. **

Psalms 148:2 - Psalms 148:5 1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! 2 Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! 3 Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! 4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created. **

Psalms 148:13 - Psalms 148:14 13 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. 14 And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints— Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him. **

Psalms 149:2 - Psalms 149:6 1 Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3 Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. 4 For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He

will beautify the humble with salvation. 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory;

*Let them sing aloud on their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, ***

Psalms 150: - *Psalms 150:6 1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! 2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! 3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! 4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! 5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! 6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!*

Final Thoughts Regarding Praise and Worship

We see that there is no shortage of Praise and Thanksgiving found in the Psalms. There is much more throughout other Old Testament books as well. "Praise is an ornament of beauty" for the upright. There is strength in praise. Praise is active and not passive. When we praise The Lord we are interacting with the hosts of heaven who continually offer praise unto Him who sits on the throne. There is deliverance in praise, it brings confusion to the ranks of the enemy (demonic spiritual orders.) Praise takes all kinds of forms. It includes music and dance. Praise includes shouting loudly to extol the virtues of God. Praise includes making joyful noises to God. Praise brings us into the very presence of the Holy presence of God. 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving' speaks of making the way into God's place, as one would enter the Tabernacle from the world of care into the gate beyond the fence. Enter into His courts with praise, addressing progressing into a place of greater intimacy. This part of the tabernacle is the Holy Place. Here we may still praise and speak to God and extol his goodness and mercies. But the ultimate place is entered with a higher lever of worship where we can nothing but *worship* in the Holiness of His presence.

Those who say there should no be loudness and clammer in zealous worship are not biblically accurate. Those who say there should be no musical instruments, are not biblically accurate. Those who say there should be no dancing, are again, not in harmony with what we see in the Psalms.

Words translated Praise in the psalms and other books and include at least 7 words. Each word addresses a different kind of praise or thanksgiving which may include, singing, playing, shouting kneeling and others. This is an interesting subject to investigate using the Strong concordance. Look at words translated as "Praise" in the KJ Bible.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is Liberty. Liberty in Spiritual worship allows freedom to praise. It should not be curtailed. It should allow each person to engage in his or her own forms of praise. We all are called to Praise. Let everything that has breath, Praise the Lord! Freedom in praising the Lord creates a beautiful tapestry of sound and glory into which God's presence is pleased to dwell.

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