

Questions & Answers About Living

By Reverend Randy C. Brodhagen

(A practical guide to questions which were submitted to our news article “Faith’s Testimony.”)

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT LIVING

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ABUNDANT CHRISTIAN LIVING

Chapter 1

“What are some things that you could recommend that I do in preparing myself to worship the Lord?”

This is a very important question for all believers. Allow me to share with you a word from the Lord through prophecy that was given in a meeting of believers which dealt with your question. The Bible verses were added at a later time. Prophecy is intended for strengthening, encouragement, and comfort from God to His people (I Cor. 14:3).

“Comfort My people with these words – that I love them, that I care for them, that I will strengthen them, that I will help them, that I will hold them up with My Word, for I am their God. Comfort them with these words.

“Teach them, My son, to worship Me – what to do in My presence. Teach them that I might receive their praise. Teach them how to come before Me, for I love them and want them to know how to come into My presence... that My joy will fill them to overflowing. Teach them for I am with you.”

“Prepare your hearts to receive from Me. Cast all doubt, worry, and fear from your heart, for I love you, (1) set your heart upon Me, not on the things of the world. Set your heart upon Me and I will put everything into perspective, for I love you. (2) You have been risen with Me and are seated with Me in heavenly places, so praise Me as if you were in Heaven. (3) I have given you a new heart that you might worship Me in spirit and truth. (4) Come into My presence in Holy Spirit and awe, reverence, and quiet. Get all irreverence out of your thoughts. Not quiet (as you understand quiet) but rather not doubtful and fearful. (5) My Spirit will teach you how to worship Me in spirit and truth. (6) Your mind rejects what I tell you, so reject your mind. (7) I bring you life abundantly if you will set your heart to learn of Me. Cleanse yourself of anything in your heart which is displeasing worship of Me. (8) Learn of Me. Learn what My Spirit says to you. Cast aside all cares of situations which you may be in – cast your cares upon Me for I love you! (9) For I gave My life for you that you might come to Me and have rest. (10) Abundant life I gave My life for! (11) Willful resistance to My Spirit grieves me. Grieve not My Spirit for I want you to be free to worship Me – free to love Me – free to love one another as I have loved you. (12) Free to give your life for one another as I give My life for you. (13) Stir up the gift within you that you might worship Me in spirit and truth. (14) I know your needs better than you. (15) Enter into My presence with praise. (16) The things of My Spirit are strange to those who do not flow in My Spirit. (17) Those who are called of Me are speaking out My Spirit – I have given you the ability to fill them. Daily I will draw those into your path for you to teach them and make them grow abundantly in My Spirit.”

Scripture references: (1) 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Matt. 6:33; (2) Eph. 2:6; (3) Acts 15:9, Jn. 4:24; (4) 1 Pet. 1:22-23, Rom. 10:8-10, Jer. 32:38-41, Ezek. 11:18-20; (5) Is. 30:15; (6) Jn. 14:26, 16:13, 1 Cor. 2:9-13; (7) 1 Cor. 14:14, Rom. 12:2; (8) Matt. 11:29, Ps. 51:10-17, Is. 59:1-2; (9) 1 Pet. 5:7; (10) Heb. 4; (11) Jn. 10:10; (12) Heb. 3:7-19, 1 Thess. 5:16-21, Eph. 4:29-5:2; (13) Jn. 15:12-13, 1 Jn. 3:16; (14) Acts 2:38; (15) Jer. 12:3, Matt. 6:8, 32; (16) Ps. 100; (17) 1 Cor. 2:12-16, Matt. 16:22-23, Rom. 8:5.

“I am looking for some practical help in reading the Bible and applying it to my daily life.”

There are two things a person needs to do in order to receive what God has provided for us through His Word: Study and meditation.

In meditation we relax and let God take over. We give ourselves completely to God, allowing Him to draw our thinking toward Himself. It has been called “thinking with a view to planning and action.” We bring our needs and concerns to God, and as we think on God’s Word, God will then speak to us. The word that God gives will have a direct bearing on our lives as we act upon it. (See for definition of meditation and purpose: Ps. 1:2, 4:4, 19:14, 63:5-6, 77:3, 143:5; Joshua 1:8, Jeremiah 15:16.)

HOW TO MEDITATE:

1. Go to your selected scripture passage expectantly, looking for the message God wants to give you. Approach it with a prayer. Ex. – Ps. 119:18 or 1 Sam. 3:9. Be ready to do and believe what God says. The Holy Spirit will help you to understand as you ask for His help. (Jn. 14:26, 16:12-15, 1 Jn. 2:27).
2. All scripture is profitable, but in various ways. It has many messages for us. Look for the meaning for yourself. The Word of God is profitable for salvation, instruction, judgment and correction, restoration and forgiveness; for a God-pleasing life and to prepare us to do good works (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Put your own name into the verse. God’s word is personally to you. As you read, ask yourself: What is the Lord giving me here? Is it instruction or warning? Is it a promise? Guidance? Encouragement? Ask God to guide you to some definite thought for yourself. As you examine the passage, you will find a sin to confess, forgiveness in Christ to apply, an example to follow, a promise to claim, an error to avoid, a new thought about God, a new concern for your neighbor, or a new purpose for your day.
3. Out of your reading (God speaking to you) should come a responsive prayer (you speaking to God). God’s Word will move us to pray concerning that which we have read. (Example – Read Colossians 3. Our prayer would be that we would use our minds and bodies the way that God intends or rededication of self to God and the service of others.) Thank God for the directive He has given you, and pray for the Holy Spirit’s power to put it to work in your life.
4. No Scripture is fully received until it is understood and put to work in your life (Acts 9:6). As you read, ask yourself: What am I to know? What am I to believe? What am I to be? What am I to do?

Meditation helps us to make a passage personal and practical. Until we see its relevance for ourselves we have not yet crossed the bridge from the world of the Bible to the world of today.

In meditation we personalize the Word God gives. What we internalize is to be externalized; that is, put to work in our lives. A little girl when asked what translation of the Bible she liked best

answered, “My mother’s translation,” meaning the Bible she saw illustrated in the life of her mother. The power and love of God comes into the situation when we then do or act on what God has said.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE:

(2 Tim. 2:15)

I recommend three readings of each book. Study involves time and will give you food for meditation.

1st Reading: Get an overview of what Luke, Acts, etc. is about. Read the book in one sitting. Many of the books can be read in an hour or less. Ask yourself: What is the main subject? How is it organized? Is it instruction in Christian faith and life? Would it be classified as recital of history for the encouragement of us today? (Hebrews 11:4). First get acquainted with the entire book, not trying to remember everything that you read.

2nd Reading: Find the outline. Read more slowly this time and get the major division, subdivisions, and paragraphs. Read from one chapter to another without pause, remembering that originally the Bible was not divided into chapters and verses. Mark the major divisions. Look for the purpose of each book. (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:8). Follow in the book to see how this purpose is carried out.

Next find the structure of the book. For instance, you may divide Acts into the ministry of Peter (Acts 1-12) and of Paul (Acts 13-28). Acts is the story of the extension of the Church to Jews and Gentiles.

3rd Reading: In your third reading you will want to make the book personal. If reading Acts, you may wish to trace on the maps the journey of the spread of the Gospel of Mark and study the confessions of faith and testimonies of Christ. What was the apostle’s message? Discover directives for your life? What is your mission today? Underline verses referring to Holy Spirit activity. Pray for His presence in churches today – and your life. Find key words of a book: “faith” in Romans and Galatians; “works” in James, etc. You probably will not understand everything in this third reading. Continue to press on. Most any study Bible will provide background material and an outline of each book.

We must let the Bible speak for itself. True study leads into the Word, not away from it. It submits to the Word of God and does not impose its opinion upon it. Here are helpful questions to ask when studying:

1. What does the passage say? – Observation. Take time to observe what the passage REALLY says. Note what it does not say. If we misread the passage, we distort the message.
2. What does the passage mean? – Interpretation. What did it mean to the man who wrote it? What did it mean to those who received it? What circumstances called for its writing? What is the cultural – historical setting? (A study Bible will help you!).

3. What does the passage say to me? – Application. How does this Word affect what I am, what I believe, what I do, and how I relate to others? How is it to influence my whole life?

What we hear from God's Word may offend us, convict us, or enlighten us. By the Holy Spirit's power it will give to us new life and hope if we take to heart and act upon what it says. (Following your study comes meditation on God's Word.)

“What is the Sabbath?”

The Sabbath is a weekly holy day which God Himself has set aside for rest for Himself and for His people. The entire day is to be called a delight to the Lord in which we cease from secular earthly employment to devote ourselves to holy and heavenly things. The Sabbath is not for ordinary labor, idleness, nor for amusement; but rather for rest, spiritual and physical; for meditation; for worship, private as well as public; for holy joy; and for mutual helpfulness towards our fellow man.

God commands that we keep the Sabbath holy to Him and not profane it by doing other activities of the world and our own pleasure, but rather to spend the entire day with God and doing God's works. (See Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 16:22-30, 31:12-17, 35:2-3; Lev. 23:3; Jer. 17:21-27; Ezek. 20:12-20; Is. 56:2, 6-8; Is. 58:13-14). The Sabbath begins on the evening of the sixth day and ends the evening of the seventh day (Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6; Gen. 2:2-3).

We note that in the Old Testament there are also listed Sabbath days other than the seventh-day Sabbath. The same principles of observance apply for these days; however, the purpose is different. The seventh-day Sabbath is intended for rest (a shadow of the eternal rest to come with God forever.) The other Sabbaths are intended as offerings to the Lord (sin, first-fruits, etc. [see Lev. 23]). All of these Sabbaths were a shadow of what was to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ (see Heb. 10:1-18; Col. 2:14-17). This is why we are not to let people judge us concerning these ceremonial Sabbaths (Col. 2:16-17; Rom. 14:5-6; Gal. 4:8-11). There is no longer any need for Christians to observe these days because Jesus has offered the sacrifice for us once and for all (Heb. 10:14).

However, we want to emphasize at this point that none of those Sabbaths had anything to do with the seventh day Sabbath which God Himself observes and will observe forever in the new heaven and new earth (See Is. 66:22-24, 56:2, 6-7). For us to be faithful, it is also important that we point out to you that the seventh-day Sabbath was observed by God and man before mankind's fall away from God (See Gen. 2:2-3).

The point of this fact is that the seventh-day Sabbath is an eternal command and observance of God that can never be changed or done away with by man because God Himself is observing it. He also intends for His people to observe it forever (See Ex. 31:16-17; Heb. 4:1-11). The Christian is still to observe the seventh-day Sabbath of rest in the same way that we observe the remainder of the Ten Commandments which God has given (See Ex. 20:1-17). Jesus summed up God's commandments: love God first and then love our fellow men as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-

40). We keep God's commands, including the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, because we love God (See Rev. 22:11-14; Jn. 14:15, 21-24; 1 Jn. 5:2-4, 2:3-7).

Jesus said, "Do not think that I am come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen; will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:17-19)."

"Your article concerning the Sabbath was most interesting. Would you please define what you meant by the 'Seventh-day Sabbath'."

The seventh-day Sabbath was established at creation before man's falling away from God. "By the seventh day God had finished the work that he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Gen. 2:2-3)." We find here that God blessed and declared holy to Himself a certain day – the seventh. As we noted in the 'Sabbath' article, this entire day is to be called a delight to the Lord (Is. 58:13-14), used for God's purposes and for our rest from worldly labor and pleasures. God's blessing rests on us as we observe His holy day of rest from the world to think on holy things. Involved in our loving God is "Remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8-11). We note: this is one of the Ten Commandments of God which are still in effect for New Testament believers in Jesus Christ (See Matt. 5:17-20; Jn. 14:15, 21-24; 1 Jn. 5:2-3, 2:3-7; Rev. 22:11-14). The seventh-day Sabbath is not to be confused with the ceremonial Sabbaths which foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. They need no longer be observed because of Jesus' sacrifice for us (Col. 2:16-23, Gal. 4:8-11; Rom. 14:5-6).

Which day in our week is the seventh-day Sabbath? God at creation established the order of days. "God called the light 'day' and the darkness 'night.' And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day (Gen. 1:5)" etc. The Lord's Day or seventh-day Sabbath begins at dusk after the sixth day and goes until dusk after the seventh day. Such manner of designating week days continued throughout the New Testament times.

We know that Jesus rose from the dead on the "first day" of the week. "After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week..." (Matt. 28:1). It is clearly substantiated in all circles that Jesus' resurrection occurred sometime before dawn on the first day which we know on our calendar to be Sunday. We can see clearly from Matt. 28:1 that the Sabbath had passed – the seventh-day Sabbath being from Friday dusk to Saturday dusk. The "first day" of the week began at dusk Saturday going to dusk Sunday. (We note: Sabbath observance was from "evening to evening" – (Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6).

The seventh-day Sabbath of the Lord or Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10) began Friday at dusk and went to Saturday at dusk. There is no New Testament evidence that Jesus nor the early church changed the Sabbath of the Lord to the "first day" (Saturday night through Sunday night), as the practice of the major portion of Christianity has done. (It is interesting that men made this change of

God's Law; however, we do not have space in this article to cover that subject.) In God's eyes His command of the seventh-day Sabbath still stands with the blessing on the "seventh" day and not on the "first" (Gen. 2:2-3).

The early church worshipped God daily (Acts 2:41-47, 5:41-42). However, the keeping of God's Sabbath on the seventh day continued to be a practice (See Acts 13:42-52, 15:21, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4). There is no scriptural evidence showing Sunday worship taking the place of the Sabbath. In fact, in only two places is mention made of "first day" activity: 1 Cor. 16:2 (not worship, but "private" offering for the poor) and Acts 20:7 (not a Sunday meeting but a Saturday night meeting lasting after midnight).

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

Chapter 2

“What is faith?”

Faith is the divine ability that enables a person to receive what God has provided. Man cannot work for or attain faith by his own efforts. Faith is a gift of God which only comes to a person through the hearing of God’s Word (Rom. 10:17). As a person hears God’s Word, the Holy Spirit works with it. It is alive (Heb. 4:12; Jn. 6:63; (Is. 55:10-11), producing faith within the hearer and enabling the person to receive what God has promised. If a person is not spending time in God’s Word, faith cannot be developed. God has a promise for every area of our lives. We need to spend time in God’s promises in order to allow Him to produce faith to receive them.

Faith is always now or present tense. It is not for tomorrow or yesterday. It is for the moment in which a person believes God. This is why, when we pray, we believe that we have received whatever it is that we have prayed to God for – on the basis of His word and promise (Mk. 11:24), even though we may not see the results or feel anything has happened. God’s Word defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen (Heb. 11:1).” In other words, faith is the confidence in God that He has done what He has promised according to His Word, even though it is not yet evidenced in the physical world. We will always see the results if we have faith in God and have believed that we have received what we have asked.

We must realize that everything from God comes first from the spiritual realm (the dimension which we cannot see or perceive with the natural senses) before it is revealed in this physical world. (See Heb. 11:3.) This is why there is often a time factor involved from the point of the prayer being said and the time when the physical manifestation occurs. (We see it!) Note the incident in which Jesus teaches this principle: the fig tree which Jesus told to dry up did not do so immediately (from what they saw). However, a few days later it was completely dried up. (See Mk. 11:12-25.)

Daniel asked for understanding concerning a vision, and twenty-one days later the angel appeared with the meaning. The angel said, “I was sent the moment you set your heart to receive.” However, he did not appear until twenty-one days later. Why? He said that there was a battle going on in the spiritual realm which had to be cleared before he could bring the message into the physical realm (Dan. 10:10-14). Our faith is the substance of what we are hoping for until we see it. When we see it, we no longer need faith for it!

Faith is not produced in our minds, but rather in our spirits. This is the part of us that is alive to God after we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The spirit is the part of us that communicates to God. The term ‘heart’ is often used to describe the spirit of man. (See Rom. 10:8-10 and 1 Cor. 14:14.) The mind needs to be renewed by God’s Word to accept what one’s spirit knows as true, simply because God has said so. The mind which is not renewed by God’s Word operates by natural senses and cannot receive the spiritual truths of God which can be understood only by the spirit (1 Cor. 2:13-14). The mind can actually hinder a person from receiving God’s promises. Jesus said, “Blessed are they who have not seen, yet still believe (Jn. 20:24-31).” If

we have faith, we will see (Mk. 11:24). True faith always involves action. By doing what God says we will receive what God has promised. The man would still be lying there if he did not get up when Jesus said, “You are healed!”

“What does it mean to heap coals of fire upon a person’s head?”

I believe that the statement to which you are referring is found in Prov. 25:21-22 and Rom. 12:19, 20. “Beloved never avenge yourselves, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord.’ On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’”

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21).” In Prov. 25:22 this additional phrase appears, “...and the Lord will reward you.”

Contrary to popular usage, the phrase “you will heap coals of fire on his head,” is not to be understood as a revengeful act, intending to embarrass its victim, but just the opposite. The picture is that of the high priest (Lev. 16:12) who on the Day of Atonement took his censer and filled it with “coals of fire” from the altar of burnt offering, and then put on them the incense for a pleasing, sweet smelling fragrance. The cloud of it covered the mercy-seat and was acceptable to God for atonement (an offering for or payment for disobedience to God). The people were forgiven because of the sacrifice.

In the New Testament we find Jesus Christ being the sacrifice for our separation from God. God in His love sent Jesus to pay the price for our being enemies of God and separated from the Father. Since God has forgiven our acts of disobedience towards Him, in the same way we are to love and forgive those who have wronged us. This section on “heaping coals of fire” actually concerns praying blessings from God for those who have wronged us and ministering in love to their physical needs. As God in His love is concerned about us spiritually, mentally, and physically, so we are even to love those who are our enemies. By so doing we are allowing the love of God to come into the situation, which will then enable the other person and ourselves to receive God’s blessing of life abundantly. Love never fails, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Cor. 13:4-8). Love overcomes evil with good, rather than resisting the evil being done, which only leads to more evil. (Example: If you fight with someone that wants to fight, evil increases.)

Jesus said, “You have heard that it has been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, Do not resist the evil man (who injures you); but if any one strikes you on the right jaw or cheek, turn to him the other one too...”

Note: Does this mean we are to be masochists? No! It means that the force of love is greater than evil. In turning the other cheek or going the extra mile, we are going beyond the evil, allowing it to burn itself out, and then overcoming the evil intended with God’s love.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy;’ but I tell you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute you, to show that you are the children of your Father who is in heaven...’ (Matt. 5:43).”

“But if you suffer for doing good, this is commendable to God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to Him (God the Father) who judges justly (1 Pet. 2:20-25).” God is our defender and just judge. We do not need to do anything but love and forgive.

“How can I get more patience for these trying times?”

The saying goes, “Lord, give me patience – right now!” Patience is a quality of God which, when coupled with faith, will receive everything from God.

According to God’s Word, the only way that patience is developed is through testing, tempting, and trials (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4). These testings, temptings, and trials do not come from God. They come from Satan (James 1:12-15). They are intended to destroy our faith.

W.E. Vine’s definition of patience from the Greek language, in which the New Testament is written is, “The quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. It is the opposite of despondency, and is associated with hope.” It is not that we endure through the situation, but that we have victory through it in spite of the situation.

In the New International Version of the Bible, the term persevere is used instead of patience in both Romans 5:1-5 and James 1:2-4. “Consider it pure joy my brethren, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” Then in verse 12, “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.” We are not to give into the trial!

Webster’s definition of persevere is “to persist in anything undertaken, to maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty or obstacles.”

Through the trials and testings that come against us we develop perseverance (patience) as we stand fast in God’s Word, rejoicing that our God is greater than the situation. God will see us through to victory (1 Cor. 10:13). We understand that God is not sending us the temptation or trial, nor is He trying to teach us something by the trial. We learn the lesson as we stand against the devil and his trial and temptation and we do not receive it by acting upon God’s Word for the particular situation. We learn that as we persevere in God’s Word, knowing we already have the victory, we see the victory. This builds experience and confidence in God, His love, and His provision.

“How do I overcome fear?”

If your heart is filled with fear, you will talk fear, and your fears will increase. The amazing thing is that when you speak, those fears will, as you say, grip you tighter than ever (Job 3:25).

To overcome this, fill your heart with the Word of God. Then, when you are tempted to doubt, make your lips speak His Word instead of your doubts. Simply make a decision to have your lips voice the Word instead of fear. You can do it through the Lord Jesus Christ who will give you the strength (Phil. 4:13). Understand that Satan rules people with fear. God rules with love. “... Perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love (1 Jn. 4:18).” We need not ever fear again. As we invite Jesus to become the Lord of our lives, God delivers us from the power of darkness (which includes fear) and has translated us into the kingdom of his Son (Jesus Christ): “In whom we have our penalty paid for through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).”

Purpose in your heart that when fear comes against you, you will speak God’s Word because He has said, “Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God (Isaiah 41:10).”

- I will say, “I am no longer afraid for God is with me all the time;” because He has said, “God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).”
- Because He has said, “My peace I give you... Let not your heart be troubled (Jn. 14:27);” I will say, “Being declared not guilty by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1),” “He is our peace (Eph. 2:14).” “Therefore my heart is not troubled or fearful.”
- Because He has said, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you: because he trusts in you (Isaiah 26:3);” I will say, “I have His perfect peace because my mind is stayed on Him.” Also see Psalms 34, 46, 91; Philippians 4:4-8.

“I just don’t feel any different even though I have been prayed for.”

This is perhaps the greatest pitfall in healing that we ever see. Feeling is not faith. Your feelings will deceive you. When some people are prayed for according to the Bible, they do feel differently. But faith in God accepts the healing regardless of feelings, knowing that God cannot lie. He promises, “I am the Lord that healeth thee (Ex. 15:26).” Whether you feel God’s power in your body or not, the whole matter rests with His Word. Jesus said, “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mk. 16:18).” “He sent his word, and healed them (Ps. 107:20).” All healing is based on the authority of the Word. Christ healed the sick and cast out spirits with His Word.

Sickness comes from Satan. God wants people healed. A woman, whose doctors had pronounced her incurable, made many attempts to receive her healing by going for prayer. After many months she only grew worse, becoming discouraged, until she heard the truth: “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” She realized that it wasn’t in the many prayers of

others that she would be healed but by steadfastly believing this promise of Jesus and acting accordingly.

No matter what people told her, she would say, “I’m not going on how I look or feel. I’m going by what God says! I had hands laid on me and prayer. I know that I am recovering.”

She expected God to be faithful. She would not dishonor Him by disbelieving His promises. This was God’s Word to her, and God does not lie (Num. 23:19). Her part was to hold fast to her confession of faith without wavering (Heb. 10:23). The Lord made her completely whole!

People are perishing for lack of knowledge. “Whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall not be ashamed (Rom. 10:11).” Jesus Christ is the answer for our every need. Have you received Jesus as your Lord? Jesus has come to bring us abundant life spiritually and physically.

“Can you explain for me about positive confession?”

Positive confession is a faith principle by which we speak God’s word and promise rather than the problem or circumstance. It is based on the fact that God calls those things which be not as though they were resulting in the things spoken coming into existence (Rom. 4:17). Much is said in the Bible concerning the use of our tongues. (See Prov. 6:2, 18:20-21, 21:23; Matt. 12:34; Ps. 19:14, 50:23, Joel 3:10; Heb. 10-23.) As our words line up with God’s Words, then God’s power is free to move in our behalf. With the mouth confession can be made, not only to the good things God has promised us, but to sickness, defeat, bondage, weakness, lack and failure.

Refuse to have a bad confession. Refuse to have a negative confession. Refuse a dual confession where you are saying at one moment, “By His stripes I am healed,” and at the next moment, “but the pain is still there.” Your negative confession denies the healing scripture, and you go on to defeat (James 1:6-7). Go on to higher level, living in the Kingdom of God. Believe you are what God says you are. Talk that way. Act that way. Train yourself to live on the level of what is written in God’s Word about you. Do not permit your thoughts, your words, or your actions to contradict what God says about you. Do not call God a liar.

Although you may not master speaking God’s way in a day or week, you will learn it as you faithfully apply it. Jesus commanded us to “have faith in God” or to have “the God kind of faith (Mk. 11:22).” Then we are told “faith comes by hearing... the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).”

After you hear the Word, then it begins to possess your heart and mouth (Rom. 10:8). When a sinner is converted, first he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and that God raised Him from the dead; then his confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:10).

God fulfills all His promises the same way. First: You hear the promise – that creates faith. Second: You believe that promise. Third: You confess that promise; you speak it. Your overflowing heart confesses the Word of promise in gladness and assurance. Fourth: You act accordingly, and God delights to make it good. “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son

of man that he should repent. Has he not said it, and will he not do it? Has he not promised, and will he not fulfill?"

FAMILY

Chapter 3

“What are some guidelines which would help me in raising my children?”

Here are 10 key thoughts to remember in developing your children:

1. Show your love consistently (1 Cor. 13:4-8).
2. Listen when your children talk (James 1:19-20).
3. Spend time doing things together that they enjoy.
4. Discipline them firmly but not in anger. Insist on obedience (Prov. 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, and 23:13).
5. Teach them the Word (Prov. 22:6; Deut. 6:7).
6. Do not strip them of their dignity as human beings. (Disciplining them in the presence of others, etc. Take them to a private place for discipline.)
7. Do not stand with them against authority. (Never criticize ministers, teachers, police, etc.) Otherwise you are breeding rebellion in your child (Rom. 13:1-6).
8. Do not leave them alone for long periods of time (Prov. 29:15).
9. Mother and dad stand together as one on disciplinary matters.
10. Do not demand from them what you do not demand of yourself.

In addition,

1. Seek the Lord’s wisdom and guidance in understanding each individual child. Listen patiently to what they have to say. Answer all their questions kindly.
2. Be as courteous and loving to them as you would have them be to you. Do not interrupt them or contradict them.
3. Do not ridicule or shame them when they displease you. Do not laugh at their mistakes. Encourage them and emphasize their good qualities.
4. Discipline them with a “rod” (newspaper, belt, etc.), not your hand, on their bottom when they have disobeyed God’s word and your authority as God’s representative. Do not discipline for selfish satisfaction or to show your authority. Make certain the child knows why they are being disciplined.
5. Do not make excuses (which are not true) to others in front of your child. We must not encourage them to lie. We need to be obedient to God’s Word ourselves so we can be godly examples for our children. We can teach them God’s Word by our example. As we live for God, our children will receive God’s Word from us.
6. When you are having a trying day, go to the Lord for strength. Do not take out your frustrations on your children.

7. Understand that children are children and can not be expected to have the judgment of adults. Guide the child to make decisions on the basis of God's Word. Help them to wait on themselves and to take responsibility for their decisions and actions.
8. Teach them to honor and obey God, their parents, and all authorities (government, pastors, school teachers, the elderly, etc.). Be slow to side with your child against one of God's authorities because this will breed disrespect.
9. God's Word is true! "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6)."

What is God's will concerning divorce and remarriage?

Divorce is not permitted by God's Word, except for marital unfaithfulness. God's quality is faithfulness. He expects that the marriage relationship reflect His faithfulness to His people. Divorce is not an option to a believer of God.

We live in a permissive society which has made divorce an easy excuse for promiscuity and immorality. One can get a divorce for any personal whim or reason. Rape can be declared by a wife against her own husband.

According to God's standards, which a true believer of God will follow, there is no excuse or reason of man for divorce, except marital unfaithfulness (fornication or adultery – sex outside of the marriage relationship). For a believer, the love of God in a person's heart can bridge and forgive even fornication. What God has joined together, man is not to divide for any personal reason or excuse.

The number one attack of the devil, today, is on the holiness of the marriage and family relationships. His desire is to destroy marriages and families. No one comes out a winner in divorce.

Concerning remarriage, if a person leaves the spouse, the person is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to the spouse. The person who marries a divorced individual is actually involving himself in adultery, according to God's Word. Some deep consideration needs to be taken on our part concerning the seriousness of marriage. Many people, knowingly and unknowingly, have violated God's principles and are wondering why they are having problems.

Jesus Christ is the answer to healthy marriages. Commitment to God and each other is involved in marriage. According to God's Word, we cannot just drop everything and leave a marriage whenever we want. As we seek God by being obedient to His Word, God will enable us to forgive, love, encourage one another, and talk matters through. To the person in adultery, Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more: (Jn. 8:11). Ask God to forgive you and put Jesus in the center of your marriage. God loves you and will help you!

(See Heb. 13:4; Matt. 5:27-32, 19:3-12; Lk. 16:18; Mk. 10:2-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-16.)

“How can I deal with strife in my house?”

It is not stated as to whether or not you are in a Christian home, so we will deal with several alternative situations.

In a home where one spouse has invited Jesus into his or her heart and the other spouse or child has not, there will exist tension and strife to varying degrees, depending upon whether the believer is living for God and obeying God’s Word. This kind of strife is not necessarily caused by what one does, but because the nature of the unbeliever is that of the world and the devil. The nature of the believer is that of God. Although the individuals love one another and care about one another, light and darkness do not mix. Satan and God are enemies of each other. Until the individuals involved receive the Lord Jesus into their hearts, this condition will remain (Matthew 10:32-39, Luke 14:26-35).

Counsel: The believing individual needs to unconditionally love the others, letting God’s love touch them. Remember, you too were an enemy of God when Jesus died for you. You were not worthy, yet God loved you and made you worthy. As you have prayed, claiming their salvation, and told Satan to release them in Jesus’ name, now treat them as though they are seeking the things of God. Understand that as conviction builds in their hearts about their need to receive Jesus and to be right with God, strife is going to increase because of the tension building within them (until they surrender to God). Satan does not want to let go of them (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Refuse to allow yourself to get into strife. They are not attacking you, but resisting God, as you are obedient to God’s Word by loving them no matter what they do or say. Be encouraged – God’s love is touching them through you. They will respond (1 Peter 2:19, 3:2)! Have faith in God (Matthew 19:25-26).

In a Christian home Satan wants to stir up strife. Believers must understand that people are not the problem. Satan, who is influencing people to do and say what they do and say, is the problem (Ephesians 6:10-18). We cannot allow ourselves to choose to be used by Satan against another. We must stand together against the in Jesus’ name.

(Counsel, see Ephesians 4:17, 5:2; Colossians 3; James 3:13, 4:7; 1 Peter 3:8-12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

“I have a question as to whether I should work or not. My husband says it is my decision. I would like to work, but I am reluctant because of my children.”

Each of us must make our own decisions. We believe husbands and wives need to work together in making decisions which affect the family. All decisions must be based on God's Word if we are to be blessed.

God's Word will provide insight for you. If a wife and mother find a "fulfilling" career outside her home, she will soon find herself serving two worlds of interest and two authorities (husband and employer). Soon she will be forced to choose which world was more important to her. That world would become her primary source for acceptance, approval, and achievement.

If she chooses an outside vocation, opportunity is given to weaken her marriage, damage her potential influence on her children, expose her to destructive temptations, and violate the principles which God has established for the wife and mother.

God intended the home to be a center of a mother's world (Titus 2:5, 1 Tim. 5:14). God created the wife to be an aid or assistant to her husband (Gen. 2:18). God instructs older women to teach younger women "...to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:4-5)." The virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31 had several vocational interests. However, they were all related to her family and her home. Even a young widow is counseled to "...marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Tim 5:14)."

Simply from the practical standpoint, if one was to sit down and figure the benefits of 'working' and 'not working,' one would find that economically there is not usually that much to gain after figuring for babysitters, food, transportation, and the family's income going into a higher tax bracket. In addition, there is wear on mother, children, and husband.

We all need to examine our priorities as individuals and as families in light of God's Word.

"I am interested in helping my son to tell the truth. Please direct me to some guidance from God's Word."

This is an important area for our consideration. God blesses the truth and hates lies. As the saying goes, "one lie leads to another." Guilt, fear, and unbelief are the motivation for most all lies being spoken. It needs to be made clear that all lies are a violation against God and are Satan's way of moving us further away from God's help.

"He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13)." (See Psalm. 32 and 51.) God is not able to help us and free us until we begin to speak the truth. To the contrary, if we continue to believe, speak, and live a lie, we bring a curse on ourselves, being apart from God's blessing. (See Rom. 1:18, 2:11; Acts 5:1-5; Rev. 21:6-8.)

God's nature is truth and holiness. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent (change his mind): has he said, and shall he not do it? Or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good (Num. 23:19)?"

"I am the way, the truth, and the life – no man comes to the Father, but by me," Jesus said (Jn. 14:6).

Satan's nature is lies and deception. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44)."

"He that is of God hears God's words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God (Jn. 8:47)."

Insights into importance of speaking the truth:

1. God knows the real truth of the matter. We only fool ourselves (Ps. 139, Prov. 16:2, 25).
2. When we receive Jesus as Lord of our lives, we become new creatures with God's nature-truth. We are not of Satan anymore-liars. So we must live God's way (Eph. 4:17, 5:10; Rom. 12:9-21).
3. Our witness to others is more effective as we speak the truth (1 Pet. 2:11-12).
4. We will have favor with God and all men (Prov. 3:1-4).
5. We will be able to walk closely with God (Lk. 8:15; Prov. 28:13).
6. We cannot expect God to keep His word if we do not keep our word or seek to deceive (Mk. 11:22-24; Matt. 18:18).

Jesus said, "It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death (Rev. 21:6-8)."

"I am concerned about what I should do when my husband asks me to do something which I know is ungodly."

God is the author of all authority whether it is in the home, church, government, or employment areas. We are to honor God's authorities (Rom. 13:1-5).

Yours is a very important question for many people today. Here are some guidelines which we have found to work in many similar situations.

Seven Steps of Action for Christians When Asked to do Something You Think is Wrong:

1. We need to check our own attitudes toward the authority to make certain that our attitudes are mature. For instance: If a person has an independent spirit, he or she will be disloyal and condemning. A criticizing spirit reflects a self-righteous attitude. An ungrateful spirit reveals prideful attitudes. A lazy spirit is revealed in dishonesty and poverty. A bitter spirit is rooted in selfishness. An impure spirit is self-indulgent, wanting everything its own way and to satisfy itself.

We are responsible for our response toward authorities. God uses the hardest to get along with to develop mature attitudes in us. God is concerned with our response, wanting our attitudes to be like those of Jesus (1 Pet. 2:19-24, 3:1-7). We are to continue to thank God even when we run into difficult situations.

2. We are to clear our consciences toward the authority, correcting our attitudes that offend and fulfilling wishes and unfinished directions of the authority. Acknowledge to the authority that we were wrong and ask forgiveness while making any necessary restitution.
3. Discern the basic intention of the authority. This is especially important when asked to violate God's Word! There are three main reasons authorities ask us to do something: (a) it has to be done, (b) to correct wrong attitudes in us, (c) to increase our skill for a future task. Ask what the authority's goals and wishes are. Ask authority to point out your attitudes which need improving. Look for God's greater goal through the situation.
4. Design creative alternatives. (a) remove a resistant spirit in yourself. (b) gain insight for the difficult situation. Ask God for wisdom (Proverbs; James 1:5-8). (c) design an alternative which can reach authority's goal.
5. Appeal to the authority. Have the spirit of a learner and servant. Explain your personal belief without a spirit of condemnation. Present alternatives. Explain how it will reach his goal. Leave the final decision to him. (Note: Steps 1-5 are illustrated in Daniel 1.)
6. Give God time to change the authority's mind. Expect God to bring outside pressure on the authority. Expect the authority to respond with extra pressure on you. Realize that God will use this pressure for our good as we respond in faith in God and His Word. Bear up under the pressure responding lovingly to the authorities to give them a basis for changing their decision. (e.g. Pharaoh and children of Israel).

7. Gladly suffer for not doing what is wrong (1 Peter 4:12-19, Jam. 1:2-8; Matt. 5:10-12). The disciples were willing to be rejected by their own families rather than deny Christ (Lk. 10:22-30, 14:25-35; Matt. 10:32-40, 19:27-30). (Example: Disciples were willing to proclaim what they knew to be true even when forbidden by church and state (Acts 3:8-31; 5:25-42). Daniel was willing to be killed rather than cease to worship God (Dan. 6). Three men refused to worship another God and were put in a fiery furnace (Dan. 3). In all accounts God supernaturally intervened as the people honored God. God will do the same for us today as we refuse to compromise His Word and maintain Godly attitudes.

“I need help in relating to my in-laws.”

Here are some suggestions which you may be able to use as guidelines for dealing with your in-laws.

1. Treat your in-laws with the same consideration and respect that you give to friends who are not in-laws.
2. When in-laws take an interest in your life and give advice, do just as you would if any friend gave advice: if it is good, follow it; if it is not good, accept it graciously and then ignore it.
3. Remember that many times when the in-laws appear to be too concerned with your affairs, they are not trying to interfere in your life but are sincerely interested in your welfare.
4. Look for the good points in your in-laws.
5. When you visit your in-laws, make the visits relatively short. Be as thoughtful, courteous, and helpful as you are when you are visiting other friends.
6. Accept your in-laws as they are; remember that they would probably like to make changes in you, too.
7. Mothers-in-law have been close to their children before marriage; give them time to find new interests.
8. Go into marriage with a positive attitude toward your in-laws – you believe it is a good family to marry into and you intend to enjoy your new family.
9. Give advice to your in-laws only if they ask for it; even then, use self-restraint.
10. Discuss the faults of your spouse only with him, not with your family.

11. Do not quote your family to hold them up as models to your spouse.
12. Remember that it takes at least two people to create an in-law problem. No one person is entirely to blame.
13. Be mindful of the fact that family ties are normal, necessary, and important – a rejection of them can only bring unhappiness to all.
14. The new family unit needs to gradually, not abruptly, separate from the in-laws to start the new home.
15. Accept the spouse's concern for his parental family. Accept the fact that parents cannot automatically stop being concerned about their children just because they get married. Parental help can sometimes be a wonderful thing to have.
16. Present a united front to any attempt by parents or in-laws to interfere in the marriage; firmness is more effective than hostility.

Main facts about in-law tensions:

1. The person who causes most of these conflicts is unfortunately the mother-in-law. One study found that she initiated as much trouble as all the other in-laws put together.
2. Victims of in-law interference are nearly always the daughter-in-law. Often the mother-in-law is jealous of her daughter-in-law for dividing the affection of her son, and tries to win back her central position in his life by alienating him from his wife.
3. Competition and conflict between these two women reaches its most violent form when they have to live together in the same home.
4. Rearing of the children is frequently another area in which the mother-in-law interferes.
5. A mother-in-law who acts in these ways can be very troublesome. But she is almost certainly deserving of your pity more than your hostility. What this person needs is the love of those around her, but since she seems unable to get it she tries instead to gain her ends by manipulation and intrigue. Unfortunately she really does not realize that she is completely defeating her own purpose.

Principles to Follow with In-Laws:

1. No in-law interference can damage a sound marriage. In-laws cannot drive a wedge between husband and wife who stand firm together.
2. The policy to adopt is to make clear that you want to be friendly and you want to work for harmony between the generations, but you will not tolerate unwarranted interference in your marriage. This must be made clear with no compromise.

3. A confrontation or discussion should be followed up by sincere and genuine attempts to be friendly and with a desire to work together. You can behave lovingly towards them even if you do not feel loving, and the action tends to promote the feeling. It will help and encourage your spouse if you make a real effort in this direction. Experience shows that this policy can in time achieve a surprising degree of success.
4. If you and your in-laws really have very little in common, short visits from time to time are best.
5. Remember, family ties cannot be broken, and they last throughout a lifetime. Even if your relationships with your in-laws are not as they should be right now, a time may come when you may need their help or they may need yours.

“How can I get my child to take to heart the rules and regulations which we have established in our home?”

We, as parents, need to be helping our children to establish a set of values and principles which they are responsible to perform for themselves.

How to Help a Child Internalize Rules and Regulations:

1. Teach the child to be responsible for what he does. (The blame cannot be placed upon others. If a child fails an exam because he did not study for it, it isn't the teacher's fault for giving the test or the difficult questions. If a child pulls the cat's tail and the cat scratches him, the child must realize that he is to blame for provoking the cat. If the child does not carry out the rules of the home and has to miss his favorite program, he is responsible for this action and not his parents.)
2. The child has to accept the consequences for what he does. (Allowing children to experience the logical and natural consequences of their actions provides an honest and real learning situation. This does not include situations which would be dangerous or injurious to the child. A child who continually forgets to take his lunch to school will quickly learn if he has to go without lunch one day, and mother does not bring it to him. A child who leaves the bike outside (and has been warned against doing this) and finds it stolen one morning must learn to do without or to use his own allowance to replace the bike.)
3. Let the child make choices. (Set up situations or give instructions in which the child is able to make a choice between two or three alternatives. This allows the parent to continue to control the situation and suggest the possible choices, and it lets the child know that he has some voice and choice in the matter. It also teaches him that he must accept the consequences of his choice. “John, you will have to make a decision. You can go to Jim's house this evening to work on your car and fix the garage door tomorrow night or you can fix the door tonight and go to the game with Jim tomorrow night. You

make the choice, and I'll go along with it." Or, "Mary, you can wear the brown or the green dress today. You go ahead and choose.")

4. Reasons for rules or standards should be given to the child when he is old enough to comprehend and reason. (But when you give the reason, don't get involved in an argument. You are still the parent and you are simply sharing "why" the child is to do what you have asked. It is difficult for a child to internalize his own value system unless he does know the "why" behind the rules and regulations.)
5. Teach the child that, even though he does not accept all of the reasons given to him, it is best for him and for others that he obey. (He will see the value later on. But at least let him know why he should do it.)
6. Ask yourself, "Do my own actions contradict what I am trying to teach the child?" (If you say, "John, don't ever talk to your mother like that," ask yourself, did he learn to do that from hearing me talk to her like that? If you say, "Don't ever lie," does the child hear you bending the truth anyway?)
7. Love them. (A child is more open to guidance and assistance when you sit with him, loving him, after the discipline has been ministered.)

"I realize that God's Word forbids my fiancé and me from having sexual intercourse before marriage. What I am wondering about is how far can we go before marriage?"

A general principle which we feel applies to everyone is the following: That which has its natural end in sexual intercourse should be withheld until your wedding night.

1. This means at the very least, that heavy petting, i.e., direct stimulation of each other's sexual organs and mutual masturbation should be out. Don't build up your sexual drives and desires to the point of no return, lest your physical relationship become a source of frustration rather than joy.
2. This also means that you should not engage in any physical activity which will build up the other person's sexual drives to the point of no return. In the context of a different problem, that of eating certain types of food, Paul puts forth the general exhortation that we do not do anything which causes a brother or sister to stumble (Rom. 12:9-13, 21).

Thus both persons must be sensitive to each other and must place the other's spiritual health ahead of their own desire for physical fulfillment now. When in doubt, don't!

"For whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23)."

"Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation; for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41)."

Pray, alone and together, about your physical relationship. If you can not visualize Jesus Christ smiling at the two of you, the Holy Spirit may be urging you to pull back the reins a little, for the sake of your love for the Lord and for each other.

This does not mean that the two of you are not going to want to relate physically before marriage. However, it does mean that since you love the Lord Jesus and the other person, the two of you will want to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your sexual life, and that you are going to wait for the green light from Him in the marriage bed which is undefiled (Heb. 13:4). Every other bed is defiled, and God will judge those who practice such things. Therefore, until marriage, “flee youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22)” and “watch and pray lest you enter into temptation (Matt. 26:41).”

“I have two questions. Are parents responsible for their children’s behavior? What could be told to a child to help them to honor their parents?”

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, *disobedient to their parents*, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such stay away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).”

It is interesting that all of these qualities are in direct rebellion to God and God’s authorities. God’s Word clearly states that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23). God has established principles which will save us and our children from death if these principles are taught and obeyed.

In regard to your question concerning parents: Parents are responsible to God and to their children to see that the children are taught God’s Word and ways, to learn about God’s love in Jesus, and to disciple the children when they violate God’s Word. Parents should encourage and bless the children when they keep God’s word. In addition, parents are to set godly examples for their children to follow by seeking, loving, and honoring God. A parent is not responsible for how a child responds to the Word of God since each individual has a free will. However, God’s Word is true: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).” (Also see Deut. 4:9, 6:7, 31:13; Eph. 5:4, 1 Tim. 3:4.)

Parents are responsible to enforce discipline towards children who are violating God’s Word. It is interesting how parents can choose for and teach their children about all kinds of things, but when it comes to God, they say, “When you get older you can choose for yourself about God.” Such parents do not know or love God and are setting an evil influence for their children, for which God will hold them accountable. God loves us, and we are to love God and teach our children to do the same. A part of that love is parental discipline. If we love our children, we will discipline them. (See Prov. 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15.)

Eli, a priest of God, was judged by God because he permitted his children to violate God's Word without being disciplined. "...because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not (1 Sam. 3:13)." For parents to teach their children what is right in their own sight without teaching them what is right in God's sight is evil (Jer. 9:13-14).

(Parental Influence: Good, see 1 Kings 9:4; 2 Chronicles 17:3, 26:4; 2 Timothy 1:5; Evil, see Jeremiah 9:13-14; 2 Chronicles 22:3; 1 Kings 22:52; Amos 2:4.)

Dealing with Children:

1. Establish with child that God has put you and all authorities there to help, love, protect, teach, and discipline them in the ways of God. We have the responsibility to use God's authority wisely, and not to provoke the children to wrath by not fulfilling our responsibilities to God and to them.
2. When you teach what God says to do, the result is blessing. Teach what God says not to do, and the consequences of cursing will be disobedience. Enforce discipline consistently towards disobedience and blessings for obedience. Show them examples of pleasing and displeasing behavior toward God as well as the consequences of both.

(See Prov. 8:17, 8:32, 10:1, 15:20, 20:11, 20:7, 23:22, 28:24; Ec. 12:1; Mk. 7:10, 10:14; Eph. 6:1-3; Ex. 21:15; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 21:18-21; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Sam. 2:26; 2 Kings 2:23; Lk. 2:49.)

3. Involve them as you worship God. Explain to them why you love God by word and action.

“I was told that I could only serve the Lord if I had remained celibate. I am married and have a lovely godly wife. What do I do?”

Many times people take a truth and carry it out of balance to such an extreme that it actually becomes false teaching. It is true that people who are unmarried and desire to keep themselves pure before God are able to devote more time to the things that belong to God. The person who is married has a spouse to care for as well as time with the Lord (1 Cor. 7:32-33). However, it is false to say that only those who practice celibacy are able to please the Lord!

God has clearly ordained marriage, seeing that it was not good that man be alone (Gen. 2:18, 24; Matt. 19:4-6). Divorce and sexual impurity outside of marriage is considered an abomination to God (Mal. 2:11-16; Matt. 19:3-9; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Many of the godly men of the Bible were married. The marriage union is to represent Christ (husband) and his Church (wife) (Eph. 5:21-33). When a godly man finds a godly woman and both are seeking God first, God blesses that marriage.

Sexual union within marriage is blessed of God. There is to be no guilt as to whether we are sinning against God when one has relations with one's spouse.

“Who so finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the Lord (Prov. 18:22).”

“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).”

“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as a loving doe, a graceful deer – may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love (Prov. 5:18-23).” (Also see Song of Solomon.)

Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:1-5).” (Also see v. 27-28, 32-35.) What a blessed thing it is that a husband and a wife can be one with God and one with each other!

There are those who would force celibacy upon individuals and cause guilt to come upon a marriage which God has blessed. “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry (1 Tim. 4:1-3). A godly man or woman who places God’s Word as first place in this life will not be readily deceived by such lies of piety and “will worship” in opposition to God’s principles and provision for which we should be thankful, such as a godly wife. Stay with God and the wife God has given you. Love her as the Lord loves you. Together, God can make you into a powerful team for His service! (Col. 3:12-19).

“Blessed are all who reverence the Lord, who walk in His ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears (reverences) the Lord (Ps. 128:1-4).” (See also Ps. 127).

“How can I have a happy married life?”

Some suggestions:

- Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Talk it out and forgive as the Lord forgave you (Col. 3:13).
- Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...and be thankful (Col. 3:15). Thank God for his blessings and be thankful to and for each other. Daily express your thankfulness to each other.
- Do not go to bed angry. No cold wars. Do not give Satan a chance (Eph. 4:26-27).

- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives submit to and respect your husbands as to the Lord. Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Do not be harsh or bitter towards your wife (Eph. 5:21-23; Col. 3:18-21).
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your heart to God (Col. 3:16).
- Be sympathetic, compassionate, and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:1-12). No yelling!
- If you have a choice between making yourself or your mate look good – choose your mate. Encourage one another and bring out the best in each other, rather than dwelling on faults.
- Remember, it takes two to make an argument. The one who is wrong is the one who will be doing most of the talking.
- Fulfill your marital duty towards each other. Remember your body is not your own but also belongs to your spouse. Do not deprive each other except by mutual agreement for a time, so you may devote yourself to prayer. Then come together again (1 Cor. 7:3-5).
- Follow the law of love: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not discourteous, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

“I am a mother of three children. Just recently my oldest child who is in high school has begun to associate with a group of youths who are involved in practices which I cannot condone. My husband and I are quite upset. What does God’s Word say to do?”

We must teach our children by our example to love God and obey God’s teachings before anyone else (Deut. 4:9, 6:7, 1 Kings 9:4). God will give you wisdom (James 1:5-8).

“Train up a child in the way of the Lord, and when he is old he will not turn from it (Prov. 22:6).”

“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to itself disgraces his mother (Prov. 29:15).” “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it from him (Prov. 22:15).

“He that spares his rod hates his son; but he that loves him is careful to discipline him (Prov. 13:24).”

A child needs to see the good consequences of good choices and the evil consequences of evil choices. Share this with your child: “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching (Prov. 1:8).”

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, ‘Come along with us; let’s lie in wait for someone’s blood, let’s waylay some harmless soul; let’s swallow them alive, like the grave... we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot with us, and we will share a common purse’ – my son, do not go along with them, do not set on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood. How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds! These men lie in wait for their own blood. They waylay only themselves! Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain: it takes away the lives of those who get it (Prov. 1:10-19).” Commit your child to God and have faith in God (Num. 23:19).

“A few months ago my wife and her sister had an argument. She recites the incident over and over. They will not talk to each other. Recently, she has been crying for no reason and hives have broken out on her body. I would be interested in your opinion.”

Bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness are spiritual problems which will, if allowed to continue, affect the mind and can cause numerous (and sometimes fatal) disturbances in the body. The term “resentment” means to “feel again.” People will rehearse the events over and over in their minds, which will reinforce their negative feelings. They feel that they are getting back at the person with whom they are upset. However, in reality they are only hurting themselves. Pride hinders them from going and working things out.

From a believer’s perspective, I would have you reaffirm to her that God loves her and her sister. He gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for her and her sister in order that they and this entire world may no longer be separated from God, but have God’s life. If she has received Jesus Christ as her Lord, she has the life of God in her (1 Jn. 5:19-20).

“He that despises, despises not man, but God, who has also given to us his Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8).”

“If you forgive man their wrongs against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. If not, no forgiveness for you (Matt. 6:14-15).” We cut off God’s blessings by not forgiving.

The Lord would have us reveal His love to each other. You can pray for forgiveness for her (1 Jn. 5:16). She herself should ask God’s and her sister’s forgiveness so God can restore and heal her (1 Jn. 1:9; Matt. 5:38-48). I would encourage you both to share with your pastor.

“Would you tell me something that would be appropriate to share with my daughter and her finance concerning their coming married life?”

It is a wonderful desire for a parent to be seeking and desiring the counsel of God for their children. I believe that much of children’s responses in marriage have been shaping for years as they watched their parents’ relationship to each other and God.

Here are some guidelines:

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthy nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged (Col. 3:5-21).” (See also 1 Pet. 3:1-13, Eph. 5:22-6:4, 1 Cor. 13:4-8.)

FINANCIAL REALM

Chapter 4

“Are there some guidelines in the Bible about giving?”

“Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me (Matthew 25:40).”

“Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, he shall not lose his reward (Matthew 10:42).”

“He that gives to the poor shall not lack (Proverbs 28:27).”

“If you give of yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted person then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as noonday (Isaiah 58:10).”

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough for you to receive it (Malachi 3:10).”

“The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered (Proverbs 11:25).”

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

“Be strong therefore, and let not your hand be weak: for your work shall be rewarded (2 Chronicles 15:7).”

“Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble (Psalm 41:1).”

“God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that you, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8).”

“He that has pity on the poor lends to the Lord; and that which he has given will God pay him again (Proverbs 19:17).”

“Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you give it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).” Jesus Christ is Lord, and He is God’s gift for us to have the abundant life!

“What is involved in tithing?”

The “tithe” is taught in God’s Word as being the giving of a tenth part of one’s property, produce, or earnings for the support of the ministry of the Lord and God’s ministers. We find examples of such practices being done before the Law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It is not known when the command to tithe was first given by the Lord. However, it is a command of God and was observed by Abraham when he gave a tithe to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-20; Heb. 7:2, 4).

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you’ “In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit, says the Lord Almighty. Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land, says the Lord Almighty (Mal. 3:8-12).”

Many people are mistaken when they think the tithe was made up by preachers to help themselves and their ministries. It is clear from God’s Word that the tithe is a divine command of God. In fact, not to give a tenth of one’s gross earnings (first fruits) to the Lord is to rob Him and to bring a curse upon ourselves. On the other hand, as we thankfully tithe to the Lord by giving to His ministries, God has promised emphatically to bless us so that we will never lack for anything materially, and so we can give even more abundantly to God’s work. God wants to bless His people through the giving of the tithe. Nowhere else in the Bible does God tell us to “put Me to the test,” except concerning the giving of the tithe. In all other places it is sin to test or tempt God (1 Cor. 10:9; Matt. 4:5-7).

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. If a man redeems (uses for other purposes) any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value of it (Lev. 27:30-34). In other words, when the person pays back his tithe to the Lord, he is to add 20 percent of the value. We believe this was to discourage people who were not paying their tithes to the Lord.

Guidelines for Tithing:

1. Recognize that all we have belongs to God, including ourselves. The tithe is our thank offering to God for His provision to us.
2. Give the tithe (10 percent of gross earnings) to the Lord’s ministry in which you are directly working. An offering over and above the tithe can be given to other ministries, but the tithe goes to the ministry you are working with and where you are growing in the Word.
3. Give to the Lord from a thankful, obedient and cheerful heart, recognizing that it is a privilege to give (Lk 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6-8).

4. As you give your tithe, thank God that by faith you receive His promise to open the windows of heaven and pour His blessing upon you. He is also binding Satan from stealing from you (Mal. 3:10-12). Tell Satan to take his hands off your finances in Jesus' name (Lk. 10:19). Also pray that God would multiply your tithe in behalf of the ministry and bind Satan from hindering the funds from coming to the ministry (Matt. 18:18-19).
5. Thank the Lord for the privilege to further His Word. Remember, for all who are ministered to by the Lord through His people, you share in their reward (Matt. 10:40-42; Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:6-11; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

“I am having difficulty with my finances. Would you have any scriptural principles of finance to help me out? I have tried everything else.”

God has provided principles for every aspect of our lives so that we can have life and have it abundantly through the Lord Jesus Christ. All we need do is to seek to manage our lives according to God's principles.

God's Financial Principles:

1. Give over to God the rights to your money, time, possessions and earning power. Understand that we do not have the final word on how these things are to be used. They belong to God. We are to ask God how He wants us to manage His goods.
2. Establish the tithe which is a tenth of the gross income. God says it belongs to Him and is to be given to God's ministries (Mal. 3:8-12). The tithe was established before the Law was given (Gen. 14:20) and is reaffirmed in the New Testament (Matt. 23:23; Heb. 7:1-10). By not giving the tithe to God we open the door for Satan to steal our finances through various means – sickness, breakdowns, accidents, etc.
3. Seek first the kingdom of God to display his way of life in you. Then God will meet every need (Matt. 6:31-33).
4. Get out of debt completely. We are to owe no man anything but to love him (Rom. 13:8). Our debts hurt the reputation of God and His ability to work to touch others through us.

These steps will help clear up debt:

- (a) find someone who will help you to sort out all your expenditures and number them in order of importance.
- b) Discontinue any expenditures which are not absolutely essential, especially things which you can do yourself. Sell items which have a high depreciating rate such as a new car, new major appliances and replace them, if necessary, with the similar items with lower depreciating rate.

c) Buy on cash basis. Discontinue credit cards unless they are essential for record keeping and money has already been set aside for the use of the card.

d) Avoid “get rich quick” schemes, but consider the possibility of extra work.

5. Evaluate every expenditure in regard to how it will affect the work and reputation of God. Our attitude towards our possessions should not be determined by what we want, but rather by what will make us more effective in the work to which God has called us (1 Cor. 10:21).

6. After you have prayed, give God an opportunity to provide something before you buy it (2 Chron. 16:9).

7. Never put God in a financial corner. To spend money “by faith” knowing that you do not have enough to cover it will often result in God’s reputation suffering. Such spending is actually tempting or forcing the hand of God. Always provide an alternative rather than limit the way in which God must provide funds, thus tempting God (Matt. 4:6-7). God’s work done in His way will never lack funds. God can provide funds ahead of time also.

8. Never borrow money for depreciating items (cars, furniture, vacations, etc.) Why?

a) It violates scripture (Rom. 13:8).

b) It produces bondage to man (Prov. 22:7).

c) It presumes upon the future (Jam. 4:13-17).

d) It produces the pressure of insecurity. Tight budgets produce fear of unforeseen expenditures. Women especially will feel this insecurity (1 Tim. 5:8).

e) It limits God providing through another unexpected source (2 Cor. 9:11).

f) It denies God an opportunity to withhold harmful items. Often to borrow money is to run ahead of God (Is. 55:8-9).

9. Never loan for nonessentials, but give to basic needs. It is important to be able to evaluate the use of the money. When we give to the needs of others, we are loaning to the Lord (Prov. 19:18). We are instructed in Romans 12:13 to “distribute to the necessities of the saints.” If we loan to them, we are making them our servants (Prov. 22:7).

10. Never co-sign for anything. To co-sign is to pledge your assets against the debt of another, often with the promise of financial gain. This is strictly forbidden in scripture. The words “surety” and “striking hands” means co-signing (Prov. 6:11, 11:15, 16, 17, 18:20, 22:26, 27:13).

11. Develop skills for home maintenance.

12. Determine God's reasons for lack of funds. If there is insufficient money to buy a particular item and God does not seem to supply the funds in any way, ask these questions.

a) Do I need it?

b) Is God testing my faith?

c) Did I misspend the money He sent for it?

d) Have I violated financial principles? #1 Stinginess (Prov. 11:24; Mal. 3:11) #2 Hastiness (Prov. 22:22). #3 Stubbornness (Prov. 13:18) #4 Laziness (Prov. 6:11, 20:13) #5 Gluttony or drunkenness (Prov. 23:21) #6 Craftiness (Prov. 28:19-22).

e) Should I make a major change in my work? The foundation for all earnings is service to individuals. The emphasis should be on meeting basic needs rather than salary and benefits. As the service concept is creatively developed, needs will be met and God's reputation will be enhanced (Matt. 23:11).

13. Discern needs and wants. God has promised to provide our needs (Matt. 6:31-33). When parents provide the children's wants, future incentive for work is lost. Read 1 Tim. 6:6-10. "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content."

14. Prepare for "financial breathing" when unexpected increases or decrease of funds occurs (Philip. 4:12). When income decreases, the wise person will have a pre-arranged schedule of priorities so that he knows which items to sell or discontinue.

15. Be sensitive to God's direction for giving. God will prompt us to invest tithes and offerings into His work. Ask these questions in determining where to invest:

a) Is the organization communicating a message true to scriptures?

b) Are people responding positively to the message?

WHO GOD IS
(Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)
Chapter 5

“Has anyone ever seen God?”

God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24). Therefore, we cannot see God unless God would choose that we see into the spiritual realm (Ex. 24:9-11; 2 Kings 6:17). Throughout the Bible we often find God revealing Himself in various forms, like devouring fire (Ex. 24:17), cloud (Ex. 16:10), fire (Ex. 40:34-38), voice from heaven (Matt. 3:17), and light (glory of the Lord [Lk. 2:9, Acts 7:55]).

Has anyone seen God? It would appear that many have seen manifestations of God (cloud, light, fire, etc). God let Moses see the back of Himself but would not let him see His face (Ex. 33:20-23). We believe that it is clear from God’s Word that no man, other than Jesus Christ, has ever seen the face of the Father God.

“And he said, ‘You cannot see my face; for there shall be no man see my face, and live’ (Ex. 33:20).”

“No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son (Jesus) which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him (Jn. 1:18).”

“And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen his shape (Jn. 5:37),” Jesus said.

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever (1 Tim. 1:17).”

“Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:16).”

“No man has seen God at anytime. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us (1 Jon. 4:12).”

“If a man say he loves God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn. 4:20).”

It would be clear that no man has seen the Father God. Now let us consider this: “Phillip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father.’ (This came in response to Jesus saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also; and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him – [John 14:6]). Jesus responded, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Phillip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how do you then say, show us the Father? Do you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, he does the works (Jn. 14:5-10).”

Jesus and the Father are one (Jn. 17:11), yet distinct manifestations or personalities of the same God. Jesus is God come in the flesh (Jn. 1:1-5, 14). To see or receive Jesus is to have seen or received God the Father because they are both equal, distinct personalities of God. God prepared a body for Himself that He might be the sacrifice for our separation from Him to bring us back to Himself (see Heb. 10:5-10). God gave the name “Jesus” to Himself as he was born in the body prepared for Himself. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature (Col. 1:12-22; Heb. 1:3). In Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily according to the Father God’s pleasure. (See Col. 1:19, 2:9; also Phillip. 2:5-11.)

Many have seen this glorified Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-8; Rev. 1:12-17; Acts 7:55-56). We believe that the glorified Jesus is revealing Himself today. However, we do caution your desiring to see God. Seek to know God through His Word! If God, by His Spirit, chooses to reveal Himself in other ways consistent with His Word, praise Him, but do not seek such revelations.

“What is God’s real name?”

When Moses asked God what His name was, God told Him, “I am who I am; I am, or I will be what I will be, or the one who causes to be (Ex. 3:14).” The holy name which the Lord goes by (as recorded in the Hebrew language in which the Old Testament is written) is “Yahweh” or to put in English, “Jehovah.” In the New Testament we call God “Father.” (See Matt. 6:9-15; Jn. 14:8-14, 16:23-28.) This is after we receive Jesus and become God’s sons (Jn. 1:12-13).

There is more to your question than what appears. Many times people today do not really understand the significance with which God and the people of Bible times treated names. To have a name meant that one existed. The name was considered to be the essence of someone’s personality. The name described the person (1 Sam. 25:25). Hence a change of name accompanied a change in character or personality (Gen. 32:28). To speak or act in someone’s name is to act as the representative of that person and hence to participate in his authority. Jesus has given us the authority to use His name (Matt. 28:18; Jn. 14:12-14, 16:23-28). To be called by a person’s name also implies ownership by the person. That which is called by Yahweh’s name is His possession; therefore, it comes under both His authority and his protection. (See Deut. 28:10; Isa. 43:7, Dan. 9:18-19.)

When God’s name is used in the Old Testament, it reveals who God is – the Savior God. He has revealed Himself and desires to be known by man. In the Old Testament God reveals Himself through the use of seven names all of which reveal His plan to save His people. His plan is fulfilled in Jesus Christ “at whose name every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philip. 2:9-11).”

The name “Jesus” means “for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).” In the same way God has names which reveal His character and purpose throughout the Old Testament.

Here are seven redemptive names of God:

1. Jehovah-Rapha – “I am the Lord that healeth thee,” or “I am the Lord thy Physician.” (See Matt. 8:16-17; Ex. 15:26; Mark 1:34.)
2. Jehovah-Tsidkenu – “the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6).” (See Rom. 5:17-19; 2 Cor. 5:21.)
3. Jehovah-Shammah – “the Lord is present (Ps. 46:2).” (See Heb. 10:19-23.)
4. Jehovah-Shalom - “the Lord is our peace (Judges 6:24).” (See Isaiah. 53:5; Rom. 5:1-2; Jn. 14:27.)
5. Jehovah-Ra-ah – “the Lord is my Shepherd (Ps, 23:1).” (See Jn. 10:1-18, esp. 11.)
6. Jehovah-Jireh - “the Lord will provide an offering (Gen. 22:14).” (See Heb. 10:8-18.)
7. Jehovah-Nissi – “the Lord our Banner, or Victor (Ex. 17:15).” (See Col. 2:15.)

We find that God is concerned about the whole man – spirit, soul (mind), and body – in His plan to save and heal man (1 Thess. 5:23-24). This desire of God to save man spiritually, mentally, and physically is summed up in the seven names given to God. He wants to meet our every need because He loves us.

In Jesus Christ we find the fulfillment of God’s saving plan for His people and expression of who God really is – Love.

“He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together...For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Co. 1:15-20; Jn. 1:1-18).”

“I was told that Jesus was a deliverance minister. What is meant by that, and are there such ministries today?”

Technically, there is not a “deliverance ministry” listed by name in the five ministry offices given in Ephesians 4:11. Jesus, the Son of God, or God come in the flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14, 18), fulfilled the ministry office of a prophet in His early ministry (Mk. 6:4). However, in function one might say that Jesus went about setting people free from Satan’s evil power. Jesus said, “The thief (Satan) has come to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10)!”

The Word of God says about Jesus’ ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach

deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18-19).”

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Acts 10:38).”

“He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy (break up, unbound, loosen) the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8).”

In other words, Jesus came to break all bondage of the devil whether it be spiritual, mental, financial, emotional, or physical – in order that those who call upon the Lord would be free (Jn. 8:31-32, 36). It is clear from God’s Word that demonic forces were the real enemy and source of problems in Jesus’ day as well as today. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood (people), but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world against wicked spirits in heavenly places (Eph. 6:12; also v. 10-18).”

Family problems, church strife, alcoholism, drug addiction, crime, sickness and disease (physical, mental, and spiritual), poverty, famine, fears, doubts, and all evil is essentially demonically influenced whether directly (a demon causing the problem) or indirectly (demon activity presents temptation, and we act on the temptation) – (James 1:13-18, 4:7; Gen. 3:1-7). God has given us provision through Jesus Christ for the binding up of demonic activity so that God’s people can be free to experience that abundant life which Jesus promised.

Jesus’ entire ministry was directed toward showing the love of God for His people through delivering them from demonic activity (whether spiritual, mental, emotional, or physical). We list but a few of Jesus’ and others’ encounters with demons for your study (See Mk. 1:34, 3:20-30, 5:1-20, 9:14-29; Lk. 4:1-13, 13:10-17; Matt. 10:1, 12:22-32, 16:23, 17:14-21; Acts 8:5-25, 19:1-20; 2 Cor. 12:7-9.)

Demonic activity has increased in these last days before Jesus’ return. Since Satan is still working, it is clear that God’s provision of deliverance through the blood and name of Jesus (Rev. 12:11) is still to be working in God’s ministries. Ignorance and unbelief are the two main areas which allow demonic strongholds to exist. They hinder people from setting others free by using the authority God has given to His church in Jesus’ name. “Behold, I give to you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you (Lk. 10:19).”

“Truly I say to you, he that believes in me the works I do he shall do, and greater works... if you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (Jn. 14:12-14).” “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).”

“Is Jesus Christ God?”

God's Word tells us this about Jesus:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn. 1:1).” (He was God in the beginning.) “Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and lived among us for a while. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side has made him known” (Jn. 1:1-5, 10, 14, 17, 18).” (See also Col. 1:15-20.)

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ – which means, ‘God with us’ (Matt. 1:20-23).”

“Your attitude should be that of Christ: who being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (see also Heb. 10:5). And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and under earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5-11).”

“We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has the testimony of God, which he has given about his son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life (1Jn. 5:9-13).” (Also see Jn. 3:15-19; 1 Jn. 2:20-25.)

“Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He (God) appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16).” (Also see Jn. 8:18, 10:22-39, 14:7-10, 17:11, 22; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1-3, Mk. 1:24; Rev. 19:16.)

“Does God really keep all His promises?”

It is impossible for God to lie! Here are some promises for you.

“My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).”

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you (Lk. 11:9).”

“Casting all your care upon Him; for he cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7).”

“The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly (Ps. 84:11).”

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and truly thou shalt be fed (Ps. 37:3).”

“I have been young, and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Ps. 37:25).”

“If you then, being evil (natural), know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall you Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:11).”

“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world (unbelievers) runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well (Luke 12:29-31).”

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son (Jesus Christ) that whoever believes on him will not perish but will have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).” Jesus has provided abundant life for us as sons and daughters of God – spiritually, mentally, and physically. The above promises belong to those who have received Jesus into their hearts, and with their mouths have said, “Jesus Christ is my Lord!” and are baptized. (Also see promises for us in Jesus - Galatians 3:13-14, Deuteronomy 28:1-14.)

“Is Mary, the mother of Jesus, holier than other people?”

The Word of God tells us that Mary was highly favored of the Lord in that she was the one whom the Lord chose to be the mother of Jesus (Read Lk. 1:26-56). As the mother of Jesus, she is considered blessed among women. However, we find no evidence from God’s word that would prove she was holier than other people. The child which she was to carry was holy (Lk. 1:35); however, Mary herself was still a part of a fallen generation (Rom. 3:9-19, 5:10-21).

The fallen nature of Adam which was passed down from generation to generation separated mankind from God. Mary was also a part of a world which was separated from God and needed a Savior (who Jesus came to be). If there was any of Adam’s blood (the blood of a fallen world) in Jesus, then Jesus would not have been holy in God’s sight. Mary was born into sin being part of Adam’s fallen generation (Ps. 51:5; Jn. 3:6). However, we know that it is the man’s

chromosomes which determine the blood, not the woman's. In other words, Jesus' father was God (Lk. 1:35), and his blood was holy and uncontaminated by the fallen nature of Adam which was passed down from generations before. Jesus was not separated from God because God's life flowed in His blood. None of Mary's fallen nature and blood had anything to do with Jesus. She simply was the chosen one of God to be a vehicle for God to accomplish His purposes in this world. We know Jesus had to be born of a woman to be like us in every way so he could pay the price for our being separated from God. Throughout history God has used people, like Mary, who are open to Him to accomplish His purposes for the good of His people.

Jesus brings perspective on this matter when his mother (Mary) and his brothers and sisters came to stop his ministry and take him back home because they thought that he had become fanatical. (Read Mk. 3:20-21, 31-35; Matt. 13:53-58.) When the people told Jesus that his mother and family were outside wanting to talk with him, He said, "Who are my mother and brothers and sisters? Behold my mother and my brethren. (He said this as he looked around at the people with him.) For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother (Mk. 3:31-35)."

On another occasion a woman came to Jesus saying, "Blessed is the womb that bare you, and the breasts which you have sucked." (We note: she was giving honor and glory to Mary. Look closely at Jesus' reply!) "But He said, 'Blessed rather are they that hear the word of God and keep it' (Lk. 11:27-28)."

Apparently, Jesus himself did not look at Mary with undue reverence and honor, or as being holier than anyone else who does the will of God. She is blessed among women in that she was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus. However, Jesus always put the emphasis not on his mother, but rather upon His Father in heaven (even at age 12 – Lk. 2:47-52). The Father God is to be worshiped, not Mary or any other believer.

God considers anyone who has received Jesus as Lord and is seeking to be obedient to His Word as being holy and a son of God. (See 1 Pet. 1:13-25, 2:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Jn. 1:12-14, Heb. 3:1; Rom. 5:19-21.) In God's sight, we who have received Jesus as Lord are just as holy as Mary because of the blood of Jesus. It was given for all mankind's salvation, which certainly also included Mary, the mother of Jesus, who also needed to be saved by the blood of her son. His name means: "For he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21)."

"I was at a meeting of Christians and I knew that the power of God was freeing me from some emotional problems which I had been carrying. Everything was simply wonderful until I saw something happen which I do not quite understand. As people were being prayed over, all of a sudden they would fall to the floor. I was afraid that they had something seriously wrong with them or had died. As they stood up again, I noticed that they had a great peace about them. Since I had never seen anything like this before, I was a little startled. Now I am seeking understanding concerning this matter. Is it scriptural?"

What you are referring to is often called “being slain in the Spirit.” We prefer the expression “falling under the power of the Spirit,” which better represents the actual working.

When the human body comes into contact with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God, the body is not able to stand and will often fall to the ground with no harm ever coming to the person who has fallen. You are correct in your appraisal of the peace of God which came over the people who were ministered to by the Lord Jesus (through the persons praying).

In response to your question concerning scriptural practice, we find recordings of similar events found in the Word of God where human beings encountered a divine presence. When Judas betrayed Jesus in the garden, Jesus said that He was the one whom the soldiers and guards were seeking. “As soon as He had said to them, ‘I am He,’ they went backward, and fell to the ground (See Jn. 18:1-6).” True, this was in the presence of Jesus. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).” If people fell over backwards in the presence of Jesus, then we can expect the same thing to happen today since Jesus is present today where people are gathered in His name. This is what God’s Word says!

In another situation, the soldiers guarding Jesus’ tomb shook and “became as dead men” in the presence of the angel of the Lord (See Matt. 28:1-4). We all realize that no dead man stands, so it means that the guards who were standing at the tomb fell down in the presence of the divine being.

At Saul’s (Paul) conversion, we find Saul and everyone in the company falling to the ground. (See Acts 9:4, 26:14.) Why did they all fall to the ground? Because they came into contact with the supernatural presence and power of God. In Ezekiel 1:28 and 2:1-2, we find Ezekiel not only falling on the ground, but the Holy Spirit of God actually put him back up on his feet! Why did Ezekiel fall? He was overwhelmed with the presence of God. He saw, “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1:28).”

At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, we find that when the musicians and the singers became as one in praising the Lord “...the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; *so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God* (2 Chron. 5:13-14).” Because of the glory and presence of God coming into the service, the ministers fell and could not minister to the people. God Himself was ministering to them.

What is the benefit of falling under the power of the Holy Spirit? Our minds cannot reason any benefit to falling on the floor. However, what is actually happening is not emotionalism, but rather a person coming into divine contact with the presence and power of God. The peace of God overwhelms the person, and often emotional and physical healings occur as the Holy Spirit ministers. Falling under the Spirit’s power is a physical demonstration of the presence and power of God.

“Please give me some scriptures as to what is mine in Jesus Christ.”

God loves you! Here are a few of God's promises which belong to anyone who has asked Jesus into his or her life to be Lord. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son (Jesus Christ) into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son (Jn. 3:16-18)."

"Surely He (Jesus Christ) has taken up our griefs (literal Hebrew: sickness, disease, weakness, and distress) and carried our sorrows (literal Hebrew: anguish, grief, pain, sorrow), yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace with God was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5)."

Blessings of Abraham are promised to us through Jesus. "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock.... You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven (Deut. 28:1-7)."

"Do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which is out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore, do not be partners with them, for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth and find out what pleases the Lord (Ephesians 4:26-5:10)." (Also see Romans 12, Colossians 3, Matthew 5-7, 1 Corinthians 13.)

"I was always taught that God determines what He will or will not do, and that man has no right to expect anything from God but that which God sees fit to give him. Someone told me that this thinking is not correct and that I can actually demand of God and expect that God will fulfill that demand. Is this true?"

God is sovereign and He alone determines what He will or will not do. As we grow in understanding of God and His Word, we begin to understand that as His people in Jesus Christ, God's Word is His will for us. God has set down in His Word how to receive the abundant life which He has promised us through Jesus Christ. God has also told us what our inheritance is in Jesus Christ.

God says about His Word: "God is not a man that He should lie; nor the son of man that He should repent (change His mind); has He not said it and will He not do it, has He not promised, and will He not fulfill (Num. 23:19)."

"My covenant (promise) will I not break nor alter that which comes forth from My lips (Ps. 89:34)." "Forever, O Lord thy word is settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89)." God made an oath with Himself (between the Father and Jesus) based on the blood of Jesus Christ. Since neither the Father nor the Son (Jesus) ever change (Heb. 13:8), the oath (His Word and promise) is sure and unchangeable (Heb. 6:13-20).

In Jesus Christ God has given us certain rights as part of our inheritance. God Himself has told us that He will perform His Word in our behalf if we would ask and believe (Mk. 9:23, 11:22-24; Matt. 7:7-12, 17:20; Jn. 14:12-14, 16:23-27).

In the original language in which the New Testament of the Bible is written, the term "ask" actually means "demand of something due." In answer to your question we have been given by God Himself what He has already done for us in Jesus Christ. God's Word has been given to show what we can and cannot expect. We are now to "demand" or receive by faith what God has already said is ours because the blood of Jesus has provided it, and God says it is ours in His Holy Word. Our part is to find out from our Heavenly Father through His Word what is ours and then receive it by asking or demanding. The term "ask" has the implication that one may or may not receive what they are asking for. People have the tendency to shy away from using the term "demand" when it comes to God because the term implies that the person has a right to what he is demanding. We need to understand that this demanding is because of the right which God has given us and is exactly what God has told us to do! Because of the blood of Jesus and the promise of God, we have a right to God's provision.

"And whatsoever you shall ask (demand) in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask (demand) anything in my name, I will do it (Jn. 14:13-14)." "But without faith it is impossible to please him (God): for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6)." The term for "seek" means, to search out, investigate, crave, demand, enquire, require, or seek out (Strong's Concordance).

"O fear the Lord, you His saints –revere and worship Him! For there is no want to those who truly reverence and worship Him with godly fear. The young lions lack food and suffer hunger, but they who seek (inquire of and require) the Lord (by right of their need and on authority of His Word) none of them shall lack any beneficial thing (Ps. 34:9-10 Amplified Bible)." Note: It is because God has already said that something is ours that we have a right to demand it of God. One cannot demand or require of God what God has not told us that we can have! If we would

ask (demand or require) it of God, God will give it to us because He has given us the right to it by giving us His Word.

“When I was young, my parents were always telling me that I was no good and that I could do nothing right. Nothing that I would do was ever good enough! I love my parents, but I am afraid that I have also grown to resent them for messing up my thoughts about myself. Something that I am beginning to resent even more is that I am now beginning to do the same things with my children. What can I do?”

Yours is a problem that seems to be wide-spread. The tendency of people who are not acting by the Spirit of God is to measure the worth of others by their expectations of what makes one adequate or inadequate. Unfortunately, people put expectations on others which they themselves cannot fulfill and which God does not even expect of His people! The result is that people are not able to experience the abundant life which God has promised until they start looking at themselves the way that God looks at them. Inferiorities, lack of self worth, resentments, guilt, feelings of not being loved, appreciated, or accepted are the result of not listening to the right source (or not looking to the right source for love and acceptance).

God’s Word alone depicts the truth about us.

Whether we as parents believe in God or not, we are accountable to God for what we project to our children. If we are telling our children, “You are no good. You’re worthless;” we are actually being agents of the devil rather than God. By demeaning and belittling our children we are speaking harmful things into their lives which are contrary to what God would have us to say. “Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger – do not exasperate them to resentment – but rear them tenderly in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).” We are to speak to and act towards our children as our Heavenly Father would speak and act.

Here is an example of how the Heavenly Father would view us and talk to us. “My children, I love you. I have created you in My image. You are very special to Me. Through My son, Jesus, I have made you worthy and holy in My sight. I see you with no faults that My love cannot overcome as you humble yourselves before Me. I have given you a position of honor and power. You are reigning with Me, for you are my children. As you do what I have told you to do, you will be blessed, and you will be able to accomplish all things because I will work with you. Nothing is impossible to you. You are never alone because I am with you. Trust in Me and I will cause you to succeed. I am pleased when you show your love and thankfulness to Me by doing what I tell you to do. I want the best for you because I love you! I know your needs even before you ask. I know your needs even better than you do. Trust Me and come to Me that I might love you. I will protect, defend, provide, and deliver you from all evil. As you do what I say, I will honor you. Because you are loved and very special to Me, love everyone equally, for that is how I love. Count others as more important than yourselves because I am looking out for you. Do not condemn yourselves and bring harm on yourselves by not believing and by disobeying Me. My words alone are life and every blessing to you. When you fail, seek Me, and I will help

you!” (See Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Jn. 1:9, 4:7-21; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:6-21, 8:1-2; James 4:6-10; 1 Pet. 2:9-10, 5:6-7; Eph. 2:1-10; Ps. 91; Phillip. 2:1-6, 4:13; Prov. 3:5-7; Josh. 1:7-9; Is. 55:6-7; Matt. 6:19-34, 17:20; Heb. 13:5-6.)

God loves everyone, but not everyone is a child of God and has right to these promises. “But as many as received him (Jesus), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (Jn. 1:12).”

“Does Satan heal people?”

Satan has a counterfeit to everything that is true. Before his fall into rebellion against God, Satan was second in command to God in heaven. Satan knew God’s working order and later counterfeited everything, which God intended for good, with evil imitations. For instance, God prepared a staff for Moses which would turn into a snake as a sign for Pharaoh concerning Moses’ divine appointment. Pharaoh’s magicians could do the same work; however, Moses’ snake ate up the other snakes. (Satan’s imitations are no match for God’s truth or power!) In the same way, many false religions report healings to have occurred. The purpose of signs and wonders is to confirm the word that is being taught, thus people are led astray by following signs instead of testing what is being said and done by the Word of God. We are always to test the spirits by the Word of God.

Jesus says, “The thief (Satan) has come to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that you might have life abundantly (Jn. 10:10).” In Matthew 12:22-23, the people were saying that Jesus had cast a demon out of a man and healed him by the power of Satan. Jesus replied, “A house divided against itself will not stand.” Satan will not work against himself, nor will God work against Himself. Satan was using these people to speak against the work of the Holy Spirit of God who healed and delivered the man through Jesus. Jesus said that speaking against the work of the Holy Spirit is unforgivable (Matt. 12:32).

We know that Jesus went about healing all who were oppressed of the devil because God was with Him (Acts 10:38). As the Father God has exalted the name of Jesus and given to that name all authority in heaven and earth (Phillip. 2:5-11), so now Jesus has given to His believers the right to the name of Jesus to heal and deliver people from the bondage of Satan. (See Matt. 10:1, 7, 8; Mk. 16:15-20; Jn. 14:12-14; James 5:14-16.)

Many people are mistaken in their thought that only the apostles were able to do these works. In Jesus’ day a man who was not one of the disciples was healing in the name of Jesus. Jesus said, “Leave him alone. He cannot be doing works in My name and be against me (Lk. 9:49-50).” (Also see Jn. 4:12-14, Mk. 16:15-20, Lk. 10:17, which speaks about the seventy who were given ability in Jesus’ name, not just 12.

In another case, certain people trying to use Jesus’ name to cast out demons had no right to use the name because they were not believers (Acts 19:13-20). Being unbelievers these men had as their father, Satan (Jn. 8:42-44). Note the demon’s response to these men who had no right to

use God's authority in Jesus' name: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you (Acts 19:15)?" The possessed man proceeded to beat up the seven men.

A house divided will not stand. Satan will not cast out his own demons; however, all demonic forces must bow to the name of Jesus.

Only the true God has given and only true believers have the right to use the name of Jesus. The true God has revealed Himself through His Son Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6-11, 5:9-13). There is salvation in no other name but Jesus (Acts 4:11-12). It is very simple to test whether someone is healing under God's Spirit or Satan's influence. If a person is healing in Jesus' name and giving the glory to the Father God and Jesus, then the person is true and the healing is from God (Jn. 16:13-15, 8:48-56, 14:12-14, 7:18). Satan, demons, and false teachers will never give glory to Jesus. They will give the glory to themselves for what was done (2 Thess. 2:3-4; Jn. 7:18). Satan working through the ignorance of the people, constantly attempted to attack Jesus on the issue of his trying to take glory to himself in order to prove Jesus was false (Jn. 8:48-51, 7:16-20, 5:30-34).

In Jesus' name have a glad New Year! "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6)."

"And shepherds were watching over their flocks at night, and the angel of the Lord came to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said to them, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Lk. 2:8-14)."

"But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to you Mary your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.' Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matt. 1:20-23)."

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:1-5)."

Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the Life: no man comes to the Father but by me (Jn. 14:6)."

"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him (JESUS) to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:9-14).” (See also Romans 10:9, 10; Heb. 10:5-7.)

The Father God has granted eternal life to whoever receives Jesus as Lord. Jesus is Life, Light, and every blessing from God. Jesus is God. In His love He came in the flesh to save His people. This is why we celebrate Christmas – God in His love came to be with His people and give them life in Jesus. Apart from Jesus Christ, Christmas (or any other day) means nothing! God loves you.

“I hear so much about the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Would you give me some understanding?”

After Jesus arose from the dead and ascended to the Father God, Jesus asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit into the world (John 14:16). At Pentecost (See Acts 1) the Holy Spirit came into this world. The disciples of Jesus had been told to wait for the Holy Spirit’s arrival. We need not wait for the Holy Spirit because He is already in the world as God’s gift to all who have received Jesus Christ into their heart as Lord.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, God gives us power to witness about the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:8). We also have the ability in Jesus’ name to cast out demons, to speak in new tongues, praising God, to place hands on the sick and they recover (See Mark 16:15-20). The supernatural ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit are also available, as the Holy Spirit wills to accomplish God’s working (1 Cor. 12:7-10).

How do we receive the Holy Spirit today? If we have received Jesus as Lord, we can ask the Father in Jesus’ name or we can have hands laid on us. Hands being laid on the recipient was the commonly accepted New Testament practice. The commonly accepted New Testament evidence for people having received the Holy Spirit is that they all spoke in new tongues, praising God (Acts 10:44-48, 19:1-7). With the infilling of the Holy Spirit will come a new tongue or personal prayer language (1 Corinthians 14:2 and 4). This is not the ministering gift of tongues which not all believers will speak in (1 Cor. 12:30). The new tongue which all spirit filled believers have, whether they have used it or not, is for private use (1 Cor. 14:2 and 4). The ministry gift of tongues and interpretation is intended for public church use, not all believers have this tongue (1 Cor. 14:27-28).

Does the infilling come through Baptism? – In Acts 2:38, repentance, faith in Jesus, and baptism prepare the way for infilling. However, the term “will receive” denotes here a separate event apart from baptism. In Acts 8:14-19 we see the clear working. “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God (been born-again or saved), they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Simon then saw that by the laying on of hands the people received the Holy Spirit. It does not specifically mention the people praising God in new tongues as it does in Acts 10:46 and 19:6. However, there was a visible sign which Simon detected as supernatural. There is no evidence that they did not speak in tongues.

LEADERSHIP

Chapter 6

“Would you please tell me how I can tell the difference between a true teacher and a false teacher?”

In this day and age it would do well for people to do what Jesus says, “Take heed what you hear (Mk 4:24),” for “many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many (Matt. 24:11).” We need to learn to distinguish between the true and the false.

In recent years many false teachers have been exposed, which unfortunately has caused some people to shy away from true teachers of God, fearing involvement in a cult. We have also seen many true teachers of God come under false criticism because Satan wants to discredit their ministry and hinder people from growing in the Lord. Remember that the “religious” people and established church at Jesus’ time attempted to discredit Jesus’ ministry!

Just because a church or ministry is established does not mean that it is true. There are true and false teachers in all of the major churches which profess Jesus. There are complete church bodies teaching concepts which are not based on God’s principles.

“How can we tell the difference?” is your question. Begin by getting acquainted with God’s Word so that you are able to discern good and evil, truth and error by what God says and not by man’s traditions and opinions (Heb. 5:11-14).

We are including some characteristics of false teachers and Bible guidelines to help you determine them.

False teachers:

1. Seek large followings and material gain for selfish purposes. Deny the Lord, focusing people on worldliness and satisfying the lusts of the flesh (2 Pet. 2:1-3; Is. 56:10-12; 1 Tim. 6:5).
2. Are liked by everyone. Will compromise the truth of God’s Word to please the people. Will speak what the people want to hear rather than what God says (Lk. 6:26; 2 Tim. 4:2-4).
3. Desire recognition and glory for themselves (Jn. 7:16-18, 5:24-37, 8:42-56).
4. Teach other than God’s Word. Put other teachings and sources before Jesus’ words. Emphasize doctrines and traditions of men before commands of God (1 Tim. 6:3-6; Matt. 15:8-9).
5. Deny that Jesus is Christ and is come in the flesh, the Son of God, the Lord of all (1 Jn. 2:22-26, 4:1-6).

6. Teach that it is permitted to disobey God's Word (Matt. 5:17-20).
7. Behave contrary to God's Word (Matt. 7:15-23; Gal. 5:13-16; James 3:13-18).
8. Cause division for selfish gain (Rom. 16:17-18; Philip. 3:17-21; James 3:13-5:5).
9. Say works of Holy Spirit are works of Satan (Matt. 12:22-37).
10. Say they are, or are greater than, Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:23-24).

The book of Jude will give you more help as well as show you the end of such false teachers.

“What is the difference between a pastor and an evangelist?”

Within the Body of Christ (that is, God's people or the church), God has established and called certain individuals to fulfill offices in His ministry. “No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him...” (Heb. 5:4-5). In other words, it is a call from God that establishes a person in an office of ministry, not necessarily a seminary education. God, not men, selects who He will place in such offices of ministry. God will then instruct, develop, and equip the individual with the gifts of the Spirit necessary to fulfill the called office of ministry.

The risen Christ Jesus has given gifts to men (Eph. 4:8). “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers... (Eph. 4:11).” These are the five ministry offices which God has established. Although not often recognized, all five offices are operating today under the leadership of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. All five offices are necessary according to God's plan and design for His work to be accomplished the way He, not people, intends His Church to function.

Why did God establish these ministry offices? “...to prepare God's people for works of service (ministry), so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:12-13).” Each ministry office has a different yet complimentary working with the other offices. No ministering office stands alone or is unique. The Body of Christ needs all the offices working together.

For instance, in response to your question, a pastor is called by God to feed (teach) and look out for the believers who are in a specific locale. The ministry of a pastor is mainly to believers and is intended to help them to grow in the faith so they can minister to others.

An evangelist is called by God to minister the salvation message to unbelievers. Unlike the pastor, the evangelist's message is to the unbelievers. Usually you will find a true evangelist

outside of churches, reaching the unsaved with the message that life eternal only comes through the love of God in Jesus. A true evangelist will also have signs and wonders following his message (Acts 8:4-13 – Phillip the evangelist). The evangelist channels those who are saved into churches where pastors and teachers can make certain that they grow in God’s Word and faith.

As the offices work together, God’s Church is built up. Often ministers and other believers do not understand God’s complimentary working of ministries. The result is strife. “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are not you worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not mere men? Who is Apollos or Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task (1 Cor. 3:1-10).”

MENTAL & EMOTIONAL REALM

Chapter 7

“Indecision is my problem. Do you have some suggestions to help me in making decisions?”

Before you make any decisions be sure you think it through. Define the issues. Do not make any decision on the spur of the moment. Make a list of the pros and cons of the various alternatives involved and the consequences of your decision. Avoid snap judgments.

In making a decision go before the Lord, giving God the care about the situation and the decision to be made (1 Pet. 5:7; Phillip. 4:4-8). Pray in the Spirit (tongues – Rom. 8:26-28).

Look in God’s Word for His leading concerning your situation, and ask God for His wisdom (James 1:5-8). Purpose to know God’s leading. (You will know God’s leading when you have peace and joy in your heart concerning your decision.) Wait until you have this peace and confidence before you act on your decision. Obey the leading of God’s Spirit. Ask yourself, “Does glory go to God through what is done? Is my decision consistent with God’s Word? Are others going to be built up in faith to receive God’s best as a result of my decision? Is God going to be honored, or am I?”

Fasting and prayer is most important in the decision-making process (Acts 13:2-3; Dan. 9:3, 10:2-3, 12). Give God the freedom to change, order, and direct your plans. (See Prov. 3:5-7.) Rest confidently in the Lord. Because if you have asked God to show you the right decision to make, He will guide you and show you the way (Isaiah 30:21).

“I am beginning to feel like a yo-yo. One day I am up and the next day I am down. What can I do for this depression?”

Depression is characteristic of people who have lost sight of their hope. It is most frequently associated with how a person perceives or feels about a situation or circumstance. Such behavior is what God’s Word would call walking by sight rather than by faith (2 Cor. 5:7).

As we grow in the Lord’s Word, we will find that God has given us a promise for every situation that we will ever run up against in this life. God knows our needs and lovingly wants to supply them. As we take hold of God’s promise to us, the result is that His Word produces hope within us. The hope will prevent us from depression and despair as we keep His promise (and the hope which it has produced) constantly in our thoughts (Is. 26:3-4). We need to refuse to think on the situation and rather think on God’s promise and the fact that God is faithful to perform His Word in our behalf (Heb. 10:23). Thinking on God’s Word daily will prevent us from being “yo-yo’s,” as you put it.

Once we have found the promise of God which applies to our need, God will produce the hope within us that all is not lost. We can be still and know that He is in control as we have given Him the situation. (See Ps. 46.) Through us continuing to think of God's Word, He will also produce the faith within us to be able to receive the promise which He has given to us (Rom. 10:17).

Faith acts and says, "I have the victory now (even though the situation may appear otherwise)." (See Heb. 11:1.) Faith is the substance of what we are hoping for until we see the results which must occur according to God's promise (Num. 23:19).

Depression may be produced by external situations, as occurred with Elijah (1 Kings 19), or it may be produced by a person's physical system being out of balance because of vitamin or hormone deficiency, lack of proper rest or exercise, fatigue from overwork, etc. We should be examining ourselves as to why we are feeling depressed. It may be the result of change or neglect on our part concerning the "upkeep" of our bodies.

In any case, as we submit ourselves wholly (spirit, mind, and body) to God, He will enable us to have the victory in every situation. David puts it this way, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of His countenance (Ps. 42)."

When a person is depressed, the individual has begun looking to himself rather than looking to God. The result which goes with not having any hope is despair, fear, worry, frustration, anger, etc. Ask God's forgiveness. David caught himself when he started to think "all is lost." Looking to God gave him hope and joy (Also Ps. 121). The joy of the Lord brings strength from God to overcome (Neh. 8:10). It is vital that we guard our thought life by refusing to think upon things which are not consistent with God's Word and by bringing our thoughts into obedience with what God says rather than how we feel. (See 2 Cor. 10:3-5, Philip. 4:4-8.)

"My husband is a Christian and loves God, but he cannot stop worrying about things. He has recently developed an ulcer. What would you recommend?"

We can pray and believe God to heal the ulcer. However, what is the problem that is causing the ulcer? When worry and fear are present in our lives, there is evidence of a spiritual faith problem centered around our not trusting God to supply our needs.

We are able through Jesus Christ to stop worrying! Job allowed problems to come upon him because of his fear and worry (Job. 3:25). We can allow blessings to come upon us by acting in faith in God. The worrier's attitude needs to be renewed by God's Word to understand that God is in control as soon as one gives Him the situation. Since your husband has received Jesus Christ into his heart, these promises belong to him. He should ask God's forgiveness for worrying and speak and act on these promises of God.

"Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking Him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

Fill your minds with those things that are good and deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, honorable (Phil. 4:4-8).”

“My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).”

“Cast all your care upon Him for He cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7).” (Also see Psalm 91, 46, 42, 42:5, Mk. 9:23.)

“I have a brother who is an alcoholic. He will not admit it and seek help. His health is beginning to fail as a result of his problem. Can I tell him anything that will help him?”

Drinking is the outward signal of an inward spiritual and emotional problem. Before long a physical bondage, dependency, or addiction to the alcohol occurs. Physical problems will develop which will lead to death.

The alcoholic needs to hear, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).”

He also needs to hear “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled shall we be saved through his life (Rom. 5:8-10).”

There is hope! Jesus Christ can and will meet his inner needs. If he turns to God and forsakes his ways, receiving Jesus as Lord, God will break his spiritual bondage and dependence on alcohol. He will become a new creature, with old things passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). As he continues to give thanks, live for God, and apply God’s Word, he will not need any influence other than God’s influence in his life.

If a person says he is a believer and continues to willfully drink, he is not speaking the truth. Also God will judge churches who do not take a stand (in love) to deal with such a person. (See 1 Cor. 5:1-13.)

“I am in need of some encouragement against discouragement.”

Discouragement begins to set in when one’s hope is diminishing. Hope diminishes when we allow ourselves to take our eyes off of God and His Word, and we begin to doubt and fear that we do not have what God has promised. If our hope decreases, we begin not to act and speak in faith, which will hinder us from receiving what God has promised us.

It is vital that we renew our minds with God's Word. If we believe a situation is hopeless, then there is nothing to apply our faith to in order to acquire victory. Through faith in God we acquire what we hope for. Without hope we are defeated. Hope is what we are believing for from God. Faith is how we get it.

Sometimes in situations there "seems" to be no victory in sight. In such situations we need to continue to thank God, speak and act on the promises in His Word, and add to our hope and faith a quality known as perseverance or patience. This is the quality of God that says, "Praise God! I have the victory - God is in control and true to His Word - whether I see it or not. I stand on God's Word no matter how long it takes to show itself. I have victory and I refuse defeat! God is true."

Discouragement sets in if we do not persevere in receiving by faith what God has promised until we see it. Your faith is the substance of what you are hoping for or believing God for until you see it (Heb. 11:1). In other words, you have it! Thank God for it. You will see it. Go about God's business.

God's Word for you: "For nothing is impossible with God (Lk. 1:37)."

'If you can?' said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes (Mk. 9:23)."

"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill (Num. 23:19)?"

"If you faint in adversity, your strength is little (Prov. 24:10)." However, "The joy of the Lord is your strength (Neh. 8:10)."

"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. ...and so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised (Heb. 6:11-20)."

"See, the Lord your God, has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your fathers told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged (Deut. 1:21)." (Key scriptures for you: Ps. 42:7-11; Ps. 46; Prov. 4:20-22; Heb. 12:1-3; Rom. 4:17-25.)

"I am having difficulty coping with pressures at home and at work. Do you have any suggestions as to what I should do?"

Pressures take on many forms. They may be the result of external or internal stimuli. A person may feel pressure by the situations around him or it may be pressure which has arrived from within a person. Pressure is often caused by deadlines, our expectancy of ourselves, or the expectancy of others upon us. As people try to fulfill themselves by achieving in their own eyes

or the eyes of others, pressure arises. There exists pressure in most decision-making processes – whether it is buying a car, home, or who’s going to take out the garbage or wash the dishes.

Situations in themselves do not bring on pressures.

Pressure develops as the result of how a person approaches any given situation. Pressure often results from fear, worry, indecision, false expectations about one’s self or others, competition which falsely determines a person’s value or worth, and conflicts between different people’s interests, ideals, way of operation, and priorities.

When pressure arises in our lives, it is a good indicator or warning to us that a relationship with someone, a situation, or ourselves are not right with God. God has given us the provision in Jesus’ blood to forgive us and relieve the pressure, if we would ask forgiveness and give God the situations and relationships.

People often think that it is God bringing the pressure; however, this is not correct. It is the result of demonic influence, the world, or our own flesh desires which are not obedient to God’s way. God leads His people into rest and peace. When people are right with God, there can be all kinds of commotion going on around them, but they will be at peace, knowing God is in control (Ps. 46).

Jesus said, “Come to me you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give to you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light (Matt. 11:28-30).” “Humble yourselves, then, under God’s mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time. Leave all your worries with Him, because He cares for you (1 Pet. 5:6-7).” “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way. Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are; simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong. If you do, it will be like good medicine, healing your wounds and easing your pains (Prov. 3:5-8).” (Also see Phillip. 4:4-8.)

As God’s Word points out, many times we try to deal with situations in our own strength and wisdom. The result is pressure that God never intended for us to carry. If we would ask God to forgive us for attempting to do it on our own and give the situation and ourselves over to Him, He would deal with the situation and work it to our good and His glory.

Pressure will also come from Satan and the world (those that are not living by God’s standards). When we are seeking to obey God, know this: God Himself will defend us. (See Is. 54:17; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pet. 2:9; Ps. 34.) Pressure is intended by Satan to destroy our faith. As we trust God in the situation on the basis of His Word, He will deal with the pressure and strengthen our faith. “Submit yourself to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you (Jam. 4:7).” “There is no fear in love; but perfect love (God) casts our fear; because fear has torment (1 Jn. 4:18).”

When pressure arises:

1. Do not react on the basis of emotion. Allow yourself to settle down.
2. Determine the reason for pressure. Do I have an attitude that is wrong with God? If so, ask God's forgiveness.
3. Give the situation to God. Thank Him that He is in control.

“What can I do to overcome depression?”

These directions will be helpful to you in overcoming depression:

1. Rule out any spiritual reason. Cover yourself with the blood of Jesus by speaking aloud, “The blood of Jesus’ covers me. Spirit of depression, leave me in Jesus’ name!”
2. Rule out any physical reason. Consider your sleeping and eating habits. Are you taking any medication which could influence you? Are you getting proper exercise? Do you have a physical illness which could be influencing you?
3. If none of these are the cause, ask yourself: What am I doing that is causing me to be depressed? How and what am I thinking that could be making me depressed? A reversal of thought patterns can often remove depression. God wants us to renew our minds to look at ourselves, others, and situations as He would. God wants us to cast down as false our reasonings and imaginations of our minds which are contrary to His Word (See 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Gen. 6:5, 6; Rom. 12:2).

Steps to Changing our Thoughts:

- a) Recognize and identify the thoughts that you express to yourself. For instance, a woman drops a dish, breaks it and feels depressed. Between the act and the depression was her thought (value judgment), “I am so clumsy. I cannot be trusted even to pick up a dish.” It was that type of thinking that brought on the depression. The more you identify your thoughts the more you can question and determine the validity of the thought. You may discover a thought pattern – a negative view of yourself, failure, deprivation, or a false view of the future.
- b) Realize that many of these thoughts are automatic. They come immediately without much deliberation. By thinking on God's Word, we can cast down such false thoughts as quickly as they come. Do not operate by your thoughts and feelings (natural), but respond by God's Word in faith (spiritual). Do not trust your own thoughts. Trust God's Word.
- c) Distinguish between ideas and facts. Just because a person thinks something does not make it true, nor does it mean that he should believe it. A person's thoughts do not always represent reality and they should be validated before they are accepted. God's

Word is reality. We are not to think evil (1 Cor. 13:5). We need to check our observations in light of God's Word. Jumping to conclusions and first impressions are not always accurate. We need to question our thoughts.

- d) After discovering that a particular thought is not true, state precisely why it is inaccurate or invalid. Speaking aloud the reason why the thought is false will reduce the frequency of the idea, the intensity of the idea, and the feeling that the idea generates. Identify specifically your kind of faulty thinking (Generalizations? Magnifying the problem? Jumping to conclusions? Exaggerations?). Tell yourself aloud what you are doing and then speak God's Word. Consider alternative explanations to the events. Do not dwell on past failures, losses, or difficulties. This will only limit you now. You are not alone (do not focus on yourself). God is with you. Look to Him! (God's Word: Philip. 4:4-8, 3:7-11; Ps. 27:1-3, 42; 1 Cor. 13:1-8; Rom. 8:26-39; 1 Kings 19; Prov. 15:15; Is. 26:3.)

“I have difficulty in disciplining myself to make decisions and to complete projects which I undertake. I also need help breaking bad habits.”

- Make a complete list of areas needing improvement or achievement.
- List two or three suggestions for each item as to how you could improve.
- Pick one of simpler tasks or areas of improvement. Make a simple specific step by step plan. Follow plan until completion.
- Before making decisions, think it through. Make a list of pros and cons. Go before the Lord (pray and meditate in the Word of God). You will know God's leading when you have peace and joy in your heart. Obey God's leading.
- Plan your day's work in advance, allowing God freedom to change, order, and direct plans (Prov. 3:5-7). Do not try to do too much, but do what you can realistically accomplish. Complete hardest job first. At intervals during the day, pray in the Spirit, resting in the Lord. Give each new day to the Lord, thanking Him that He is guiding your day!
- In facing a difficult task, do not skirt around it, but plunge in after praying in the Spirit, giving the task to God, and reflecting on the fact, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Phil. 4:13).”
- Chart how your time is used.
- Do not become discouraged by setbacks. Learn from them but don't repeat.
- List ways you are efficient and inefficient. Make necessary changes.
- Look at all the activities of your life. Decide if you have a proper balance between time with God, family, work, exercise, recreation, and rest.
- Study, meditate, and memorize the following scriptures. Write out what these verses mean for you in light of being impulsive (James 1:4; Proverbs 15:28; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Corinthians 14:40, 15:58; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

“I am one who easily loses my temper. Things happen that cause me to flare up readily, and not only does it irritate my own system, it also angers others. Can you help me overcome this bad temper?”

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).” God calls it a real virtue to be slow to anger. Some people pride themselves in their quick temper. But God says that if this is your spirit, you are a fool! “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger rests in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7:9).” This is God’s Word that anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Now if this is your case, perhaps it is because you are not truly born again – you have not been regenerated. You can obtain salvation today by repenting from your sins and by believing the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for those sins and rose again that you might live eternally (Romans 10:10).

Or you may be born again but not baptized in the Holy Spirit. This too can be taken care of as you read God’s Word and accept His promise for yourself (Acts 2:38-39). Praying in tongues helps control anger.

If you are a Christian, don’t attempt to justify your wrong spirit. “I’m German” or “I’m Irish,” etc. NO! You are a new creature in Christ, old things are passed away, and all things are becoming new. Remember this.

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath (Psalm 37:8).” We do not have to operate in anger anymore. Put it away from your life. Replace it with the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23) and by yielding yourself to do and respond according to God’s desires rather than your own. It is the Lord within you who will enable you to desire and to do His will for your life (Phil. 2:13). Boldly overcome your anger in Jesus’ name. (See James 1:19-20 and Ephesians 4:26-27.)

“How can I know what is God’s direction for my life in making decisions?”

God will give wisdom and direction to those who submit themselves to Him and ask for wisdom and guidance (James 1:5).

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear (reverence) the Lord, and depart from evil (Prov. 3:5-7).” (See also Ps. 37:3-7; Prov. 16:1-3.)

God wants us to prosper and be blessed in our undertakings. We will then give thanks and praise to God for blessing us. As we follow His word, God will prosper our ways (Joshua 1:7-9; Ps. 1:1-3).

God will give us direction through various means, which are still relevant for us today:

- God's Word (Josh. 1:7-9; Ps. 1:1-3)
- The inner witness of our spirit (Prov. 20:27; Rom. 9:1)
- The voice of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:29, 10:19)
- Visions and dreams (Acts 9:10-12, 10:9-20, 26:19)
- Angel visitations (Acts 8:26-29, 10:1-3; Heb. 13:2)
- Prophecy (Acts 21:8-14, 13:2).

These are the basic ways that God will lead us today. God's Word is always the final test of all the leadings. "But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8)." If the vision, dream, or voice we heard, etc., does not agree with God's Word, the revelation is false and not to be acted on. The usual way for God to lead is through a small voice (inner witness of the spirit) which we might know as conscience. If we get quiet before God, He will answer our questions and give us direction. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left (Is. 30:21)." This voice is not audible but is more like thoughts. Through practice, being sensitive to the Lord's leading through our spirits, we will be able to distinguish our thoughts from God's thoughts.

Guidelines for seeking God's Direction:

1. Submit yourself and life to God. Acknowledge and depend on God for everything. Give every situation to God in prayer (Philip 4:4-8). (See importance of fasting and prayer – Daniel 10:12.)
2. Think on God's Word (Joshua 1:8). Take time daily to think on God's Word.
3. Do God's Word (James 1:22). Act on God's Word before acting on the counsel of people. Seek godly counsel (Ps. 1:1-3; Prov. 11:14). Just because someone is a Christian does not mean he or she is giving you godly counsel! God's Word is your final authority.
4. Godly counsel will confirm God's leading within you. As you are quiet before the Lord, He will direct you. You will know His leading in that you will have peace and confidence about the issue (Ps. 37:3-7).
5. Act on the leading which you have peace about.

"So often I feel left out and worthless. Do you think this is just self-pity?"

The devil is a specialist in the field of sowing seeds of self-pity in the minds of Christians. He focuses your attention upon disappointments you have experienced; or he emphasizes your so-

called lacks, weaknesses, failures, or mistakes. He brainwashes you to believe that you are worse off than anybody else.

A woman whose doctor has diagnosed a tumor in her stomach is convinced that “My tumor is the biggest and most severe of anyone’s.” A man I know feels sorry for himself because he is not as tall nor as attractive as his neighbor.

All of these feelings of self-pity are satanically induced. “We are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11).”

The devil tells you that you are not blessed as much as some other Christian — but that is a lie of the old deceiver. Just how much are you blessed? God has an answer for that. He says in Ephesians 1:3 that you are “Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Jesus Christ.” Absolutely, you are as much blessed as anyone else you know! In fact, you are the most blessed person you know for you are blessed with every spiritual blessing. How can you beat that? Begin now to regard your life as one highly favored of God, richly blessed of Him. God says so, so it is.

But you protest, “I don’t feel especially blessed.”

Feelings have nothing to do with this declaration of God’s Word. Feelings or no feelings, God’s Word says you are blessed, so you are. “The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:17).”

Any time the devil grips you with feelings of self-pity, know that God has provided you with victory over the spirit of defeatism (2 Cor. 2:14). Jesus has overcome for us. Pity yourself? No! Praise the Lord? Yes! There is a divine ingredient in the power of praise that will expel self-pity and enable you to overcome.

“When I was a child, my parents always showed partiality towards my older brother. Nothing I did seemed to be good enough to please them. I have read your column and believe that the Lord will help me through you.”

Yours is quite a common problem in that the tendency of people is to show partiality or favoritism towards or over another. The result oftentimes is jealousy, envy, and strife towards the person who was shown the partiality. In addition, the person who feels neglected must deal with such emotional disturbances as rejection, unworthiness, feelings of being unloved, inferiority, self-pity, or depression. There often exists resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, and hatred towards the people who have shown the partiality (and neglect of another).

People have a tendency to judge by the outward appearance of things (how a person looks, talks, or whether they are smart, rich, or successful.) Prejudices and bias also shape people’s judgments and treatment of others. (Did the parent want a boy and had a girl? The parent may want the child to be athletic but the child is inclined towards the arts. A second child often feels like the first is getting more attention because he feels under the shadow of the first.)

God's Word clearly points out the importance of God's people not showing partiality or being a respecter of persons. Jacob's partiality towards Joseph in making him a coat (and not making any for the other brothers) allowed jealousy and strife to come into their home (Gen. 37:3-4).

The Lord tells His churches not to honor one member or minister over another but to treat all alike (James 2:1-9; 1 Cor. 3:1-9, 4:6-7). Jesus treated all alike (Matt. 22:16). Even though some people are easier to love than others, we are to love all people alike (be concerned about the spiritual and physical welfare of all people).

“These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment (Prov. 24:23).” It is wrong before God to prefer one person before another because he or she has more to offer you. Such thinking and action is not God's way.

God loves all people equally. God is no respecter of persons, whether the person seeks God or not. God has provided His blessings for all people equally. Jesus died for all people to give them life with God, health, and every blessing. To receive God's equal provision, one must by faith act upon God's Word which He has given to all people alike. If people do not believe God's Word, they will not receive what God has provided. (See Acts 10:34-38; Rom. 2:4-11; Matt. 5:43-48.)

Guidelines for people who feel that partiality was shown against them:

1. Look to God alone as your source of love. Do not put your expectations on people. Only God can fulfill your needs. Realize people will fail. God is no respecter of persons, and God loves you.
2. Realize that through Jesus God has made you worthy, accepted, and loved. Your worth is not determined by how people look at you, but by how God views you. God will never fail you! We are not to seek to please people to earn their love or recognition. (One will find that people are not easily pleased.) We are to seek our honor from God (Jn. 5:41-44). Faith in God and obedience to His Word is what pleases Him (Heb. 11:6).
3. Ask God to forgive you (1 Jn. 1:9) for your feelings towards the people showing the partiality (whether they are alive or dead – you need to get free), towards the person you feel received the attention you wanted, and for the feelings you had toward yourself. These feelings (depression, unworthiness, rejection, unloved, etc.) are contrary to how God's Word sees you.
4. Forgive yourself. God has forgiven you.
5. Ask God to abundantly bless the other people and yourself (Matt. 5:44-48; 1 Pet. 3:8-12).
6. Tell yourself, “I'm loved. God loves me!” Do this daily.

“I am having difficulty keeping my joy when problems arise in my life. What can I do to keep my joy in the Lord?”

This is a very important question in that God’s Word tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10). It is obvious, therefore, that Satan would attempt to steal our joy so that we would not have strength to deal with situations (Jn. 10:10). We have found that our attitudes are the area in which our joy is maintained or lost.

How to Prevent Joy from Being Stolen:

1. Develop a singleness of mind and purpose (See Philip 1:12-30) – Paul said here that his reason for living was Jesus Christ and the furtherance of the good news of God’s love for the world through Jesus (v. 21). He refused to be influenced by his situations and circumstances. He was suffering persecution in prison because he was telling people about Jesus (v. 12-14). Other ministers on the outside were “badmouthing” him (v. 15-18). He really did not have any reason to be rejoicing as far as his situation was concerned! Yet, he maintained a positive confession of faith, refusing to look at things negatively. He was reaching people in places that could not have been reached before, like leaders of nations (v. 12-13). Believers outside were made bolder by watching his example not to be afraid to witness for Jesus (v. 14). The good news of Jesus was increasing and that was all that mattered to Paul. “For me to live is Jesus.” God is with me, so what if I run into difficulties. God is greater! (1 Jn. 4:4, Rom. 8:31-39). He did not look at the problems as problems. God was in control. He was willing to forsake all and follow Jesus (Lk. 14:26-33). Jesus had to be first in his life.

We must refuse distractions like pleasing people vs. God, taking on cares of the world, having deceitfulness of riches, lust of other things, and our own lusts. (Mk. 4:14-20). We have joy when we have and know that God is in us and that we have the victory already, even though we may not yet see it. To focus our minds on things other than Jesus (God’s Word) is to allow our joy to be stolen.

2. A second joy-stealer is selfishness, which produces strife and division (Jam. 3:13-4:7). Attention should be directed towards accomplishing God’s plan and looking out for others, rather than doing things our way (See Philip. 2:1-5). Our attitude should be, “Lord what do you want done?,” rather than “This is what I want.” We should be thankful to be a part of God’s working. Look out for the needs of others. If our joy is decreasing in what we are doing, it may be that we have some attitudes that are not right with God and others. Do not get in the way of God’s purpose and plan for His (not our) Church. Refuse to grumble and complain (Philip. 2:14-16; 1 Cor. 10:10).
3. Guilt is the third joy-stealer. Forget the past mistakes and failures and go forward in Jesus. (See Philip 3:7-17; Eph. 3-4.) If unconfessed sin exists in our lives, we are to confess it to God who will forgive us and restore our joy (See 1 Jn. 1:9; Ps. 51, 32).

4. The fourth joy-stealer is worry and fear. God has commanded us to rejoice in the Lord always, not to worry about anything, to give things to God, to thank God that He is then in control, and to think properly by thinking on God's Word (Philip. 4:4-8).

To sum up – Joy is lost when:

- We are self-seeking rather than seeking God and others
- We allow guilt over the past
- We do not give our lives and situations completely over to God.

God wants our hearts set on Him alone, before husbands, wives, children, jobs, or things of this world. He wants us to look out for the needs of others, knowing that He is looking out for us (Is. 58:6-12). He wants us to seek forgiveness, forgive others, and forgive ourselves, knowing that He has forgiven us so we can move ahead in Jesus. God wants us to rejoice always in Him, giving our cares to Him because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). God wants us to keep His joy (Ps. 16:11).

“Every time I seem to start to get on my feet again something comes along and knocks me back down. I feel so helpless and discouraged! I do not know too much about God's Word. Is there something that you feel would help me?”

Jesus said, “The thief (Satan) has come to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly (Jn. 10:10).” We need to learn how to receive that life which Jesus has already provided for us. I praise God with you that you are looking to God to meet your needs! I would encourage you to become a part of a Christian church and get involved in a study of God's Word. “How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight (Deut. 32:30)?” Together with other believers we are stronger.

Understand that the moment you ask God to forgive you (because of the blood of Jesus was given, which paid the penalty for your separation from God), and you invited Jesus Christ to come into your heart by saying, “Jesus Christ is my Lord (Rom. 10:9-10),” you became a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) with God now living within you (1 Jn. 4:4, Col. 1:27). You are actually a son of God (Jn. 1:12-13) with the same ability Jesus was given (Jn. 14:12-14). We need to understand this and stop giving Satan opportunity to defeat us by using our own words and actions. Stop talking defeat, sickness, and weakness. Defeat is of the devil. Weakness, sickness, and poverty are of the devil. As we speak about these things, we are praising Satan's works and not God's.

The Lord said, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourself therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:6-7).” We can say, “The devil is fleeing from me because my life is obedient to God, and I am resisting Satan in Jesus' name.” (Also see Mk. 16:17.)

Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (Jn. 8:31-32).” We can say, “I am set free because I know His blessed truth.” (Keep on growing.)

God said, “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work (2 Tim. 4:18).” “The angel of the Lord encamps around about them that reverence Him, and delivers them (Ps. 34:7).” (Also see Ps. 46, and 91.) We can say, “I will not fall into the devil’s evil snares; the Lord delivers me because I reverence the Lord.”

“Would you please give me some principles for overcoming fear and worry?”

We must understand that our fear and worry does not profit us anything, but actually hinders God from moving in our behalf. Fear and worry are unbelief. God only responds to faith (See Heb. 11:6).

Principles for Dealing with Fear and Worry:

1. Ask yourself, “What has fear and worry accomplished in my life?” Describe in detail. Describe the benefits of fear and worry.
2. Make a list of the following: How many times has my worry prevented a situation from occurring? In what way did my worry increase the problem?
3. Read Matthew 6:25-34. Learn how to live a day at a time. Deal with your problems a step at a time. Do not allow worry and fear to creep in. Focus upon Christ and not on the problem. Write out a description of how you will put this daily practice in your own life.
4. Read 1 Peter 5:7. Unload your fear and worry on God and you will be strengthened because of his love and care for you. Write down the specific cares and worries that you have at this time and then spend time in prayer, giving these to God.
5. “You (God) will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you (Isaiah 26:3).” Direct your thoughts toward God and His teachings. Describe how you will put this principle into practice in your life and how you will remember to do this each day. (See Psalms 34, 46, 91; Isaiah 41:10.) Look in Bible concordance under “fear” and “worry” for other promises.
6. Read Psalm 37. Replace fretting with trust, delight, commitment, and resting in the Lord. Describe what each of these words means to you and how each one will help you release your fears and anxieties to God so you will be free of them.
7. Read Philippians 4:4-9. Stop worrying, give everything to God in prayer, express thanks that it is taken care of (Mark 11:24), and peace will be yours. Discuss the specific steps you will take to stop worrying.
8. Praise the Lord in the Spirit.

“My wife and I are new in the area. We have been visiting different churches trying to find a church home. Do you have any suggestions?”

Here are some guidelines to follow in making your decision:

1. Pray that the Lord would guide you to where He wants you.
2. Is Jesus Christ exalted as Lord? Is loving obedience to God's Word taught?
3. Does the church emphasize and equip people to follow the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20)?
4. Is the emphasis on Jesus, encouraging and equipping God's people to be Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), or is the emphasis on numbers, funds, and church programs?
5. Does the church teach the Bible as unconditionally true and that all of its contents are relevant for us today?
6. Is there love present that speaks the truth according to God's Word, not man's wisdom?
7. Do not consider facilities, programs, or your own feelings, but first consider the teaching and the truth (are you growing in faith and experiencing victory by what you hear?).
8. As you study God's Word, you will know what is true.

“I have some bad habits which I am having difficulty getting rid of. I'm a believer. What would you recommend?”

Start confessing aloud, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13).” Understand that you are a new creature, and old things are passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). You have a spirit of power and love — a calm, well-balanced, disciplined, and self-controlled mind (2 Tim. 1:7 Amplified). To be dependent on anything other than the Lord is idolatry. Ask God's forgiveness. Thank God for the victory. Command the body to line up with God's Word in Jesus' name. Your body is the temple of God. All things are lawful to you, but not all things are helpful. Ask yourself, “Does what I am doing give glory to God?” (See 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 1 Pet. 4:1-7; 1 Cor. 9:27; Acts 24:16, Amplified.)

“I have a great problem with sleeping well at night. I have tried sleeping pills and different prescriptions, but nothing seems to help me have a good night's sleep. I know how important sleep is, so I would like your counsel on this subject.”

For all those who are troubled with insomnia and lie awake restless most of the night, there is good news! A sure cure for sleeplessness: “For he (God) giveth his beloved sleep (Psalm 127:2).”

In millions of beds this nightly battle goes on. It's the power of God versus the power of Satan. If God is the giver of sleep (and He is) then Satan is the author of insomnia. Jesus revealed the nature of Satan: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they have it more abundantly (John 10:10).”

Satan seeks to steal your sleep, thereby destroying your health, peace of mind, and general well-being. Sleeplessness breeds nervous disorder, depression, and all kinds of infirmities.

You can root Satan and sleeplessness like Jesus defeated the devil in the wilderness by declaring, "Thus it is written." Take your sleep, not by counting sheep, but by boldly quoting God's wonderful Word! "For he giveth his beloved sleep!"

Psalm 4:8 gives a vital key to God's gift of sleep: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Peace is a prerequisite for sleep. Before laying down to sleep, pray out of your heart and mind all anxieties, grudges, sins, failures, and disappointments. God will give you a clean heart and a right spirit (Psalm 51:10).

God's cleansing, along with your casting all your cares upon Him, will positively produce peace, and peace is essential for sound sleep. Practice kneeling beside your bed before retiring and committing yourself in the hands of the Lord. Dwell in your bed assured of safety and sleep, for the Lord is watching over you.

"I do not feel that anyone loves me or cares about my needs."

See Ephesians 3:14-19. If you would pray from your heart, believing, it would enable you to begin to understand how much God really loves you. In 1 Cor. 13:4-8 we find God's description of true love. Know this fact today: God loves you and has sent His Son Jesus Christ to give His life for you that you might have God's life and love through Him. Now start to understand God's love. Look into the mirror each day and say the following things to yourself:

1. Because God loves me, He is slow to lose patience with me.
2. Because God loves me, He takes the circumstances of my life and uses them in a constructive way for my growth.
3. Because God loves me, He does not treat me as an object to be possessed and manipulated.
4. Because God loves me, He has no need to impress me with how great and powerful He is because HE IS GOD, nor does He belittle me as His child in order to show me how important He is.
5. Because God loves me, He is for me. He wants to see me mature and develop in His love.
6. Because God loves me, He does not send down His wrath on every little mistake I make (of which there are many).
7. Because God loves me, He does not keep score of all my sins and then beat me over the head with them whenever he gets the chance.
8. Because God loves me, He is deeply grieved when I do not walk in the ways that please Him. He sees this as evidence that I do not trust Him and love Him as I should.
9. Because God loves me, He rejoices when I experience His power and strength and stand up strongly in His Word against the pressures of life, overcoming them in Jesus' name.

10. Because God loves me, He keeps on working patiently with me even when I feel like giving up and cannot see why He does not give up on me too.
11. Because God loves me, He keeps on trusting me when at times I do not even trust myself.
12. Because God loves me, He never says there is no hope for me; rather, He patiently works with me, loves me, and disciplines me in such a way that it is easy for me to understand the depth of His concern for me.
13. Because God loves me, He never forsakes me even though many times my friends might.
14. Because God loves me, He stands with me when I have reached the rock bottom of despair, when I see the real me and compare that with His righteousness, holiness, beauty, and love.

It is at a moment like this that I can really believe that God loves me. I can truly say, “I am loved. God loves me!” Yes the greatest of all gifts is God’s perfect love.

“I am interested in some teaching and guidance concerning how to overcome guilt.”

Guilt is the by-product of having committed something that is wrong. Guilt is real and cannot be covered over. It must be dealt with or it can cause serious spiritual, mental, and physical problems. It is the result of separation or alienation from God and people, caused by a violation of what one knows to be the law of God or conscience. Guilt may be produced by willful disobedience and by what one thinks one should have done but did not do. (We often see this when someone dies. People project guilt about what they had not done or had done to the deceased. Much of this guilt is unjustified.)

All people are separated and guilty before God unless they receive God’s provision, Jesus Christ, for their separation and the resulting guilt. In Jesus, we come into right standing with God and there is no guilt (See 2 Cor. 5:21).

“Therefore there is no condemnation – no adjudging guilty of wrong – for those who are in Christ Jesus, who live not after the dictates of the flesh, but after the dictates of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).”

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also – along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Rom. 8:31-34).”

If we should disobey God after receiving Jesus, God has a provision to remove our guilt. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).”

Rule:

Holy Spirit = Guilt *before* confessing disobedience.

Satan = Guilt *after* confessing sin.

Believe God has forgiven you! And forgive yourself. (Further insight: David – Psalm 32 and 51).

“How can I gain confidence in myself?”

Confidence in yourself is usually based upon your sense of adequacy or inadequacy, strengths or weaknesses, what you can do or cannot do based on what others think of you and what you think of yourself.

Many damaged people are still being damaged because they strive to be recognized by people who turn around and discourage them. We need to be encouraging each other to love and do godly good works, bringing out the best in each other.

In addition, God has a better way to gain true confidence. May I present God’s way to gain true confidence? These promises belong to those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

1. God declares us to be worthy sons of God in right standing with Him because of Jesus Christ, not because of what we do (Eph. 2:8-9). Life, health, provision, protection, and every blessing in God’s Word are ours in Jesus (Eph. 1-3). God has made us adequate.
2. We do not need to strive for recognition anymore. Jesus has already lifted us to a place of prominence before God (Eph. 2:6). God is our sufficiency, not ourselves (2 Cor. 3:5).
3. We can do all things through Jesus’ ability who strengthens us and lives in those who believe (Phil. 4:13).
4. We do not need to judge, compare, or measure ourselves by our own or anyone else’s expectations. We let God and His Word measure us and direct us (1 Cor. 4:3-5; Jn. 15:3). Often we and others expect more of ourselves than God does.
5. As we direct our confidence and attention away from ourselves and focus on God, we begin to find our real identity – sons of God with a nature like that of our loving Heavenly Father – holiness, love, power, forgiveness, peace, hope, joy, and a sound, well-balanced disciplined mind.
6. Our confidence rests in who God is, not in ourselves (Num. 23:19). Because God is true, what He says about us is also true (1 Jn. 5:10-15).
7. As we meditate upon who we are in Jesus Christ and the authority that is ours in Jesus’ name, our confidence will increase. Study God’s promises.

“What can be done about psychosomatic illness?”

Many well respected psychologists and psychiatrists, such as Dr. Carl Jung, recognize the importance of God in healing the ills of mankind: “I should like to call attention to the following facts. During the past thirty years, people from all the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients. Among all my patients in the second half of life – that is to say, over thirty-five – there has not been one whose problem in the resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It seems to me, that, side by side with the decline of religious life, the neuroses grow noticeably more frequent. The patient is looking for something that will take possession of him and give meaning and form to the confusion of the mind. Is the doctor equal to the task? To begin with, he will probably hand over his patient to the clergyman or the philosopher, or abandon him to that perplexity which is the special note of our day. Human thought cannot conceive any system or final truth that could give the patient what he needs in order to live: that is faith, hope, love, and insight. There are, however, persons who, while well aware of the psychic nature of their complaint, nevertheless refuse to turn to the clergyman. They do not believe that he can really help them. Such persons distrust the doctor for the same reason, and they are justified by the fact that both doctor and clergyman stand before them with empty hands, if not – what is even worse – with empty words. It is from the clergyman, not from the doctor, that the sufferers should expect such help (Carl C. Jung *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. ” New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., Inc., 1922 p. 260-262).” We add – A clergyman or any Christian is only a help when he directs you to God and His Word as your source of life.

Most mental disturbances are caused by conflict between inner good and devil forces combined with demonic activity. In the 1930’s, specialists in psychosomatic medicine began to learn that a host of physical diseases were caused by envy, jealousy, self-centeredness, resentment, fear and hatred—the identical emotions that the Bible lists as attributes of our evil nature (see Galatians 5:19-26). Hence, we see that most of the mental and physical ills of man are caused by the activities of an inner evil force. Man is unable to free himself.

The Bible deals with the question, as Paul says, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7:24-25)! (Also Romans 7:4-8:39.) Confess your need for God, through the Lord Jesus, to take control of your life. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (Jn. 14:27).” (Also see Rom. 7:25, 6:5-6, 8:3-4, 10, 13; Gal. 5:24, 4:28-31, 5:17; Col. 3:5, 8-10.)

To be free we need to yield our wills to God so that God’s will can be done in our lives (See John 8:31-35).

“Would you please give me some insight into how to overcome discouragement?”

Discouragement is one of the ways in which Satan attempts to steal our joy and keep us from pressing ahead to receive all that God would have for us in His love. It is important for us to note at this point that discouragement is the result of our losing sight of God’s word and promise, the result being that we allow ourselves to doubt and get weighed down by circumstances and

feelings of hopelessness. The tendency is to simply want to give up. As we learn to know that God is faithful to His Word, and as we learn to be patient and to continue to act upon God's Word, then we will always know victory. (See Heb. 6:11-20, 10:23; Num. 23:19; also see Ps. 42 and challenge feelings of discouragement.)

Discouragement comes upon people for various reasons:

1. The path we are on may be difficult (Num. 21:5).
2. The task we are working on may be difficult (Neh. 4:10).
3. The wicked person may be prospering while we who are living for God may seem not to be prospering (Ps. 73:2-3, 37).
4. There may be a delay in the fulfillment of what we have sought from the Lord (Prov. 13:12).
5. It may be that we have set our heart upon something which we have desired before the Lord (idolatry), and we find that we are going nowhere until we ask God's forgiveness and release it to Him – that His way be done (James 4:1-17).

God would have us know today that He loves and cares for us. He will encourage and strengthen us, enabling us not to give up our joy, victory, and the fulfillment of the promise in our behalf – as we seek Him by doing what He says in His Word. Be encouraged today. God says He will bless His people in this life. We who have received Jesus are children of Abraham also and heirs to the promise (Gen. 26:24; Deut. 28; Gal. 3:13-14). God will surmount our needs in danger (2 Kings 6:16; Psalm 91), give companionship in trials (Is. 43:1-3), and live beyond the grave (Rev. 11:17-18). God knows what we need better than we do (Matt. 6:32, 10:29-31). God cares about us and loves us.

We believe that the Lord has given us the key in how to stay free from discouragement and how to obtain the victory in all situations. "...I will not fail you, nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land which I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth (continually speak God's promises rather than doubt and defeat); meditate on it day and night (constantly think on God's Word and Jesus rather than upon the circumstances and yourself, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. (The Lord and His Word cannot help anyone who does not believe and act in obedience to what He says. God's blessings come to those who are obedient.) Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous (Don't give up!). Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go (Josh. 1:5-9)." (See also Ps. 1; Phil. 4:4-8; and Is. 26:3.) Discouragement sets in when we forget that God is with us like He has told us.

If you find yourself discouraged, ask God to forgive you for not acknowledging His presence. In the presence of God is fullness of Joy (Ps. 16:11). God will then restore your joy which will cause strength to continue, knowing that God is with and for you (Neh. 8:10; Rom. 8:31-39). Speak out loud God's promise for you. Tell the devil that you refuse to be discouraged in Jesus' name.

“I have a difficulty with controlling myself. Lately, I have been getting angry over minor things. This is not unusual for me. What I am concerned about, however, is that I continue to think and talk about the matter long after it is finished. I am finding myself controlled by my circumstances rather than me being in control. What can I do?”

Anger is common to all people in varying degrees of expression. Anger is a secondary emotion which would tell us that there exists a problem at a root source. Usually, anger is caused when one's pride has been hurt or threatened in some manner. The problem is not necessarily the situation at hand, but rather the way in which we are allowing our feelings to interpret the situation and then the way we are expressing ourselves during and after the event. By continuing to harbor anger we are actually giving opportunity to a demonic influence (Eph. 4:26-27). Satan would have us rehearse the event, stirring up strife, rather than forgive and forget as God does.

If we are continually finding ourselves feeling angry and upset, it might do us good to examine ourselves, rather than blaming other people and situations. We choose to be angry. We must ask ourselves, “Why am I allowing myself to get angry?” (Don't point to individuals or the situation, but ask, “What need within me is not getting met?”) We may find that there is an area of our lives that has not been brought under the Lordship of God. If so, we should ask God to forgive us for that specific area. We can never blame anyone or anything else for “making us angry.” Could it be that we wanted to control an individual or situation rather than letting God be Lord of us, others, and the situation?

God's Word tells us that God will keep us in perfect peace if we keep our mind (thoughts) stayed on Him (rather than feelings and circumstances – Is. 26:3. In order for us to do this we must renew our minds with God's Word. Proper godly response will come as we think on and say God's Word (Mk. 4:24-25 esp. in Amplified Bible). We understand that self-control is a ‘fruit’ or product of us having our life submitted to God's control. God will produce self-control in us as we yield to His Word, bringing our will to do what He says rather than what we may be feeling. (Think on Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 4:17-32; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Col. 3, 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 Pet. 2:19-3:18; Philip. 4:8).

Remember: The new and real you is not being attacked, so you do not have to defend yourself or retaliate. You do not have to respond in ways not pleasing to God. You are a new creature, and old things passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). It is no longer the old you who lives, but Jesus who lives in you (Gal. 2:20; Gal. 5:24-25; Rom. 6).

God says that love is more effective than our anger or wrath in accomplishing His purposes – which are always to our benefit. (See James 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Matt. 5:38-48; Rom. 12:9-21.)

For additional insight spend time reading Proverbs, especially what is said about anger and the angry man (Prov. 10:11-12, 19:11, 19, 14:16-17, 29, etc.)

“I am having many trials and problems. Would you please give me some encouragement from God’s Word?”

We would be happy to share with you some of the many promises which have meant much to us during times of stress and pressure. God loves you and wants to help you at all times. As we call to Him, He will move in our behalf. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear... Be still and know that I am God (Ps. 46:1, 10).”

“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you (1 Pet. 5:6-7).”

“Submit yourselves to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you (Jam. 4:7).”

“Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41).”

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, that he that is in the world (1 Jn. 4:4).”

“In the world you can have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (Jn. 16:33).”

“For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:4-5).”

“The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust to the Day of Judgment to be punished (2 Pet. 2:9).”

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all (Ps. 34:19).”

“The Lord redeems the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate (Ps. 34:22).”

“I will never leave you or forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do to me (Heb. 13:5-6).”

“There is no temptation which has taken you but such as is common to everyone: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to endure; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).”

“Count it all joy when you fall into different temptations (trials); knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience (perseverance). But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (Jam. 1:2-4).”

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philip 4:13).”

“Let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised) (Heb. 10:23).”

“Do not be lazy (in diligence to God’s Word), but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. ...And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise (Heb. 6:12-15).”

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... (Eph. 6:10-18).”

“Thus says the Lord to you, be not afraid nor discouraged by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s. ...And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the enemy.” (See 2 Chron. 20:15-22, also Philip. 4:4-8, Ps. 91.)

“The joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehem. 8:10).”

“I am having difficulties with fears and worries. Do you have any suggestions as to how I can overcome my fears and worries?”

We must understand that our fear and worry does not profit us anything but actually hinders God from moving to help us. Having fear and worry is having unbelief. God only responds to faith (Heb. 11:6). Whatever is not done from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). We may, therefore, conclude that worry and fear are sin. God’s perfect love casts out fear, for fear has torment (1 Jn. 4:18).

- Ask yourself, “What has fear and worry accomplished in my life?” Describe in detail. Describe the benefits of fear and worry. (For instance: high blood pressure, nerve conditions, ulcers, colitis, confusion, sleepless nights, etc.)
- Make a list of the following: How many times has my worry prevented a situation from occurring? In what way did my worry increase or bring about the problem? (See Job 3:25.)
- Read Matthew 6:25-34. Learn how to live a day at a time. Deal with your problems a step at a time. Refuse to allow worry and fear to creep in. Focus upon Jesus and the Word of God and not on the problem. Speak aloud the promises of God rather than speaking the fear or worry and dwelling on the problem. The only time we speak about the fear and worry is to confess it to God as a sin, asking for God’s forgiveness and knowing that we are forgiven (1 Jn. 1:9). This enables the power of the fear or worry to be broken. Confession of the sin to God should be done if we have dwelt on the fear and worry.

Sometimes worries and fears just come into our thoughts (often there exists no reason for them). When something like this occurs, we should speak out loud against the

fear, saying, “In the name of Jesus, I do not receive that fear or worry. Leave me!” Then speak God’s promise concerning your situation.

- Read 1 Peter 5:7. Unload your fear and worry on God, and you will be strengthened because of His love and care for you. Write down the specific cares and worries that you have at this time and then spend time in prayer, giving these to God (2 Tim. 1:12).
- “You (God) will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you (Isaiah 26:3-4).” Direct your thoughts towards God and His Word. Describe how you will put this principle into practice in your life and how you will remember to do this each day. (See Psalms 34, 46, 91; Isaiah 41:10.) See Bible concordance under “fear” and “worry” for other promises.
- Read Psalm 37. Replace fretting with trust, delight, commitment and resting in the Lord. Describe what each of these words means to you and how each one will help you release your fears and anxieties to God so you will be free of them.
- Read Philippians 4:4-8. Stop worrying, give everything to God in prayer, express thanks that it is taken care of (Mark 11:24), and rejoice in the Lord always. Then peace will be yours as you go about your business. Discuss the specific steps you will take to stop worrying.
- Praise the Lord in the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:14, Jude 20).

MINISTRY

Chapter 8

“I am interested in developing my testimony so that I might share my faith in Jesus in a way that others can understand. I have never had speech lessons.”

We fully believe that the Holy Spirit will guide your words with wisdom and clarity as you boldly speak about what God has done for you. (See Acts 1:8, 4:19-31 6:10; Matt. 10:15-40, especially verses 19-20.) Speech lessons are not necessary because God will help you as you rely on Him when you speak. We also have found that it is profitable to carefully prepare a testimony which, when spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit, will cause the hearers to know Jesus themselves.

How to Prepare a Personal Testimony (Do's and Don'ts of a Three-Minute Testimony):

DO...

1. Ask the Lord for wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5-6).
2. Use a testimony worksheet, following a three-point outline:
 - a. Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way. (Be truthful, but do not exaggerate or emphasize how bad you were.)
 - b. How I received Christ. (Be specific.)
 - c. After I received Christ these changes took place. (What does Jesus mean to you now? What changes has He made in your life?)
3. Begin with an attention-getting sentence and close with a short, clear conclusion. Include relevant, thought-provoking, secular facts and experiences.
4. Write or speak in such a way that others will identify with you in both your past and present experiences.
5. Give enough details to arouse interest.
6. Use at least one (at most two) scripture verse.
7. Edit your draft carefully, rewrite if necessary.

DON'T...

1. Use Christian jargon. Many non-Christians do not understand words such as “saved, converted, convicted, or sin.”
2. Speak in generalities, be vague or too wordy.
3. Mention church denominations, especially in a derogatory way.
4. Speak critically or negatively about any other individual or group.
5. Give the impression that the Christian life is “a bed of roses.”

PRESENTATION:

1. Memorize your testimony. Practice it until you feel comfortable giving it.
2. Share your story with loving enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
3. Ask the Lord to give you a happy, radiant face. Smile often.
4. Speak clearly and loudly, using a natural, relaxed tone of voice.
5. Avoid mannerisms which distract listeners, such as rubbing your nose, jingling coins in your pocket, swaying, or clearing your throat.
6. Avoid preaching or high pressure methods of obtaining “decisions” for Christ. Men are drawn to our Lord by the Holy Spirit.

What is God’s Will?

“I’ve been attempting to share the Lord Jesus with my grandmother. However, she keeps insisting that God has not chosen her to be saved. How can I help her?”

Your attempt to share Jesus with your grandma expresses your love for her. She needs to understand God’s love and desire for all of us. God’s desire: “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promises, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, *not wanting anyone to perish*, but everyone to come to repentance (turn to God and away from serving ourselves) (2 Pet. 3:9).”

“...God our Savior, *who wants all mankind to be saved* and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4).”

God’s Plan & Provision – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (Jesus Christ) that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s only Son (Jn. 3:16-18).”

Would you please tell me where “God helps them who help themselves” is found in the Bible?

It is not in the Bible. God’s Word leads us to depend on God, not on ourselves. Try this one instead: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path (Prov. 3:5-6).” (Also see Ps. 1:2,3; Matt. 6:25-34; 2 Thess. 3:6-15.)

“I was reading in Acts 2:38 where Peter said in response to the question, ‘What must we do to be saved?’, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ My question is what is, involved in repenting?”

To repent is to have a change of heart and mind. The term's usage in the Bible as it pertains to man usually involves man's turning from serving himself (and the devil) and turning to God to serve Him. Repentance is a step of faith by man which God enables to happen (2 Tim. 2:25-26).

Repentance always involves a humbling of one's self and putting down pride. There are three major areas of repentance in God's Word. These are:

1. A response to the love of God in Jesus Christ by turning from self and the devil to giving one's life to serve and love God (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6; 2 Mk. 1:15; Lk. 13:3, Acts 17:30-31, 26:20). This type of repentance is involved in receiving the eternal life which God has promised us if we receive and confess Jesus as Lord of our lives.
2. The second type of repentance involves turning from disobedient actions. "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near; Let the wicked forsake his way, and the evil man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon (Is. 55:6-7)."

"If my people, which are called by name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14)." (Also see Jer. 18:8, Lk. 17:3-4; 1 Jn. 1.)

3. The third type of repentance involves a change of belief when a person discovers that what one has been thinking or believing concerning God was incorrect (as revealed by God's Word). We find an example of this in Job 42:1-6. "Then Job replied to the Lord: I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, 'Listen now, and I shall speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job had a seeking heart that wanted to be pleasing to God. However, he spoke ignorantly about God's Word and ways. Praise God that he saw his error. He did not let his pride get in the way but admitted his error and sought God's fullness, renouncing his old thoughts about God.

When a person has truly repented there will be a change in thought, word, and deed (Acts 26:20). (Especially see Eph. 4:18-5:5; Col. 3:1-17; Rom. 12:9-21; 2 Cor. 5:17-21.)

"I would like to know whether a murderer can be saved?"

Salvation is not based on our works, whether good or evil. It is God's gift based on whether or not we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:8-9). No matter how evil

people's deeds may be, if they would turn from their deeds, turn to God, and say the following, they would be saved:

"I recognize I'm separated from God. I need the blood of Jesus to forgive me. Come into my life, Jesus (Rev. 3:20)."

"Jesus Christ is my Lord, and I believe in my heart, he's risen from the dead." (See Rom. 10:9-13.) They should then be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts. 2:38). "Therefore, if any is in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are made new (2 Cor. 5:17)."

Before people turn their lives to Jesus and become "born again," the problem is their nature's condition, not their deeds. God says, "There is none righteous (in right standing with God), no not one (Rom. 3:10)." This is why Jesus had to die for us.

"For all have sinned (to be in a condition separated from God) and come short of the glory of God; and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:23-26)."

People are often quick to condemn. However, Jesus came not to condemn but to give life to those who turn their lives to him (Jn. 3:16-18). He told the adulterous woman, "Go and sin no more (Jn. 8:2-11)." Usually those whose lives are shameful recognize their need for Jesus quicker than the moral, upright citizen. This is unfortunate, because unless the moral, upright citizen acknowledges that he, too, is separated from God, needs and receives Jesus as Lord, he will not be saved. "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me," Jesus said (Jn. 14:6). For further insight: Ps. 130, Lk. 13:1-5, 19:10; Matt. 9:9-13.

"I was reading in James 1:27 that pure religion involves keeping myself from being contaminated by the world's thinking and standards and visiting the orphans and widows in their need. My question is how can I help the widows?"

We find in God's Word that His love is great towards those who are in need. God says that He Himself will become the husband of the widow (Is. 54:4-6). Because God cares for the widows, He also expects His people to care for their needs (Ex. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; Ps. 68:5, 146:9; Prov. 15:25; Jer. 49:11; Is. 1:17).

The major responsibility for the widows rests with her children (Read 1 Tim. 5:3-16, est. 8 and 16). If the widow's family does not take care of her, God's Word says they are worse than infidels. God will hold them accountable. If there exist no children, then it is the Body of believer's responsibility to care for her, following the guidelines which are given in 1 Tim. 5:3-16.

Guidelines for Caring for Widows:

1. Allow the widow to be independent (if she is able) but not isolated. Permit her to have her own life by not mothering her, while at the same time seeking to help facilitate her personal and household needs being met. (As she requests or permits: help with business affairs, shopping, laundry, repairs around home, grass cutting, etc.) Ask her where you can help.
2. Involve her in family activities as she wishes to become involved. A phone call or visit is most appreciated, since she is aware that someone cares. Various forms of outings are often appreciated since they provide a break in the daily routine. Remember if she should not want to go, it is all right. She knows that she is included yet free to exercise her own freedom of choice for which she will respect you even more.
3. Spend quality time with her discussing God's Word and promises. Younger women especially can learn much from the wisdom that the older woman has acquired over the years. This will provide her an opportunity to fulfill the Word of God which will bless her and others (Titus 2:3-5). Ask questions and discuss the insights which God reveals. Discuss her personal faith which will allow her opportunity to share. Encourage her to be involved in Christian fellowship. If she needs transportation, see that it is provided. Churches should see to it that the widows are involved in the ministry service which God has called them to do. (Ministry of prayer, helps, etc., involves the young and old together. Remember to visit the nursing homes.)

“Is there a hell?”

There will be a time of everlasting punishment as well as eternal blessing. At the last judgment, there will be a complete and eternal separation between the ungodly and the godly. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).”

The place of eternal punishment is called “hell.” It is a physical location; however, its location is not known.

Jesus says, “It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost, from the springs of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars. Their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” Hell is a place of eternal torment reserved for Satan, his followers, and all those who do not believe in Jesus Christ and God's Word.

God's Word states what hell is like. “And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind (Isaiah 66:24).” (See also Mark 9:45-48.)

“He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb (Jesus). And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark of his name (Rev. 14:10-11).” (For your personal reference see also Revelations 20:10-15, Matthew 13:50, 5:22; Mark 9:43-44; Luke 12:5, 16:23-24; Jude 6:8.)

Hell is a reality, but God desires that we not go to eternal suffering. This is why God in his love sent Jesus Christ to suffer and die in our place. Then God raised Jesus from the dead that we who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord might have eternal life with God. Have you invited Jesus into your heart?

“Is there something that I need to do so that I can share my faith in Jesus?”

We are thankful to the Lord that there are many people like yourself who have a desire to share faith in Jesus to a greater degree. We receive many questions dealing with this area of witnessing the faith. The way God’s Word reads is that we are to tell the world about what great things God has done for us through Jesus Christ and about the love God has for His people in Jesus Christ. We are God’s ambassadors to this world (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Rom. 10:14-15). Not everyone is an evangelist or pastor, etc.; however, all of us as God’s people are ministers, called to tell others about what we have “seen and heard, and know to be true” (1 Jn. 1:1-4). Many times we find it difficult to witness because we think that we have to first become some great Bible scholar, or get some speech lessons, or have self-confidence before we go out and tell people about the love that God has for the world in sending Jesus Christ. This is bad thinking on our part! We need to get ourselves out of the way, get filled with the Holy Spirit, and learn to rely upon the Holy Spirit to direct our witness.

I used to wonder why it was so difficult to get people to go out and tell someone else about the Lord. Several things came to me as I prayed to God. The first was that many people really are not convinced themselves about their relationship with the Lord. (You cannot tell someone else about something you do not have or are not sure of yourself).

Secondly, many believers have not acted on the promises of God enough to know that God will do exactly what He says in behalf of them that believe. As a result, they do not have a testimony of God working personally in their lives. You cannot have an experience or encounter with Jesus and God’s Word and not have your life changed! You will want to tell someone else about what God has done for you. Andrew went and told Peter that he had found the Messiah (Jesus), and then proceeded to bring Peter to Jesus (Jn. 1:35-51). The woman who had talked with Jesus at the well went and told her village what had happened to her. The result was that the entire city received the Lord (See John 4:1-42). The man that had been delivered from demons was told by Jesus to go and tell the people of his country what great things God had done for him. As he went, many others believed God for help through Jesus as a result of his testimony (Mk. 5:1-20).

The devil does not want people talking about what God has, can, and will do for people. God wants us to tell others simply what we have seen, heard, and known to be true from experience on the basis of God's Word.

Thirdly, it was revealed that people often care more about what people think than what God thinks about them. Jesus said that if we are ashamed to confess him before men, He is ashamed to confess us before the Father God (Matt. 10:24-40).

Fourthly, people are hindered from witnessing about the Lord because they have not received the infilling of the Holy Spirit, even though they are believers in Jesus. (See Acts 8:4-19, 19:1-7, Eph. 5-18.) Jesus tells us that once someone receives the Holy Spirit, the person will receive the power or ability to witness about the working of God – under the direction of God's Spirit (Acts 1:8; Jn. 15:26-27; Matt. 10:18-20). The disciples, after they had received the Holy Spirit, were on fire for God, witnessing about Jesus with all boldness and confidence, whereas before they had been fearful and even deserted Jesus (Acts 2, 4:1-31). (For further examples of how the Holy Spirit empowers people, read the book of Acts.)

Fifth, it is possible for people who have received the Holy Spirit to lose their first love because they have put things of the world before God (Rev. 2:1-7). As they ask God to forgive them, He will restore their testimony.

“I am concerned that my church is not doing what they should be doing. Is it not true that the purpose of God's churches is to be telling those who are lost about the love which God has for them through Jesus Christ that they might be saved from eternal death?”

Yours is an interesting question. I do believe that wisdom would recommend that you also discuss this matter with your pastor alone. We are certain that your pastor would love to help you in fulfilling your desire to share Jesus with those who do not know God's love.

We believe that the Lord will reveal understanding to you as we view the role of “church” and define what is in the Bible.

In the Bible the term church is either referring to the people of God in general or to specific people of God who are meeting in a specific place, like a home or building. (See 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5; Philem. 2.) When God's people gathered together, they did certain things (Acts 5:42, 2:41-47). The churches, or God's people, were unified in praising God and preaching Jesus. Even though the people met in different homes to praise God, they were still one in Jesus. The emphasis is not on the place, but the people. We note: “God daily added to the church those who were saved (Acts 2:47).”

Now within the church or people of God, God has given gifts, calling some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Their purpose is to equip God's people to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:1-16). We note that when these individuals are fulfilling what

God has given to them, then God's people will be doing the work of the ministry. All believers are to be ministers of God's love and word (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Rom. 10:9-17).

Jesus sent all believers out with orders to teach all nations about God's love and provision for life (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-20). Jesus instructed us not only to go but also to pray that the Father send even more laborers into His work (Matt. 9:37-38). It is not the responsibility of an institution to do this work. It is the responsibility of God's set-apart people! All of us who have received Jesus as our Lord have been given this privilege and responsibility to tell others about God's love in Jesus Christ (John 4:34-38).

We are to go to church to worship and praise God, be equipped to know who we are in Jesus, and what the greatness of God's power is in behalf of them that believe. (Pray Eph. 1:17-23.) We also encourage one another to grow and believe in God's Word (Acts. 2:41-47). After we go away from church we are to individually share what Jesus is doing in our lives with the people of the world. This is when we are going to see people get saved. Then we bring them to church with us the next week so they can tell what great things God has done for them.

A church is doing its part when they are teaching believers about the abundant life in Jesus, how to walk in victory in the promises of God, and how to share faith in God. Our part is then to go into the world in the name of Jesus to tell unbelievers about what God has done and will do for them if they would give God a chance (John 3:16 and Rom. 10:9-10).

“I was embarrassed the other day when my friend asked me how she could receive the Lord and I did not know what to tell her. Would you please give me something to say?”

Here is what are known as the “Four Spiritual Laws”:

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life (Jn. 3:16, 10:10).
2. Why is it that most people are not experiencing the abundant life? – Because man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life (Rom. 3:23, 6:23). Man was created for fellowship with God, but because of stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own way and broke fellowship with God. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion towards God's Word or passive indifference, is evidence of what the Bible calls sin. Man is continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion.
3. The only way not to be separated from God is God's provision in Jesus Christ. Through him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life. Jesus died in our place (Rom. 5:8). Jesus rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4). Jesus is the only way to God (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).
4. It is not enough to know these facts. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives. We must receive Jesus (Jn. 1:12). We receive Jesus through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). (Also read Jn. 3:1-8.) We receive Christ Jesus by personal invitation (Rev. 3:20). It is not an

intellectual agreement nor an emotional experience, but rather we receive Jesus Christ by faith as an act of the will.

(Copies of Four Spiritual Laws can be picked up at any Christian Bookstore).

Another way of answering the question “What must I do to be saved?” is this:

1. Acknowledge: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).” “God be merciful to me a sinner (Lk. 18:13).”
2. Repent: “Except you repent (turn toward God), you shall all likewise perish (Lk. 13:3).” “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:19).”
3. Confess: “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved (Rom. 10:9).”
4. Forsake: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord...for he will abundantly pardon (Is. 55:7).”
5. Believe: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned (Mk. 16:16).”
6. Receive: “He (Jesus) came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received Him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (Jn. 1:11-12).”

Why not make your eternal decision right now?

A Prayer to Receive Jesus as Lord and be Born Again:

“Father, in Jesus’ name, I recognize by God’s Word that I have been separated from you. I believe that Jesus Christ died for me, a sinner, and gave his blood that I might be forgiven. I now receive Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior and will, by His help, confess Him before men. I thank you that I am now your child.”

“I am looking for help sharing my faith in Jesus with my family and friends. It is not that I am ashamed of my Lord. I’m just ‘chicken’!”

We thank the Lord for your desire to share Jesus. “For salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).”

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news (Romans 10:13-15).” It is truly a life and death matter.

For God did not send his son (Jesus Christ) into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (Jn. 3:17-18)."

We do not believe you are "chicken." However, you are in need of some understanding as to who you now are in Jesus Christ. The moment you confessed with your mouth, "Jesus Christ is my Lord," you became a new creature. (See Rom. 10:9-10, 2 Cor. 5:17.) It is no longer you who lives but Jesus Christ who lives through you (Gal. 2:20). Jesus Christ is now your ability, and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (Phil. 4:13). God desires to work through you to bring this entire world to know His love in Jesus Christ. God has now made and equipped you to be His ambassador in this world (2 Cor. 5:16-21).

Read what God says about you:

"For God did not give to us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7)." You have a spirit of boldness.

"Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day (2 Tim. 1:12)."

Be convinced about what you believe. Read and apply God's Word so you are experiencing it. Be willing to take abuse for what you know to be true (Matthew 10:24-40). Speak the truth in love.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)."

Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" (See Acts 8:12-17, 19:1-7; Luke 11:13.) The Holy Spirit will give you the power and words to witness.

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16)." As we point people to God's love in Jesus through our love, words, and deeds, we are witnesses. Be alert to ways that you can love God's people.

"I know about your challenges to witnessing for Jesus Christ. I am a Christian but I am shy and not a good conversationalist. Does God expect me to be as good a witness as those who are blessed with the gift of speech?"

For this reader and all those who might ask the same question, here is my answer: There are many ways to witness for Christ, and vocal witnessing is only one of them. What you are and the way you conduct yourself is often more important than what you say. There are times that words are soon forgotten, but a Christian's attitude will long be remembered by those who behold it. When you are sincerely helpful to your workmates on the job, when

you refuse the temptation to join in their complaints, when you pray for their sick loved-ones, or give up a coffee break to listen to their problems; you have shown them the Lord Jesus Christ. Your dedicated, consecrated life can be a solid witness for the Lord in a hundred ways.

However, I do not think you should rule out the fact that you can speak for Christ, too. Several of the men whom God used mightily felt that they could not speak adequately. (See Moses – Exodus 4:10-17; Jeremiah 1:4-10.) You are in good company. However, in each case, God enabled them to overcome, and He accomplished His purpose through them as they relied on Him.

Three great scriptures helped me. I am grateful for what the Word of God has brought to pass in my life. I am sure these scriptures from His Word will help you as well.

1. “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say (Exodus 4:12).” As we go, God will enable our speech and will give us what to say to His glory (Acts 1:8).
2. “The Spirit of the Lord spoke to me, and His word was in my tongue (2 Samuel 23:2).” Seek to fill yourself with and memorize God’s Word.
3. “Lord...grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness we may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and the signs and wonders may be done by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:29).”

God will answer our prayer!

“I have a neighbor who incessantly talks about Jesus. I like her, but she is so fanatical. She believes in healing, tongues, casting out demons, etc. Can all believers do these things? Are such things for today? I think she thinks she is Jesus.”

Yours is a seeking heart – you will find (Matt. 7:8). God’s Word is truth: “I’ve been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).”

“I (Jesus) tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I’ve been doing. He will do even greater things than those, because I’m going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so the Son may bring glory to the Father (Jn. 14:12-13).”

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ...they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well ...and the Lord worked with them and confirmed His Word by signs that accompanied it (Mark 16:15-18, 20).”

“I received Jesus as my Lord and was born again while listening to an evangelist on TV. Should I now be baptized?”

Yes! (Acts 2:38). Also ask them to lay hands on you to receive the Holy Spirit with evidence of tongues (Acts 8:5-17, 30-38, 19:2-7; Rom. 6:3-4; Titus 3:4-8).

“How can I be used of God?”

1. We must have a sure knowledge of our own salvation. We are witnesses for the Lord, “I know whom I’ve believed (2 Tim. 1:12).” “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life (1 Jn. 5:11)...” (Also see Rom. 8:16.)
2. We must know the Bible. The Word alone reveals the plan of God for this life and eternity. By the Word we know about prayer, healing, giving, walking with the Lord, heaven and hell, etc.
3. We need to be filled with the Spirit for truly effective service (Acts 1:8). Then we must be led by the Spirit.
4. We must have a heart of genuine love for others. Only the love of Jesus compels us to be used of God. It was love that compelled Jesus to come, to heal, and then to die for us. Now through His love we are to live for others.
5. We must know and practice the power of God through prayer. We must invest our time, talents, and treasures in the Lord’s work (2 Cor. 9:6-15).
6. We must be bold and fearless (Prov. 28:1). It was boldness for which the early Christians prayed (Acts 4:29). The Lord will give us holy boldness, which means confidence, courage, and fearlessness. We must explicitly obey the Lord’s Word. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature... These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues...they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:15, 17-18).” Dare to carry our Jesus’ orders.
7. We must seek to bring glory and honor to God by yielding ourselves to the Lord right now. Pray, “Lord, use me! What would you have me to do? (Acts. 9:6).”

Review these essentials often. Set out to be used of God! (See Matt. 9:37.)

“I have a friend who is always saying, “Praise the Lord!” What purpose does this serve?”

- Praise is the key to the manifestation of God’s presence.

“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel (Psalms 22:3).”

- Praise is the key to the revealed glory of God.

“Who so offereth praise glorifieth me... (Psalms 50:23).”

- Praise is the key to doing God’s will here on earth.

“In everything give thanks (Note: not for everything, but *in* everything. God is greater than the situation) for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (1 Thess. 5:18).”

- Praise is the key to fulfilling the Father’s desire for true worshippers.

“Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord (Psalms 134:2).”

- Praise is the key to a fruit-bearing life.

“...That is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name (Heb. 13:15).” God wants us to be a blessing to others.

- Praise is the key to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

“And they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God (Lk. 24:53).”

- Praise is the key to the continual Spirit-filled life.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:18-20).”

- Praise is the key to entering the very courts of God.

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful to him, and bless his name (Psalms 100:4).”

- Praise is our response to God’s love for us in Jesus.

“He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise to God: many shall see it, and shall trust in the Lord (Psalms 40:3).”

“I have been told for years by various ministers that they were there ‘to equip the people of God for the work of the ministry’ which each individual has been called to perform. My question is what exactly is the ‘work of the ministry’?”

The reference which you quote is found in Eph. 4:11-16. The five ministry offices (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher) are to equip God’s people for the work of the ministry.

What they told you concerning each Christian as being a minister of God's love is also correct (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

What is Involved in the Work of the Ministry:

1. Loving everyone (Gal. 5:14-26; Rom. 12:3-18; 1 Cor. 13; 1 Jn. 4:7-21).
2. Bearing one another's burdens. This does not mean carrying the care for each other, but rather that we help each other take the burden to Jesus (Gal. 6:2-6; 1 Pet. 5:7).
3. Praying for each other (Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:2-4; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).
4. Witnessing to others what we have seen, heard, and know to be true about Jesus and God's promises (Col. 4:5-6; 1 Jn. 1:1-4; Ps. 107:2; Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:7-8).
5. Encouraging and rebuking one another to continue in faith and obedience to God's Word (1 Thess. 5:7-24; Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20; Heb. 10:23-25).
6. Caring for the needy, the widows, and the orphans. (Is. 58; Matt. 25:31-46; Gal. 6:9; 1 Jn. 3:16-17; James 2:14-26, 1:27).
7. Encouraging one another not to forsake assembling together to worship, continue in teaching of God's Word, prayer, and the Lord's Supper (Heb. 10:24-25).
8. Laying hands on the sick for healing and casting out devils in Jesus' name (Mk. 16:17-18).
9. Instructing one another in God's ways (Col. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 2:1-2).
10. Supporting the five ministry offices (Eph. 4:11) and the body of Christ through the use of the service ministries. (Read Rom. 12:3-8; Gal. 6:6.)

As you can readily see, the work of the ministry is centered on letting the love of Jesus come through us so that others are drawn to God by that love. Those whom Jesus has called to operate in the five ministry offices (Eph. 4:11) have the responsibility to teach other believers what to do and how to do the "work of the ministry." Then it is the believer's responsibility to do it.

"Can I pray and believe for the salvation of loved ones and know that they will turn to God for life by receiving Jesus as their Lord?"

Whenever we pray with our understanding, we are to first determine what God's will is in the matter. When we pray in tongues, we pray by the Holy Spirit according to the perfect will of God. (Rom. 8:26-28.) We determine God's will in the matter by finding a promise or promises that apply to our situation (1 Jn. 5:14-15). There is a promise in God's Word for every situation and need that we will ever encounter in this life.

Therefore, pertaining to your question, see what God's will is concerning people being saved:

- "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering towards us, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)."

- “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; *who will have all men to be saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4).”
- “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son (Jesus Christ) that whosoever believes in him (Jesus) should not perish but have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).”

It is clear from God’s Word that it is His will that everyone be saved by confessing Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). We also know that individuals must make that decision for themselves. God has given to each of us a free will, so that we might freely and lovingly respond to His love in Jesus and receive all His blessings for us. God will not force anyone to love Him or receive His blessings; nor can anyone receive salvation for someone else. Individuals must decide for Jesus on their own. God has already provided the gift of life. Now it needs to be received.

Where, then, do our faith and prayers for someone else to receive salvation fit in? Our faith and prayers enable people to freely decide for themselves that they want God’s life. We can claim them for the Lord and believe that they will be able to receive the life God has provided as we believe and do not doubt (Mk. 11:22-24, 9:23; Matt. 19:25-26; Jn. 14:12-14).

As we open our hearts to God and to people, and lovingly pray for them that the Father draw them to Himself (Jn. 6:65), then we allow an atmosphere for them to receive God’s life in Jesus. Love them and share God’s word as questions begin to arise in their hearts toward God and the reason for the hope in you (1 Pet. 3:15). We cannot choose for others; however, we can help provide an atmosphere for them to turn to God.

Our prayers will do three things to help enable people to receive:

1. Since the devil is blinding their minds from realizing a need for Jesus (2 Cor. 4:3-4), our prayers will stop the devil from hindering their free choice (Matt. 18:18).
2. Prayer will enable God to open opportunities for them to hear His Good News (Col. 4:2-6; Matt. 9:37-38).
3. Prayer will open their hearts and minds to receive God’s best in Jesus (Eph. 1:17-2:10).

“Would you please give me some help in comforting my friend whose mother just died?”

“May the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).”

The final enemy, death, has already been overcome and defeated for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. We who believe on the Lord Jesus will have eternal victory. What a comfort it is to know that because Jesus lives and is raised from the dead, so we who die believing in Jesus will also live!

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Jesus said (Jn. 11:25-26).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believes in him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God” (Jn. 3:16-18).

As God’s Word points out, not everyone will have eternal life and blessing. Only those who have received and lived for Jesus will have such a hope and reward. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me (Jn. 14:6).”

We can have hope and confidence even at the time of death because our God has overcome the power of death for us.

God has a promise to meet our every need. As we have faith in God and his word, we are comforted and receive victory in Jesus’ name.

1. Tell your friend that God will replace:
 - a) Our tears with joy (Is. 12:2-4; Jn. 16:19-22; Rev. 21:4).
 - b) Our grief with His presence (Is. 43:2; Jn. 14:23, 26, 16:20).
 - c) Despair with hope (Is. 51:12-15; Heb. 13:5-6).
2. Help your friend with making decisions (Is. 44:8; 55:12).
3. Help your friend to:
 - a) Talk about death (Is. 40:6- 11; 1 Cor. 15)
 - b) Reach out to others (Is. 41:17-20).
 - c) Stay involved with God’s people.
 - d) Realize the real and living hope in Jesus (1 Pet. 1:3-8; 1 Cor. 15).

Help your friend to read God’s Word and remember:

- Jesus is the bread of life (Jn. 6:47-58).
- Jesus has laid down his life for us (Jn. 10:7-18).

- Jesus alone is our resurrection and life (Jn. 11:1-44; Eph. 2:1-10).
- Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (Jn. 14:1-3).
- God has destined us to be his own through Jesus (Eph. 1:13-14).
- Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might (Eph. 6:10).
- Our faith is the assurance of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1-39, 12:1-2).
- God has put all things under his feet...even death (Romans 8; 1 Cor. 15).
- Take care of God's responsibilities given to us (Matt. 25:14-30). (Also read Rev. 21:1-8.)

“I was told that a person must be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in other tongues in order to be saved and have eternal life. Is this true?”

No. The basis upon which a person receives salvation is faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9).”

As people hear about how God loves them and how God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for their being separated from God so that they can become God's sons and daughters, God is working faith in their hearts.

A person then responds to God's love and word by saying, “I want and need God's life and forgiveness. Forgive me, Lord. I confess Jesus as my Lord and I believe in my heart that He is risen from the dead.” (See Rom. 10:9-10, 17; Rev. 3:20, 21:6-7, 22:17; Jn. 1:12-13.)

The person is then water baptized after believing in and receiving Jesus as Lord (Acts. 2:38, 8, 12-13, 35-39; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 6:3-4). It is clear from God's Word that a person is only saved through faith in Jesus Christ, and faith itself is a gift from God alone.

There exists much confusion over this issue concerning the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Actually, the infilling of the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with a person's salvation. When a person receives Jesus into their lives as Lord and Savior, at that moment they receive the life of God and become children of God. When a person receives the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:4, 10:44-46, 19:1-7), the person is now empowered by God to do the work of God.

It is possible for a person to be “born again” or saved and not yet have the Holy Spirit. However, it is not possible for a person to be filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues without first being saved by faith in Jesus.

Being “born again” and being filled with the Holy Spirit are two separate events which we are not to confuse with one another, yet God considers both to be essential for abundant Christian life and ministry.

In Acts 8 we find a clear distinction for our reference. “When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women... (We note that the people believed and were water baptized. They were saved!). When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply (note this!) been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of hands, he offered them money... (Acts 8:6-18).” (See also Acts 10:44-48, 19:1-7.)

The physical evidence or sign which Simon noticed concerning the infilling of the Holy Spirit was the new tongues, as is shown in these other accounts. It is clear from them that the people were saved by responding to the Word of God. It is also clear that the people were filled with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. The two events are not to be confused; yet God and the apostles recognized both are necessary.

“I have a question about the verse where it says that when a person is delivered from a demon that the demon goes to a dry place and then returns to the person in whom it was living. If this is true, how can a person keep free from the demon?”

The verses which you are referring to are found in Lk. 11:24-26. Once a demon is removed from a person by the power of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, the demon will go to what the Bible calls a dry place. No one knows exactly where this is located, nor does it matter. What does matter is that the demon will seek to go back to the person from which it was removed. If the demon finds that the person has “not filled the house,” it will seek to come in again. Thus, one can see the importance of having the house filled. The only one who can be responsible to fill it and keep free is the person who has been delivered. If people want to stay free, they must learn to walk in God’s ways and use His protection and weapons. Deliverance is only as good as what people do with it afterwards in their daily lives.

How to “Fill the House” and Stay Free from Demonic Bondage:

1. Ask Jesus to come into your life to be your Lord and Savior. God loves you and wants to protect, care for, and give you abundant life.
2. Be filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (Eph. 5:18; Acts 2:1-4, 8:14-17; 10:44-46, 19:1-6). Demons do not want people to be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and operating in the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1-11, 14:1)

because the power of God is now in their lives to render ineffective the work of the devil and to expose Satan's work for what it really is.

3. Use the "prayer language" or new tongue (Jude 20; Eph. 6:18). This will help you to stay in the Spirit in tune with God's will, to avoid temptation, and to deal with activity in the spiritual realm of which you have no knowledge with your mind (1 Cor. 14:14; Rom. 8:26-28; Matt. 26:41).
4. Be watchful and alert (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Matt. 26:41). Put on the whole armor of God by reading, thinking upon, and doing God's work (Eph. 6:10-18). Obedience to God's Word will not allow the devil to have an opportunity or a home in your life (Eph. 4:27). The product of living attached to Jesus and doing His Word is that the fruit of the Spirit will be produced in our lives. This will bring glory to God and produce God's work around us rather than our being tools for the devil (John 15:1-12; Gal. 5:16-26).

"If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you (and keep) you free (Jn. 8:31-32)."

5. Cast down the lies of the devil (which come into your thoughts), that are contrary to what God's Word says (Such as, you are weak, miserable, unworthy, cannot be forgiven, fearful, etc.). These are lies of the devil. God's Word is the basis for the truth about us, not how we feel (2 Cor. 10:3-5). When a thought comes that is not God, say, "In the name of Jesus, I cast that lie down. God says this is the truth!"
6. Stay in an attitude of submission to God. Walk in love towards others. Be quick to seek and give forgiveness when wrongs are committed. (See Ps. 139:23-24; 1 Jn. 1:5-2:11; Matt. 6:14-15.) Thank God daily that you are covered by the blood of Jesus. When pressure comes from Satan, command it to leave, saying, "In Jesus' name, get away from me!" It must leave. (See Jam. 4:7; also see 1 Jn. 5:18.)
7. Testify to others concerning your deliverance by the power and to the glory of God (Mk. 4:19-20). Do not let Satan hide the work God did. He will attempt to cover the fact that he was there so he can come back again. You will keep your deliverance as you tell others and give God the glory (Ps. 107:1-2; Jn. 8:36).

"What will happen to those who have not received God's love for them by committing their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?"

God's Word clearly teaches that it is God's will and desire that everyone be saved from destruction and have the eternal life with Him which He has already provided through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4). God has already provided eternal life for everyone. However, each person must receive God's love by making a commitment of his or

her life to Jesus as Lord. This is the only way that the Father God has established for us to be saved from eternal separation from Him (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Jn. 5:7-13).

God loves us and wants us to have His life. In sending His Son, Jesus Christ, God has provided and revealed Himself as a loving God who wants mankind to have His best. In His love, God has given us a free will so that we can freely, lovingly receive and respond to His love. It is now our choice whether or not we will accept God's love and blessings (which include eternal life, health, protection, and provision in Jesus Christ).

God's Word clearly states what will happen to unbelievers who have not received God's love gift of salvation and life for a lost and dying world:

1. Their lifetime is spent in vanity and emptiness. (See book of Eccl.) "For all this they sinned still, and believed not in His wondrous works. Therefore, their days did He consume in vanity (Ps. 78:32-33)."
2. Unbelievers, not God, have already condemned themselves to eternal death by their own unbelief, if they do not turn to God for life in Jesus. "That whosoever believes in him (Jesus) should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus Christ), that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him (Jesus) might be saved. He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:15-18)."
3. Unbelievers will die in their sins because they have not received the forgiveness and life which the blood of Jesus has provided. "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins," Jesus said (Jn. 8:24).
4. They shall be judged by God's Word in the last day. Jesus said, "He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (Jn. 12:48)."
5. Unbelievers are being hindered from making their own choices for God's love and life by an enemy that wants them destroyed (Jn. 10:10). "If the gospel which I preach is hid, it is hid from them that are lost; in whom the God of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them (2 Cor. 4:3-4)."
6. Unbelievers will be classed with sinners in eternity. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, whoremongers, and sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8)."

If you are an unbeliever and have not accepted God's love in Jesus, know today that God loves you and wants you to have life with Him. You can have life with God by praying: "Father, I recognize that I have been separated from you. Forgive me because of the blood of Jesus. Come into my life, Jesus, to be my Lord and Savior. I confess with my mouth that Jesus Christ is my Lord and I believe in my heart He is risen from the dead. Thank you, Lord, for making me your child.

If you prayed this prayer, now seek out a church which teaches that Jesus is God come in the flesh.

“What is a deceiving spirit?”

A deceiving spirit is a demonic influence which attempts to hinder people from coming to God’s truth by speaking lies or by blinding people’s minds so that they cannot understand God’s truth. The Lord Jesus tells us that Satan is a liar and a deceiver (Jn. 8:44). (Also read Rev. 12:9, 20:10).

All demons are liars and distort the truth for their own purposes. People who are influenced by a deceiving spirit are themselves deceived in thinking that what they are doing and saying is alright, and they will become liars and gossips seeking to maliciously deceive others.

The Lord tells us that such people who are liars and deceivers will have chosen by their disobedience to God to be put in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone at the final judgment (Rev. 21:8). Such people have deceived themselves into thinking that they can get away with their deception; however, God’s Word reads otherwise!

“Now the Holy Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing or deceiving spirits (demons) and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy; having the conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3).”

Here we find deceiving spirits bringing in doctrines and teachings into the Christian Church which are not scriptural practices. We will also find such deceiving spirits trying to keep God’s people from the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which bring supernatural revelation, power, and encouragement from God to His people (1 Cor. 14:37-39). The deceiving spirits will do this by distorting and twisting the Word of God to make people believe that such gifts are done away with or not for everyone. Such spirits will attempt to dilute the Word of God or substitute false practices for the truth. We cannot add to nor subtract from what God has said to us in His Word.

Remember how Satan used the Word of God (incorrectly applied), attempting to deceive Jesus from the truth (Matt. 4:5-7). If Satan attempted to deceive Jesus using the Word of God falsely applied, he will certainly attempt to deceive God’s people in the same way. We cannot afford to let the devil steal what God has told us is ours as recorded in His Word. Anything that contradicts, limits, or underestimates God’s love, power, and ability is a teaching of a deceiving spirit. (Eph. 3:20 reveals that God cannot be limited.) Anything that presents God in an evil light is done so by a deceiving spirit. (Read James 1:13-18.) Disobedience to God’s Word is presented by such a spirit.

Deceiving spirits are also responsible for people not realizing the need to receive God's love and life by accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, less the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them (2 Cor. 4:3-4)."

God's Word tells us that people have been deceived or blinded from realizing their need for Jesus and all that God has to offer them. We also were once deceived (Tit. 3:3-8), but God's love saved us. God can set others free as we respond to them in His way. (Read 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Col. 4:3-6.)

"What is the 'mark of the beast'?"

Please read Revelation 13. During the latter part of the tribulation period before Jesus Christ returns, Satan will have total control of this world for 42 months. During that time Satan (dragon) will give authority to the "beast" to control the world and war against God's people who have received Jesus as Lord and are obedient to God's Word, not bowing down to the beast. God's people are called to patiently endure and be faithful during this time (verse 10).

Then another beast will appear who will exercise authority in behalf of the first beast, making people worship the first beast. This second beast, otherwise known as the false prophet, will control both political and church affairs. He will deceive the entire world by signs and wonders, causing people to worship the first beast. He will cause the people to make an image of the beast so they may worship it. He will then cause, by Satan's power, the image of the first beast to come alive and speak, that those who have not worshipped the image should be killed.

The false prophet will also force everyone, without distinction, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, which is the name of the first beast or the number of his name. The number is 666. This marking is Satan's way of forcing people by economic control to worship the beast. If a people do not get marked, they will be killed.

What is the harm of being marked? "A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury...He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb (Jesus). And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.' This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them' (Revelation 14:9-13)."

Jesus will then return, defeat Satan, and establish a new order.

This is a sure word about what is soon to happen. In Jesus Christ is life abundant and eternal. We who have received Jesus have nothing to fear. As we remain faithful to Him to the end, God will give us a crown of eternal life. The unbelieving, Satan, and his fallen angels will be in the lake of burning fire forever.

If you have not received Jesus as your Lord, understand this: God loves you and wants you to have life with Him forever. As you confess that you are in need of Jesus and say, "Jesus is my Lord and I believe He is risen from the dead," you will be saved (Romans 10:9-10). Be baptized and then filled with the Holy Spirit. In no way ever receive the mark of the beast or obey anyone other than God and anything other than His word.

PHYSICAL REALM & HEALING

Chapter 9

“I have a couple of friends who believe they are giving glory to God and “suffering for Christ” because they do not believe that God will heal their diseases. Is this true?”

Many people have a misconception about what suffering, trials, and tribulation mean. We understand clearly from God’s Word that suffering, sickness, and disease are not His will for anyone, nor is it God’s will that anyone perish and suffer eternal punishment in hell (Is. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus, acting in the perfect will of the Heavenly Father, “went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him (Acts 10:38).” Everyone who sought healing from Jesus received healing!

Sickness and disease is from the devil. Health and salvation are from God. People will not be free to receive their healing until they understand that it is not God’s will for them to be sick.

If we would take the time to study God’s Word and find out what it says, not what someone has told us about it, we would find God’s truth which would set us free.

The phrase, “suffering for Christ,” is talking about being persecuted for being a Christian. There is no reference to any person “suffering” sickness and disease for Christ’s sake. Jesus’ suffering for us was not sickness and disease but being afflicted, beaten, mocked, and giving his own life and blood (as our substitute). He paid the price for our separation from God so that we might be saved by receiving Him as our Lord. As Jesus was persecuted, so will we suffer persecution, not sickness and disease, for being his followers. (See for yourself: 2 Cor. 1:5-7; Gal. 5:11, 6:12; 1 Thess. 3:4; 1 Tim. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:12, 2:12, 3:12; Heb. 11:25; 1 Pet. 1:11, 2:21-23, 3:18, 4:1, 4:13, 5:1, 5:10; Rom. 8:18; Phillip. 3:10.)

In James 5:10-11, we find the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord as examples of “suffering” affliction and of patience. “Behold we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” (Job was healed and prospered – Job 42.) Glory always went to God when the people were healed! (See Luke 18:43, 5:25-26; Acts 3:7-8, 4:21.)

The term “tribulation” appears 26 times in God’s Word. In the Greek the term means “pressure, affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, trouble, tribulation.” In all the New Testament listings (none of which speak about tribulation as being sickness and disease), tribulation is the result of pressure from the devil towards Christians in the form of persecution. (See Matt. 13:21, 24:21, 29; Mk. 13:24; Jn. 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 2:9, 5:3, 8:35, 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:4, 7:4; 1 Thess. 2, 3:4; Rev. 1:9, 2:9-10, 7:14; 2 Thess. 1:4, 1:6; 1 Samuel 10:19; Eph. 3:13.)

The term “temptation” or “tempted” appears 20 times in the New Testament. In the Greek, the term means, “a putting to proof (by experiment) (of good), experience (of evil), solicitation, discipline or provocation – adversity, trials. (See Matt. 6:13, 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 4:13, 8:13,

11:4, 22:40, 46; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 4:14; 1 Tim. 6:9; Heb. 3:8; James 1:2, 1:12; Rev, 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:9.)

Satan, not God, is the tempter in adversity, sickness, and evil (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5). God is the deliverer of the faithful (1 Cor. 10:13). “Blessed is the man who perseveres (holds fast to God’s Word) under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone... don’t be deceived (James 1:12-13, 16).”

All temptations of the devil are intended to make our faith in God fall and to destroy us spiritually, mentally, and physically. God does not teach us by sending evil (such as sickness and disease upon our bodies). God teaches us by His Word.

“I am a Christian and I believe in God’s Word. I have not been able to have a child. Is there anything in God’s Word upon which I can base my prayer for a child?”

The Lord gives several clear words concerning His will and provision about your request. “Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward (Psalms 127:3-5).”

In Deuteronomy 28:1-14 the blessings of Abraham are listed. Included in verses 4 and 11 are promises that apply. “Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body...”

Barrenness is a curse of the law because of disobedience, according to Deuteronomy 28:18. However, we note that in Galatians 3:13, Jesus Christ has paid the price for us being separated and disobedient to God, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (v. 13-14).

In other words, Jesus took away the curse of barrenness. To those who have received him as Lord and Savior, Jesus gave right standing with God and the promise of a fruitful womb. It is a matter of now receiving by faith what Jesus has already provided for you. Understand, without a doubt, that it is God’s will that you have a child. Tell Satan, “In Jesus’ name you cannot steal what God has provided for me.” Pray to the Lord in Jesus’ name asking for the child which He has promised you in Deut. 28:4 and 11 as you release your faith. Thank God that you have a fruitful womb. Go about your daily affairs as usual, rejoicing with your husband that you are both blessed. Do not get anxious. It takes nine months for the baby to come.

“He (God) maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord (Psalms 113:9).”

“A wonderful working of the Lord by the power of prayer was shared with me. I would like to share it. Enclosed is a copy of the doctor’s confirmation which I requested for you.

It is so exciting what God is doing for those who believe in Jesus and act on His Word. God is so good!”

Re: Joseph Duncan

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter will verify that the above-named lead man for the City of Beaumont was involved in a motorcycle accident on April 24, 1979. At that time, he sustained a fracture of the medial portion of the medial femoral condyle of the right leg. He was placed in a long leg cast and put on non-weight bearing.

It was my opinion that he would require from 6 weeks to 3 months to heal his fracture. However, the patient returned in 2 weeks indicating that he had no pain whatever and that it was his opinion that the fracture would be healed. The cast was removed and X-rays were taken and the fracture appeared to be healed. The patient was allowed to begin weight-bearing and he has absolutely no pain or problems of any sort.

The result is totally unexpected. It is, at minimum, three times as fast as would have been expected and is nothing short of amazing.

Sincerely,

Edmund T. Dombrowski, M.D.

Praise God! “God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Num. 23:19).” “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Heb. 11:06).”

Some of God’s promises for healing include: James 5:14-15, Mk. 11:23-24, 16:18; Is. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:24; Ex. 23:25-26, Ps. 103:2-3, Jn. 14:12-14. Jesus Christ is Lord!

“Is it wrong to eat duck?”

No. In the Old Testament there are various dietary regulations which were instituted for the people. In Deuteronomy 14 we find which meats the people could and could not eat. Duck was considered among the “clean” meats that the people could eat. In the New Testament, we are not bound by such dietary regulations.

There are people today who by personal choice eat only certain meats or do not eat meat at all, eating only vegetables. Again, this is by personal preference. There is no scriptural basis.

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed (1 Tim. 4:1-6).”

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all of our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us: He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross. Therefore let no one judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come: the reality, however, is found in Christ (Col. 2:13-17). “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not touch! Do not taste!?” These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence (Col. 2:23).”

“I am realizing that overeating and overweight need to be dealt with. Besides stopping eating what can I do to help this situation?”

We are excited with you that you have made the first step to resolving the problem – you have recognized that you have a problem and that you need help. God is able to help us in all areas of our lives as we yield ourselves to Him.

Guidelines for Excessive Behavior (Over anything):

1. The Lord has wonderfully made you to know when your body or mind is being pushed to excess. God intends for you to listen to what your body is telling you but not to be controlled by it. For instance, I may be hungry and my stomach starts to growl, saying, “Feed me!” It is healthy to eat but not to excess, where you feel bloated, nor to eat all day long.

Another time you may feel sluggish. It may be that you need physical exercise or proper vitamins because something is lacking in your diet. People often work themselves too hard, and the Lord may be telling them in the body and mind to rest. On the other hand, there are people who only rest, and do not work, which will eventually lead to poverty.

So you see, there will always be a balance in God's working. "Everything is permissible for me' – but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me' – but I will not be mastered by anything (1 Cor. 6:12)."

2. Remember our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are to take care of ourselves. Get to know what God says about you in His Word. Find out about how your spirit, mind, and body operate. Spend time in God's Word. It is health to you, will feed your spirit, and will help you to control your body and mind. (See Prov. 4:20-27; Rom. 12:1-2.)

Find and eat a balanced diet, making certain you are getting proper vitamins. Get enough rest and physical exercise, making certain that you are thinking, speaking, and acting upon positive, rather than negative, things (Philip. 4:8).

3. Excessive behavior is often rooted in fear or worry. Give the worry and fear to God, knowing that He loves you. "Father, in Jesus' name I give this fear to you. I thank you for forgiving me (1 Pet. 5:7; James 4:7)."

Tell the fear (of gaining weight, poverty, etc.) to leave you in Jesus' name. (See 2 Cor. 10:3-5.) If you are obsessed with a desire, it may be that you are dealing with spiritual forces which can only be broken in Jesus' name.

4. Remember: It is God working in you that will enable you to have victory. Continue to speak that fact, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phillip 4:13)." Refuse to speak weakness (Joel 3:10) or defeat. As you rest in the Lord by being confident that God is working in you and with you (since you have given the situation to Him and are doing what He says to do), you will see God's wonderful results in your life (See Prov. 3:5-6). God is your strength and salvation (Ps. 91). Rejoice in the Lord as you go about your daily activities and you will start to see balance come into your life (Philip. 4:4-8).

"Is it wrong for a person to have the body cremated at death?"

Contrary to popular belief, there exists nothing in God's Word against cremation. The common Hebrew practice was to bury the body; however again, there is nothing stated against cremation.

It is our opinion that this thought (that Christians should not be cremated) originates from the idea that it is by fire that Satan, the fallen angels (demons), and all unbelievers will be tormented forever (having not received God's love in Jesus Christ and condemning themselves to such a fate). (See Rev. 20:10-15; Matt. 25:46; Isa. 66:23-24; Jn. 3:16-18.) Because of this idea Christians would not want to submit themselves to such a practice. However, this thought is not based on a true understanding of God's Word concerning the makeup of man or God's plan and purpose for him.

Man is created by God from the dust of the ground and the body will return to dust (Gen 2:7, 3:19, 18:27; Ps. 103:14; Job 10:9, 34:15). It has been scientifically reported that man consists of gases, water, and about a pound of dirt. When God took that dirt, He breathed His life or Spirit into it and man became a living being created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27, 2:7). God made him with more than a body. Man is an eternal being because God's image was created in him.

God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24). Likewise, the real man is not the body but the spirit. Man is made up of a spirit and soul (mind), and lives in a body (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). The spirit awaits the day when the person dies so that it can leave the earthly body which hinders the spirit. This body is earthly and not eternal like our spirits. (See 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Rom. 8:19-25.)

When a person dies, whether the person is buried or cremated, the body will go back to dust, so it really does not matter which method a person decides to use. However, the spirit of the person will live eternally (Ecc. 12:7). Therefore, it does matter what we decide in this life in regards to our spirits. We will either be with God eternally or we will be separated from Him, experiencing eternal death and torment (See Rev. 20:10-15; Matt. 25:46; Jn. 3:16-18).

When man decided to disobey God, he fell from having eternal life with Him. The consequence of man's decision was eternal death (Rom. 6:23). However, God in His love has provided the gift of eternal life with Him for all who turn to His only provision for life in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23; Jn. 3:16). Whoever believes in Jesus as Lord and lives for Him will be saved from eternal death and torment and will be given eternal life with God.

As a person confesses with his or her mouth, "Jesus Christ is my Lord" and believes that He is risen from the dead, at that moment the person's spirit is "born again." It is made alive to God, whereas before the spirit was dead to God. The soul or mind then needs to be renewed by God's Word so that it will be saved also (James 1:21; Rom. 12:1-2). The body needs to be brought under control to the spirit which is now alive to God (Rom. 12:1, 6:6-18).

In the near future the Lord Jesus will come back to judge this world and to take His people to Himself. In that day, at the final trumpet, the dead in Christ and all the dead will arise from the graves and God will give man an eternal body to match his eternal spirit. Those who are alive still at that time will have their bodies changed at that moment and will rise to meet Jesus in the air. (See 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:35-57; Jn. 6:40; 2 Cor. 4:14; Acts 24:15; Jn. 11:25-26.) Those who have received Jesus as Lord and have lived for God will go to live with Him, and those who have rejected Jesus and not lived for God will depart from His presence to eternal punishment. (See Matt. 25:31-46; Lk. 20:35-38; Rev. 14:11-13, 20:10-21:8).

RELATIONSHIPS

Chapter 10

“How can I deal with a jealous, backbiting “friend” who is spreading rumors about me at work (which could cost me my job)? I’m about ready to blow a fuse. I realize God must have a better way.”

Ever since man’s separation from God, jealousy, envy, competitive striving, and backbiting have been present in this world. Cain killed his own brother Abel because of jealousy. Some of this world’s slogans are “dog eat dog world,” “survival of the fittest,” “keep up with the Jones.” Man’s desire is to promote himself and his own interests at any cost. God’s desire is harmony and equality.

To deal in love with jealous people, we must understand that there usually exists within them a low self-image, insecurity, need for recognition, and discontent about themselves. Since they feel inadequate about themselves, they will take it out on someone they feel is adequate, stands in their way, or upon the subject of their affection. They are in spiritual and mental bondage and need God’s help.

Do not defend yourself (Romans 12:17-21). Commit your cause to God who judges justly (1 Peter 2:20-25). Pray God will bless them. Do good to them (Luke 6:27; Matthew 5:43-45). Express your love to them. When opportunity arises, tell them that God equally loves both of you so much that He sent His son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our being separated from Him. We receive God’s life by receiving Jesus Christ. “Therefore, if any is in Christ, he is a new creature – old things are passed away – all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).” Jesus took upon himself our separation from God: unworthiness, failures, fears, doubts, worries, or sickness, and gave us his worthiness and right standing with God and every blessing (2 Cor. 5:21). God declares us to be special and equal sons of God – not because of who we are or because of our deeds, but because of God’s gift through Jesus Christ. We are to be concerned about God, not ourselves (2 Cor. 5:15). We are to bear one another’s burdens, share in each other’s joys and sorrows, and encourage each other in God. Forgive as God has forgiven you. (For further insight see James 3:13-4:12.)

“Is it all right for my boyfriend and me to live together if it is only for economic reasons?”

“All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord (Prov. 16:2).” God is not “old fashioned” because the truth which was established at the beginning of time does not change. God believes in marriage! We are also told to “watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41).” What may start out as “innocent” can end up in disaster as we “oppose ourselves” in Satan’s trap. (See 2 Tim. 2:25-26.) God would not have us put ourselves in a position where we could be forced to choose between Satan and our lusts vs. God.

Satan will encourage us with all types of reasons to say what we are doing is alright – economic reasons, planning to get married, convenience, seeing if we get along or are compatible, etc. However, God says we are putting ourselves in danger by living together outside of marriage. Marriage alone has God’s blessing. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).” (Also see 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.) Understand the term “fornication” means sex relations outside of marriage. “But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband (1 Cor. 7:2).”

Living together involves a temporary “satisfaction” of lusts; however, it cannot fulfill a person because it is Satan’s counterfeit to marriage. Marriage involves commitment and responsibility towards God and one’s spouse. If someone is not willing to make that commitment and to take that responsibility, lust, not love, is the motivation. People are using each other.

Three is not company when the third party is Satan. God loves you and wants your life and marriage to be blessed!

Counsel: If economic reasons are the real reason for your living together, a girl roommate could just as well share the expense. That way you avoid placing temptation in the way of your boyfriend and yourself.

Otherwise, separate until you are married. If you have violated God’s way by having sexual relations already, ask God to forgive you by the blood of Jesus. God will forgive you! If your boyfriend wants to live together and not get married, tell him, “I want you and me to be right with God, and I cannot live with you until I’m married to you.” If he persists, tell him, “I’m not the girl for you!”

“What type of body will I have in heaven and will I know my loved ones?”

At the resurrection of the dead at Jesus’ return, God will give a new spiritual body, which will be eternal and not subject to death (1 Cor. 15:44). The body will be very similar to Jesus’ body after he was raised from the dead by God, confirming that Jesus Christ is God’s only way to eternal life.

We will not be spirits, but will rather appear to be very similar to what we look like now. However, we will be flesh and bone (Luke 24:39). No blood will be present in us. Our bodies will not decay or be subject to any sickness, disease, deformity, or death. We will be eternal.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption (1 Cor. 15:50).” When a person confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and is baptized, at that moment God gives him a new spirit which is alive to God. In Jesus the person is heir to God’s promises and eternal life with God. Before one can live in eternity, God must change the person’s body (1 Corinthians 15:38-57).

Yes, we will recognize each other in the new life. The disciples knew Jesus after his resurrection from the dead. However, there will not be family relationships as we understand them. “The children of this world marry... but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now the dead are raised... For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him (Luke 20:34-38 KIV).”

All people will be raised from the dead. However, only those who have received Jesus as Lord by faith will have eternal life with God. All unbelievers will spend eternity in the lake which burns with fire (Rev. 21:8). God loves us and desires that none perish, and that we and our loved ones all receive His way to life in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:16-18; 2 Peter 3:9).

“I was told that there is a certain amount of times that we are to forgive people and after that we don’t have to forgive anymore. Where is that in the Bible?”

The reference to which you are probably referring is found in Matt. 18:21-22 where Peter asks Jesus, “How often shall I forgive those that wrong me? Seven times?” Jesus responded, “Not seven times, but 70 times seven.” We have a tendency to quickly get out our calculators and total to 490 (the times I am to forgive that person and after that it’s over). In other words, we are just making a list waiting for 491 so we can zap someone. After all, Jesus said we are to forgive that person only 490 times. However, is that really what Jesus said?

When we are reading God’s Word, it is important that we get the whole thought on the issue. Jesus proceeded to teach from Peter’s question concerning forgiveness in Matthew 18:22-35. He told a story about a man (representing us) who owed a king (God) an unpayable amount. As the man stood in judgment, he pleaded pardon with the king. The king was moved to compassion and forgave him the debt. The man then turned around and had a person, who could not pay him back an insignificant amount, thrown into jail. The king heard about what had happened and called the man back, saying to him, “O wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you asked me: should you not also have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you? (vs. 32-33).” The king then delivered the man over to the tormentors until the debt was paid. “So likewise will my heavenly Father do also to you, if you do not forgive from your hearts every one his brother their trespasses (v. 35).” (Also see Matt. 6:12-15; Mk. 11:25-26; Lk. 17:4; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.)

Look at this carefully. What was Jesus really saying when he said forgive them 70 times seven? Note: if we have really forgiven people as God says to do, then we will never get beyond their having one offense against us! As soon as we are quick to forgive them, they go back to zero offenses. It would be impossible for a person to ever have 490 offenses against us if we have forgiven as God has forgiven us and wiped the offense off the record like it never happened. (See 1 Jn. 1:9.)

God teaches us to unconditionally forgive without limit. God will take care of us. (See Psalms 37:17; Romans 12:17-21.) A Christian cannot afford to have an unforgiving and bitter attitude because we cut ourselves off from God's forgiveness and are not able to help other people either. (See Matt. 5:23-26.) By allowing ourselves to be unforgiving, we are actually opening ourselves and our homes up to Satan's destruction (tormentors).

God's Word clearly states that unconditional, limitless forgiveness is God's way for us to deal with each other, enabling God to bring His love and harmony as well as accomplish His purpose in the situation (Acts 7:60).

SPIRITUAL GROWTH & CHARACTER

Chapter 11

“I am interested in getting results when I pray. My friend tells me to just believe in Jesus. Is there something else that I should do?”

Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way which God has provided for us to come to Him.

1. God will do little or nothing unless we ask Him (James 4:2). He says, “Call to me, and I will answer you (Jer. 33:3).” Prayer is simply asking God and expecting to receive the answer!
2. God says, “Come boldly (with confidence and assurance) to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).” Remove from your life hindrances to receiving answers – not receiving Jesus as Lord, wrong attitudes and actions, unbelief, fear, etc. Confess your sin to God (1 Jn. 1:9), ask and thank God for forgiving you.
3. Know that through what Jesus has done for you, you have right standing with God (2 Cor. 5:21), Rom. 10:10). As a righteous person, you have influence with God (James 5:16).
4. Know that God has given you the privilege and ability to stand in His presence through faith in Jesus Christ, without any sense of sin, guilt, or unworthiness. The blood of Jesus enables us to pray to God (Heb. 10:19).
5. Pray about everything (Phil. 4:6). Dare to ask God for miracles (Jn. 16:23-24). “When praying, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them (Mk. 11:24).” Only believing –prayer gets results from God! Ask the Father in Jesus’ name. Then believe you shall receive and you shall have! Now shift from praying to praising. You are fully persuaded that what God has promised, He will perform (Rom. 4:21).
6. Cease struggling: you have committed your need into God’s hands. Rest in the sure promise of God (Num. 23:19). God will perform His Word if you believe!

“I am writing this in hope that others can profit from my mistake. My mistake is my tongue. For years I have gossiped and slandered friends, family, and anyone else I could talk about, whether I knew them or not. I thought it was important that everyone knew what was going on. Now I find that no one really wants to be around me. I guess “no news really is good news.” My prayer is that we can stop hurting one another by not meddling in affairs that are not our business.”

This time you have spoken well! Allow us this opportunity to discuss what God’s Word has to say concerning the use of our tongues:

“How forcible are right words (Job 6:25; Ps. 15:2, and 3)!”

“Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones (Proverbs 16:24).”

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver (Proverbs 25:11).”

“The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow him up (Ecc. 10:12).” (Also see Is. 50:4.)

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, anger, and clamor, evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice (Ephesians 4:31-32).”

“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell (James 3:6).” (See also James 3:1-4:12.)

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law..., you are not a doer of the law, but a judge (James 4:11).”

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings... (1 Pet. 2:1).”

“Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile (Ps. 34:13).”

“He that keeps his mouth keeps his life: but he that opens wide his lips shall have destruction (Proverbs 13:3).”

“Whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue, keeps his soul from troubles (Proverbs 21:23).”

“If any among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is vain (James 1:26).”

“...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God (James 1:19-20).”

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile (1 Peter 3:10).”

“He that hides hatred with lying lips, and he that utters a slander, is a fool (Proverbs 10:18).”

“Whoso privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off: him that has a high look and a proud heart will not I allow (Psalms 101:5).”

“A hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered (Proverbs 11:9).”

“An evil man sows strife: and a whisperer separates chief friends (Proverbs 16:28).”

“Where there is no wood the fire goes out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceases. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd (emptiness) covered with silver dross. He that hates dissembles with his lips, and lays up deceit within him; when he speaks fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it. The liar hates. The flatterer works ruin. Meddling makes strife (Proverbs 26:217-28).”

“Should a believer take someone to court?”

We believe that God has a better way of taking care of our problems and needs. “Cast all your cares upon him (God) who cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7).” “My God will supply all your needs according to the glorious riches in Christ (Philip. 4:19).”

We believe that God is able to take care of His people who are obedient to His Word. If we submit our cause to God, he will deal justly with us and the others involved as we are trusting Him. (See 1 Pet. 2:23; Prov. 3:4-5.)

At Corinth, a similar question arose which may help us with some understanding. “If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another-and this in front of unbelievers!

“The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong and you do this to your brothers.”

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you once were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you are justified (declared not guilty) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:1-11).”

We praise and thank God for judges who are seeking God’s wisdom. However, the point is that believers should not be taking people to court. God will look out for us and deal with those who

oppress His people. We do not need to fight our own battles, nor are we to make needless battles. Relationships are more important than goods.

Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you ‘Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well’ (Matt. 5:38-40).”

“Recently, I was propositioned and refused to consent. The result was that I lost my job which I really need. What should I now do? Should I get an attorney and press charges?”

We praise the Lord that you refused to compromise your faith in God by defiling your body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:9-20). It is pleasing to God that you did not allow the pressures of the world to cause you to separate yourself from God’s fellowship (1 Jn. 1:5-2:6; Isaiah 59:2).

Your security rests in God, not in your job. Since your desire was to be pleasing to God by being obedient to God’s Word, you can rest confidently that God will provide for your needs (Ps. 91 and 2 Chron. 16:9). God will open doors to you!

Concerning how you should deal with the other individual and whether you should bring legal action; let us take a look at God’s Word. You then decide for yourself your course of action on the basis of God’s Word.

“But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven... (Matt. 5:43-48).”

“Repay no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather put aside wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head (cause a blessing to come to him). Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:20, 21).” (See also Rom. 12:9-21, Deut. 32:35, Is. 54:11-17.)

“Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away,. Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land” (See all of Psalms 37.) (Concerning lawsuits: See 1 Cor. 6:1-8.)

Praise the Lord! God will take care of those who love Him and are obedient to His Word; and God will deal with the evildoer who despises God’s Word and attempts to wrong God’s people.

“Why is it that every time I turn around I am being criticized and judged?”

It could be that you are doing something wrong, and you need to do some examination of yourself; or it may be due to the fact that some people are quick to judge and criticize others; or it may be both. More information would be helpful.

God has principles that can not be violated if we want His blessing. God wants to bless us and has blessed us through Jesus. However, if we love God we must be certain to obey his Word. Otherwise we still allow Satan (the accuser) opportunity to bring accusation and problems because we are outside of God's protection. God has provided a solution if we have done wrong before Him – Repent and stop it! Ask God's forgiveness! (See 1 John 1:5-2:6.) God will forgive, and then Satan will not have any right to condemn us. (Also see Romans 8:1.)

We daily need to examine ourselves whether our lives are consistent with who we are in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 13:5). (Also see 1 Cor. 11:31-32.) Since Jesus has made me right with God and holy (2 Cor. 5:21), are my words, attitudes, and actions reflecting that I am a child of God?

When we are judged and criticized, we must first examine ourselves as to whether there may be an attitude, word, or action that is out of line with God which may be causing problems. (You will find it interesting to see what David did when he was publicly cursed: (2 Sam. 16:5-14). We may be surprised to find an area of our lives that needs some repenting, cleansing, and healing. Praise God! We do not want our pride to get in the way of God's perfect work in us. After all, Jesus died for us.

There may be times when you are judged and criticized by the world for what you believe in Jesus. If after you have judged yourself, and you find no just cause (let's be honest and open before God!), then commit your cause to the Father God who judges justly (1 Pet. 2:19-25; 1 Cor. 4:1-5). In the end, we are all only accountable and responsible to God.

It is interesting how quickly we can all judge and criticize one another if given the opportunity (or, maybe, we might even take the opportunity). God would say to those of us who are quick to judge, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24).” Too often we make snap judgments based on our perception of a situation according to our bias, not on all the facts. It is interesting to note how fast we can think evil (and the worst) about people and events.

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye,’ and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matt. 7:1-5).” (Also Rom. 14:7-19; James 4:11-12.)

Jesus said to the people who were going to kill the woman caught in adultery, “If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,” and to the woman, “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin (Jn. 3:17-18).” We condemn ourselves by not believing and obeying God’s Word in Jesus. So we also should not be condemning the world (they do what they do because they have not received Jesus). God will judge them (1 Cor. 5:9-13). (Believers also see 1 Jn. 5:16!!!)

“Since I have come to the Lord Jesus and am seeking to live by what the Bible says, my family and friends seem to be working against me. I do not understand why this is happening or what to do.”

We are either for God and His Word or we are against God. A person cannot serve two masters. When we receive Jesus as Lord, are water baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in new tongues, an exciting transformation by God has occurred in our lives. We are new creations born of God and now empowered by God Himself. As we grow in God’s Word even greater changes begin to be realized within and without us (which the world begins to take note of and dislike). God’s conviction in love is revealing that we who have received Jesus are not controlled by the world and Satan any longer. We have something different than those who do not have Jesus namely, peace with God and God’s blessing. (It is our prayer that people would realize how much God loves us all and that all people would be able to receive the life which God has already provided through Jesus’ death and resurrection from the dead.)

Satan is not able to blind the mind of a person who is seeking God’s love, so he uses people who are still under his direction and ignorant of God’s ways, in an attempt to persecute God’s people and get them to give up their faith in Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit. (See Matt. 10:16-40; Jn. 15:18, 16:4; Mk. 4:14-17; 1st and 2nd Peter; 2 Tim. 3:10-17.)

God’s Word tells us what to do in times of persecution because of God’s Word:

1. Consider yourself blessed that you are different from the world which hates you because you are of God. Rejoice because your reward is great in heaven (Matt. 5:10-12; Jn. 15:18, 16:4; 1st Peter 1:3-9).
2. Do not think it strange that you are persecuted (1 Peter 4:12-16; Jn. 15:18, 16:4; Matt. 10:16-40).
3. Expect that God will fight for you, so do not fear or be discouraged (Jos. 23:10; Ps. 5:11, 23:5, 91, 138:7; Zeph. 3:17; 1 Sam. 2:9; Deut. 20:4, 28:7; Job 8:21-22; 2 Cor. 4:8-9; Jn. 16:33).
4. Be willing, if need be, to lay down your life for what you believe in Jesus (Matt. 10:39; Rev. 12:11; Heb. 11:35, 12:4; Daniel 3 and 6).
5. Forgive and pray a blessing from God for those who are persecuting you. Love them and do good towards them (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:19-21; Prov. 25:21-22; Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:54-60).
6. Do not seek revenge (Rom. 12:19; Prov. 20:22).

7. Trust God and commit your cares to Him for He loves you. Commit your case to the Father God who judges justly (1 Pet. 5:7, 2:19-25, 3:8-18).
8. Realize that suffering for Christ strengthens us as we trust God. It also purifies us from the lusts of the world (1 Pet. 4:1-8, 1:3-9).

“I am a Christian and I am trying to do my best, yet there does not seem to be any changes in me. I still have difficulty loving others and I do not seem to have much joy or peace in my life. Would you give me some counsel?”

We must first remember that God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our being separated from God so that we could have God’s life forever. God loved us even while we were enemies of His. As we received Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Savior, God’s love and ability flowed into us, transforming us into new creatures, old things being passed away, and God has made everything new (2 Cor. 5:17). God has declared us not guilty, forgiven, holy, worthy, and His children, not because of our works, but because of the blood of Jesus which was given for us. God loves us! We must now consider ourselves as new creatures, not looking back at our old selves but rather looking at ourselves because of what Jesus did for us.

We do not try to be Christians. We are Christians because of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Because we are Christians we will in due season begin to bear fruit in our lives. This fruit is discussed in Gal. 5:22 as being love, joy, peace, gentleness, etc. “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (Jn. 15:7-8).”

The key to seeing results or changes in our lives is for us to continue in Jesus and God’s word. We need to realize who God has made us through Jesus, and then to renew our minds by God’s Word, bringing our bodies under control in obedience to God’s Word. (See Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5.) Being a doer or obedient to God’s Word is how we mature in the faith so that the fruit will then simply come forth. As we continue in God’s Word, God works within us, causing us to desire to do, and giving us the ability to do, His Word. However, it is we who must be obedient. God will not do it for us. God is enabling us, but He has given us a free will to choose what we will do (Philip. 2:12-13; Rom. 6:1-18). Many people do not experience all that God has for them simply because they have not chosen to do what God says to do. Thus, they do not receive God’s results. It is when we are obedient that we receive God’s blessing. A person will reap what a person sows (Gal. 6:7-8). In other words, if I choose to love and forgive, I will be loved and forgiven. If I choose to hate and bear a grudge, I will be hated.

As we grow in God’s word, we begin to understand that God is in us. God’s nature is love, so our nature is now love. God enables us to love as we are loved when we recognize that God has changed us. Do not be discouraged. These changes do not happen overnight, but will happen as we continue in and do God’s Word. God is working in us! The Word of God becomes fruitless in the lives of those who do not do it and allow other things to come before it (Mk. 4:18, 19). “And those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear, the Word, and receive and accept and welcome it and bear fruit some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was

sown (Mk. 4:20).” Why did some produce more than others when hearing the same word? “Be careful what you are hearing. The measure of thought and study you give to the truth you hear will be the measure of virtue and knowledge that comes back to you and more besides will be given to you who hear.” (Our note: Do!) (See Mk. 4:24 Amplified; also James 1:21-27).

“Is it necessary that I vote?”

Apathy and rebellion go together –neither is a quality of God, but of the devil. Our country will remain strong as God’s people continue to seek and obey His standards and honor and pray for the authorities which God has placed over us.

In these days criticism towards authority is running high. God’s Word tells us this will happen. However, criticism without constructive solutions never accomplishes anything. The Lord says, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked ways, I will forgive them their sin and heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14).” This is God’s solution.

In America we have the God-given privilege and responsibility to take part in electing the authorities that exist. In very few countries throughout the world is such a privilege given to the people. God has honored our country, and we have prospered because we have honored Him. If we really care about this country, we will be obedient to do what God says to do.

1. Pray, honoring God and asking God’s forgiveness for ourselves, our leaders, and our country. Ask that He raise up the leaders which He wants leading us. Ask that God give His wisdom to the leaders.
2. Vote, asking God to give you the wisdom and discernment for whom you should vote. Study the issues. Examine the spiritual background of the men.
3. Believe that when you prayed in Jesus’ name for God’s leaders, you received whom God wanted to lead our nation. Thank Him for the leaders.
4. Honor the authorities as being from God. (More insight is in Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; James 1:5-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17.)

God wants to heal our land, but it begins with each individual being in right standing with God. Have you yielded your life to God? Jesus Christ is God’s only way to LIFE. “God so loved the world that he gave his only son (Jesus Christ) that whoever believes on him will not perish but will have everlasting life... but he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son (John 3:16 and 18).”

“How should Christians treat the Jews?”

Often times the Christian community has a tendency to look down on the Jews and to condemn them for not having received the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah (who is discussed in Isaiah 53). This tendency to condemn the Jews should not be so.

If you would study God's Word, you would find that the Gentiles (everyone who is not a Jew) are actually called by Paul "sons of Abraham" through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:1, 12, 16-17; Gal. 3:13-15).

A definition of a true Israelite or Jew reads, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Rom. 2:28-29)." It is not what we are outwardly that matters, but rather what is in our hearts toward God.

God's Word tells us that we are to love all people, and especially those of the household of faith (Matt. 5:43-48; Gal. 6:10; 1 Jn. 4:11-12). We who have received Jesus as Lord are actually declared by God to be His sons and daughters and heirs to the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:13-14). We are in reality "spiritual Jews" in Jesus Christ. The promise of God is to the Jews first and then the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. Because we have received Jesus and the Jews have not received Him does not mean that we are to boast against them (Rom. 11:18-23). In fact, we are to pray blessings upon them, knowing that God will restore and honor them (Ps. 122:6-9).

For your study concerning the question of the Jews and how Christians should relate to them, we are going to refer you to Romans, chapters 9-11, which deal with this subject. We quote for you a portion of this section in order to reveal to you the mystery of God's wisdom and plan.

"For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins. As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all (Rom. 11:25-32)."

"Can a person be such a sinner that God will not forgive them?"

No. If a person forsakes the old self and old ways, turning to God for help by believing on the Lord Jesus, and being baptized, God will forgive him. In fact, God will make that person one of His children and heir to His promises in His Word.

People's actions are not the real problem. The problem is that until people receive Jesus into their hearts, they are separated from God. Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world. "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (Jn. 3:18)."

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly...But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6, 8)." (See also 9:11.)

No matter how great the disobedient actions we have done, if we turn to Jesus, God will forgive us and give us the power to stop those actions and to live for God. "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed (forgiven), you were sanctified (made holy), you were justified (declared not guilty) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)."

If a believer should commit disobedience to God's Word, God has provided a way of forgiveness. "If we confess our sins (disobedience to God's Word), he (God) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)." (See also 1 John 5:2-6.)

"Why is it that people get jealous of one another?"

Within the heart of man is a desire to be recognized above one's peers. Jealousy is rooted in this desire to be in the first place before all others (James 4:5). A person's pride in self is always involved in jealousy or envy. Jealousy often arises from a fear of being displaced.

This fear may be justified; however, in most cases there is no evidence to support such a fear. (For instance, a husband may think that his wife is not faithful. Whether she is or not remains to be seen. The fearful or jealous suspicion is rooted in the person's own insecurities and inferiority feelings about himself. Such feelings will bring pressure on the spouse which could lead to the person's fears being realized as the spouse is not being loved and begins to look elsewhere. The person who is jealous is not able to give love because of the constant haunting thought that his or her love will be betrayed.)

In other cases, jealousy arises between individuals who are striving for supremacy over others. This can happen in family, work, school, and even church situations. People want to be recognized for themselves and their accomplishments. The result is competition and striving. Gossip and promoting one's self or enterprise which leads to division is the result of jealousy rooted in pride. "We are better! Our way is best!" etc.

The people who have jealousy in their heart are never really satisfied, because such people always have to be out-doing someone else. Jealous people are never able to really rejoice in others' success or accomplishments because they will have to do something to get the honor and praise that is going to someone else. Jealousy clearly reveals a lack of love plus selfishness, rooted in the pride of an individual or group. (We all have jealousy in our hearts whether we recognize it or not!) God's Word states that jealousy is wrong before God.

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy etc. I warn you that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).” God in His love has moved towards us in Jesus Christ to free us from having a nature that is separated from God. He has forgiven us because of Jesus' blood.

As we receive God's life in Jesus, God gives us a new nature which is alive to Him. It does not have to do the works of the old nature (jealousy, hatred, etc.) because God has given us the highest position that anyone could ever have, calling us “sons of God” (Jn. 1:12). And has seated us together with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). We are now free to love and work together in harmony. If jealousy should arise, we are to ask God's forgiveness and to love again (1 Jn. 1:9).

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (1 Cor. 13:4-8).”

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to other's interests. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Philip. 2:1-5).” (See also 1 Cor. 12:12-27.)

“How can I be a blessing for the Lord and to the people with whom I worship God?”

Praise God for the desire within your heart. Here are some ways to fulfill your desire.

Counsel for Christian Growth:

1. Seek God first in your life. Allow God to direct every aspect of it. Live your life to please God, not yourself. Be faithful to the Lord by doing what He says. Remember to whom much has been forgiven the same loves much (1 Cor. 6:19-20). (See also Jn. 15:1-12; Phillip. 3:7-16.)

2. Care about God's Word. Eagerly hear and do what God says. Be faithful in attendance to worship and Bible study. This will benefit you eternally and encourage your teachers and others (James 1:21-27; Heb. 5:11-14, 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:1-20).
3. Seek to promote God's Word (Jesus). We are to be sharing Jesus and God's Word with all people. We are not to be promoting certain churches and personalities. As we lift up Jesus, He will draw all men to Himself. People will gather to worship in different places and in different ways; however, if we are all promoting and worshipping Jesus there will be no division in the Body of Christ (Jn. 17:17-23, 12:32; 1 Cor. 3:1-11, 19-23, 4:6-7; Matt. 28:19-20).
4. Pray daily for God's people and ministries throughout the world in the Spirit (tongues) and with your understanding – so that the Gospel can be furthered and the world can be saved (Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:2-4; Jn. 17; 1 Thess. 5:17).
5. Give tithes to the ministry you are involved in and offerings to other ministries or needs in order to further God's word and work (Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Lk. 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:5-15).
6. Encourage and love God's people (including pastors and teachers). Do not be a grumbler and complainer (Philip. 2:14-16; Heb. 10:24; Gal. 6:2-10).
7. Support pastors and teachers. Share with them what you are learning. Remember they are men like yourselves; however, they are called by God to watch out for and give an account of you (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Tim. 5:19; Gal. 6:6; Attn. pastors: 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
8. Look out for the needs of others before yourself (Philip. 2:1-5; Gal. 6:1-10; Is. 58:6-12; Matt. 25:31-46).
9. Have this attitude: "What can I do to help?" Do what you are going to do with all you might for the Lord's glory, not to please people. People will be pleased by what you are doing out of thankfulness to God. Ask God what you can be doing. Ask your pastor to pray with you about where you can participate in the vision which God has given him (Rom. 12:3-9; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:17, 22-25; 1 Cor. 10:31-33).
10. Seek unity and the common good for God's people as to what is God's vision, not one's own idea. When decisions are to be made in God's churches, the Body should seek the Holy Spirit's leading and be in agreement before action is taken. Division has often resulted in churches because certain individuals wanted their own way instead of following God's direction (Eph. 4:1-3; Philip. 4:1-2, 2:1-5).

“What does it mean to forsake self?”

The Bible term is “die to self.” It means that we recognize that in ourselves we are nothing if we do not have God’s life. Our appearance, brilliance, eloquence, lusts and desires, good deeds, or wealth all mean nothing if we do not have God’s life. We recognize that on our own we cannot achieve or acquire that which is eternal. We cannot earn or merit God’s life.

We also recognize that this world has nothing to offer us because it is also going to pass away. This world only offers that which brings temporary “fulfillment,” which soon turns to emptiness as the glamour, excitement, glitter, and newness wears off – as the moth corrupts, the car door gets dented, the roof leaks, the “honeymoon is over,” health breaks down, or death takes its toll. One begins to realize that all that we eagerly longed and hoped for, when it arrives, does not satisfy. “Is this all there is?” as the saying goes. God has more, much more!

God is eagerly, lovingly awaiting for you and me to realize that we have been separated from and need Him alone and all that He is – Perfect Love, Life, Health, Security, Provision, Protection, Wisdom, Knowledge, and Eternal Existence (I Am). God’s word says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” God is concerned about life, but it took the death of Jesus Christ to give us life. We are now called by God to forsake ourselves and die to ourselves as Christ Jesus died for us, and now to live for God in newness of life because Jesus died and then rose from the dead. Now we daily live for God rather than for ourselves, bringing our desires in line with God’s desires in His Word.

The very moment we yield our lives to God by asking Jesus to come into our hearts to be our Lord, the life and fullness of God comes into us. We are ‘born again’ into God’s family, and God actually lives within and through us. We are then baptized in water, depicting our death with Christ to ourselves and resurrection with Christ to new life with God!

- The same power that raised Jesus from the dead now lives within us.
- We become a new person; old things are passed away.
- God makes us worthy.
- We have right standing with Him.
- Sin, failure, fear, guilt, loneliness, disease, weakness, poverty, inferiority, and death have no power over us.
- We are seated with Christ in heavenly places.
- We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus.
- We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.
- God’s wisdom, knowledge, and ability become ours to use as we live for Him under His direction and loving control.

- We have meaning and purposeful fulfillment as we live for God and others.
- God produces in our lives love, joy, and peace.
- We are able to love and forgive others, as God has loved and forgiven us in Jesus Christ.

The amazing thing is that God has had all these blessings waiting for you and me since before He created the world. He has given us all these blessings as His gift to us in Jesus Christ, and He is waiting for us to receive His love gift. As we forsake ourselves, receive Jesus, and are baptized, all of God's blessings become ours. God has given us Himself that we might give ourselves to Him. (See 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Gal. 2:20, 5:13-26; Rom. 6; Lk. 14:25-35 for your question.)

“I am constantly gripped by fear. What can I do?”

If your heart is filled with fear, you will talk fear, and your fears will increase. The amazing thing is that when you speak, those fears will, as you say, grip you tighter than ever (Job. 3:25).

To overcome this, fill your heart with the Word of God. Then, when you are tempted to doubt, make your lips speak His Word instead of your doubts. Simply make a decision to have your lips voice the Word instead of fear. You can do it through the Lord Jesus Christ who will give you the strength (Phil. 4:13). Understand that Satan rules people with fear. God rules with love. “Perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love (1Jn. 4:18).” We need not ever fear again. As we invite Jesus to become the Lord of our lives, God “delivers us from the power of darkness (includes fear) and has translated us into the kingdom of his son (Jesus Christ): In whom we have our penalty paid for through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).”

Purpose in your heart that when fear comes against you, you will speak God's Word. Because He has said, “Fear not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God (Isaiah 41:10);” I will say, “I am no longer afraid because God is with me all the time.”

Because He has said, “God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7);” I will say, “I am free from all fear because my God has not given me fear, but power, love, and a sound mind.”

Because He has said, “My peace I give to you...Let not your heart be troubled (Jn. 14:27),” I will say ‘Being declared not guilty by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1),’ ‘for He is our peace (Eph. 2:14);’ therefore my heart is not troubled or fearful.”

Because He has said, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you: because he trusts in you (Isaiah 26:3);” I will say, “I have His perfect peace because my mind is stayed on him.” (Also see Psalms 34, 46, 91; Philippians 4:4-8.)

“Is it wrong for Christians to judge and make legislation against unbelievers who are involved in evil practices?”

The Word of God gives us some understanding. “For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience or unbelief. Be not therefore partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now are you light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth). Find out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have nothing to do with the fruitless works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ (Eph. 5:5)” (See also Jn. 3:14-21 I Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 2:1-10; Titus 3:1-8.)

“I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother (fellow believer) but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a swindler, a drunkard, or a slanderer. With such a man do not even eat.

“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church (unbelievers)? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. ‘Expel the wicked man from among you.’ (1 Cor. 5:9-13).” (Remove the person who believes but will not turn from wickedness from the church.)

God has principles that can not be violated. The wages of disobedience is death. God in His love has provided life through Jesus, but it is each man’s and woman’s choice what each will possess. (Deut. 30:11-20), Rom. 10:8-10; Jn. 3:15-21). God alone will judge the people of the world who have not received Jesus and have not chosen to obey His principles. We, as God’s people, are to speak against evil and not partake in evil. However, we are not to judge unbelievers, bring legislation against them, nor persecute them for their not being Christians. We are to judge, watching ourselves lest we also fall (Gal. 6:1) those who call themselves Christians. However, God will judge the unbelievers!

By proclaiming the Love of God in Jesus Christ and loving the world is the way unbelievers are going to be saved, and people will obey God’s principles and be blessed! The Law of God was not intended to save people. Jesus is God’s provision! (See Gal. 3:19-25 and Romans 3:19-26.) Throughout history whenever Christianity was forced upon the world and legalized by the State apostasy developed. Why? Because Christians are not made by legal decree, but by faith and commitment to Jesus Christ whom God (in love) sent us. We now love and freely obey God because we recognize our need for Him.

We as God’s people need to learn something about the love of God and remember that we too were once enemies of God and did not obey or desire to obey His Word. However, God loved us and sent Jesus to pay the price for our separation from God while we were still His enemies. This love of God is what the world needs to hear!

Jesus, when confronted with a woman caught in adultery, said to her, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more!” (See Jn. 8:1-11.) To the church people He said, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone!” (Another key scripture is James 2:12-13.)

“I have purposed in my heart to be a peacemaker. For years I was a gossip and fought with my husband. Now I realize that such behavior is not God’s way. Since I am new to the Lord and do not know the Bible that well, I would like you to give me some verses to help me be a peacemaker.”

God’s desire is that His people live in unity and peace with Him and with others. Although the words of life, which are found only in Jesus, bring division amongst those who reject Him, to those who receive Jesus He brings life and peace with God and the ability to live at peace with others.

We are glad to help you to find passages in God’s Word. We would also like to take this opportunity to show you how to use your bible so that you can study on your own as well. Usually in the back of your bible is a section called “concordance.” We would recommend that every person have a study bible with a good concordance. In this section key words are noted and under them are passages which use the key word.

For instance, we looked up “peace” or “peacemaker.” “Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you (2 Cor. 13:11).”

“Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9).”

“To the counselors of peace is joy (Prov. 12:20).”

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (James 3:17-18).”

“Repay to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as it lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. (This is not a cursing but rather is letting God’s blessing come on the person!) “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21).”

Let’s look at “unity.” “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133:1).”

“I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with endurance forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).”

Another related area would be “love.” “By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn. 13:35).”

“The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him (1 Jn. 2:10).”

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren (1 Jn. 3:14).”

“For though we have never yet seen God, when we love each other, God lives in us and his love within us grows even stronger (1 Jn. 4:12).”

As we grow in God’s Word, we can also begin to relate other areas which are associated with what we are seeking. “Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9, 2:19-24).”

“I was always taught to honor and obey the authorities which God has placed over me. However, lately I have been told things which violate what I know to be true in God’s Word. Is there a time when a person is not to obey the authorities over them?”

God alone is (and has) the authority to establish authorities. Their purpose is to lead people according to God’s principles. God alone has the right to establish what is right and wrong for mankind. No man has the authority, in himself, to dictate to anyone else or to violate God’s authority by establishing commands contrary to God’s Word.

God has given all authority that exists in the world. Whether the authorities believe or do not believe in God, they will all be accountable to Him on the judgment day for how they have led the people of this world. The areas of authority to which we are accountable are:

- Home – husband (Eph. 5:21-33, 6:1-3; 1 Cor. 11:1-3),
- Church – ministers (Eph. 4:11-12; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-7),
- Employment – employers (Eph. 6:5-9),
- Government (1 Pet. 2:13-17; Titus 3:1-8, especially see Rom. 13:1-7).

Ultimately before any of these authorities, we are responsible to the authority of God (Lk. 14:26-27, 33).

We are to honor God’s authorities on earth at all times. We are to obey God’s authorities on earth when they are leading us according to God’s principles, as they are written in His Word. Note this important distinction between honoring and obeying! We are never to allow rebellion to be in our hearts toward authorities, even when we must obey God’s commands instead of those commands of men which are not consistent with God’s Word. We are still to honor the authorities and appeal to them to do things God’s way. If they refuse, we must be willing to accept the consequence of our doing what is right before God (persecution from the people who

are not living by God's standards – 1 Pet. 3:10-18, 4:12-19). For instance, three men refused to bow down and worship the king because they could only worship God. They were put in the fiery furnace to die, but God saved them (Daniel 3). Daniel refused to stop praying to God in spite of the king's decree. He was put in the lion's den, but God saved him (Daniel 6). The apostles were told by the church authorities that they were not to do any more healings or miracles in the name of Jesus. The apostles responded, "We must obey God, rather than men." They then returned to the other believers and prayed for more boldness to preach and more healings and wonders to occur. In spite of persecution from church leaders, they continued to do what God wanted done (Acts 4:1-31; 5:12-42). The parents of Jesus had started home and Jesus was not found with them. When they found him in the temple sharing with the teachers, Jesus said to his parents, "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" He then went with them and obeyed them (Lk. 2:41-52).

We note in all these examples that the authorities were honored as authorities; however, in each case the individuals obeyed God and accepted the consequences that followed from men – of whom they were not afraid. (Also see Matt. 10:16-42; Jn. 15:20-16:4.)

"For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if you endure a beating for doing wrong? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable to God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats, committing his cause to him who judges justly (1 Pet. 2:19-23)."

"Recently I was at a church meeting with my friend who had brought me. I heard about how God loves me and sent Jesus to die for me that I might have life with God and be forgiven. When the pastor asked for us to yield our lives to God's control, I went forward and they prayed with me to receive Jesus into my heart. Jesus is now my Lord and I want to tell the world about what God has done for me! I want to live for God. I want to know if there are some Bible verses that can help me live for God?"

We praise God for what He has done in your life! (See Philippians 1:6, 2:12-16; Hebrews 12:2.) You are a new creature and have God's life in Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17-21). We believe these passages will be helpful to you.

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the unbelievers do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: no immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord (Ephesians 4:17-5:10).” (Also see Romans 12, Colossians 3, Matthew 5-7; 1 Corinthians 13.)

“Why did the apostle Peter preach baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38), after Jesus had said to do so in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?” (Matt. 28:19, Acts 4:12, 8:16 and 19:5).

We praise God that you are doing your homework. We cannot measure the blessing that comes as we study to show ourselves workman approved unto God who correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

We would also add to your references concerning baptism “in Jesus’ name” Acts 10:48, supported by Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6:3. It would appear that baptism in early Christianity was administered, not in the threefold name, but “in the name of Jesus Christ” or “in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Does this contradict what Jesus told us in Matt. 28:19? We do not believe so as the early church, correctly so, understood that baptism and all other practices (Mk. 16:17-18; Jn. 14:12-14, 26, etc), rested upon the authority of Jesus. Jesus in Matt. 28:18 confirmed his authority over all things, including the right for the disciples to baptize.

Now as we begin to understand Jesus’ understanding of himself in relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit, clarity will come to us concerning Jesus’ words in Matt. 28:19. (Whenever we speak about the relation of the Trinity or the Godhead, we enter into a mystery area concerning man’s limited understanding to perceive spiritual truths about God, but by the Holy Spirit we can understand (1 Cor. 2:9-16).

Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say ‘show us the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own, rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this

work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” (Jn. 14:6-14) (See also Jn. 17:20-21)

Jesus understood that he, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are distinct personalities, yet all one!! Jesus is actually God come in the flesh (Jn. 1:1-17). Jesus is the Word.

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Col. 2:9-10).”

The Father established all authority to the name of Jesus, that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (Philip. 2:9-11). Therefore, when Jesus spoke in Matthew 28:19, he understood the Godhead to be one. The Father gave authority to Jesus. Jesus gave authority to us in his name. We who have received Jesus are now one with God (Jn. 17:20-23, 25, 26; Col. 1:25-27). To baptize in Jesus’ name would be to baptize in the name and authority of the full Godhead and visa-versa!

“I am interested in some teaching and guidance concerning how to overcome guilt.”

Guilt is the by-product of having committed something that is wrong. Guilt is real and cannot be covered over. It must be dealt with or it can cause serious spiritual, mental, and physical problems. It is the result of separation or alienation from God and people, caused by a violation of what one knows to be the law of God and conscience. Guilt may be produced by willful disobedience and by what one thinks he should have done but did not do. (We often see this when someone dies. People project guilt as to what they had not done or had done to the deceased. Much of this guilt is unjustified!)

All people are separate and guilty before God unless they receive God’s provision for their separation and the resulting guilt, Jesus Christ. In Jesus we come into right-standing with God and there is no guilt (2 Cor. 5:21).

“Therefore there is no condemnation (no adjudging guilty of wrong) for those who are in Christ Jesus, who live not after the dictates of the flesh but rather after the dictates of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).”

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also – along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died –more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Rom. 8:31-34).”

If we should disobey God after receiving Jesus, God has a provision to remove our guilt. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).”

Rule:

- Guilt before confessing disobedience – **Holy Spirit.**
- Guilt after confessing sin – **Satan.**
- Believe God has forgiven you! And forgive yourself.

(Further insight: David wrote Ps. 32 and 51).

“What meaning is there in all these earthquakes and now volcanoes erupting?”

We are living in an exciting age. The world is fearful and upset. However, those who have invited Jesus Christ into their lives can be rejoicing. Why? Because the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this world is coming soon!

God’s Word in prophecy has predicted 2,000 years ago that these signs which we now see in increasing frequency and intensity will occur before the Lord Jesus Christ returns and before the destruction of this world. God never lies. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matt. 24:35).”

The disciples of Jesus asked him, “What shall be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?” Jesus answered, “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming, ‘I am the Christ’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pangs...and this gospel will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matt. 24:3-8, 14).” (For a full account, please read Matthew 24, 25, Luke 21:7-36.)

No one, except God, knows or can predict the exact day or time of Jesus’ return. We are called to watch, be ready, and be found living obediently by faith in Jesus Christ. God loves you and desires that none of us perish. This is why God sent Jesus into the world for us. Have you prepared yourself for the Lord’s return by asking Jesus to come into your life to be your Lord? (See John 3:16-18, Romans 10:9-10.) If you have received Jesus, are you obediently living for God by faith in God’s Word? God desires us to be with Him. The choice is ours whether or not we will receive God’s life through Jesus (Deut. 30:15-20).

“Is it legalism to emphasize the commandments of God rather than the love of God? Also, what is legalism? (Someone told me this, but I felt embarrassed to ask them).”

Legalism is trying to earn our own salvation by keeping the Law of God or trying to live the Christian life in the energy of the flesh. Neither of these is acceptable to God (Gal. 2:16). We are saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man shall boast (Eph. 2:8-9). “Grace” is

the dynamic force which God gives to every person to fulfill His will. Grace is given to a non-Christian to repent and to receive the gift of eternal life (Eph. 2:8). Grace is given to a Christian to grow to maturity in the Lord. If he responds to the grace God gives, God will give more. If he resists, he will experience the consequences of bitterness, greed, and moral impurity (Heb. 12:15-17). God gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5-6, James 4:6).

To say that an emphasis on the commandments of God is legalism is not only a misuse of the term "legalism," but a misunderstanding of the relationship between God's commandments and God's love. God does not separate love for Him by how well a person keeps His commandments (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24, 15:9-10; 1 Jn. 2:3-6, 3:21-24, 5:2-3; Rev. 14:12, 12:17; Matt. 5:17-20, 7:21-27; James 2:14-26; Romans 5:19-6:4). God does not expect us to keep them in our own energy but by His grace. Paul observed, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:10; Philip. 4:13)."

God's love must be emphasized. However, since he associates His love with His commandments, it is not realistic to be concerned that one is emphasized more than another. To say that we should concentrate on the love of God and back away from the commandments of God, lest we be legalistic, is to promote several false impressions.

First, there is the false impression that we have no further obligation to keep the moral law of God. Paul asked, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law (Rom. 3:31)".

A second false impression is that God's love and grace give the Christian license to do what he wants and that he is only responsible to keep God's moral law if the Holy Spirit gives him a special prompting to do so. Even then he is only to do it if he has the motivation of love.

The fact is God's Spirit is faithfully prompting every Christian to obey the commandments of God as found in God's Word and is giving grace to Christians to enable them to do so. Our immaturity often hinders our ability to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so there is value in exhorting each other daily (with God's commandments and standards) lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13).

A third false impression is that of associating self-control with legalism. Self-control is part of the fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5:22. The very name that Jesus gave His followers emphasizes the importance of being "disciplined ones." "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God (1 Jn. 4:1)."

"What can we as Christians do to come against evil and to help our country?"

God has given to us the responsibility of holding forth His Word of life, being shining lights for Him in a perverse generation (Phil. 2:15). God declares us to be "salt," preserving this world by our obedience to God's standards (Matt. 5:13). God's judgment on cities and nations in His Word is often related to what His people do or fail to do.

God gives cities and nations opportunity to forsake their evil ways and turn to God. There are many accounts of God in His love wanting to save the people, but they continued in their evil ways which eventually consumed them. God's desire is that none perish, but that all come to the knowledge of the truth and have His life (2 Pet. 3:9). God uses His people to bring that Word of life to this world. We are His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:17-21). Jonah was sent to Nineveh to tell them that the city would be destroyed if the people did not stop their evil practices and turn to God. The people received God's Word through Jonah, repented (turning from their ways), and called to God; and God gave them life.

Abraham prayed to God to spare Sodom and God was willing to do it if there were ten righteous people in the city. Today God is looking for Christians to believe God and stand in for this country and pray (Ezekiel 22:30). As we do so, God promises that we will be able to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all Godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:1-2). "If my people whom I have named my own submit, humbling themselves before me, pray to me, seek me, and turn back from their evil ways, I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14)."

Christians who are led by the Spirit of God, living by faith and obedience to God's Word, are the force that is preserving this world from the evil which Satan would bring. This is why it is most important that our lives be kept from evil so we do not hinder the Holy Spirit's power and influence through us in this world. Otherwise we are not worth anything either (Matt. 5:13).

Evil is curtailed as people receive the new life which only Jesus Christ can give. As we are faithfully sharing God's love, people will want to receive His life. As they call on the Lord Jesus, they will be saved. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23)."

"Why do we have so many churches? Is it pleasing to God?"

God is not as much concerned about how many churches there are as He is about how His people relate His love and unity within each local church, between churches, and to the people who have not yet received Jesus into their hearts as Lord and Savior. God is not as much concerned with what church a person attends or who the pastor is as He is with what family we belong to – the family of God or the devil's.

It is not for us to criticize people or churches and pastors, but it is for us to seek to love God, His Word, and His people, cooperating and encouraging one another to grow in the Lord. As God looks at people, He is concerned whether they have received Jesus as Lord and are by faith hearing and obeying His love commands and thereby experiencing His blessings. As God looks at churches, He is concerned whether they are exalting Jesus as Lord, relying on the blood of Jesus and His Word, maintaining the unity of believers, and obediently equipping God's people to do all things to God's glory and to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

People follow different personalities, traditions, and personal whims. Some emphasize while others re-emphasize some things in the Bible. Some things people emphasize are not even in the Bible and do not matter by God's standards! We are to follow God and His Word, not what people like or do not like. We are to help each other to understand that decision-making is based on love and unity that God be glorified, not for personal interests or gain. God's churches are to be formed from united believers sharing the Good News about God's love in Jesus and the blessings of God, and by loving and encouraging one another as God loves us.

I believe that if the churches would unite in their efforts to exalt Jesus and share the Good News, there would not be room in all the churches to hold all the people praising and thanking God for His love! We will have to build more churches. Jesus be praised. His people are one. This is His vision. (See John 16:20-23; 1 Cor. 1:10-17, 3:1-9; Eph. 4:1-16; Rom. 13:9-15:6.)

“In all sincerity...I’m not perfect, but a good person. I’m wondering why God doesn’t answer my prayers?”

Thank you for your question. Here are some more things which God says will hinder our prayers from getting results.

1. Lack of knowledge of God and His Word (will), and who we are in Jesus Christ concerning the rights and privileges which God has given to us as His children (Eph. 1:17-23).
2. Ignorance of what “believing” is. If we “believe” that God’s Word is true, we will act upon what it says! We will do what God says to do (Jn. 14:12). Possess what is promised. Do not “try” to believe – do not condemn yourself. Simply thank God and do what He says. Act on what you know from God’s Word and be open to know and act on more.
3. Not knowing there is a difference between “hope” and “faith.” Hope is future, faith is now (Heb. 11:1). We hope for eternal life because Jesus’ return is a coming future event. However, by faith in Jesus Christ we know we have eternal life right now even though we do not see it because Jesus has not yet returned. Faith is the substance of whatever we are hoping for until we see it (Heb. 11:1). Faith, not hope, moves God (Heb. 11:6).
4. Wrong Confession – Speak what God’s Word says, not what your feelings or circumstances say about your situation. After prayer, never say, “It’s getting worse!” (Even though it appears to be that way. Satan is trying to steal from you.) “Let the weak say, ‘I’m strong!’” (Joel 3:10, Heb. 10:23).
5. Mental Assent – You can admire God’s Word, but not get any results because you do not act on it. You can know the entire Bible but it will not do you any good until you do what it says. Do not be deceived, being a hearer only and not a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25).
6. Praying for God to increase your faith. You receive your faith from hearing and studying the Word of God, not by praying for it (Rom. 10:17). The presence of faith, not the amount, is what gets results (Lk. 17:5-6). God’s Word will produce in you the faith necessary to receive all God’s blessings.

7. Dependence on another's faith. We are not always with other believers. No one believer has any more direct line to God than another. (Some get better results because they really believe God's Word and know how to receive from Him.) We need to grow up to know that God will hear our prayers of faith and act on them because He lives in us (James 5:15-18; Jn. 14:12-14).
8. Double mindedness – caused by ignorance of knowing the Word of God which is God's will for our situation. People cannot make up their mind as to what God says He will or will not do on the basis of His Word (Jam. 1:6-8).
9. Unconfessed sin or disobedience to God's Word; also stubbornness to follow the leading of God's Spirit (Is. 59:1-2; Zech. 7:11-13).
10. Unforgiveness (Mk. 11:25-26).
11. Unbelief – Jesus at Nazareth could not do any mighty works because of the unbelief of the people (Matt. 13:58). If no one is believing, God is not able to work in the situation.
12. Strife at home (1 Peter 3:7). If one partner is in the Lord and the other is not, it is important that the believer stay out of strife.
13. Selfishness (James 4:3). This is dealing with indulgence to satisfy the desires of the flesh or world. However, there is nothing wrong with asking what God promises for yourself.

“I am interested in your giving me some Bible verses which will help me to get rid of the constant guilt feelings which I am daily experiencing for past events in my life.”

The Lord loves you, and wants to help you. The blood of Jesus has already paid the penalty for our past, present, and future events which would separate us from God and one another. It is our part to receive, apply, and take to heart what God's Word tells us so that we can be free from the guilt.

- “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk after the spirit and not after the flesh (Rom. 8:1).”
- For He (God) made him (the sinless Jesus Christ) to be sin (separated from God) for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God (have right standing with God) through him (Jesus) (2 Cor. 5:21).”
- “And having chosen us, he called us to come to him; and when we came, he declared us “not guilty,” filled us with Christ's goodness, gave us right standing with Himself, and promised us His glory (Rom. 8:30).”
- “Being justified (declared not guilty) through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).”
- “Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? Will God? No! He is the one who has forgiven us and given us right standing with Himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ? No! For he is the one who died for us and came back to life again for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, interceding for us there in heaven (Rom. 8:33-34).” “Being now justified (declared not guilty) by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Jesus) (Rom. 5:9).”
- “I even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for my own sake; and I will not remember your sins (Is. 43:25).” (Also see Ps. 103:12, Heb. 10:17, Jer. 31:34.)

- “I’ve blotted out your sins; they are gone like morning mist at noon! O, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free (Is. 44:22).”
- “He (God) forgives all my sins. He heals all my diseases (Ps. 103:3).”
- “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7).”
- “In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace... (Eph. 1:7).”
- “No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool! (Is. 1:18).”
- “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 Jn. 2:1).” (Also see Is. 53:5; Heb. 9:14; Ps. 32:51.)
- “What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record (Ps. 32:1-2).”
- “If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).”

The provision which God has given for a person to be right with Him and free from guilt is to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, asking God’s forgiveness because of the blood of Jesus which has paid the price for our separation from God, and then asking Jesus to come into our hearts and confessing with our mouths that Jesus is our Lord (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38). “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ Jesus they are a new creation, old things are gone, everything is new (2 Cor. 5:17)!” If believers in Jesus should disobey God, God has told us to acknowledge what was done to Him, and He will be faithful to forgive and cleanse us (1 Jn. 1:9). God will make us like it never happened, freeing us from guilt. (See Ps. 32 and 51.)

“Many times I have tried to forgive a certain person for a wrong done deliberately, but I simply cannot. Is it really necessary to forgive?”

I can sympathize with your difficulties, for in my Christian life I had some real problems with forgiveness. As a minister of the Gospel, I am still a target for criticism and harsh attacks. But friend, for a Christian there is no other answer but to forgive. Unforgiveness is “cancer of the soul.”

We must always look to the Master, Jesus Christ, when we think of this subject or when we encounter someone who is so very hard to forgive. Consider the indignities, cruelties, and barbarianism of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Yet He prayed, “Father, forgive them.” Jesus says, “Love your enemies... and do good to them that hate you (Matt. 5:44).”

How many people allow their lives to be marred because they hold a grudge against someone? To learn how to be criticized and take it as a Christian is critical development in us. Differences

between people arise, but we must never let them give place to bitterness, malice, ill-will or resentment. Rather, we should allow the love of Christ to fill us. There is a high cost for unforgiveness. “If ye forgive not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:15, 18:21-35).” Unforgiveness results in God turning us over to the tormentors (anything that torments: nervousness, migraines, ulcers, sleeplessness, fears, mental oppressions, unanswered prayer, bitterness of spirit, etc.).

Overcoming Unforgiveness:

1. Ask God to reveal those people against whom you have resentments.
2. Whether they are dead or alive, whether they asked you to forgive them or not; sincerely and lovingly forgive them from your heart.
3. Pray for God’s blessing on them.
4. Show them you love them.
5. Thank God for your forgiveness and God will enable you to forgive others!

“What is the unpardonable sin?”

It is often thought that the unpardonable sin is something like suicide, murder, adultery, incest, homosexuality, etc. However, God’s Word reveals that all of these abominations to God are no worse in God’s eyes than gossip, pride, or lying. All of these things can be forgiven of the person who would humble himself before God and seek forgiveness. God will forgive and cleanse and enable the person to stop practicing sin and to live a new life in the Lord.

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified (made holy), you were justified (declared not guilty) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).” The blood of Jesus has forgiven all sin. To those who seek God’s forgiveness, they will be forgiven by God.

“If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death (1 Jn. 5:16-17).”

Apparently, as your question states, there does exist an unpardonable sin or a sin which leads to death. What is it? Most of Christianity would say that the unpardonable sin is that the person has not believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from eternal death. However, the passage just quoted (1 Jn. 5:16-17) would not agree with such thought since it is written to people who have already confessed Jesus as Lord. Jesus himself would not agree that the unpardonable sin is not believing upon him and continues to tell us what is the unpardonable sin.

Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters, and so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the (Holy) Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man (Jesus) will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit (Matt. 12:30-32, Mk. 3:28-30).”

God’s Word makes it clear that the unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit occurs when a person says that a work that is done by the Holy Spirit is done by the devil. Some people of Jesus’ day were saying that Jesus was healing and casting out demons from people by the power of Satan instead of God (See Matt. 12:22-32; Mk. 3:22-30). These people were saying that Jesus was possessed of a demon and thus could do these works. Jesus also made it clear that Satan will not work against himself by removing his own demons. It was the Holy Spirit of God working in Jesus which removed the demons and healed the sick. Jesus made it clear that the people who say that something done by God is done by the devil have committed the unforgivable sin.

People today who are saying that a healing, or a demon being cast out of a person in the name of Jesus, or tongues, or any other work of the Holy Spirit are not of God (but of the devil) are in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit and committing the unforgivable sin. The same works done by Jesus will be done by believers in Jesus’ name today (Jn. 14:12-14) by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).

“What is true religion?”

Many people have their own ideas as to what true religion is. Only God can tell us the answer, and we will find that answer in His Word.

- “Then said they to him, ‘What must we do to work the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent’ (Jn. 6:28-29).”
- “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (Jn. 14:6).”
- “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).” (Also see 1 Jn. 5:6-13.)
- The first way according to God’s Word to enter into true religion is through faith in Jesus as being God’s only provision for salvation. Jesus Christ is Lord! If a person truly has Jesus as Lord and has the life of God, then there will also be faith works that are evident in the person’s life. (See James 2:14-26; Eph. 2:8-10.) What are examples of such works?
- “If anyone considers himself to be religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:26-27, 1 Jn. 2:15-17).”

- “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become as the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame...If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of the Lord has spoken (Is. 58:6-14).”
- “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will reply, ‘Lord, when did we do all these things to you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’ (See Matt. 25:31-46).”

Who is our brother or neighbor? In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37) Jesus makes it quite clear that we are to love and do good to our enemies as well as those who treat us well. We also note in this account that those who said and professed to be religious by their actions showed themselves to be false because they passed by their brother in need. God wants us to love all people as He has loved us. (See Matt. 5:43-48.)

“Would you explain for me why it is that a person can receive the Lord and be all excited about God working in his life, and awhile later he seems to get distracted from God?”

What most people do not really understand is that there exists an enemy of God and man who would attempt to deceive everyone from turning to God for life and every blessing which He has for us in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). This enemy (God’s Word calls him Satan) attempts to steal God’s Word from people or distract them from delighting in God’s Word and the operation of God’s Spirit so that the person forgets about all the blessings of God.

The Word of God is clear as to the fact that what we are telling you is true, and also goes on to tell us how, in answer to your question, Satan attempts to steal God’s Word and blessings from a person. If we would spend some time in Mark 4:1-25, we would find the Lord Jesus telling us how Satan attempts to steal God’s Word and blessings from a person, and how Satan operates to steal from people so that they do not receive God’s Word and have the life of God. We would find how Satan works to hinder those who have received the Word of God from growing in faith and moving deeper into the abundant life which God has promised to His people. (Jn. 10:10).

The methods Satan uses to distract and steal are:

1. Through creating confusion in the hearer of God's Word, Satan steals the Word of God that the person heard (Mark 4:15; Matt. 13:19). If people would look deeper into God's Word, asking God to help them to understand, and would ask questions of the person ministering, this could oftentimes be prevented. Be sure that what the minister is saying is what God's Word says!
2. Satan brings trouble or persecution from family, friends, and others against people who are seeking God. This is in order to stop them from growing in God's Word and coming into the fullness of the Spirit (Mark 4:16-17). To move ahead with God is not popular in this world (Jn. 16:33, 15:18-16:4; Matt. 10:16-42, 5:3-16; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-19). The way to prevent Satan from hindering us is to set our hearts to love God first before family, friends, etc. (Lk. 14:26-33). We are not to care what people think or say about us especially when what they are saying contradicts what God says.
3. Satan will attempt to distract us by focusing us on the worldly affairs so we worry about how we'll survive, or he will give us wealth so that we forget about being dependent upon God as our source and look to ourselves, or he will simply get us interested in other things which we then start to put before spending time with God in prayer, worship, and study of His Word (Mark 4:18-19).

The way to prevent Satan from hindering us in these ways is to look to God as our source for all our needs being met and to understand that to be a friend of this world is to be an enemy of God (James 4:4-7; 1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 6:19-34; Deut. 8; Philip. 4:10-13, 19; 1 Tim. 6:3-12; Prov. 30:8). We note that this third grouping of Satan's tricks have to do with playing on our old desires for the world which we are no longer a part of (Jn. 17:13-19; Col. 3:1-10; Eph. 2:6), and for the old flesh desires which no longer have power over us in Jesus (Gal. 5:16-26; Rom. 6; Col. 3:1-10; 2 Cor. 5:17-21).

If we were to continue in Mark 4:20-25, we would find what would happen to the person who did not allow himself to get distracted by Satan. We find that people produce different amounts of fruit or blessings in their lives because of the measure of study, thought, and obedience to do the Word of God which they have heard. Jesus says, "If you continue in my Word, then are you my disciples indeed and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free...And he whom the Son (Jesus) shall set free, shall be free indeed (Jn. 8:31-32)."

"Can I pray directly to God?"

When Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross for our sakes, the veil which separated the holy place from the common people was torn in two, meaning all separation from God was now removed because of the blood of Jesus paying the price for our sin or separation from God. God's Word puts it this way, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful (Heb. 10:19-23)."

We now have the right to come boldly before God because of the blood of Jesus and because Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask for anything in my name, and I will do it (Jn. 14:12-14).”

In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have asked for nothing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, and your joy shall be complete...In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. (NOTE THIS: Jesus will not ask the Father for us!). No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I am come from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father (Jn. 16:23-24, 26-28).” Jesus clearly teaches that we are now to ask the Father in the name of Jesus. Jesus will not ask the Father for us (verse 26-27).

It is clear from God’s Word that we can go directly to the Father God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. We do not need intermediaries (saints, Mary, angels, etc.) to pray to God for us. In fact, Jesus himself says that He will not pray to the Father for us. How then could any other “saint” have the right to pray for us?

We are often asked, “Can the dead pray for us?” The Bible answer is “NO!” In fact, God forbids such seeking of communication with the dead! This is called “necromancy.” “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritualist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God (Deut. 18:10-13).” “And when they shall say to you, seek them that have familiar spirits, and to wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek to their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? (Is. 8:19).”

The dead cannot help the living. Only God can help the living! There exists no scriptural evidence which would support someone ever being blessed by praying to or communicating with the dead. In fact, Saul was cursed by God for such activity (1 Sam. 28). We are only to pray to God in the name of Jesus and God the Father will hear us and respond accordingly.

“I am interested in who Satan is, how he operates, and can he make me do something against my will?”

Satan was the head angel of God until he desired to take God’s place. He led a rebellion in heaven and was defeated and removed from heaven by God’s forces. (See Isaiah 14:12-17;

Ezekiel 28:13-19; Rev. 12:7-9.) Jesus says about Satan, “The thief comes not but to steal, kill, and destroy; I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10, 8:44).”

The apostles Peter and Paul say about Satan: 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-10, 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jude 6.

Satan will always try to counterfeit God’s activity. He will attempt to deceive people into believing that the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit are actually evil and done by the devil and that the works done by him are done by God, attempting to make God appear to be a liar, unjust tyrant, and the source of evil, sickness, disease, and death. Jesus went about healing all who were oppressed by the devil for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

Satan is the enemy of God and man and attempts to hinder people from receiving God’s Word and the abundant life of God made possible through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-4). He tempts us with things to get our attention away from God so that we do not trust and love God, and then disobey God’s Word because our attention was on ourselves. (See Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 2:18.) He comes against our minds with fear, despair, depression, confusion, worry, strife, etc., and other false imaginings and reasonings which need to be cast down by God’s Word. (See 2 Cor. 10:3-5; James 3:13-18.) He comes against our bodies with sickness and disease (Acts 10:38). He had the power of death until Jesus broke that power (Heb. 2:14). Satan attempts to distract us from growing in the Lord by attempting to keep us ignorant of God’s word, by cares and worries about situations of the world, focusing us on acquiring wealth and looking to the things of this world and our own desires (flesh) rather than and before God (deceitfulness of riches), and by bringing persecution because of what we believe in Jesus (Mk. 4:14-20).

Satan cannot make you do anything against your will! He can only tempt! (See James 1:12-18.) We choose to either give in to Satan or resist him and serve God (Rom. 6:6-18; James 4:7). Satan is still the lord of this world (Jn. 16:11, 2 Cor. 4:4); however, his power has been removed from him by the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have received Jesus as our Lord, Satan only has power over us if we let him! Jesus has defeated Satan, and we are free in Jesus’ name! Satan is limited, unlike God, to being at one place at a time. Other fallen angels, called demons, work with him in a hierarchy of evil throughout the world. Their end is coming forever. Jesus is Lord!

(Victory scriptures for you: Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Cor. 10:13; Rev. 12:7-11, 20:7-15; 1 Jn. 5:18, 4:4, 3:8; Lk. 10:19-20; Acts 10:38; Heb. 2:14-15; Jn. 16:11; Col. 1:12-14, 2:14-15; Philip. 2:9-11; James 4:7; Rom. 8:31-39; Jn. 16:33)

“I listen to and enjoy Christian radio and TV programming. My question is since I receive more benefit from these programs than from the churches which I have attended, is it necessary that I go to gather with other believers?”

The Lord’s Word is spreading more rapidly and extensively than ever before because of the mass media which are now available. Since we also are highly involved in the proclamation of God’s

Word through the media, our concern is always to encourage people such are yourself, “not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is... (Heb. 10:25).”

Often we all have a tendency to be rather self-centered and not to view things the way that God would have us to understand them. God’s emphasis in His Body or Church is that the entire Body of believers grow up and be blessed, rather than individuals. God’s way is that individuals not separate themselves from one another but rather that they work together receiving their blessing as they minister to one another, not seeking for themselves (Phil. 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:12-27). As God’s people come together to minister to the Lord and to love one another, God is glorified and the Body of believers is blessed (Acts 2:41-47).

Why Believers Gather Themselves Together:

1. To worship the Lord and to love one another. God has ordained that we assemble together for worship. (Evidenced throughout Bible concerning days set aside for worship of all the believers, see Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:41-47). It is pretty difficult to love someone and to encourage them if you are sitting there listening to the radio or TV.
2. To share the Word of God and teaching with one another. This not only includes hearing the Word, but also testifying to its working, ministering the word to one another, etc. (Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:26). You personally cannot be involved in this if you are sitting at home.
3. To sing psalms and hymns to the Lord with one another (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-20). (Note: the power of God came into the place of worship as the people together praised and worshiped the Lord) (2 Chron. 5:11-14).
4. To break bread (Lord’s Supper) and to be baptized (public confession of faith)-(Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor. 11:18-34).
5. To pray for the sick and other needs (Matt. 18:19-20; Acts 4:23-31, 2:42-43; Eph. 6:18-19; James 5:14-16, etc.)
6. To encourage one another to continue in God’s Word and the faith and obedience to Jesus and the Word. To provoke one another to love and good (faith) works. We actually gather together to benefit someone else. We are also able to strengthen each other by standing together in the Lord (Heb. 10:24-25); (Col. 3:16; Eccl. 4:9-12). “One will chase a thousand and two will chase ten thousand... (Deut. 32:30).”
7. To allow the ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7-12) to operate within the Body of believers as the Holy Spirit desires to work. The gifts of the Spirit are not intended for individuals to use on themselves, but are intended to operate to benefit the building up of the Body of Christ (believers or Church). This occurs when God’s people gather together in the name of Jesus expecting the gifts to operate to the Glory of the Lord.

8. To provide opportunity for God's people to give their tithes (Mal. 3:8-12) to the Lord's work. The tithe belongs to the Lord's ministry with which a person is fellowshiping. An offering can also be voluntarily given to other ministries (radio, TV, evangelistic, etc.) as the Holy Spirit directs; however, the tithe belongs to where you are fellowshiping. It is wrong before God for people to neglect to give to God's work (Mal. 3:8-12), whether they are sitting at church or at home.

The Lord has given us radio and TV ministries to supplement the local churches' teaching and to reach people who are not believers yet. The work of the ministry is to be done through local groups of believers.

“Is there a consequence to disobeying God's Word?”

God has eternal principles which have promise of blessing if obeyed and cursing if disobeyed. “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursings. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut. 30:19-20).” (See Deut. 28 for fuller explanation of blessings and cursings.) Obedience always has reward of blessing and disobedience always has reward of cursing. It is our choice as to what we will have.

God in his love has shown us what to do and not to do. God in his love also knew that mankind could not obey his law perfectly. The result of mankind's separation from God is eternal death. However, God in his love has provided eternal life and every blessing to whoever would turn to Jesus as being the Lord of their lives. The effects of mankind's separation from and disobedience to God is cancelled by Jesus paying the price to set us free. (See Jn. 3:14-21; Rom. 6:23, 8:1-18; Gal. 3:13-14.) Jesus has enabled us to have all the blessings of obedience and removed the penalty of eternal death of disobedience.

Now does that mean that we can willfully disobey God and not have any consequences? God's word says, “No!” Jesus has freed us to be able to live for God. We must now choose to be obedient to God's Word in order to experience what Jesus has provided. (See Rom. 6.) If a believer should disobey God, and asks God to forgive him, God in his love will forgive. (See 1 Jn. 1:5-2:6.) We note that a true believer hates sin. Although he may fall at times, he will be quick to ask God's forgiveness and not continue to make a practice of doing evil.

Disobedience to God's Word always has consequences which will affect us until we seek God for forgiveness. Worry, fear, bitterness, unforgiveness, lying, jealousy, strife, etc. will wreck our minds and bodies if we persist. Gluttony, greed, smoking, drinking, overwork, adultery, divorce, laziness, etc. will have consequences. “Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Gal. 6:7).”

“If we deliberately (Note: deliberately) keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people’ (Heb. 10:26-30).” “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 7:21)” (See Matt. 7:13-29 dealing with obedience.)

“I was told that once you are saved you will always be saved. Is this true?”

When we receive Jesus into our lives as our Lord, it is an act of our will to receive by faith the free gift of eternal life which God has given us through Jesus Christ. God has given us the choice to receive Jesus and have life or to reject Jesus and have eternal death. The choice is ours to make. God will not violate our free will.

If we have received Jesus, we can have complete confidence that we are saved (Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Jn. 5:9-13). We can also be confident that no man or even the devil himself can take away our salvation (Jn. 10:28-29; Rom. 8:34-39) if we do not want to give up Jesus. However, it is possible that people who have been saved can by their own choice turn around and give up their faith in Jesus and by their own choice lose their salvation.

God’s Word says (speaking to and about Christians): “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace (Heb. 6:4-6).”

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:26-29).”

“If anyone sees his brother (fellow Christian) commit a sin that does not lead to death (eternal), he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death (eternal). There is a sin which leads to death (eternal). I am not saying that he should pray about that (1 Jn. 5:16).

“Therefore, dear friends (fellow believers), since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position (2 Pet. 3:17).”

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel (Col. 1:21-23).”

“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner (in this case speaking about a ‘fallen’ believer) away from his error will save him from death (eternal) and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).” (See also 1 Tim. 1:19-20; Mk. 4:13-20; Matt. 10:16-39.)

“I had read your article concerning “once saved always saved.” Your conclusion was that this is not true. I appreciate your citing passages for our reference. I read a response to your article which differed with what you said; however, in looking again at Hebrews 6:4-6, I cannot find evidence that you were incorrect. Please respond to his conclusions.”

The Word of God brings conviction on people’s hearts! It is important that we all pray that God would open our understanding to God’s Word and all that is ours in Jesus (Eph. 1:17-23). As the brother correctly stated, we are not to take anyone’s word for anything unless it is in God’s Word. And if it is in God’s Word, we should be willing to put aside our pride, thoughts, and doctrines in order to act on the Truth of God’s Word. Because we feel so strongly about wanting to keep God’s words before your eyes, we usually list many verses for you to consider so you can make decisions on the basis of God’s Word, rather than our opinions.

For instance, let us look at Hebrews 6:4-6 in light of the question “Is it possible for believers to lose their salvation?” Look up these verses in several translations. “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

Now we quote the brother’s response as to ‘who’ is being referred to here. “...the one who continually hears the salvation message, continually rejects the free gift, and continually turns his back on the calling of the Holy Spirit, will eventually find that the Holy Spirit has departed from him.” (Our note: he never had the Holy Spirit to begin with!) The Holy Spirit is a patient and untiring God, but even He will not burden you forever if you persist in rejection after being told of His gift. That, sir, is what Hebrews 6:4-6 tells us. Let us see!

Now for a look at the passage again. Who is being talked about? A person:

- Who has once been enlightened (Greek = made to see),

- Who has tasted (Greek = to taste, eat, to experience) the heavenly gift (salvation-See Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8),
- Who has shared in the Holy Spirit,
- Who has tasted (to taste, eat, or experience the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age-(gifts of the Spirit).”

It is clear from the passage that the person being talked about is someone who has received salvation, been filled with the Holy Spirit, and has been experiencing God’s promises and power in his life. He certainly is not, as the brother thought, someone who ‘hears, continually rejects, and turns his back on the Holy Spirit.’ Brothers and sisters, let us look closely at what God’s Word says before we take it upon ourselves to be teachers (James 3:1)!

What will happen to the person in the context of this verse? “It is impossible for those (born-again, Spirit-filled believer)..., if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance.” NOTE: “if they fall away” – you cannot fall away from something you do not already have! These people were already saved (which is not what the brother says, but it is what the verse says!). This verse clearly says if a believer falls away (gives up Jesus), it is impossible for him to repent. Why? He will not want to! God does not renege on His promise, but man can choose otherwise. (See Heb. 10:26-31; 1 John 5:16-18; 2 Pet. 3:17; Col. 1:21-23; James 5:19-20; Mk. 4:13-20; Matt. 10:16-39.)

“I am a new Christian and I am looking for some help in how I can tell whether what I am being taught is from God or Satan.”

The Word of God clearly states that we are not to simply assume that everything that we hear and see done is of God. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21).”

There are tests from God’s Word which we will find helpful in this area:

1. Does the teacher believe that Jesus Christ is God and that Jesus is God come in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2-3; Jn. 1:1-5, 14, 18)? If they do, they are from God (1 Jn. 4:2). If they do not believe, then they are not true (1 Jn. 4:3).

“Wherefore I give to you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).”

2. If the teacher teaches any other way to life with the Father God other than through faith in Jesus alone (good works, etc.), then they are false (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 1:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; Col. 3:6-15; Jn. 14:6; Rom. 5:1-2.)

3. If someone teaches there is no need for the blood of Jesus to be offered as sacrifice for our sin (separation from God), they are false (Heb. 9:11-28, esp. 22). The blood of Jesus is the source of our salvation and victory over Satan (Rev. 12:11).
4. True teachers will often have signs and wonders following their words, because God is working with them (Mk. 16:14-20; Acts 10:38; Jn. 14:10-14). In itself, this is not a test of true teachers because false teachers also are able to do signs and wonders (Matt. 24:11, 24; Mk. 13:22). However, you can tell the difference because the true one will do the signs in the name of Jesus and will give the glory to God, not taking credit to himself (Mk. 9:38-40, 16:17; Jn. 8:42-50; 5:22-47, esp. 30-32). False teachers do signs in their own names and do not give credit to God, but rather to themselves (2 Thess. 2:3-10; Jn. 5:31). Jesus was often accused of doing the works He did by the power of Satan (Matt. 9:34; Jn. 8:42-55; Matt. 12:24-32). However, Jesus clearly teaches that Satan does not work against himself by casting out his own demons (Matt. 12:24-32). It is only the authority of God by the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name that can bind demonic activity. Only those who are filled with the Holy Spirit can do such work in Jesus' name (Acts 19:13-20). We believe that the test here is who is getting the credit – God, or the person doing the work? A true teacher will always glorify God and tell the people to do so also (Jn. 14:12-14). A false one will say, “Look to me!”
5. Are the teacher's words what the Bible actually says in the context in which it is written? See for yourself what God's Word says! If you have received the Holy Spirit, God will show you what is true and what is false (1 Jn. 2:18-29, especially 27; 1 Jn. 4:4).
6. A true teacher will seek to live a holy life obedient to God's Word, not emphasizing the things of the world and flesh desires. False teachers are indulgent to their own desires, lavishing themselves with things of this world and directing others to do likewise. False ones will also say what people want to hear for their own personal gain (2 Pet. 2:1-22, esp. 17-22; Matt. 12:33-37; 1 Tim. 4:1-6, 6:1-14). False ones often employ intellectualism and appeal to man's flesh desires, rather than to godly power by the Holy Spirit and holy obedience to God's Word (2 Pet. 2:17-22; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Tim. 3:1-17).
7. A true teacher will be heard by those who are increasing in the knowledge of God and obedience (1 Jn. 4:6; Jn. 8:47). The testing of spirits is serious business. We dare not say something is not of God that is of God (Matt. 12:30-32).

“Why are there so many different interpretations of God's Word? How can I tell who is and is not correct?”

The Word of God is clear concerning its origin, content, and purpose. “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).” (Also see 2 Tim. 3:14-17.)

It is clear from God's Word that God is One, and His Word has only one interpretation which can be discerned as a person is led by the Holy Spirit. (Read 1 Cor. 2:10-16.) “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing

spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:13-14).”

By the Holy Spirit we can know the deep things of God. The person who does not know Jesus as Lord cannot understand or appreciate spiritual truth. Thus we see many varying interpretations coming from people who have no understanding but only man’s reasoning about God and His ways. Also a person not filled with the Holy Spirit will have difficulty interpreting spiritual truth, especially about the Holy Spirit and His operation.

You might be thinking – “Why are there so many differences within churches?” First, Satan does not want unity among God’s people, nor the operation of spiritual gifts in the Church. Second, in many cases, traditions and doctrines of men have been passed down the years as “truth” when in reality these things oppose God’s truth in His Word (Matt. 15:1-20). Jesus constantly ran into opposition with the church over man’s interpretation vs. God’s. Third, ignorance of the Word of God hinders interpretation. “Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God,’ (Matt. 22:29).” Jesus was speaking to the learned Bible scholars of his day. Just because someone has gone to seminary or Bible school does not make him or her an authority on God’s word. God gives authority to His people. “For Jesus taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (religious teachers) (Matt. 7:28-29).” Signs will often accompany God’s Word (Mk. 16:15-20).

God’s people need to grow up to be able to understand spiritual truth. Paul prays for this in Ephesians 1:16-23 and 3:16-21. It would do us all good to pray these prayers for ourselves and others. Prayer for spiritual understanding is the first step to knowing God’s ways.

Second, “Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:13-14).” Never take someone else’s word for it (traditions and doctrines, commentaries, etc.). We must search the Scriptures for ourselves, especially if we are teachers! The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul was telling them was true (Acts 17:10-11). They searched with an open mind, open to all God had for them, but it had to be in God’s Word. If what they learned shattered their past beliefs, praise God! They received it.

Third, be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will lead you into all understanding concerning discerning truth and error. “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you – the anointing you received from him remains in you and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him (1 Jn. 2:26-27).” Teachers are in the Church to help you grow (Eph. 4:11-16), but you are responsible for what you do with God’s Word.

“I am having difficulty overcoming temptations. Would you please give me some insight in this area?”

“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:13-15).”

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it (1 Cor. 10:13).”

We must first understand that a temptation is anything that would destroy, hinder, or distract us from a faith relationship with God. Satan cannot make us do anything, so he entices us by temptations. The temptations are not the problem. The problem comes when we do not respond correctly to the temptations and we separate ourselves from God by making a wrong choice. God is faithful to forgive if we acknowledge the wrong and ask for forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:9). However, we do not have to give the devil opportunity any longer!

We know from God’s Word how Satan operates (2 Cor. 2:11). All temptations are intended to bring pressure against our minds and bodies. We have not disobeyed God just because an evil thought runs through our head. What we do with that thought is what will determine its affect on us and our relationship with God (2 Cor. 10:3-5). We can have victory over every temptation through Jesus Christ!

All temptations are intended to take our eyes off of God and to doubt God’s Word as being true. Satan uses three major areas of temptation: our flesh, the worldly influence, and demonic oppression (Mk. 4:14-19, 4:1-11). An example of how NOT to respond to temptation is Genesis 3:1-8. An example of how to respond to temptation is Matthew 4:1-11.

We need to learn to distinguish the area we are being tempted!

1. **The Flesh** - our old self and desires which were apart from God (Gal. 5:16-26; James 1:14). Examples of flesh temptation: Gen. 39:7-12, 3:1-8; Matt. 4:2-4.
2. **The World** - attitudes and values and things which distract us from seeking and relying on God alone (1 Jn. 2:15-17; James 4:1-4). Examples of world temptations: Gen. 11:1-9; 2 Sam. 15:1-4; Mk. 4:19; Matt. 4:8-10.
3. **Satan and demons** - opposing forces to God who are attempting to destroy, steal, and kill man lest he receive God’s life and blessing (Jn. 10:10; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 1 Peter 5:8-9). Examples of demonic oppression: 2 Cor. 12:7-8; Matt. 4:5-7; Mk. 4:17.

How to Overcome Temptation

1. Recognize Satan is a liar (Jn. 8:44). We do not have to give in to him! God is greater! (1 John 4:4; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Gal 2:20, 5:24-25; Eph. 4:17-24; 2 Cor. 5:17).
2. Watch and pray (in the Spirit or in tongues) lest you enter into temptation (Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18).

3. Distinguish area of temptation, and speak and do God's Word. **Flesh:** Offer body to God (Rom. 12:1, 6:1-23). Recognize body is temple of Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Refer to scriptures in #1. Flee youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Peter 2:11).
World: Renew mind with God's Word (Rom. 12:2; Philip 4:8; Col. 3:1-2).
Demons: Resist by blood and name of Jesus (James 4:7; Lk. 10:19, 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18)

“I am having difficulty living for God. Can I still be a Christian and continue to get drunk? I am also having trouble overcoming other desires which I know are not pleasing to God.”

God is a holy God and desires us also to be holy. The reason for us to be holy is so that we can be with God and have His blessing in our lives. God realized that none of us could be holy and that we were all guilty before Him. This is why God in His love sent Jesus to make us holy and in right standing with Him. Through Jesus we can now have no guilt or condemnation in our lives (Rom. 8:1-31, 34). As we have received Jesus as our Lord, God has made us new creatures; old things are passed away, and all things are made new (2 Cor. 5:17). We now stand holy before God.

Since we are now new creatures we want to live holy, obeying God's word because God has loved us. We realize that the old way of life leads to destruction, and obedience to God's word brings life. We realize that God will help us as we love Him and desire to obey His Word (Philip. 2:12-13). We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philip. 4:12).

We must dwell on the fact that we are new creatures in Jesus, and we do not have to live contrary to God any longer. Our spirit is holy and wants to do God's Word. Now we need to give our bodies to God to be used for God's purposes, and we need to renew our minds and desires by God's Word so that our thoughts and attitudes come into agreement with Him (Rom. 12:1-2). The key is found in loving and wanting God more than desiring to fulfill ourselves and our desires apart from Him. In order to do this we must come into a full understanding of the fact that Jesus has already broken the power of every evil thing off of our lives!

We must begin to look at ourselves differently if we have asked Jesus into our lives. God looks at us as holy, worthy, and forgiven. If such is the case, why should we continue to look at ourselves as weak, worthless, and helpless? Why get drunk if you are not a drunk? You are a child of God! – Not a drunk! Do you realize that you are not in bondage anymore to anything that is against God? You are free! He whom the Son (Jesus) has set free is free indeed. If we continue in God's Word we will know how to be and stay free from everything that separates us from God and is leading us to destruction (Jn. 8:31, 32, 36). If we want out, all we have to do is act on what Jesus has already provided! He who calls upon the Lord will not be ashamed (Rom. 10:11-13).

Jesus now lives in you. You are not to live for yourself any longer; you are to live for God if you want His blessing. God will help you! Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I

condemn you! Go and sin no more (Jn. 8:11). (Also see 1 Jn. 1:9.) Because her life was changed by meeting Jesus, she now had ability to live differently. Because we now have received Jesus as Lord, we now have God's ability within us to live for Him. To willfully continue to disobey God will open us up to Satan's destructive activity (James 1:12-25; Heb. 10:26-39).

(Helpful scriptures for your thought: Rom. 6, 12:1-14; Col. 3; Eph. 4:17-5:20; Gal. 2:20, 5:13-26; 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Col. 1:9-29; 1 Jn. 1:5-2:6; 1 Pet. 1:13-2:12; Matt. 5:43-48; Jn. 14:15-26.)

“When should a person be baptized?”

God's Word is clear that people are to be baptized in water (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:15-16). As to the time or age when a person is to be baptized, the Word of God does not state specifically since there exists a free will response on each person's part. However, certain criteria for a valid baptism are set down as to what a person must do before he or she is baptized.

- A. Be taught God's Word (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 8:12, 10:43-48, etc.)
- B. Repent and then be baptized (Acts 2:38). To repent is to turn away from living for one's self and Satan and to turn towards obedience to God and looking to Him as one's source.
- C. Believe in and confess Jesus as Lord with your mouth (Acts 8:29-39 esp. 37, 8:12, 16:30-34; Rom. 10:9-10).

We find in God's Word that before people were baptized in water, in every account they first had heard the Word and responded to the Word by repenting and believing on the Lord Jesus, confessing with their mouths that 'Jesus is my Lord.' Faith is the only thing that saves a person (Mk. 16:16). Faith only comes to a person through the hearing of God's Word (Rom. 10: 17). Without faith in Jesus being present in the person being baptized, there is no baptism, but rather a simple washing with water of no spiritual value.

The practice of parents or sponsors believing in the place of an infant at the infant's baptism is not scriptural practice and finds no scriptural support. It is often thought that Jesus sanctioned baptizing infants when he said, "Allow the little children to come to me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God (Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 18:15-17; Matt. 19:13-14)." However, if one reads these sections carefully, one would find that in the verse following it says that Jesus took the children in His arms and laid his hands on them and blessed them. The children were not baptized but rather blessed. It also makes note that the parents specifically brought the children for the purpose of being blessed, not baptized.

Another verse often used to support infant baptism is "go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them... (Matt. 28:19-20)." The discussion goes that since infants are included in "all nations" they are to be baptized. However, careful reading would reveal that the verse clearly

teaches “to teach all nations,” or “to make disciples of all nations” and then to baptize “them,” speaking not about “all nations” but rather those who were made disciples by receiving God’s Word. In Acts 2:38, we find that a person is to “repent and be baptized.” To repent always preceded baptism. It is clear to say that most infants have not heard the Word of God, repented, and believed on the Lord Jesus, confessing with their mouths that Jesus is their Lord. Confession is made to salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). God’s Word teaches that a child is able to believe, making a distinction between an infant and a child (Matt. 18:6). When children are taught by the parents and grow to know God’s love and gift of life, repent, and believe on Jesus, confessing with their mouths that ‘Jesus is my Lord;’ then it is the time they are to be baptized, not before. We find no clear evidence from God’s Word stating otherwise.

What about the infants? The parents are to dedicate their children to God. (This is actually what is happening when infants are incorrectly called “baptized.” The parents are seeking God’s blessing on their child and promising to teach by God’s Word and example the ways of God.) God’s Word says that the child is under God’s blessing because of the faith of the believing parent (1 Cor. 7:14) until the child is of age to believe for one’s self, and then be baptized into the Lord Jesus’ Body, not into a certain type of church, as is often mistakenly thought. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 1:13-17; Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 6:1-4.)

When we stand before God someday, each one of us will stand individually responsible for what we have done with the Lord Jesus. The faith of someone else will not cover us. We must have responded in faith to God’s Word and His love if we are to have His life eternal.

“Why is it important that a believer speak in tongues?”

God gives us in His Word several reasons why all believers should speak in tongues. These are reasons which God has determined, and they are not to be taken lightly nor disregarded by man’s reasoning, traditions, or doctrines. God’s Word says, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak in new tongues... (Mk. 16:17).”

All believers when filled with the Holy Spirit have the ability to speak in new tongues to God. This is what we call the prayer language. It is for one’s private life with God. We make the Bible distinction between the ministry gift of tongues with interpretation, which is intended for public use (1 Cor. 14:5) – not every believer will have it (1 Cor. 12:30), and the new tongue or prayer language which all believers will have for their private use to God (1 Cor. 14:2).

Biblical Reasons Why Believers are to Speak in Tongues:

1. Tongues are the initial sign of a person being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:1-7). Tongues are the supernatural evidence that the apostles noted as the sign that people were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:46).
2. Tongues are for spiritual edification or charging up (1 Cor. 14:4). It is not a mental or physical edifying. God says we are edified in our spirits (1 Cor. 14:4, 14). Tongues are God’s means of enabling us to pray supernaturally to Him (1 Cor. 14:2).

3. Tongues remind us of the Spirit's indwelling presence (Jn. 14:16-17). As we use them, tongues assist us in the worship of God everyday (Jn. 4:24).
4. Praying in tongues is praying in line with God's perfect will (Rom. 8:26-28). Many times we do not know how to pray about situations with our minds. The Holy Spirit will help our prayers as we pray in tongues (or in the spirit), so that we get God's perfect will for every situation. Everything then works together for our good (Rom. 8:28). In 1 Corinthians 14:14 (Amplified Bible) it reads, "For if I pray in tongues, my spirit (by the Holy Spirit in me) prays." We note the mind is unfruitful as one prays in tongues because the Bible says our spirit is praying by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 14:14).
5. Praying in tongues stimulates faith and helps us to trust God more (Jude 20). Our praying in tongues does not produce faith. God's word produces faith (Rom. 10:17). However, praying in tongues stimulates faith since it takes faith to speak in tongues, believing that God understands what you are saying even though you do not (1 Cor. 14:2; Rom. 8:26-28).
6. Speaking in tongues (or the spirit) keeps us free from worldly contamination. We can speak in tongues to ourselves to the Lord wherever we are and so remain in the Spirit even though the world around us is doing ungodly things.
7. Praying in tongues enables us to pray for the unknown. Since it is Spirit prayer it is not limited by our minds and so the Lord is able by His Spirit to have us pray for whatever He would have us to pray (Rom. 8:26-28; 1 Cor. 14:14). Selfishness is removed from our prayers.
8. Praying in tongues gives spiritual refreshing and rest (Is. 28:11-12).
9. Speaking in tongues gives thanks well to God (1 Cor. 14:15-17). We are not speaking to people or for people's benefit, but giving thanks to God (1 Cor. 14:2). However, if we are speaking for people's benefit, then we will not speak in tongues.
10. Speaking in tongues will help control the use of our tongue along Godly lines as we yield our tongues to the Holy Spirit's use (James 3:8).

"I am seeking to grow in the understanding of God's Word. Recently I had some questions and went to several pastors whose ministries I respect in order to gain some understanding on a certain issue. Following discussion with them both, I found that they actually opposed one another concerning their beliefs in this particular issue. I love them both; however, now I am confused as to what is true. What should I do from here?"

Quite often you will find this experience to be the case. However, it is not that there is a problem with God's Word being divided, unclear, or of many interpretations. There is only one interpretation to God's Word as revealed by His Holy Spirit because God is unified (2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 2). The problem of interpretation is not with God but with men. Man's "wisdom," traditions, doctrines, and thought about God's Word and ways, in many respects, have actually distorted it. The true meaning has been lost, removing the power of God's Word to transform and enable His people to have victory in their lives (Matt. 15:1-9; 2 Tim. 3:16; Job. 42:1-7).

Simply because someone is a religious leader or has gone to a seminary or Bible school does not mean that he or she is an 'authority' concerning God's Word, and able to reveal the Word in truth

by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was considered by the “organized” church as being a radical, satanic, fanatical, false teacher. However, the people, who were open to God’s Word and receiving all that He had for them, noted that Jesus spoke and had authority which the religious leaders did not possess (Matt. 7:28-29; Mk. 1:27). God will also confirm the word of His true disciples with signs and wonders (Acts. 10:38; Jn. 14:12-14; Mk. 16:17-20).

Many teach today that God’s Word is a dead, historical book which is only applied to the people in it. God’s Word is alive! It will save, heal, deliver, and provide every blessing for those who believe and do what it says to do, today just as in the apostles’ day (Heb. 4:12; Heb. 13:8; Matt. 24:35; Jn. 14:12-14).

Because God’s Word is true and for today, if we are to have the abundant life which Jesus promised in Jn. 10:10, we need to search God’s Word for ourselves, asking the Holy Spirit of God to lead us into all truth. Every believer needs to study the scriptures to find out for himself what God actually says. We cannot afford to go by what men say about God’s Word. The Bereans checked out everything that Paul told them, making certain it was true in God’s Word and not some man’s opinion about it, according to what he has been taught, traditions and doctrines of men or his personal thoughts (Acts 17:10-12). The question we need to be asking ourselves and the teachers of God’s Word is, “What does God’s Word say concerning this matter? Please show me from God’s word.” (See 2 Tim. 2:15.)

We are to obey spiritual leaders as long as what they are telling us is consistent with God’s Word (Heb. 13:17) because the principle stands, “We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29; 4:19-20).” We are not to be rebellious or disrespectful in our attitude, nor slanderous towards those who have spoken incorrectly from God’s Word. However, after we have found out what is correct, we are, in a learner’s spirit, to show them and pray that their understanding and our understanding be enlightened to the receiving of God’s Word, even though it goes against man’s doctrine and teachings or against their own thoughts and belief (Eph. 1:16-23). If the person who is to be an “authority” refuses to receive God’s Word after it has been clearly established among many witnesses from God’s Word, do not sit under that person’s teaching any longer (1 Tim. 6:3-5, 5:19-20; Matt. 15:1-14). Be willing to receive the consequences (Jn. 15:18-16:4; Matt. 10). “I am writing this to you about those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things (1 John 26-27)...” (See entire section 1 Jn. 2:24-27; Jn. 16:13-15).

“Why are there so many different churches all professing to be the true church?”

In this day and age where one can look on every street corner and find a church building, it is important that we seriously consider what God’s Word has to say concerning God’s true church.

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you were called. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).”

“For he himself (Jesus) is our peace, who has made the two (Jew and Gentile) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far away (Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (Jews). For through him (Jesus) we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (Eph. 2:14-18).” (See also Eph. 2:22.)

“My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me? I have given them the glory that you have given to me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (Jn. 17:20-23).”

Apparently, there is only one true church and it is unified. Now which one is it – Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, non-denominational, etc.? God does not even recognize the labels and names which men have placed upon the different groups. God plays no favorites concerning church groups. What God looks for is whether Jesus Christ is being lifted up and exalted as Lord in the hearts of the people. The true church referred to in God’s word consists of people who profess Jesus as Lord and do His Word. We find such people in many different groups which have other titles over their church doors.

The reason that there exists so many groups with so many different titles is because of people following people, man’s traditions and doctrines, and people allowing their likes and dislikes to divide God’s unified church. We (God’s people) are to work to maintain the unity in the Church (Eph. 4:3). Division is rooted in one group’s desire to gain supremacy over another. “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not mere men?” (See entire section 1 Cor. 3:1-23; 4:6-7.)

When God’s people quit trying to promote and build their own little kingdoms and begin to lift up Jesus and God’s Word, doing what God says to do – “love one another –,” then we will see the world come to know Jesus. Talk is cheap. Christians often talk about loving one another. God loves us all equally and calls us “co-laborers together with Him (1 Cor. 3:5-9).” God has assigned to each a different task. Getting behind a vision which God has given to a group should not cause division but rather should exalt Jesus, causing unity to be maintained in God’s Church if we would support His work in each other.

“What exactly is involved in the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion?”

We find reference to the Lord’s Supper in God’s Word in the following sections: Matt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24; Lk. 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:23-32.

The Lord's Supper is a time in which believers in the Lord Jesus Christ celebrate and proclaim His death until his return. It is a time of rejoicing in the fact that Jesus' death (and shedding his blood for us) paid the price to make us right with God. We are no longer separated from God but rather forgiven – God's children and heirs to God's life and promises. As believers share together in the Lord's Supper, we are also proclaiming our oneness with one another as members of God's family through Jesus Christ.

The meal itself consists of unleavened bread and “the fruit of the vine.” However, this is not ordinary bread or drink as we shall see from God's Word. “And he (Jesus) took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to them saying, ‘this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.’ Likewise he gave them the cup after the supper, saying, ‘This cup is God's covenant sealed with my blood which is poured out for you’ (Lk. 22:19-20).”

“I speak to you as sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say: The cup of blessing for which we give thanks to God: do we not share in the blood of Christ when we drink from this cup? And the bread we break: do we not share in the body of Christ when we eat this bread (1 Cor. 10:15-16)?”

“For until the Lord comes, you proclaim His death whenever you eat this bread and drink from this cup. It follows then that if anyone eats the Lord's bread or drinks from His cup in an improper manner, he is guilty of sin against the Lord's body and blood. (Note this!) So then everyone should examine himself first, and then eat the bread. If he does not recognize the meaning of the Lord's body when he eats the bread and drinks from the cup, he brings judgment on himself as he eats and drinks. That is why many of you are sick and weak, and several have died (1 Cor. 11:26-30).”

When God's Word says, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” (1 Cor. 11:24-25), it means just that fact. In the Lord's Supper we are participating in more than bread and juice as a remembrance. We participate physically with bread and juice; however, spiritually we are sharing in the true body and true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why it is such a serious matter for a person to receive the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. This means that we have faith that we are participating in the Lord Jesus' body and blood given for us (1 Cor. 11:29). If it were merely bread and juice representing the body and blood, we would not be guilty of the body and blood of Jesus by faithless partaking. However, God's Word clearly states that it truly is the body and the blood of Jesus that we are taking as bread and juice (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). People have become weak, sick, and some have died because they have not received God's holy gift in faith. It is actually Jesus that we are receiving in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:29-32, 10:15-16).

The purpose of the meal is to give us the most personal assurance that our sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ; it is a covenant or promise by the Lord; physical healing is also provided. By it we receive strength and encouragement to live holier and more dedicated lives. We remember His death which gave us life and forgiveness, and we publicly proclaim that Jesus gave his body and blood that all people might be forgiven and have life with God. We also proclaim our unity in Jesus.

“I would like information concerning fasting.”

Fasting is a voluntary abstinence from food for one or more meals. You need to determine the length of the fast. It is not a diet, but should be focused on reaching specific spiritual objectives. It should be combined with meditation on God’s Word and prayer. Fasting is most efficient when practiced regularly one day a week, and it should be preceded by nutritional eating habits. During a fast, liquids are permitted. Avoid overeating after the completion of the fast by eating soups or other light food. Avoid physical exercise during the fast.

Fasting was an established practice in the Bible. It is important that we remember that it is a voluntary, not forced, activity. Fasting, especially after three days, will produce a greater alertness to spiritual things.

Basic Purposes for Fasting:

1. To gain spiritual alertness to overcome temptation (Matt. 4:2-11).
2. In repentance for disobedience to God (1 Sam. 7:6; Neh. 9:1-3; Dan. 9:3, etc.)
3. To seek God’s will in a specific matter (Judg. 20:26; Acts 14:23, 13:1-3).
4. For concern for the work of God (Neh. 1:4).
5. For deliverance or protection (Ezra 8: 21-23; 2 Chron 20:3; Mk. 9:29).
6. As part of worship (Lk. 2:37; Acts. 13:2-3).
7. To humble oneself before God (Ps. 69:10-13).
8. When in deep sorrow (Ps. 35:13-14; Dan. 6:18).

When fasting, desire greater effectiveness in discerning and achieving God’s purposes (Is. 58:6). Fast secretly, and God will reward you openly (Matt. 6:16-18). Do not fast to achieve selfish purposes (Is. 58:3-5). Do not fast to impress others with your spirituality (Zech. 7:5). Other references: Matt. 7:21; Mk. 9:29; Acts. 10:30; 1 Cor. 7:5.

“What does the Bible say about homosexuals?”

Some modern versions of the Bible use the term “homosexual;” however, the word is not a scriptural term. The Bible uses at least fifteen different terms to identify, describe, and condemn the sin of “sodomy.” (The abomination of sodomy is recorded in Ezekiel 16:49-50; Genesis 19:1-11; Judges 19:16-30.) We understand that sodomy (homosexuality), lesbianism, and other perversions of God’s order were the cause of Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed by the fire of God’s judgment.

Other terms:

- sodomy (Gen. 19:4-10, 1 Kings 14:24, 15:11-12; 2 Kings 23:7)
- abomination (Lev. 18:22; Deut. 22:5)
- burning with lust (Rom. 1:27)
- violating nature (Rom. 1:26)

- wickedness (Judges 19:23)
- dishonoring the body (Rom. 1:24)
- shameful lusts (Rom. 1:27)
- lusting for strange flesh (Jude 1:7)
- filthy dreamers (Jude 1:7-8)
- effeminate (1 Cor. 6:9)
- abusers of themselves (1 Cor. 6:9)
- inordinate affections (Col. 3:5-6)
- reprobate (Rom. 1:28)
- defilers of themselves (1 Tim. 1:9-10).

Nobody is born a homosexual. We are all born with a sin nature which is capable of every kind of lust and perversion. However, in order to engage in perversions, we must first reject the moral laws of God which are written in our hearts (Rom. 2:15) and then become involved in sensuality. Then God “gives them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves (Rom. 1:24, 1:16-32).”

Some people are born without the ability or interest to have a physical relationship with the opposite sex. God’s Word calls these people “eunuchs” (Matt. 19:12). However, such people are not even to be considered in the same case as those who have a burning lust for the same sex.

It is important to realize that the basic temptations that result in sodomy are common to all people (1 Cor. 10:13), and that man’s solutions cannot cure sodomy. Only the power of God’s truth in Jesus Christ and the grace of God can bring forgiveness and freedom. (See Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 6, 10:9-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 8:31-36.).

Understand: Jesus Christ at the cross by His blood has broken the power of such a sin that is an abomination to God. Jesus has provided freedom and life to whoever would call to Him, confessing Him as Lord and turning from one’s wicked ways to live for God. He will give us the ability to do it if we want to live for Him (See Philip. 4:13; Rom. 6). God declares, “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me (Jeremiah 32:27)?” We must receive this life that God has provided by receiving Jesus into our hearts as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10).

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God: do not be deceived: Neither the sexual immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were (they rejected their ways turning to Jesus). But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11, 12:20).” Jesus alone can give freedom and life!

“I am a new Christian. The other night I attended a meeting and received the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. The man ministering told us that being made one of God’s children through Jesus as Lord and then receiving the Holy Spirit is just the

beginning of my life as a Christian. Would you please give me some further counsel for growth in my Christian life?"

Praise the Lord for what He is doing in your life! (See Philip. 1:6, 2:12-13; Heb. 12:1-4.) Your spirit is alive to God now. What you do with your mind and body will determine your growth in the Lord (Romans 12:1-2).

Counsel for Christian Growth:

1. **Seek God first** Live for God – be open to all He has for you and what He wants you to be. (Example: Jesus only did and said what His Father gave him to do and say.)
2. **Continue in God's Word** and do what God says (Jn. 8:31-32, 36; Col. 1:21-23; James 1:21-25).
3. **Study and think upon God's Word** to show yourself approved to God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15; Mk. 4:20, 23-25 Amplified Bible).
4. **Watch and pray** (Matt. 26:41, Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). Cast down false imaginations and reasonings of the mind which are contrary to God's Word (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
5. **Stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit within you.** We do this by praying in tongues and by praising God with our understanding (2 Tim. 1:6; Jude 20).
6. **Flee youthful, and not so youthful, lusts.** Renew mind with God's Word rather than letting desires control your thoughts. Yield yourself to God. Remember your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Tim. 4:16; Eph. 4:17-24; Col. 3; Rom. 6:10-13; 1 Cor. 6:9-20).
7. **Submit yourself to God.** We do this through prayer, acknowledging attitudes and actions which are against God (1 Jn. 1-9), and by obeying God's Word. Then we also need to learn how to resist the devil so that he will flee from us (James 4:6-10). Refuse to allow wrong attitudes and actions which will give the devil a place in your life (Eph. 4:27).
8. **Do not forsake getting together with other Christians** to praise the Lord, share in the word and pray, and to encourage one another in the Lord (Heb. 10:24-25). Love one another and bear one another's burdens to Jesus (Gal. 6:1-10).
9. **Put on God's armor.** Learn about your rights and authority in Jesus Christ. (See prayer in Ephesians 1:17-23, 3:14-21, 6:10-18.)
10. **Confess before men what God is doing in your life** because of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, as you act on God's Word, believing God (Matt. 10:16-39; Acts 1:8).