

# Acts In Action Training Series



Foundational Faith Lesson Series

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## What Is The Bible Introduction

The 'What Is The Bible' training lesson is a course designed to provide Biblically based and Spirit led answers and teachings about questions related to the Bible. In this lesson we will be taking a look at several common questions that people may have in regards to the Bible and discuss answers to those questions. These questions and answers are designed to be simple and easy to understand while at the same time providing depth and spiritual insight. The format is laid out in question and answer format and each of the answers are based completely on Biblical passages. In this study we will be reviewing the following four questions: What is the Bible? What is the Word? What is the purpose of the Bible? How do we apply the Bible in our life? These questions may seem very basic for someone who believes in Christ, however we know that a house is only as strong as the foundation that it is built upon. This teaching is intended to help the new believer lay a solid foundation on which to build and grow as well as encourage and challenge those who have believed for a long time to continue to learn and grow closer in their relationship with God.

This lesson is also not intended to prove that God exists, that the Bible is true, or convince anyone to follow Christ. This lesson was prepared with the assumption that His word is true and alive, that Jesus died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven, that we should always be prepared to testify about what God has done and He is doing, that our faith must be displayed in action and not simply through words, that God is love and that we should treat everyone the same way that we would treat Jesus.

As you go through this lesson the first thing that we recommend is that you pray. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and teach you as you read and review the Bible passages that are used. Pray that as you learn about God and His Word, you will grow closer to Him and that you would be changed. Finally, pray that you will not only learn the information, but that you will apply it to your life and bring glory to the name of the Lord.

## What Is The Bible?

Many people view the Bible as a collection of stories. Some may believe that these stories are from history and others may believe they are nothing more than fairytales. Others believe the Bible is a collection of rules that, if followed, will mean that we will live a good life and be accepted into heaven after we die. Still others view the Bible as nothing more than a collection of literature that has been created by different writers over a long period of time. However, the reality is that none of these are true. If we were to use our human wisdom and knowledge to describe the origin of the Bible we would say that it was created over a course of approximately 2,000 years by 40 different authors. The truth is however that the author of the Bible is One person, the Lord God and the Bible is very clear that it is in fact the very words of God.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)**

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

It is easy to look at the number of humans that were involved and the timespan over which the Bible was written and wonder how it is possible that the entire Bible could be the Word of God. The truth is however that every single book, every single chapter, and every single word is the very word of God. He did not merely



inspire a human to write a book and then the human wrote what he believed the Lord wanted. No, each word is precise and specifically chosen by the Lord Himself.

Consider this analogy, a king wants to build a new palace and because of this he brings in builders, engineers and designers. He talks with the engineers first and tells them exactly the design that he wants and they create the building plans. He then talks with the builders who take the plans and begin to build exactly to the specification that the king had laid out. Finally, he brings in the interior designers who begin to fill each room with furniture and decorations that the king has selected, placing them in precisely the location that the king had specified. During this building process multiple people would have been involved and multiple steps taken. However, the palace is not a product of the engineers, the builders, or the designers. The palace is completely the work of the king and represents the vision that the king had for it. The Bible is a result of the same process. In this case, the Lord our God used various people during different periods of time to document the message, the information and the instruction that He wants to convey to us.

We must remember that, though the Bible does contain historical information, it is not simply a history book. The Bible also contains facts and information, but it is not intended to be used to prove or disprove anything and it is not intended to be used to help you win a debate. The Bible is God revealing Himself to use through His Words, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the presence of His Holy Spirit. It was given to us by the Lord so that we can know Him more deeply and draw closer to Him.

In the Bible we read many stories and hear about many people. However, every story and every event ultimately point back to one person and that person is Jesus. Each story, while it can be used as an individual story, is actually only one part of a much larger tale. It tells us how much God loves us and how much we need God. He loves each of us so much and was willing to make the most amazing sacrifice in order to show us His love and provide a way for us to be reunited with Him.

So if we know and believe that the Bible is not the work of man but in fact the Word of God and we believe that the Word of God was intended to reveal to us how much He loves us and who He is then we can now move on to our next question, What is the Word?

## What Is The Word?

We know that the Bible is the Word of God but what does that mean? How are the words of God any different than the words that are contained in any book? The Bible clearly tells us just how different the words of God are than the words of humans.

### **John 1:1 New International Version (NIV)**

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

The Word of God is not simply words that are spoken like the words of humans, the word of God is much much more, the Word is God Himself. When we read the Bible, we are not simply reading words that are written, but we are actually meeting God and seeing who He is. Because the Word is God Himself, we can begin to examine the Word and its attributes. As we do this, we begin to see that because the Word is God the attributes of the Word are the same as those of God.



The first characteristic that we will discuss is that the Word of God is true. God is perfect in all of His ways and as such He does not lie. All that He does and all that He says is in perfect truth.

**John 17:17 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

When we read the Word of God we can have complete confidence to know that nothing we are reading is false or incorrect. We do not have to worry that someone is trying to convince us of something or to persuade us by twisting the truth. Instead, we can read and learn knowing that we do not have to fear being lied to. What a relief this is!

The truth also never changes and this is another characteristic that we can see in the Word of God. When God has spoken, His Word will never change or become untrue.

**Matthew 24:35 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*

We can stand on the Word of the Lord because it is firm and solid and does not shift and change in the way that the world does. Also, the Word of God will never pass away. No matter what is going on around us or what situation we may find ourselves in, even when it seems like our entire world is crumbling around us, the Word of God will be a firm rock on which we can stand and not be shaken.

**Titus 1:2 New International Version (NIV)**

*“In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.”*

So many people in the world and so many things in the world will promise us peace, love, joy, and happiness, yet there is in fact only One who can truly deliver. When God says something, we know that what He says will come true. We can have complete faith and confidence in the promises that He makes.

**Numbers 23:19 New International Version (NIV)**

*“God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”*

He never forgets the things that He has told us and He will never take back His Word. He will never lie to us and therefore we do not need to wonder about His words for us and if they can be trusted. In a world where we can so easily be deceived by false promises and lies, we have the One who will always speak the truth to us and then act in the exact way that He has spoken. His actions will never be different than His words and His words will never contradict His actions.

**Genesis 1:3 New International Version (NIV)**

*“And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”*

God’s words are not empty but instead they are completely powerful. God’s words become truth when He speaks them and whatever He speaks will happen. When we read Genesis and see how He created our universe we will see that He did not have to figure out anything or prepare a project plan like a builder would



do if they were to build a house. No, He simply spoke what He wanted to happen and when He spoke it, it happened. How amazing it is to think that this same God whose very words created all that we see and know loves us. One thing we can always take comfort in is that God will never tell us something that will not happen.

### **John 1:1 New International Version (NIV)**

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

### **John 1:14 New International Version (NIV)**

*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

In the same way that the word represents God, the word also represents Jesus. Jesus was there at the beginning and He was with God and Jesus, being the son of God, is also God. Jesus did not die but He rose again and He sent His Holy Spirit to be with us on earth until He returns again. This means that Jesus is active and alive in this world and in the hearts of those who have accepted His word. In the same way the Word is also alive and active. It is not simply words written in a book and therefore when we read the word, we should ask the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us and reveal His truth to us.

### **2 Peter 1:3 New International Version (NIV)**

*“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”*

### **Revelation 22:18-19 New International Version (NIV)**

*“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.”*

God has given us all that we need in order to go through this life. He has given us His Word and He has given us His Spirit. We should allow both of these gifts to change our hearts, change our souls and change our minds. The Bible is not incomplete and it also does not contain anything that is not of use. We do not need to add anything to it and there is nothing that needs to be removed. It contains exactly what God knew we needed and to ensure that we did not miss anything or misunderstand He gave us a teacher in the Holy Spirit. While formal education is wonderful and has a purpose, you do not need it in order to become deeply rooted in the Lord. Simply open the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and show you what He wants to you know and start reading. God is faithful and He will show you exactly what you need to know.

## What Is The Purpose Of The Bible?

The purpose of the Bible is not to be a book that we read. It is not meant to be something we read for pleasure or entertainment. It is not a self-help book that we can read in order to get solutions to life's problems. It is not a book of rules that if followed will mean that we will get into heaven. The purpose of the Bible is transformation through revelation. When we read the Bible, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit's guidance, it will begin to transform our lives. This transformation is not just a change in behavior or a change in mindset, but something much deeper.



**Romans 12:2 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

God’s desire for us is to be transformed so that we do not conform to this world. This means that we do not think like the world thinks, we do not care about the things that the world cares about and we do not live our lives in the way that the world says is right. This transformation occurs when we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of God’s Word to us. When we come face to face with the truth of God our lives will be changed and they will never be the same.

Actually, the word transformed goes beyond just being changed, it actually means that we are reborn and made new, we are made into something else. We may retain the memories of the past but we actually become something different. This is a similar process that we can see take place in a caterpillar when it turns into a butterfly. At the right time, the caterpillar undergoes a metamorphosis. The definition of metamorphosis is “a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means.” The caterpillar undergoes a complete transformation in structure, appearance and purpose. This same process occurs when we invite Jesus into our hearts and we accept the Word into our lives. It should also be noted that this process continues over the course of our lives. It prepares us for our eternal lives in heaven beside our Savior and Lord Jesus.

**James 1:22-25 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”*

The Word of God is also not meant to simply be studied or memorized. Studying and memorizing is a good thing, but if you only memorize and study it, but never carry out what is being taught then it will be of no value or use. Consider the following example:

There are two sisters who both have a messy room. Their parents tell the sisters to clean up their rooms. The first sister searches for information about what it means to clean up your room. She studies different theories about the process of cleaning your room and how it can be done more efficiently. She learns different ways in which we can say that we need to clean our room. She even learns how to speak and describe cleaning her room in different languages such as Greek and Hebrew. She holds gatherings in her room with friends from the neighborhood to discuss what it means to clean a room and to encourage each other by talking about struggles of cleaning the room and how to overcome them. Yet, at the end of the day, her room remains uncleaned. The second sister immediately goes to her room and cleans it. Which of the sisters has done what the parents have asked and has accomplished the task set before them?

We must remember that the application of the Word is what God seeks. So many will argue about which translations and which versions of the Bible should be used and the differences between them while all the



time their room remains un-clean. We must use what God has spoken to use through His Word and examine our lives to see if we are actually doing the things that He has taught us to do.

**Psalms 119:105 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”*

**Romans 15:4 New International Version (NIV)**

*“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”*

As we proceed on the path of transformation, the Word, along with the Holy Spirit, serves as a guide to help us understand what we need to do. As we make decisions and take steps in our life we should first and foremost seek the wisdom of God’s Word and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the truth. In this way, the path that God has for our lives can be shown to us and we can proceed with full peace and confidence that we are moving in the direction that God desires for us.

The Word contains the wisdom that we need in order to live a Godly life and the Holy Spirit serves as our teacher. This wisdom, when learned and applied, provides light to our world so that we can navigate. It will encourage us as we continue on the journey and it provides us with hope. We can have hope because God’s Word tells us that our future is in Him and that through Him, we may have eternity in heaven.

**Isaiah 55:10-11 New International Version (NIV)**

*“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

**Philippians 1:6 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

The Word of God is also going to be accomplished. Just as we learned what happened when God said, “Let there be light” we know that each word contained in scripture will be accomplished. It is the Lord who spoke you into being and it is the Lord who has saved you and transformed you. You can have joy and peace to know that He will not leave you or forsake you, but he will continue His good work in your life because His Word tells us so. He will complete what He has said He will do and that includes the transformation of your life.

Remember that God’s Word creates and transforms, so when the Lord speaks, that your life will be transformed by those very words which means that it will occur. He is speaking directly into your life and saying that it will be transformed in the same way that He said let there be light. His words will accomplish exactly what they say and He will say exactly what will happen.

**Matthew 4:4 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*



God's Word brings life to us. Just as we need various things such as food, air and water each day in order to physically survive and thrive we must also understand that God's Word is an absolute necessity to live and thrive spiritually. We can have all of our physical needs met in this world and yet be living in a completely dead state if we are disconnected from the Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this way, God's Word provides us with the very sustenance and nutrients that our spirit needs in order to survive and thrive in this world. There are many ways that we can choose to go in this world, but there is only one way that will lead to life and that is when we chose to accept Christ and are connected with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. All other ways will lead to death.

**Hebrews 4:12 New International Version (NIV)**

*“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

Lastly, the Word of God provides us with discernment. When we understand God's Word through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we will begin to understand the heart of God. We will understand the difference between right and wrong and we will be able to judge between actions of obedience and actions of disobedience.

When we are doing wrong, we will begin to feel conviction in our hearts and we will not be able to proceed because in our hearts we will know that we are disobeying. We will not be able to hide or cover it up because the Word of God and the Holy Spirit will penetrate every area of our lives and show us the truth. When we see the truth of who we are, we will know how desperately we need Jesus and the salvation and forgiveness that He has provided to us through the cross.

## How Do We Apply The Bible In Our Lives?

Applying the Word of God to our lives is the point in which we truly demonstrate the beliefs that we have professed with our lips. When we read the Word of God and hear the message that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through it and fail to apply those teachings in our lives, we are no different than the girl who was told to clean her room but failed to actually do so.

**James 1:21-22 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

The Bible is very clear that if we only listen to what the Word says to us, but we do not allow it to change our lives, we are deceiving ourselves. We are telling God as well as all those around us that despite saying we believe the Word of God, we actually do not. If you truly do believe that the Bible is the Word of God and you truly want to allow it to change your life, it is simply a matter of making the decision to allow the Holy Spirit to change you and obeying what He tells you to do.

**Joshua 1:8 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*



One of the first steps that we must take is to not simply read the Bible as though it were a task we must complete. We cannot read it like we read a book which has a beginning and an end. When we read a normal book we start at the beginning and read through the last page and then once we are done we will think back about what the book said and determine if the book was good or bad, think about what we learned, and consider if we enjoyed reading it. After we have given some time to think about it, we will say that we have ‘finished reading’ that book and place it on our bookshelf or give it to a friend. As we have established however, the Bible is not simply a book and as such we must understand that we should never view the Bible as something we finish reading.

The Bible tells us that we are to keep the words that are written in it always on our lips. This means that we should read the Bible consistently and faithfully. We should never replace our reading of the Bible with anything else no matter what it would be. Any other book we read should be in addition to the Bible but never in place of the Bible. We should also note that there is not a specific amount that we should read at any given time. In fact, when we truly allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and teach us as we read the Bible, we will find that sometimes we may read a single sentence which speaks to us while other times we may read entire chapters.

### **1 Thessalonians 2:13 New International Version (NIV)**

*“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.”*

Next, we cannot simply read the Bible and then move on to our other tasks. Once we have read the Bible and allowed the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us, we are to meditate on what we have learned day and night. We should not simply walk away and forget what we have learned, but instead we must think of it and ponder what it means and how our lives can and should be changed as a result of it.

One thing that is interesting is that when we carry out this process of reading the Word of God, allowing the Holy Spirit to teach and then meditating on what we have learned, the Bible tells us that we will be prosperous and successful. This is because when we allow the Word of God to speak to us through the Holy Spirit and are applying what we have learned we will begin to make decisions according to the Lord’s plan and desire for our lives. One thing that should be noted is that in our worldly minds it is easy to limit the words ‘prosperous’ and ‘successful’ to the world’s definition, such as having more money, more possessions, or a greater status. While it is entirely possible that we may experience those types of blessings in this world as a result of our obedience, it is just as possible that we won’t. Yet, we will learn that happiness, joy, peace, and love are not dependent on worldly success but instead are a result of our relationship with God. A true and living relationship with the Lord and obeying Him is success.

### **Matthew 22:37-40 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

Jesus provided us with a very straight forward two-part answer to what it means to apply the Bible in our lives and what the result should be. We are first to love God. This is not a love that we often think about as a human in which we merely get a warm feeling when someone is near because they make us happy, it is talking



about true love. A love that transcends any circumstance or temporary emotions and remains completely devoted no matter what has happened, what is happening, or what may happen in the future and trusts completely. When we trust Him, we will completely follow His Word and His commands. The second is that we are to love our neighbor in the exact way that we would hope that we are loved. If we think about how we want to be loved and are honest with our heart, we will want to know that no matter how we may have failed or sinned, we are valued, cared for, considered, forgiven, trusted, and remembered not for what we have done or what we can do, but simply because of who we are. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to have this kind of Love for God and for others.

### **Psalm 119:9-16 New International Version (NIV)**

*“How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.”*

When we allow God’s Word to sink into our hearts, we will live according to what we have learned and our lives will be changed. We will find that we no longer stray from what God tells us, but instead we naturally do as the Word of God has instructed. Our desire will begin to be to please our Father because of our love for Him. We will begin to talk about our Father more and more and each area of our lives will become an area of worship. No matter if we are at work, at home with our spouse, with our children, our family, our friends, or enjoying a hobby, we will praise the Lord because we will know that He is good. Obeying the Father will become a delight of our heart and we will seek to follow every command that He has given us and every word that He speaks to us.

### **2 Timothy 3:15-17 New International Version (NIV)**

*“And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Lastly, when we apply the Bible in our lives, we will also see that the Holy Spirit will use us to help teach those around us. The Bible tells us that everything written in it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training so that the servant of God can be prepared to do the good work of the Father here on earth. As we begin to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us what the Word of God is and we allow it to be applied to our lives, we can also begin to share what we have learned with others. Do not be surprised when the Holy Spirit uses other believers to speak to you about the Word of God and also, do not be surprised when the Holy Spirit uses you to speak to other believers.

### **Philippians 1:6 New International Version (NIV)**

*“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

As we work to apply the Word of God in our lives, we must always remember that it is not us who initiated the work, it is the Lord. When we invited Jesus into our hearts the Lord began the process of changing our hearts and this change is a lifelong process. While we are on this earth, we will never reach the point in which we can



say 'I have learned and applied all of the Word of God to my life'. The learning and application of the Word of God will be a continuous process throughout our lives and our understanding and maturity in it will go deeper and deeper as we seek the heart of God more and more.

## What Is The Bible Conclusion and Closing Prayer

If we truly believe that the Word of God represents God Himself, then we should understand how seriously we should take His Word. If you are serious about wanting to know who God is and want your life to be transformed by His love and by His Word, then open your heart and invite His Spirit to reveal His truth to you and to teach you what it means. After all of these pages of instructions and teachings it can be summed up in this way: Open the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to teach what you are about to read, read a portion of the Bible and finally ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can apply what you have read and learned as you live your life.

Father, as we come to the end of this teaching, we first want to thank You for Your love for us. Lord, we know that while we are undeserving of Your love, You choose to give it to us freely. We know that Your Word to us is a wonderful gift and we are so blessed and honored to be able to learn about who You are and how much You love us. Father, may our hearts, our minds and our souls be transformed as You teach us Your Word. Father, we want to know You more and we want to be closer to You and we pray that every barrier and every wall is torn down so that we may have a more intimate and close relationship with You. Help us to understand and apply the things that You teach us and help us to be a light for Your kingdom in this world. Father, we thank You, we praise You and we give You all of the glory, honor and praise now and forevermore. Amen and Amen!

## Who is God Introduction

The 'Who is God' training lesson is a course designed to provide Biblically based and Spirit led answers and teachings about questions related to who God is. In this series we will be taking a look at several common questions that people may have in regards to God and discuss answers to those questions. These questions and answers are designed to be simple and easy to understand while at the same time providing depth and spiritual insight. The format is laid out in question and answer format and each of the answers are based completely on Bible passages. In this study, we will be reviewing the following four questions: Who is God? What role does God play in my life? What are the characteristics of God? Why do I need a relationship with God? These questions may seem very basic for someone who already believes in Christ, however, we know that a house is only as strong as the foundation that it is built upon. This teaching is intended to help the new believer lay a solid foundation on which to build and grow as well as encourage and challenge those who have believed for a long time to continue to learn and grow closer in their relationship with God.

This lesson is also not intended to prove that God exists, that the Bible is true, or convenience anyone to follow Christ. This lesson was prepared with the assumption that His word is true and alive, that Jesus died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven, that we should always be prepared to testify about what God has done and what He is doing, that our faith must be displayed in action and not



simply through words, that God is love, and that we should treat everyone the same way that we would treat Jesus.

As you go through this lesson the first thing that I recommend is that you pray. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and teach you as you read and review the Bible passages that are used. Pray that as you learn about God and His Word you will grow closer to Him and that you would be changed. Finally, pray that you will not only learn the information, but that you will apply it to your life and bring glory to the name of the Lord.

## Who is God?

The question of who is God is one that many people have spent their entire lives trying to answer. It seems that so soon after God created humans, they forgot all about Him and one of the simplest questions became much more complicated than it ever should have been. After God created man and we sinned against Him we began to forget who He is and we even tried to write Him out of existence. At the same time, we look around at the earth and all that is in the universe and we realize that all of these things, ourselves included, could not have come from nothing. So, we began to build theories and create other gods that we believed could have been capable of bringing everything into existence. Now, there are so many different theories and belief systems that it would be nearly impossible to know them all.

The reality is however that no matter how many different explanations we may create or how many different theories we may develop or how hard we use our imagination, the truth can never be changed. When something is truth it is not dependent on individual or popular opinion, the latest scientific theories, or governmental policies. It is not changed because someone disagrees with it or believes that it does not make sense or because it does not allow them to do what they want. No matter how hard people have tried over the centuries and millenniums to rewrite the truth we have never succeeded nor will we ever. So, what is the truth? What is the answer to this question? Before we answer this question let us once again remember, truth is not a belief, it is not an opinion, it does not matter if you like it or don't like it and it is not something you can either choose to believe or not choose to believe. Truth is simply truth and there is nothing that you can or cannot do to change it.

The truth is, that there is one God who has absolute power, absolute wisdom, and absolute knowledge. He is the one who created all things and it is through Him that all things are sustained. He is everywhere and is in absolute control of everything from the paths of the largest stars in the universe, to the activity of the ants on the ground, and even in the things that we can't see, such as the air we breathe and the gravity of the earth. He is perfect in love, in truth, and in judgement. He has created each of us and He loves us beyond measure.

How can we know this? It is because this God gave us all we need in His Word, the Bible. Let's examine more of what the Bible says about who God is.

## God is a Trinity: The Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit

### Genesis 1:26 (NIV)



Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

From the very beginning of the Bible, God began to show us who He is. Only 26 verses into Genesis, God gave us a very distinct comment about Himself. This comment clearly made the distinction that God reveals Himself to us in more than just one way. When referring to Himself God uses words that indicate more than one person. If God were a single person then the phrase would have used the words “me” in place of “us” and “my” in place of “our”. One thing that we must keep in mind and that we will discuss further along however is that this does not mean that there is more than one God.

### **Matthew 28:19 (NIV)**

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

God is comprised of three different individuals or beings who, while each being entirely God and possessing all of the attributes of God, have their own distinct role. They are separate, yet at the same time, they are the one true God. These three individuals are referred to as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### **Ephesians 4:6 (NIV)**

One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The first person of the trinity is the Father. The Father created all things and sustains all things. He has no beginning and He will have no end. It is through and by the Father that we have life and all things happen according to His will and plan. He gives and He takes away according to His riches and glory. All things belong to Him and He has authority over all things in creation.

### **John 1:1 (NIV)**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

### **John 1:14 (NIV)**

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### **John 3:16 (NIV)**

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.

The second person of the trinity is the Son. The name of the Son is Jesus and Jesus is also the Word of God. God sent His Word, Jesus, to us to live and be in community with us. Just as the Father had no beginning and will have no end, so Jesus also has no beginning and no end. Jesus has all of the same attributes and power as the Father, yet He functions in a different role within the trinity.

The Father sent His Son Jesus to save us. In this way Jesus served as a sacrifice which atoned for our sins and when we accept this sacrifice, the weight of our sins and the eternal consequences of those sins are forgiven.



Jesus serves as our mediator with the Father and through this relationship we are restored to a relationship with the Father just as Adam and Eve had a relationship with the Father in the Garden of Eden before the first sin was committed.

**1 Corinthians 2:11 (NIV)**

For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

**John 14:26 (NIV)**

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

The third person of the trinity is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of God and is alive inside of those who have accepted Jesus. When we accept Jesus as our Savior and are restored to a relationship with the Father, the Holy Spirit then comes to us and acts as our teacher and guide. He will help us as we go through our lives to learn and apply the teachings contained in God's word. The Holy Spirit also imparts gifts to us that allow us to perform the work that God calls us to. These gifts include the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, the gift of healing, and the gift of discernment, among many others as well. In addition, when we have the Holy Spirit within us and we follow as the Holy Spirit leads us, we will experience the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. These fruits include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

**2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which make up God work completely in unison as God and provide us with all that we need. It is through God that we have been given life. It is through the Father that we have been given purpose. It is through the Son that we have been forgiven and provided with salvation from the consequences of our sins and it is through the Holy Spirit that we have been given fellowship, love, guidance, and companionship. Through this relationship with God that we are transformed so that we can bear fruit for the glory of God.

**God is Omnipresent****Jeremiah 23:24 (NIV)**

"Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" Declares the Lord. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Declares the Lord.

**Proverbs 15:3 (NIV)**

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

**Psalms 139:7-12 (NIV)**

7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

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9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.  
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"  
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Being omnipresent simply means to be everywhere at the same time. God is omnipresent throughout the entirety of the universe. This is also not limited only to the visible and seen universe but also includes what is unseen. There is nowhere in which God is not present and that He cannot reach and touch. It is impossible to escape from the presence of God because no matter where you would try to go, there God would also be. It must also be stated that the omnipresence of God does not simply occur in space but also in time. God is not simply in all places at once, but in all times at once as well. God is not bound by time as creation is. He is in the past, He is in the present, and He is in the future simultaneously.

Because God is everywhere, He also sees and hears everything that occurs within the universe. Just as it is impossible to hide physically from God, it is also impossible to hide our thoughts, actions, words and deeds because He actually has already seen everything you have done, everything you are doing and everything you will do in the future.

### God is Omnipotent

#### **Matthew 19:26 (NIV)**

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

#### **Psalms 115:3 (NLT)**

Our God is in the heavens and he does as he wishes.

#### **Psalms 33:9 NLT)**

For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command.

Omnipotent means having unlimited or infinite amounts of power. God is Omnipotent. There is no feat, no act and no situation that is impossible for God to perform or handle. We can see so many examples of the extraordinary power of God within the Bible. He caused a flood that covered the entire earth and yet saved Noah and his family. God caused the ten plagues in Egypt and then parted the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape the oppression of the Egyptians. God sustained the Israelites for 40 years in the desert. God brought down the walls of Jericho and God gave David the victory over Goliath. God brought countless victories to the Israelites and showed His power to Israel and the entire world, over and over again. Yet, as amazing as these occurrences may seem to our human logic, they actually pale in comparison to the actual power that God possesses. The true power and abilities of God go beyond anything that our human logic or knowledge can comprehend.

There is nothing that can be victorious against God and there is nothing that can compete with God in any way. The reality is that everything that God has created, which is everything other than God Himself, was created simply by God thinking and speaking. Also, everything that God created only still exists because at any given point in time, God Himself, sustains it by His will. In fact, as you read this, in this very moment, the only reason you exist is because God is sustaining you and without God's will to sustain you, you would simply



cease to exist. The very fact that you are here today is a testament to God's desire to sustain you and that He has a plan for you. It should be noted that this same scenario is true for the enemy of God as well, Satan. There is nothing that Satan can do to defeat God and there is **no** power that Satan has over God. Because God sends His Spirit to live within the followers of Jesus there is also nothing that Satan can do against us who believe. We do not need to be scared of anything in creation because greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world and He will never leave us or forsake us.

### God is Omniscient

#### **Romans 11:33 (NLT)**

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

#### **Hebrew 4:13 (NIV)**

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

#### **Psalms 147:5 (NIV)**

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Omniscience is defined as having complete knowledge of everything. This everything is not limited to a particular subject or topic of discussion but truly means literally everything. God is Omniscient. There is nothing that He does not know and there is no question that He does not know the answer to. Nothing happens that is outside of His knowledge and He is never wrong. As we have established, God is also not bound by time and therefore His knowledge also transcends time as well. There is nothing in the past that He does not have full knowledge of. He knows every detail that has happened in the lives of every person, animal, insect and living creature that has ever lived and He also knows the same details of everything living creature and object that will come in the future.

In the same way that God has complete knowledge of what happens in His creation, He also has complete knowledge of how it was created. Our modern study and knowledge of math, science, physics, biology and astronomy pales in comparison to the knowledge that God has of these subjects. God is the architect and designer of gravity, motion, light, chemistry, mathematics and the list goes on and on. The more we do learn about these subjects and discover the complexity and precision with which this universe operates, the more and more it points to the reality of our creator and Lord. This is why the psalmist wrote in Psalm 19:1 that, "The heavens declare the Glory of God."

This limitless knowledge and understanding of everything that has happened and everything that will happen means that when God asks us to do something, we can trust Him with full confidence that He knows what the best path for our lives are. Not only does God know the best path for our lives, but He also knows our hearts. He knows the things we like and the things we don't like. He knows our struggles, our hurts and our sufferings. He knows everything we have felt and every good or bad experience that we have ever had. No matter how logical or illogical the direction may seem based on our limited understanding and information, God's plan and path for our lives is always the best.



## Creator and Sustainer of the Universe

### Genesis 1:31 – 2:1 (NLT)

God saw all that He had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

### Colossians 1:16 (NLT)

For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

### Colossians 1:17 (NLT)

He existed before anything else and He holds all creation together.

Having established God as being the only one who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, we can safely understand that God is the one who created the universe. The universe and each creation within it, is not random. It was created in a specific sequence and process which is described in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. God started from nothing when He created the universe. It was not like when humans create something. When humans create something, we utilize materials and resources from our surroundings, process them into the condition in which we need them and then construct the item based on the plans we have. When God created the universe however, there were no materials and resources that existed. As He needed different things to build the universe He simply spoke and they existed.

I am reminded of a funny story that I once heard which illustrates this difference. A man decided that, just like God, he could create a living being. He called out to God and told Him of the plan that he had. He showed God how he had studied the biology of living creatures and now knew all of the elements and compounds needed to create a living creature. As God watched, the man reached down to pick up a handful of dirt in order to start to extract the resources needed. God however, immediately spoke up and said to the man, "I have no problem with you trying but.... I do insist that you use your own dirt." When God created the universe and each thing in it He didn't simply build them, He made something out of nothing and made it to function in perfect harmony and symmetry.

Not only did God create the physical world that we see, God also created the things that we cannot see. The things of the spirit cannot be seen with our own eyes, yet there is an entire other realm which includes angels, demons, and supernatural powers. God is the source of all authority, every nation, every leader and every power. Even those who are against God receive their authority and power from God. The nations of this world exist and were created by God.

A concept that we must also understand is that because God is the Creator of all things, there is nothing that can be created apart from Him. A question that many people will pose is, what about the inventions and creations of humans? What about the medications that humans have created? What about the buildings, the cars, the planes, the boats, the computers and all of the other "manmade" objects? The Bible tells us that all wisdom and understanding come from God and therefore the wisdom, creativity, understanding and imagination of each person is from the Lord. When we invent something or build something it is a result of God allowing us to and providing the fundamental inspiration and knowledge to do so.



As we have touched on already, everything that has been created by the Creator is also sustained by the Creator. If a human builds a house, they can leave the house after it is built and for all intents and purposes the house will continue to exist on its own. Yet, the role that God plays with His creation is much more serious. The Bible tells us that God is the one who holds all of creation together. God sustains all of the things that He has created and without His power, His wisdom and His will to maintain all that He has created then it would fall apart and be no more. It is through Him that all things move and have their being and it is through Him that we have life. In the same way that God spoke creation into being He also is continually sustaining it.

## God Never Changes

### Hebrews 13:8 (NLT)

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

### Psalms 102:25-27 (NIV)

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same and your years will never end.

### James 1:17 (NLT)

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

God, including the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, did not have any beginning and will not have any end. God has always existed and God will never cease to exist. This is an impossible concept for the human mind to truly grasp because we are finite beings. Being finite means that there is a limit, a start, or an end. God however, is infinite, which means something without limit, without beginning and without end. To our minds everything must have a beginning and an end. In the same way that the power, presence and wisdom of God is without limits so is His very existence.

In creation, as things exist, they change over time. All we need to do is look at a child as they grow and we will see them changing. This change is not only in their physical characteristics but also in their heart, their emotions and their beliefs. After only a handful of years a person may be almost unrecognizable from the young child that they once were. Then as an adult the way that they behaved and the things that they believed in when they were 25 years old will likely be entirely different than the way they behave and what they believe in when they are 65 years old. We truly never stop changing as we go through our lives. God, however, never changes. The exact same way that He judges yesterday is the exact same way that He judges today. The way that He loves, cares, provides, sustains, forgives and redeems never changes.

Many people have believed that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are different in their actions. They feel that when Jesus was born God somehow changed and became a God of nothing but peace who would never punish anyone for anything. The reality is however, that the same God who wiped out nations, destroyed armies, brought fire and brimstone down onto Sodom and Gomorrah and wiped out all living creation in the flood of Noah is the same God that is alive today and who will still be alive forever. That same judgement and punishment is set for creation however, because the blood of Christ has



covered the sins of those who believe and follow Him, they will not have to suffer the consequences of that judgement.

The reality that the Lord does not change should give us great peace and confidence because we know that when He says He loves us He will never change His mind. When He tells us that He forgives and forgets He will never bring up our sins anymore. He will never lie to us or treat us one way today and then treat us a different way tomorrow.

## What Role Does God Play in Your Life?

### **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do and he will show you which path to take.

### **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

### **Job 14:5 (NIV)**

A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.

Some of the most difficult situations that we deal with in this life occur when we begin to believe that God is not in control and as a result, we need to take control. This could be summed up in this way, in the world today when someone wants to take a trip in a car, they typically will use some type of navigation device to show them the way. This may be their cell phone, a dedicated GPS device, or a built in GPS system in a car. Now, imagine someone who has a navigation system pulling up the complete directions to a destination they had never gone to before. However, just as they begin to embark on their journey, they turn off the navigation system and say, "I don't trust that navigation system so I'm just going to figure out how to make it there on my own." This sounds like foolishness to us and yet, so many Christians ignore the voice of the Lord and the direction that He gives to us in His Word.

It can be easy to consider all of the wonders of the Lord and find it hard to understand how someone who is so powerful and amazing would want to be involved in our lives. How is it that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords would desire to play a role in our lives? The reality is that God is intimately involved in the lives of each and every person and He knows everything about each one of us. The Lord knows the exact moment that you woke up this morning and He knows the exact time that you will fall asleep tonight. He knows the obstacles that will be placed in your path and the consequences of the decisions that you are making. In fact, the correct way to look at this is not to ask the question of what role does God play in your life, but rather to make the statement that there is no part of your life in which God is not intimately involved.



## God Created You

### **Genesis 1:26 (NLT)**

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

### **Genesis 2:7 (NIV)**

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.

### **Psalms 139:13-15 (NLT)**

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

Each human being exists because God created them. Every human being, with the exception of Jesus Christ, exists because it was the will and desire of God that they exist. There are no other means by which a human has or will ever be created or exist. God does not create anything without purpose and therefore we have a beautiful truth to consider in our lives. None of us, not me, not you, not your neighbor, not your co-worker and not the baby that is being born on the other side of the world as you read this, is the result of some mistake or random action.

God has not just created each of us, He created each of us absolutely unique. Not just unique in one way or in certain ways, but in every part of our being. Each part of your body He created perfectly according to His purposes and plan for your life. When we think of great works of art such as sculptures or paintings, we often see copies. Sometimes these great works are copied in mass quantities, however, no matter how many are produced there is never more than one true original. The true original represents a unique work that cannot be duplicated. An original work of art created by a great artist may often be displayed in an art museum or private collection and holds with it a tremendous value to both the artist and the owner. Like a great piece of art created by a great artist, each one of us is a unique and priceless creation that cannot be duplicated. We are each greatly treasured by our creator and each part of us, each brush stroke, was created with care and intention.

One of the tools that the enemy has used against man is the lie that we exist without purpose and as a result of random chance. When a person believes that their lives have no meaning and that they do not have purpose, why would they believe that there is meaning and purpose in the lives of others? If their lives have no value than neither do the lives of the people around them. When they believe this, their actions, their treatment of others and also of their selves will follow suit. This belief and the effects from it, are a source of great suffering in this world. This belief goes against the great commands that Jesus gave to us, that we would love God above all others and love others just as we love ourselves. When we believe the lie that we were not created by a loving God and are precious in His sight, we will not love God nor will we have any reason to love others.



We must always remember that God is alive, He is real and He is the one that created us. He has created each of us completely unique like a priceless work of art and each of us has a specific purpose that can only be fulfilled by us and as a result of this, we should value who we are. We must also remember that each person around us is also a unique and priceless creation and we must love and value them just as we love and value ourselves.

## God Orders Yours Steps

### **Acts 17:25 (NIV)**

And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

### **Psalms 139:16 (NLT)**

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

### **Psalms 32:8 (NLT)**

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you."

Something that we can clearly see in scripture is the authority of God. God is in complete control in every situation and circumstance. This does not just refer to the big things that happen in the world and the universe, but in the lives of each person as well. As amazing as it sounds, God knew you, knew every step you would take, every decision you would make, every situation you would be in and the result of your life, before you even existed. God knew what you would own, the job you would have and the friends you would make and because of this, there is no situation that you can be in that will surprise God. In fact, because He is the one who orders our steps, we can take comfort in the knowledge that there is a purpose and a plan for our lives and that every circumstance has meaning.

We find people falling into two different traps in regards to the authority of the Lord. The first occurs when an individual experiences what would be considered by the world "Success". They have a good job, a happy family and a comfortable living standard. When an individual is in this situation, they will often begin to forget the authority of the Lord in their lives and may have never considered it in the first place. They view their success and accomplishments as a result of their own intelligence, hard work, and abilities. They will say "I got that education", "I got that job", "I made that money", or "I bought those possessions". They will fail to recognize or remember that the reason they have all of those things is that the Lord ordained it according to His perfect will. Because of this truth the correct response would be to give all the glory and praise to the Lord for everything they do and everything they have.

The second trap occurs when people experience difficult times and suffering. They may experience the loss of a loved one or be the victim of a terrible crime. They may find themselves in a position where they are starving or being abused and there may be no end that they can see to the circumstances. When these situations occur people often will focus on the situation and forget who is in control. They only think about the negative things that are going on in their lives and they forget to look to the future that they have. They think only of the struggle that they are going through at the moment and forget the wonderful future that they can have in Jesus. They lose hope and they become bitter and angry and they no longer have love and joy in their hearts.

If you have been in either of these situations, or if you are going through it right now, remember that God is with you and He seeks to guide you along the best path for your life. Call on Him and ask Him to show you the way. Listen for His



voice and His lead and when you hear it and experience it, remember the most important step of all, you must obey what you have heard. Without obedience then all your effort to hear Him and seek Him is meaningless.

You may ask the question, if God truly orders my steps, do I actually have a choice? And what's more, how can I be held responsible for my own life if I am not able to choose? What we must remember here is that God has laid out the path before you, but He gives us the ability to choose to follow His path or not to follow His path. God already knows what we will choose and as such has already prepared for and incorporated the result of that decision into His plan. God has established order and given us instructions on what we must do in order to have that close and personal relationship with Him and He has also told us what the consequences of the decision that we make will be.

Let's look at an example to try and help illustrate this. Imagine a father and son playing together in a field. The father knows that there is a hole in the field and knows that if the son goes to the side where the hole is, he will fall in and be hurt or even killed by the fall. So, the father tells the son, "If you go and play on the side of the hole you will be hurt and even killed and we will no longer be together. However, if you choose to avoid the side with the hole and stay with me and play you will not get hurt and after we are done playing, we will go get ice cream together." In this example, if the son does choose to go and play beside the hole and away from his father and as a result dies, does this mean that the son's death was a punishment from the father? No, it is not a punishment, it is simply the consequence of the decision that the son made and it happened exactly as the father told him. If the son chooses to stay by the father and play with him and avoid the hole then, just as the father said, the son will live, will be happy and will enjoy ice cream with his father. In this example though, we must remember that at every moment the father knows what the decision of the son will be and in fact has incorporated the decision and the consequence into his plan. So, when the son makes the decision, he makes it in perfect accordance with the father's plan and expectation.

Our Father in heaven has given us a very similar choice. We can either hear and obey what our Lord is telling us and remain close to Him or we can choose to ignore what He has told us and move away from Him. Each of these has a consequence that has been completely described by our Lord and we know exactly what will happen as a result of each of the possible decisions that we could make. The question that we each have to answer is this, will we choose to listen to Him and obey what He has told us, or will we choose not to?

## God Offers You His Love and Salvation

### 1 John 4:10 (NLT)

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

### John 3:16-17 (NIV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

### Isaiah 12:2 (NIV)

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."

A fundamental understanding that every Christian must grasp is that at the heart of everything, the reason for all that God has done for us is love. The reason that God created us and offers His son as a Savior to us is because of His great love for us. We must each also understand that this love, the love of the Father for us, is on an individual level. What that means is that when God says He loves us, He is not talking only about a group of people, but about each specific person. If you were the only person that God could rescue and the only person that would respond to His love, He would



not have changed anything. He would still have given His son and allowed Him to suffer on the cross. Each one of us is that valuable in His eye.

Because of this great Love, the Lord does not just save us but He also offers us life, eternal life, with Him in heaven. When the Bible speaks of eternal life here it is not simply talking about existence, because each one of us will continue to exist forever. However, we can either experience life for all eternity or experience death for all eternity. Life is experienced when we have a relationship with God and are close with Him. Death is experienced when we have no relationship with God and are separated from Him. What is truly amazing is that even though as we have learned God is in complete control of everything that happens, God still allows each of us to make our own decision to either accept His gift of love and salvation, or reject His gift of love and salvation. We can, and in fact, must choose if we will experience life for all eternity or death for all eternity.

A beautiful reality that we should know is that this love and salvation that God offers to us are not things that are far off in the future. No, we do not need to wait until some distant day in the future to experience and understand. We can make the decision to accept and experience it right here and right now, in this life, on this earth. We only need to believe, trust and obey Him. When we do this, we experience many benefits to our lives. We will not have to fear the future, we will not have to fear anything because when we are seeking the Lord and obeying what He tells us, He will be our guide, He will be our defender and He will be our strength.

God offers His love and salvation as a gift, but there is one thing that we must never forget. Salvation, which is often described as a free gift to us, came at an immeasurable cost. Jesus, the Son of God, who was without any imperfection or sin was sacrificed as the perfect atonement for our sins. This was the greatest cost to ever be paid and it was paid for you and I. God offers this to us, but again, there is a requirement that is placed on us as well. The Bible tells us that if we believe in God and what Jesus has done for us, then we must take up our cross daily and follow Him. Just as Jesus took up His cross and gave His life for us, we must take up our cross and give our lives to Him by listening to Him and doing the things that He tells us to do. We must seek His will and His glory and not our own.

## God Will Judge You

### **Revelation 20:12 (NLT)**

I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.

### **2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV)**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

### **Romans 14:10-12 (NIV)**

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

God also does not force us to accept His love and His salvation, but in fact allows us to make a decision to accept it or not. We can each choose to follow Him and give our lives to Him, or choose to reject Him. Each of these decisions comes with a consequence attached to it and this consequence is an eternal one that, after it has been made and we have passed from this world, can never be changed. As we have mentioned prior, we can choose to live for eternity in life or live for eternity in death.



So many people think that God is looking down on them and when they do something wrong, He is right there to punish them and is even seeking to do so. This simply is not true, God does not desire to punish us, in fact God's desire is that everyone of us would have a close and personal relationship with Him.

Nonetheless, there will be a day in which each person will stand before the judgement seat of the Lord and their decisions and actions will each be reviewed and judged against the commands of the Lord. When we think of this scene, we may have images of a modern court in which someone has been accused of a crime and is on trial and in fact, this is a good illustration of the situation. The person who has been accused will appear before the judge and be accompanied by their defense attorney. The role of the defense attorney is to prove that the one who has been accused is innocent and should not be punished under the law. On the other side, there is a prosecutor whose duty is to prove that the accused individual did in fact commit the crimes that they are charged with and as a result should face punishment under the law. Both of the attorneys will present their case and, based on the evidence presented the judge will render the verdict. The accused will either be acquitted of the charges against them and set free, or they will be found guilty and sentenced to be punished for their crimes.

In the situation that we will face, we can view ourselves as the accused person. The prosecutor will be Satan. Satan will know every single mistake that we have ever made and he will make a strong case as to why we are deserving of punishment. However, there is a fundamental difference between the judgement found in our earthly courts and the judgement of the Lord. When the Lord judges us, it will be with absolute truth, knowledge, wisdom and accuracy. Unlike our human court in which the facts of the case must be proven, our God is omniscient and knows the full reality of every detail of our lives. Based on what we have done with this life and the decisions that we have made God will rule that we are either worthy of eternal life or eternal death. We will either be in a close personal relationship with Him for all eternity or experience complete separation from Him for all eternity.

One thing that the Bible is very clear on is that each one of us will be judged based on our own decisions and actions. There will be no excuses and no one will be able to say, "but you don't understand what happened to me, what they did to me, or how my parents treated me, or ...." And the list goes on and on. In every situation and circumstance, you have a choice to make, to either love the Lord and obey Him or to reject His commands. Jesus laid out the criteria in an extraordinarily simple way when He was asked what the greatest commandment was. Jesus responded by saying that the first is to love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength; and that the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. He also added that all of the law and prophets hang on these two commands. So, here are two very simple questions that you can ask yourself, yet that have eternal impact. The first is very simple, "Do I love the Lord with all of my heart, mind, soul and strength?" I believe that most, if not all Christians, and in fact most people when faced with the judgement of the Lord, will answer yes to that question. The second question however proves to be the true test and it goes like this, "How does my life prove that this is true?" You see, it is very easy to say the words that you love the Lord and that you believe in Him, however, if you truly do then your life will be forever changed and the evidence of that will speak for itself.

## What Are The Characteristics of God?

### **Romans 11:33 (NLT)**

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

### **Exodus 34:6-7 (NIV)**

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."



**Isaiah 40:28-29 (NLT)**

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.

Have you ever been somewhere that was breathtaking? Someplace that was so amazing that it is impossible to describe to other people? Someplace where the only way that a person can actually understand what it is like is to experience it for themselves? Maybe you have visited the great coral reef in Australia, or saw Mt. Everest, or hiked the Grand Canyon. When you come home and try to explain to your family and friends you find that the words you speak simply cannot convey the true magnitude and beauty of that place. Trying to describe our Lord is similar to this experience. The reality is that no amount of paper or no quantity of words could ever capture the fullness and perfection that the Lord God is. Yet, because of what we experience when we begin to know who He is, we desire to read and write about Him, to learn more about Him and ultimately to tell others about what a relationship with Him is truly like.

The Bible tells us that God's wisdom and knowledge are so great that they are immeasurable and it is impossible for us to comprehend and understand. Our God is compassionate and gracious and He is slow to become angry. He loves us and forgives us and yet, when we are truly guilty, He is just and punishes us just as a good parent punishes their child. He is the one who has created all things and He is the one who sustains all things. All that we can and all that we are come from Him. He owns everything and He gives and takes away according to His riches and glory.

While we could read and write about Him forever and never fully understand the Lord, we will take just a few of the characteristics that the Bible gives us about our Lord and dig deeper into them. We have already spent time talking about the omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of God and these certainly foundational concepts of who He is, but we want to take a closer look. We do not simply hope to understand the basics of who He is, but to truly know Him the same way a child knows their father. When we think about what a good father is, we may think of love, a kindness and a gentleness that cannot be explained. We think of protection and correction and the ability to teach and encourage. We think of wisdom and discernment and the ability to help with any problem that is presented to them. We think of someone who is willing to sacrifice whatever is required for their child because they truly love them and wish to see them not just survive, but to thrive and experience happiness, fulfillment and most of all, love.

In this section we will examine four characteristics of our Father that we clearly see outlined in scripture. As we learn more about who God is and how much He loves us, remember to always pray and ask Him to reveal His truth to you. Invite Him to read along with you and seek to become closer to Him. He will hear your prayer because He also desires to be closer to you.

## God is Love

**1 John 4:16 (ESV)**

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

**1 John 4:9-10 (NIV)**

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

**1 Corinthians 13:3-7 (NLT)**

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not

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demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance.

In the world we live in, the word love is used to describe so many feelings and things. If we open our ears as we go through our day, we will hear the word love used in many different ways. I love those clothes! I love the food there! I love shopping there! I love those kinds of animals! I love my new boyfriend! I love my job! I love my car! I love my house! I love to relax! I love to go to parties! And the reality is that this list could go on and on. The word love has come to a point in which the argument could be made that it is meaningless. After all, if we say that we love this and we love that and then a day later change our minds and say we love something else, then what does it really mean when we say we love something?

What then is real Love? What does it mean to truly love? If we want to understand what love is and what it means to love the Bible shows us. The one who can show us what love is and who is in fact the source of love, is God himself. God takes love entirely serious and sincere. So sincere that He sent His son to be sacrificed so that our sins could be forgiven and we could enter into a relationship with Him. There is a word that is used to describe what true love looks like, the kind of love that God has for us. This word is Agape. Agape refers to love that is completely unconditional and not self-seeking in any way. There is never a thought of gain or return, but only of the good of the other. When we examine what most humans view as love, we find that this type of love is not very common. In the vast majority of relationships in the world today, whether they are marriage relationships, family relationships, or friendships, we see that this type of love is not present. The only one who is capable of giving perfect love to us is our Father. When we read the passage in 1 Corinthians 13, we see one of best descriptions of God's Agape love. This is the love that He has for us and this is the type of love that He has called us to have for others as well.

So, if God is love and the source of love, is it possible to have true love apart from Him? Humans have multiple ways of looking at love and each person has their own standard of love. We are in many ways obsessed with love. So many books and movies and stories revolve around a person's search to find love and the events that take place when they believe they have found it. How do they know that they have found it though and how do they know they are expressing it? Is love something they feel, is it a decision that they make, or is it something that they do or experience? True love, the Love of God, is all of these things and the most difficult thing about the love of God and what we have difficulty understanding is that true love has no requirement or even expectation that it is reciprocated, ever. A wonderful example of this is when Jesus was being nailed to the cross and as the hammer fell and the nail went through His hand, He cried out to the Father to forgive them for they did not know what they were doing. Even as our sin put Him on the cross and our words mocked Him, He cried out in love for our forgiveness. This is the love of God and what true love looks like. The only way that we can experience it and learn how to demonstrate it to others, is by having a relationship with the Father.

## God is Just

### **John 5:30 (NIV)**

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

### **Deuteronomy 32:4 (NLT)**

He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!

### **Isaiah 30:18 (NIV)**



Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Something that we clearly established earlier in this study is that God will judge us. There will be a day in which each one of us will stand before the judgement seat of the Lord and He will determine if we will experience life or death for eternity. This decision will be made based on what we have done with our lives and if we choose to love the Lord and follow His commands or we choose to reject Him. We can imagine what this scene may look like and there are many examples that we can see on TV and in books today. On one side we see the prosecutor who has an argument and evidence that they hope will prove that the one being accused is in fact guilty. On the other side we have the accused and the defender who is there to try and demonstrate that based on the evidence the accused is in fact innocent. The judge or the jury must then decide who has proven their case and then give a ruling as to whether the accused is innocent or guilty.

For human standards and abilities this setup is as good as it can get. We try to limit our personal biases and opinions and instead make a judgement based on the facts of the case. Though this sounds reasonable and just the reality is that it is still open to mistakes. However, what if there was a judge who knew every single fact about a case before the prosecutor or defender even made their case. What if there was someone who could render a perfect judgement based on perfect law and who never made a single mistake in the decisions that they made? No one could fool them, no one could sway their opinion and no one could tamper with the evidence or force a judgment based on a technicality. There was never a hung jury and no case was ever thrown out because of lack of evidence or suspicious behavior. This type of justice is not possible in the world we live in because no judge or jury can ever know the truth.

Another aspect of being just is fairness. How many times have you heard someone use the phrase that “life is not fair”? When we look around at the world, we can see on the surface why this statement would be a popular one. You will find some people who have no relationship with the Lord thriving based on the standards of the world and experience no resistance, while on the other hand, people who are truly seeking the love and will of the Father struggle to even survive. However, when we are judged by the Lord it will not be based on the world’s standards. It will not be based on what we have accomplished, how much we have achieved, or how many possessions we have acquired. Our judgement will be based solely on the decisions we have made and what we have chosen to do with the time we have been given. What does this look like? Jesus gave us a perfect example....

#### **Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)**

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts, but a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Jesus could see each person and their heart as they gave their offering. The amount was inconsequential, it was the heart, the faith and their love for the Lord that He was concerned with. Because He can see the heart and see the motivation behind it, His assessment of the situation was perfect and could not be challenged. So, it will also be with each one of us. God is just and His justice and decisions are perfect.

#### God is Good

#### **Matthew 19:17 (NIV)**

“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”



**Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

**Psalms 107:1 (NIV)**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

One of the things that the world wants us to believe is that people are essentially good at heart but just make mistakes and get blinded by their desires. The reality is that people are not good at heart. Yes, we were each created by God and created in His image yet, He gave us something that He did not give to any other creature, He gave us a choice. We failed at making that choice and as a result we disobeyed Him and the heart of man was tainted for all generations to come. It does not matter how clean a glass of water is, if only one drop of contamination is allowed in the water will no longer be clean and bacteria will grow and grow and grow until the once clean water is nothing but filth. We can see the full extent of this only five chapters after God had created man in the book of Genesis.

**Genesis 6:5 (NLT)**

The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil.

This is the result of a world in which we have chosen to ignore God and His laws. No one, not a single human being is good because we have each sinned. If the world we live in was left only to human hands and to be ruled by human wisdom, then I will tell you that it would literally be hell on earth. The statement we see about the condition of the world here in Genesis 6 would be completely true for our world today. People will say “how can there be a God who loves us if there are so many bad things in the world today and He lets so many evil things happen?” However, this is the incorrect perspective and as a result it is the wrong question to ask. If we view our condition from the correct perspective then the question we should ask should be this, “why is it that, given the fallen state of creation, the sinful heart of man, and the evil plans of the Adversary, there is any good in the world at all?” Do you see the change in perspective here? If it were not for God and His presence in this world there would be no good at all. The good that is present is not a result of humans, but the presence of the Lord! He is the only source of goodness and apart from Him, nothing and no one is good.

Another question we should consider on this topic is this, what does it mean to be good? We use the word “good” to describe so many different things and so many different situations and experiences. But what does it mean when we say that God is good? The word “good” may become clearer when we add its opposite into the conversation, evil. In almost every book we read, movie we watch, or story we hear, there is some element of good versus evil. The right way versus the wrong way. Evil is the opposite of good just as we know that Satan is the opposite, or the adversary of God. The things that God does and the way that He behaves will be the opposite to the things that Satan does and the way he behaves. When we think of it in this light, we can start to see that God is not good because He matches our definition of what good means, rather goodness is defined by God and His very character and nature. If we want to understand what is good, then we must simply look to who God is.

**God is Truthful****Hebrews 6:18 (NLT)**

So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.

**John 17:17 (ESV)**

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

**Numbers 23:19 (NIV)**

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Truthfulness is a quality that is becoming less and less common in our world. When we listen to conversations around us, look at advertisements and hear the messages that we hear spoken by people in the media, we will see that it can be very hard to know what is actually true. It seems that everyone has an opinion about everything and they are quick to demonstrate why their opinion is in fact the truth. So how are we to know the truth? What makes something true?

Let's first talk about what makes something true. The definition that we as humans have established for truth is this, "the quality or state of being true, that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality." Our understanding of this is that truth is what actually is. Truth is not opinion or speculation and it cannot change. God is truth and this first means that what He does and what He says is truth. Once God speaks or acts, those things become the truth and the reality of them cannot be changed. No matter what someone may say or what they may do, what God has said and done nothing can never be changed.

Because of this, we can also be certain that when God speaks something, He will not say something that will later become untrue. In other words, God will not lie to us. There are no other people in this world and no other sources that we can know will never lie to us. We can have complete peace and confidence to know that what God tells us is completely honest and true. This also means that we do not need to doubt anything that He has told us. If He has spoken it, then He is bound to it because if He does not fulfill His word, then it would mean that He has done something that is contrary to His very nature.

Because God's words and actions are true and because He is that author of all that happens, we can also say that God is the source of all truth. Similar to what we have learned about goodness, if God were not present in our world today then there would be nothing that we could find truth in. One of the names that has been used in reference to Satan is the deceiver. A deceiver is someone who attempts to lead a person to believe that something that is true is not. We can see the work of the deceiver in our world today in that so many have rejected the truth of Christ. However, no matter how much the deceiver may work to trick mankind, the fact and the reality will never change. God is truth and His desire is to share in a relationship with you so that you are no longer deceived, but instead know the truth. His desire is that you know Him and His truth.

## Why Do I Need God?

**Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)**

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**Romans 3:22-24 (NIV)**

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

**Acts 4:12 (NLT)**

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.



A question that I have heard many people ask is, “why do I need God?” Many people who have had difficult lives and who have experienced suffering feel that, if there is a God, then why did He allow them to suffer? Because of this they want to push God away and have nothing to do with Him. Others who have not experienced difficulty in their lives view their lives as good and complete. They will say that they are healthy, they are happy and they don’t understand why they need to make any changes. So then how can we respond to these questions? How can we show the people who do not have a relationship with God that they desperately need one?

The first thing that we need to do is define what we are talking about when we say relationship. A relationship is defined as the way in which two or more people regard and behave toward each other. Each person and being who has ever been created has a relationship with God. Satan himself has a relationship with God and the demons all believe in God. So, it is not enough to simply acknowledge that God exists or to say that you believe in Him. We can also see from scripture that all of us, every one, has sinned and fallen short of the mark. No matter how good we believe we are or how good someone appears to be, our actions will never be enough. Each of us was created to be in relationship with the Lord and to bring glory to His name. This is the fundamental purpose for our existence. So, if we are not engaging in the fundamental purpose for our existence, how can we truly experience joy and contentment? The Bible tells us that the joy of sin lasts only for a while. At some point, no matter if it is hours, days, months, or years, the fun will eventually fade and we will be left with emptiness. We will search desperately for something that can bring happiness back into our lives.

Consider the way a drug addict behaves. When they first try the drug, they feel great and feel like they have all they need. Then the drug wears off and they crash and the reality of this world comes back. They need more and when they get it, they find that the more they use it, the less affect the drug has, so they need more and more. Each time they crash it gets harder and deeper until they need the drug to even be able to make it through the day and feel alive. Forget joy or happiness, it becomes simply a means to make it through each day. This is life without Christ. Eventually, everything we find in this world will end and we will be empty. There is only one thing that can bring us the eternal joy and contentment that we each desperately seek, and that is when we come back to fulfill the true purpose for which we have been created, to be in relationship with God and to bring Him glory.

So, what does it mean to be in relationship with Him? It is not simply believing that He is real or trying not to do “bad” things. Being in a relationship means that you believe in Him. You believe that you are a sinner who has no hope of salvation and happiness on your own. You believe that in order to forgive your sins He sent His son Jesus as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for your sins and you accept Jesus as your savior. You read His Word and you spend time in communion with Him through prayer. Finally, you begin to obey what He has told you to do. When you engage in a relationship with the Lord, real relationship, your life will be changed forever and ever and you will experience joy and contentment like you have never experienced, nor could ever experience with any other thing and you will have an eternity to share with Him in that relationship.

## Who is God Conclusion and Closing Prayer

During this study, we have discussed many things about our Lord. We have talked about who He is, how He is involved in our lives, what He is like, and finally, why it is so important that we have a real relationship with Him. However, this study has not even scratched the surface of who God is and what He wants to do in your life. As we have mentioned, there is not enough paper and ink in the world to truly be able to write down all there is to know about our God. There are many other studies that have been written and many other resources that you could read, watch or talk about, but the one that is the most simple and easy to access is available to you at no cost and is available to everyone who has a real relationship with Him no matter where they are. That resource is the Holy Spirit who lives inside each person who has accepted Christ. The Bible tells us that if we truly seek Him, we will find Him...



**Jeremiah 28:9 (NIV)**

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

This passage does not simply refer to our initial encounter with the Lord, but goes much deeper. For those of us who have accepted Christ and know the Lord and desire to go deeper in our relationship with Him, we can. Seek Him with your whole heart and desire to know Him more and more and He will take you deeper and deeper, deeper than you could possibly imagine. Open your Bible and before you begin to read pray....

Father, I want to know to You more. I want to experience Your presence and Your love for me. I want to learn more about who You are and what Your plan is for my life. I desire above all else to be close to You. Father, as I read the words that You have written to me, I ask that the Holy Spirit will reveal Your truth to me and teach me the lesson and the wisdom that You have for me. Father, let me understand Your word and let the Holy Spirit be my guide. Lord, I give You my life, I give You all of me, and I submit to Your will. Lead me, guide me, and protect me according to Your perfect purpose and will. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen and Amen.

God will take you deeper if you ask Him and seek Him. Do not be afraid to ask, but test and you will see that He is alive, that He loves you and that He wants to go deeper with you.

## What are God's Commands Introduction

The subject of commandments is typically not one that people truly desire to talk about. Most of the time I would say that people view commandments with a negative connotation. People have a desire to be free and to live their lives freely and for most people they believe that when they are under commandments then their ability to do this is hindered. This is also the case with the commandments that we see in the Bible. Many Christians are very quick to talk about the forgiveness and grace of the Lord, but avoid talking about His commandments. However, I believe that if this is the case then this shows that they also do not truly understand the purpose of commandments or the Father's heart behind them.

As we go through this lesson, we will discuss the true meaning of commandments and also why God created commandments for us. From there we will move on to determine why we should obey them. Commandments are not merely suggestions or guidelines, they are truly there for us to obey and follow! Commandments are also enforced. There are consequences for those who chose to follow the commandments of the Lord and there are also consequences for those who chose not to follow them. We will discuss this and work to gain an understanding of why we have these consequences and what they actually look like.

This knowledge will lay the foundation for us to move on to review the commandments that God has given to us in the Bible. The reality is that the Bible is full of commandments and were we to do an exhaustive study of them all we would need many more pages than contained in this lesson. We will however review the two great commandments that Jesus gave to us in the New Testament as well as the commandments that many of us are familiar with from the Old Testament, The Ten Commandments. We will also touch on several other primary commandments that are found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Finally, we will discuss common questions about commandments. Many people, even Christians, will object to the idea of commandments or may be opposed to certain commandments. We will review and discuss several of the common objections and questions that are raised about the commandments of God. I pray that this text will help shed light on



what the commandments of God truly are, why God gave them to us, and why it is important for us to hear and obey the Father's commands.

Let us pray...

Lord, we first humble ourselves before You and we pray that as we go through this lesson, let it not be human wisdom or understanding that we gain, but instead may we receive spiritual discernment. Lord, may You be the one to teach and may You be the one to show us the truth through Your Holy Spirit which lives within us. Father, we pray that above all things, we will grow closer to You and that we will learn more about You and Your love for us. Father, may our words be Your words and may we experience You in a deeper way. We thank You and we praise You and we give You all of the glory now and forever. Amen and Amen!

## What is The Meaning of Commandment?

### 1 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

A command, in the Biblical sense, is a law that God has given that we are to obey. Just as with the laws of a nation, when those laws are broken, when we disobey the commands of God, there are consequences. If we were to be honest with the way that most people view the word commandment then I would imagine that most would view it in a very negative light. For most people, they would view a commandment as a rule or regulation that tells them that they cannot do something that they would otherwise want to do. They would view a world without any commandments as being a world in which they were free to live in the way that they saw fit and where they could pursue the things that they wanted to pursue without any hindrance. A world with commandments, however, is one in which their freedom is infringed upon and they are bound by the chains of commands. This may sound dramatic but it can be very simple. Imagine someone driving to a meeting and running late. They are on a road with a low speed limit and think to themselves, "if it wasn't for this speed limit I could go faster and be there on time! Why do we need to have speed limits!" However, we need to take a deeper look at what a commandment is and what it is there for. The reality is, and this is true for many things, the truth of God is in fact the exact opposite of what the world tells us.

### Matthew 5:19 (ESV)

Therefore, whoever relaxes 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 does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

A fundamental truth about a commandment that we must understand is that it does not bind our freedom in anyway. Here is the reality: we are completely and entirely free to make the decision to follow the commandment and we are equally free to make the decision not to follow the commandment. There is nothing that is forcing us to make this decision one way or another. There is nothing that is robbing you of your freedom to choose and to live your life in whatever way you see fit. Your free will is not hindered because God gave commandments to us. This is something that we have seen modeled all throughout the Bible since the creation of Adam and Eve. They lived under a commandment, literally a single commandment, that was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was no electric fence around the tree, there was no forcefield stopping them from approaching the tree, and there was no one standing beside them ready to slap their hands if they began to reach for it. They were not hindered in anyway and they were completely free to choose to obey that command or not. Throughout the rest of scripture, we see time and time again where people choose not to follow the commands of the Lord. Virtually every story in the Bible involves, or is the result of someone choosing not to follow the commands of God.



## Commandments do not bind us, they set us free

### 1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)

But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

As we have seen, commands do not bind us or hinder our free will in any way. So then, what do they actually do for us? The truth is that commandments from God are designed to set us free. In order to grasp the truth behind this we must also understand another fundamental aspect to this topic and that is consequence. Unlike a commandment, in which we have the freedom to choose to follow, the effect and the reality of a consequence is an absolute and unchangeable fact. We have zero ability to choose to accept a consequence or not. We are bound to the consequence and there is nothing that we can do to escape the reality of the consequences of the choices we make.

Consider a very simple example. Imagine that there was a glass full of water sitting on the edge of a table with a sign beside it that said, “Do not push this glass of water off the edge of the table.” The truth is that we would have full freedom and ability to either choose to leave it alone or to push it off the edge of the table. I am not forced to do either of these options and there is nothing hindering me from either. If I were to choose to disobey the command and push that glass full of water off of the edge, what would happen? The glass would of course fall to the floor and break and the water would spill out over the floor. The floor would be completely wet and covered with shards of broken glass. That is the consequence of the action that we had taken and it would have occurred regardless of if there was a command not to do it. Once the action was taken and the consequence of that action realized, we would then be completely bound to the consequence. We could never say, “I do not choose to experience the consequence” because the truth is, we have no freedom to make this choice. If, however, we had used our free will and made a choice to follow the commandment not to push the glass of water off the edge we would have never experienced the consequence of the action and would not be bound by it.

The reality is that commandments and specifically our obedience to those commands, are what prevent us from being bound by the consequences of the actions that we are commanded not to do. Commandments do not bind us, they in fact set us free from consequences!

## God made commandments because He loves us

We now know what a commandment is and also that commandments do not exist to bind us but instead to set us free, but why did God give them to us? Why does He care so much about whether or not we are free from sin and from its consequences? We can find the answer in the love that God has for us.

### John 3:16 (NIV)

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.

In the second lesson of this series we learned that one of the fundamental characteristics of God is that He is love. He in His very essence is love and the source of all love is God Himself. Because God is love He has created the universe with love. This love is poured out for you and for me. God’s love for us knows no end and as a result He is not here to simply cater to us or placate us. He loves with a depth beyond any human comprehension or understanding. He truly wants the best for us and He knows that we can never have the best if we are constantly being bound by the consequences of sin. He does not want to see His children cry, He does not want to see His children suffer and He does not want to see His children hurt each other. Each and every one of us is precious to Him and as a result He gave us commands in the hope that we would live our lives in a way that would bring us joy and also demonstrate His love to those around us.



**1 John 4:16 (ESV)**

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

Let us think of a real-world illustration of what this looks like. Can you imagine what it would look like if a child was given everything that they asked for and their parents allowed them to behave in whatever way the child saw fit?

Unfortunately, in the world today, we can see the result of this type of parenting all too often. We see children who are given no rules and no regulations and if they decide that they want to try something or do something, they simply do it. I will tell you that you do not need to imagine this scenario because there are stories on television and in magazines of people who were raised this way. These stories are told not because the people were happy and content, but because their lives have been ruined and they have either fallen into complete despair and depression, had died as a result of their decision, or because of the pain and suffering they lived have committed suicide. But the victims of these stories are not simple those whom the stories are about. Along this path of destruction, they also hurt and wounded many around them including the ones that they loved. To live on this earth without any commandments or authority is to live a life of misery, suffering and pain. This is the opposite of what our loving Father desires for us.

**1 John 5:3 (ESV)**

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Our God has not given us commands because He wants to make us slaves or see us without joy. Our loving Father has given us commandments in the hopes that we will not suffer the consequences of sin. As we have already seen, the scriptures clearly show us that to obey is better than sacrifice. Not only is sacrifice not needed when we obey, but we also do not need to suffer the consequences of the sin for which the sacrifice was made. We truly have a loving Father!

### God's commandments show us our need for Jesus

**Romans 3:21-26 (NIV)**

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

The Bible clearly shows us that, with the exception of Jesus, there has never been a single person who has ever complied with all of the commandments that the Lord has given to us. From the very beginning, in spite of there being only a single commandment at the time, man sinned. Every human who has existed since that time carries the weight of that sin and has fallen short. As we have learned, God's first and foremost desire would be that we completely obey Him and follow His commands, but He is also completely aware that we are unable to completely do that. The stain of sin has already occurred and on our own we are unable to escape the consequence of it. So, what is it that we can do? If the Lord desires to have a relationship with us, but because of our sin is unable to, then how is it that we can be united in relationship with the Father? The Lord made the way through Jesus.

**Leviticus 17:11 (NIV)**

For the life of a creature is in the blood and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.



**Romans 6:30 (NIV)**

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

The Word of God tells us that whenever a sin has been committed there are consequences to that sin. We may experience those consequences in the physical world through such things as a physical injury, a damaged relationship with someone, or the loss of something that we have. However, the most serious and long-term consequence that anyone can experience is the separation that sin creates with the Father. Sin is death and as we have learned, true death occurs when we are separated from, or not in relationship with, the Father. The cost then of sin is death. God shows us that life is represented by and is actually contained within the blood of those who are physically alive. When we sin and are separated from the Lord, the Lord has made a way for us to satisfy the consequence and come into relationship with Him again through a blood sacrifice. The shedding of blood allows for a substitutional atonement for the sins that we have committed. Each sin requires this shedding of blood so that the one offers the sacrifice may become clean from sin.

**Hebrews 10:12-14 (NIV)**

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

When we look at the commandments and consider the standards by which we will be held accountable to them, it will be completely obvious that we are unable to keep them. We need to have help, we need to have another way to be restored into a relationship with the Father. That way is Jesus. The Father has not only made a way through the shedding of blood to atone for sin, He has also provided the sacrifice. When Jesus gave His life, He became the One sacrifice for all sin and any who believe in Him and invite Him into their heart will be cleaned. The Bible tells us that it is only through the name of Jesus that we can have salvation and be restored into a relationship with the Father. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. It is to Jesus that we must cling and to Jesus who we must give our lives. All authority on heaven and earth has been imparted to Jesus and He has the power not only to forgive our sins of disobedience, but He also bore the consequences of those sins, the consequences that should have fallen upon us. He is the One substitutional atonement for all sin.

**Matthew 27:26 (NIV)**

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

I recall being at a church event and seeing shirts that had the words “I am Barabbas” written on them. Of course, they were talking about the murderer and criminal Barabbas who was set free while Jesus, who was sinless, was beaten and killed on the cross. At the time, I remember thinking to myself, “why would anyone want to be Barabbas, much less desire to tell the world that they are?” However, the reality is that, Barabbas represents each one of us. On the day he was set free he did not deserve to be set free. There was absolutely nothing that he could do to gain freedom from the consequences of his actions. There was no hope for him. There was only one reason and one reason alone that he was set free. It was because Jesus came and took his place. It was only because of Jesus that He was set free.

We are just like Barabbas. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The commandments point us to Jesus because it is only through Him and by Him that we can also be set free from the consequences of our sin. We must humble ourselves and admit that on our own we are unable to follow the commands of the Lord. As the Bible tells us, if anyone claims to be without sin then he has deceived himself and the truth is not in Him. Once we have admitted this, we need to ask Jesus to forgive us and accept Him as our savior. Through this process, He will wash us and clean us and we will be restored into relationship with the Father. We can experience the peace, joy and love that can only come from the Father. From this point on we are not only restored into a relationship with the Father, but we also experience



the presence of the Holy Spirit living within us. We are now ready and equipped to hear and obey. Of course, even with this, we will still stumble and fall. However, the desire and intention of our hearts will forever be changed.

## Why Should We Obey?

### **John 14:15 (ESV)**

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

### **1 John 5:3 (ESV)**

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

This appears to be a very straight forward question and there could be many answers for it. I believe that many people would answer such a question with superficial answers such as “because I want to go to heaven”, or “because I don’t want to go to hell”. However, we truly need to dig deeper to understand not just why we are obeying, but the motivation behind our decision to obey. Let us consider an example to understand this issue more deeply. A parent instructs their child not to eat one of the cookies in the cookie jar until after dinner is over. The parent then tells them that if they disobey and eat a cookie then they will not be allowed to eat anymore cookies for a week, but if they obey the command and wait until after dinner then they can have two cookies. The child thinks about how much they would like to eat two cookies and avoid the consequence of not having cookies for a week so they make the decision to obey and as a result they get to enjoy two cookies after dinner.

On the surface, it appears that this is a good decision on the part of the child and in addition the parent has also achieved their goal. However, the real question that I want to explore here is not whether or not the child made the correct decision, but the motivation behind why the child made the decision. In this situation, the motivation was entirely self-centered. The child did not obey because they wanted to please the parent or show their love for the parent. The child also did not obey because they understood that the parent knew what was the best for them and loved them and cared for them. The child obeyed because they believed that obedience would provide them with the best possible outcome. If the child did not see the advantage that obedience would bring to them, or if they felt that what they would gain by disobeying outweighed the consequences of disobedience, then they would not obey. Their obedience was solely based on what was best for them given the consequences presented to them.

### **1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT)**

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Unfortunately, far too many believers, whether they realize it or not, approach obedience to the Lord and even salvation with this same attitude. If you were to begin to ask believers why they accepted Jesus I believe that, if they were honest, many would say that they accepted because they want to go to heaven not hell and they try to obey the commands of the Lord for the same reason. They want to avoid a negative consequence and gain a positive consequence. The reality is that this motivation for obedience is the same motivation as that of the child in our example. It is self-centered and based on self-gain, self-preservation and self-satisfaction. However, the motivation to obey what the Lord has said should not be focused on us but instead focused completely on Him. If our motivation to obey Him is pure and right then we should truthfully be able to make the following statement concerning it, “I obey the Lord because I love Him more deeply than anything else and it is my heart’s desire to please Him and see Him glorified regardless of the consequences of my decision.” Do you see the difference in this motivation? This motivation is completely God focused and is based on our complete love and devotion to Him.



What we must always remember as believers is that God does not simply see the result of what we do and judge us based on that. God looks at the heart. No matter what the outcome is, if the motives of our heart are not pure and set upon Him and His goodness then we have sinned. For the remainder of this section we will be looking at what the consequences of both obedience and disobedience looks like. However, always remember that no matter what you are doing, do not focus on the outcome and results, but ask yourself “why am I doing this?” Is it out of love for the Father and to bring glory to the King of Kings or is it because you are thinking of something else and seeking to bring glory elsewhere, most likely yourself?

## Adam and Eve Set the Example

### Genesis 2:15-17 (NLT)

15 The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. 16 But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— 17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

While there are many examples of proper obedience as well as disobedience within the bible, it is hard to find one that illustrates so vividly the process and the consequences as the account of Adam and Eve. Just as in the example we discussed in the prior section of the child who was given instruction from the parent, here we see two children faced with a choice to obey or not. The Lord had created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden to care for it. They had complete freedom to move about and enjoy all that was around them. It quite literally was paradise. The Lord Himself would walk with them and engage in direct relationship with them daily. There was but one rule that the Lord gave to them and that of course was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

### Genesis 3:1-5 (NLT)

1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” 2 “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. 3 “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’” 4 “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. 5 “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

Enter the snake. The snake, or Satan, began to speak to Eve and lie to her about the consequences of disobeying. Note here that at the core of what Satan said was this, if she ate of the fruit then she would gain a positive outcome. **She** would gain knowledge, and ultimately, **she** would be able to be like the Lord Himself. Satan’s work began to turn Eve’s focus from pleasing the Lord to pleasing herself. She began to think about her own glory and happiness rather than the joy and happiness of the Father. Adam, though he was not directly tempted by the snake, was in actuality the one who truly failed. It was Adam who failed to stop the snake and it was Adam who failed to lead His wife even though he knew that was part of his responsibility. He was to protect Eve and yet Adam was passive and did nothing to protect her or lead her in the right way. One could speculate that as Adam heard and saw what was taking place between Eve and the snake He began to also think about the happiness of Eve and ultimately, His own happiness was to stop Eve.

### Genesis 2:6-7 (NLT)

6 The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it to. 7 At that moment their eyes were opened and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Adam and Eve had been presented with two options. They could choose to focus upon the Lord and obey Him because they loved Him and desired to please Him or, they could choose to focus on themselves and pursue the course of action



that they believed would provide the greatest benefit to themselves. They could continue to experience the perfection of the garden and the relationship they had with the Lord, or they could choose to disobey and experience what would happen if they did. In this situation, they chose to focus on themselves and they believed that what they would gain by disobeying would be worth it. This exact same process has played out in the life of every human ever since. Each one of us, because we choose to love ourselves more than we love the Lord, make decisions every day in which we disobey the commands and desires of the Lord.

## The Consequences of Obedience

### 1 John 3:24 (NLT)

“Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.”

Once we understand the true motivation behind our obedience, we can then start to discuss the consequences. Once again, we must emphasize that the consequences, whether good or bad, should never be our motivation to obey. However, the consequences will always occur. Everything that you do, every decision that you make, will bring the consequences that are consistent with those decisions and motives. We must always remember that obedience to God should never be and in fact cannot be about earning His love. He already fully loves us unconditionally. Obedience is about our love for Him. So, if we do obey and we obey with the correct motivation what will happen?

### Luke 6:46-47 (NIV)

47 As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48 They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.”

The very simple answer for what we experience can be summed up in this way, we will experience the fullness of God. We will be completely free from the consequences of sin and as such be in complete union with the Lord. Adam and Eve had a relationship with the Father like no other human has ever had. There was no barrier between them and the Lord. When they walked in obedience before the fall their relationship with the Father was completed and unhindered. Because of this they were entirely fulfilled. Their need for love, companionship, friendship, purpose and intimacy was completely satisfied by the love of the Lord. This is intimacy that the Father wishes to have with each one of us, however, because of sin this intimacy cannot exist. This is why the sacrifice and forgiveness that Jesus provides to us is so important. It is through Jesus that this intimacy and relationship can be restored.

### Leviticus 26:3-6 (NIV)

3 “If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, 4 I will send you rain in its season and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. 5 Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. 6 “I will grant peace in the land and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land and the sword will not pass through your country.”

The consequence of obedience has a major effect on our day to day lives as well. Earlier in this lesson we learned how while sin in this world can be fully forgiven through Jesus, the consequences of that sin must be faced. When we choose to be obedient to the Father and do what He has told us to do we are preventing the consequences of sin from affecting us. If we obey and do not drink much wine, if we will honor our bodies and avoid promiscuity and sexual sin, if we will guard our tongue and the words we say and if we are honest and honorable then we will avoid so many of the consequences that come with these sins and choices. So many people in the world today are so burdened with the consequences of their sins that it is hard for them to imagine that there is a way out. How much better would it be to make the choice from the beginning to heed the commands of the Lord and simply obey?



## The Consequences of Disobedience

### Hebrews 10:26-29 (NLT)

26 “Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins.” 27 There is only the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. 28 For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God’s mercy to us.”

Before going too far into the consequences of disobedience we need to make several points clear. First, Jesus was sent and died as a sacrifice for all of our sin. No matter what you may have done, what you may be doing right now, or what may happen in the future, the blood of Christ has already paid the debt. When it comes to the topic of our salvation the Lord looks at our hearts and He knows with perfect accuracy where our heart is in terms of salvation. Second, when we state that we should not disobey we are never talking about absolute perfection. The bible tells us that none of us are capable of living a sinless life and that if we believe we are without sin then the Truth is not in us. What we are talking about are the motives of the heart. Are we striving to obey and is our hearts desire to please our Father? Ask any competent parent and they will tell you that there is a fundamental difference between a child who makes a mistake while sincerely working to obey their parents and a child who willfully disobeys.

When we discussed the consequences of obedience, we talked about experiencing the fullness of the Lord. It should come as no surprise that consequences of disobedience are the opposite. The consequence of disobedience is that we will be separated from God. In lesson two of this series we learned how true life occurs when we are in relationship with the Lord and true death occurs when we are separated from the Lord. Disobedience results in death, which is separation from the Lord. We see this pattern established early in scripture in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve walked with God. They spoke to Him, they interacted with Him, they had a direct and intimate relationship with Him. They experienced life on this earth in a way that no human being, with the exception of Jesus, has experienced it. However, they disobeyed, and in doing so they sinned against the Lord. Once this happened, they began to experience the consequences of disobedience. Though there are multiple consequences that occurred, the fundamental change was in their relationship with the Lord. The relationship changed. No longer were they able to be close to the Lord, no longer were they able to talk directly to Him, and no longer were they able to have the intimacy with Him that they had experienced prior to their disobedience.

Separation from the Creator is the true and ultimate consequence of disobedience against the Creator, however, it is not the only consequence. As we discussed earlier in this lesson when we disobey, we also create additional consequences in this world. When we disobey the commands of the Lord, we destroy relationships with other people, we hurt our bodies, we end up in damaging addictions, we find ourselves in jail and the list could go on and on. However, these consequences are not only outwardly, they also affect our hearts. So many people are living with tremendous guilt, fear, remorse, anxiety, anger, bitterness and unforgiveness. When we live with these burdens we can go through life in this world with no joy, peace, or hope and end up in a sad and depressed state of existence. When we live a life of disobedience, we end up living lives in this world that are bound by chains, chains that are the worldly consequences of our disobedience.

## What are God’s Commands?

Up to this point we have spent a significant amount of time talking about what commands are, what it means to obey them and what happens when we don’t. However, before we can begin to work through the process of obedience, we must also understand what we are commanded to do. As was mentioned in the very first session of this series, many



people view the bible as nothing more than a book of rules. We now know what the bible is forever, we also have learned that the bible, God's word, does give us commandments about what we are and are not supposed to do. In the same way that God told Adam and Eve what they were and were not to do in the Garden of Eden, so has He also done for us through His word.

### **1 John 2:1-6 (NLT)**

1 "My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin, but if anyone does sin we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. 2 He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. 3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. 4 If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. 5 But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. 6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did."

Most people, even new Christians, know about the ten commandments and many of them also could likely name a few of them. However, there are many more commandments contained within the bible about our actions and what we do. In fact, in the old testament alone there are over 600 different commandments that Israel was required to comply with. Most, if not all of these commandments, deal with a person's actions and behaviors and were a part of the covenant that was made between the Lord and Israel. Many of them dealt with helping a person remain clean, or free from sin, in front of the Lord and also how a person who had become unclean, or tainted by sin, could become clean once again. With the new testament, and more specifically with the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross, we can be cleaned from all of our sin no matter what we have done. Through Jesus, the Lord has made a new covenant with His people. Anyone who shall believe in Jesus and accept the sacrifice that He made will be cleaned from their sin and be saved from the eternal consequences of sin. This may sound very simple and at this point and it could be easy to say, "So if I simply accept Christ as my savior and follow Him then I don't need to worry about any commandments?" While it actually is that simply, the true reality is that we must understand what it means to accept Christ and follow Him. We must always bear in mind what we have spoken about many times, that the Lord looks at the heart and not the appearance.

### **Matthew 23:37-40 (NLT)**

37 Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Jesus made a wonderful summary of the laws when He told us to love the Lord with all that we are and to also love others as we love ourselves. Jesus said that if we follow these two commandments that all of the law will be fulfilled. What we must remember about this is that the Lord does not simply look at our actions to see if the commandment was technically satisfied. The Lord looks into the motives of one's heart and if the motives of the heart were not pure and in line with the intent of the commandment then obedience has not been achieved. This is why Jesus also told us that even if we say a mean word about another person then in our hearts, we have actually done the same as if we had actually murdered them. Or, if a man were to look upon a woman lustfully then he has already committed adultery in his heart. So, if we say with our mouth that we love the Lord with all that we have and we love others as we love ourselves yet we do not truly love this way within our hearts, He will know. If we perform acts of love for the Lord or we care for the people in our lives but the motives of our heart are not pure then the actions will mean nothing. So, then what does it truly look like to love the Lord with all that you are and to love others as you love yourself?



## The First Great Command - Love God

### Matthew 23:37-38 (NLT)

37 Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

As with many of the commands of God at first glance this seems to be a pretty straightforward and simple command. The Lord essentially just said that we should love Him. However, we must dig deeper in order to understand what is truly being expressed in this command. The reality is that this is the foundational command on which all other commands are based. If we follow this command, then all other commands will begin to come into focus and in fact, we will not need to wonder if we are being obedient because our obedience will be the natural outpouring of who we are.

In order to get a complete understanding of this command we must first understand what it means to love. If you had never been to my home and I told you to come over for a visit, you had better come to an understanding of the way before you leave or you will never reach the destination. The same is true with love. Love is truly an overused word in our world today. People talk about loving this and loving that and others will use terms like “I love you”, “I used to love that person”, “I fell out of love with that”, and yet they have no idea what love actually is. We also hear many people try to define love by saying that it is a feeling, a decision, an emotion, or a reaction. Yet these all fall hopeless short of the reality.

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The Lord has told us and shown us exactly what love is and I believe that the motivation behind each of these descriptions there we can see a heart of selflessness. To truly love means to give of yourself to the other with absolute focus on their joy and peace and with zero concern with self-gain or furtherment. Love can never be bought or earned. Love would occur when someone gives without receiving, when they care without being cared for, when they sacrifice without having anything left. When we have completely submitted all that we are to the Lord and come to a place in which we are willing to do anything that He would ask of us without thought of ourselves with the sole motivation behind it being our desire to please our Father, then we will fully love the Lord.

### John 14:23 (NIV)

23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

It should also be noted that while the love that we have for the Lord is a matter of our heart, our actions should reflect it. It can be easy to speak the words and tell the Lord and the people around us that we love God, but if the actions and the day to day behaviors that we exhibit are not changing to become more like Him each day then the truth is that we do not in fact truly love Him. The Word of God clearly tells us that if we love Him then we will obey Him. We must not be afraid to ask the question to ourselves, if I say I love the Lord, do my actions prove it?

## The Second Great Command - Love Others

### Matthew 23:29-40 (NLT)

39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”



The second great command not only directly follows the first in scripture but it is inseparable from it. You cannot obey and practice one of them while ignoring the other. The word “Love” in this command has no different meaning or less power than the word that is used in the first command. In the context of these two great commands the people that the Father places around us should essentially be the outlet for our overwhelming love for the Father. When we are filled with love from the Lord and we look to those around us we should love them as though we are loving Jesus. We should show them the same love and care that we would show to Jesus were He standing in front of us.

### **1 John 4:19-21 (NIV)**

19 We love because he first loved us. 20. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

This command, just as the first, hinges on both our hearts and our actions. We cannot say that we love others while at the same time ignoring their needs and standing by as they suffer. Our example of the way that we are to love others should be Jesus. Jesus did not love others with the thought of gaining anything in return, He loved us unconditionally and without end. In the same way, we are to love our neighbors like this and this will be a sign to all those around us that we are believers in Christ, because of our love for one another.

### **Matthew 25:35-40 (NIV)**

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 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.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needed clothes and we clothed you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

As with the first command the Lord clearly is very serious about this command. He tells us that the entirety of the law and essentially the foundation of the faith is built upon these commands. As we go through our day to day lives, we encounter so many people who are in need. Yet, there are so few of us who actually take notice of the need around us. There are people who do not have food, do not have shelter, do not have clothes, and do not have companionship. If we begin to truly think of those around us as Jesus does and we understand the love that He has for them we should start to see them in a different light. The love that He has for them should become the love that we have for them and Jesus did not merely say that He loved them but He took action, the most serious action that a person can take is to give their life for them.

## The Ten Commandments

### **Exodus 20:2-17 (KJV)**

2 I am the Lord thy God, which has brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.



7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

These commandments are so well known that many people across the world who have never been to a church or come to know the Lord would likely know at least one, two, or even more of them. The reality is that these basic commandments form a solid foundation on which each person can build their lives and as a result, many nations have chosen to use these commandments as the bases for the social norms for their society. Consider for a moment the way a person's life would look if they followed these commands. The reality is that that person would live a life that will be free from the vast majority of burdens and complications that so many people in this world live with. They would be saved from so much of the heartache and suffering of this world. Now imagine an entire society were to embrace these commands and all of the people who lived there were to follow them. That society would be one in which I believe everyone would want to live

As we learned earlier in this lesson, God did not give us commandments because He wanted to limit our freedom or because He did not want us to enjoy life. These commandments were given because the Lord wants us to live free and joyful lives that are free from the burdens and consequences of sin. If a person constantly lies to their neighbor, or steals what is not theirs, or commits adultery, or violates these commands, their lives will inevitably be filled with negative consequences and burdens that they would not have if they were to follow these commands.

### **1 John 3:15 (NLT)**

“Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.”

Many people would say that the command, such as these, are the old testament law and since Jesus came, we have a new covenant and therefore we do not need to pay any attention to these. We must realize that Jesus told us that these commands have not passed away, but in fact, God looks upon our hearts. Jesus did not only not abolish these commands, He actually explained to us that the true level of scrutiny that the Lord will do to determine when these commands have been violated is beyond that of our actions alone. The Lord looks upon our hearts to see what the intentions of our heart are. With this in mind we should examine our hearts daily to determine if we are hearing and obeying these commands that the Lord had given us. Commands that He had given us because He loves us.

## Other Commandments

### **Matthew 4:17 (NLT)**

“From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”



Repentance is at the heart of true faith and belief in the Lord. John the Baptist began to make the call for repentance in preparation for the coming of Jesus and when Jesus came, He continued to teach about it. To repent means that we admit our sins and we turn away from them. Being sorry is not the same as repenting. To truly repent your heart and your thoughts must change so that not only do you ask for forgiveness concerning what you have done, but you also make a decision that you will not desire to do it anymore. Repentance represents a one hundred and eighty degree turn from the path that you were headed on.

**Luke 6:27 (NLT)**

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.”

Earlier in this section we talked about how God has told us to love Him and also to love others. When God says to others, our neighbors, He does not preface it with, “love those who are kind to you”, or “love those who love you in return.” No, when God says that we are to love others He means all people and He specifically mentions that we are to love our enemies. From the perspective of the world this seems as though it is entirely against logic but in the eyes of the Lord this shows that we have truly placed others above ourselves and that we are desiring to love others in the way that Jesus first loved us.

**1 John 4:1 (NLT)**

“Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world.”

We are to beware of false teaching. False teaching is any teaching that is contrary to the Word of God and His character. In order to know what false teaching looks like and when it is being espoused, we must be able to test them. In order to test them we must first, ourselves, gain and understand the teachings of the Lord. We are not commanded to ask someone who is more knowledgeable than us about false teaching, we should ourselves learn and grow in our relationship with the Lord and our knowledge of His precepts. When this happens, we will have the prompting of the Holy Spirit as well as our own knowledge of the Word of the Lord to help us in determining if what we are hearing and seeing is truly of the Lord.

**John 10:27 (NLT)**

“My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.”

In the new testament we find dozens of references to how those who profess faith in Jesus will hear His voice. As followers of Christ we should always be seeking to hear Him and to learn what things He is calling us to do. Just as a sheep knows the voice of its shepherd so should we know the voice of our Lord. We should learn to listen for Him and we should learn to know what His voice is like. This does not mean that we will hear an audible voice speaking to us, though it is possible and has happened in many believer’s lives. What we often find is God speaking to us through our heart and through the circumstances we are in each day.

**1 Peter 5:6 (NLT)**

“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.”

In the world that we live in today we are told that we should increase in confidence and authority and that we should not allow any to control us. However, the direction that God has given us is much different. We should realize that God is the One who is in complete and total control of everything, including our very lives. Whenever anything happens that is good, we should immediately, in humble adoration, give the thanks, honor and praise to the Lord rather than assuming the responsibility ourselves. When we allow ourselves to understand and accept who God is and also who we are then we will understand what it means to be humble before the Lord.



**1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (NLT)**

23 For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.”

There are multiple ceremonies, or sacraments, that the Lord has instructed us to observe. One of these, and for us as followers of Christ, one of the most significant is the sacrament of the Last Supper. When Jesus was about to go to the cross to die for our sins, He gave us a beautiful symbol of what was about to happen. He showed us that His body would be broken for us and His blood would be poured out, just as a sacrificial lamb, in order to pay the penalty for our sins. He then told us that just as He had taken bread and broke it and wine and drank it, we should also do these in order to remember the sacrifice that He made for us and to understand the importance of it.

**Matthew 28:19 (NLT)**

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Another sacrament that Jesus gave to us was to baptize those who believed. Jesus gave us specific instructions to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We should, as believers, be baptized, but we should also seek to baptize others in this way. This act should also not be limited to only those around us but wherever the Lord may call us to, even if He calls to the ends of the earth.

**Mark 11:25 (NLT)**

“But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.”

Forgiveness is a foundation theme throughout all of scripture. The overall story that the bible tells us is how we sinned and disobeyed God yet He made a way for us to be forgiven. However, Jesus made it very clear that forgiveness is not something that we are only to receive, but it is something that we should also extend to others as well. When someone has hurt us, or shamed us, or treated us poorly we should extend the same forgiveness that we have received from our Heavenly Father to them as well. We must always be willing to review our hearts and ask ourselves are we willing to forgive others just as the Lord has forgiven us?

**Luke 18:22 (NLT)**

“When Jesus heard his answer, he said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

One of the earlier commands showed us that we should always listen to the voice of the Lord. However, if we listen and understand what we should do, yet we do nothing, then we have failed. Jesus made it very clear that we must not only hear but we should obey Him. We should follow His commands and we should follow Him where He goes. The lyrics of one song go, “Where you go, I’ll go, where you stay, I’ll stay, when you move, I’ll move, I will follow you.” This should also be the desire of our hearts to not only see and hear what the Lord would have us to do, but to actually take action and follow through on what He has asked of us.

**Philippians 4:6 (NLT)**

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.”



Worry is something that seems to be so prevalent in our modern society. It seems that in almost everyone's life there is something that they are worrying about. However, Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippians that we should not worry. Instead of worry, we should lift our concerns up to the Lord and we should not only trust in Him, but we should give Him thanks for what He has done in our lives. We should turn our focus off of the things that bring us worry and put it upon the things that the Lord has already done! What a beautiful command and a wonderful reminder that we do not need to worry but instead we can trust in Him.

## Common Objections to God's Commandments

When we look at the state of the church today, we will find that there are many different beliefs and theories about what it is that we as Christians should be doing. Many will talk about evangelism, others about teaching, others about social issues and the list could go on. However, as we have seen, the fundamental direction that God has given all those who choose Christ is to obey Him. As we have discussed, obedience will never produce salvation, because no man can earn salvation by works. Obedience, however, should become the natural fruit produced after a person has chosen to accept Christ.

Many people do not agree with this concept, in spite of its fundamental and inarguable biblical foundation. There are a variety of excuses that are used and perpetuated in order to argue against the direction to obey. However, when we examine the root cause of the vast majority of excuses, we will see a foundation of self-centeredness. Individuals who will use excuses in order that they may not obey the commands of the Lord are focused upon themselves and what they are gaining. Obedience to the Father has nothing to do with what we gain from it or what we avoid as a result of it. Obedience to the Father does not change or increase His love for us. Obedience to the Father does not earn salvation for us. Many people may ask, "if obedience doesn't do any of those things then what does it do for me?" This question, at its very core, misses the reality of obedience. Obedience to the Father is not about us, it is about Him. The thought that, "If I obey my Father, He will love me more", is an incorrect way of thinking. The correct way and perspective are this, "If I love my Father, I will obey Him." Our decision to be obedient has nothing to do with the Father's love for us, but it has everything to do with how much we love the Father! Do we need to make excuses for why we don't love the Father?

So many say that they love the Lord yet, each day they consciously and willingly disobey Him and follow the disobedience with excuse after excuse. We must stop justifying our behaviors and making excuses for our sin. What we need to do is hear the commands that the Lord has given to us and simply do what He has told us to do. That does not mean we will do it perfectly every time, but it does mean that when we do make a mistake we repent as soon as we realize what we have done and we will learn from the mistake to avoid disobeying again in the future. We will do this not for ourselves or any benefit that we may receive, but we will do it because we want to please our Father by doing the things that He has asked us to do.

If we are saved by grace through faith won't God just forgive me if I disobey?

### John 14:23-24 (NLT)

"Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me."

This is a statement made that is often made in order to justify disobedience. The truth is that yes, for those who have come to true belief and faith in Christ, no matter what we have done or what mistake we may make in the future, God can and will forgive us because the debt has been paid in full by the blood of Jesus. However, a person who has come into the true relationship with the Lord, meaning that they love Him, would never attempt to, or even desire to, justify disobedience. The difference is truly a matter of the heart.



No single time in the Word of God did He condone, permit, or even imply that sin in any form was permitted. If a person believes that the atonement for their sins, that Jesus provided through His death on the cross, gives them permission to commit sin they are gravely mistaken.

**James 2:14-24 (NIV)**

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”

As we have established earlier in this series, true salvation comes down to our hearts. One thing that we know from the Word of God is that we cannot earn salvation through our works and our actions. However, there is no such thing as works-based salvation, words-based salvation also does not exist. We can no more talk our way into heaven than we can work our way into heaven. With that being said, we also know that while we are still in this world and have our fleshly bodies, we will also have our sinful nature to contend with. What God requires while we are in this existence is not perfection. What God is looking at is, again, our heart. He does not require that we have achieved perfection and live a sinless life, if this were possible then there would have been no need for Jesus to have come and died. The Lord is looking to see our effort for Him. He’s looking at our hearts and is seeking to see if our heart is after Him and for Him.

One example that shows this in detail is that of the disciple Peter. Peter boldly stood and told Jesus that He would never forsake Him. However, as we know, Peter denied Jesus not once, but three times in one day. There is no doubt that this was sin. However, later on Jesus visited Peter and affirmed to Him that not only were his sins forgiven, but that He would have a great work and calling for the Lord. The moment Peter denied Jesus he knew what he had done. He did not intend to do it and he knew that it was wrong. Immediately afterwards Peter began to weep because he knew what he had done against the Lord. It was with a convicted and repentant heart that He sought after the Lord and for the rest of his life he never denied the Lord again. In fact, Peter was crucified because he was a follower of Christ and according to the accounts that exist insisted that he be crucified upside down because, as a result of his denial of Jesus, he felt he was not worthy of being crucified in the same way as Christ. He was repentant even unto death! So, the question is, when we have sinned are we seeking to find a way to justify the act or are we repentant and have a desire to allow the Holy Spirit to change us?

[Because Jesus came doesn't that mean the law doesn't apply anymore?](#)

**Matthew 5:17-19 (NLT)**

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So, if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”



Many people will say that when Jesus came, He represented a new covenant, therefore the law of the Lord no longer applies and it is only grace that matters now. However, this is a false teaching. Jesus in fact came because the original law was, is, and will always be in effect. God does not allow sin of any kind. Jesus came because God could see that no person would be able to live a life without sin and as a result be in relationship with Him. Unless God made a way then we would never be able to have true communion with Him in the way that Adam and Eve had once had, the way that the Lord had intended it to be. God sent Jesus so that the requirements of the law could finally be fulfilled and that through that, we could be restored to the relationship that He desired. However, while the blood of Christ does provide for the atonement of our sins and restoration of relationship with the Father, it does not absolve us from obeying the commands of the Lord.

Consider a child in a family who has a loving father. Nothing that the child will ever do will cause the father to stop loving the child. Yet, the father still establishes rules for the child. Just as we established earlier in this lesson, these rules are not because the father desires to oppress, to limit the child, but instead to protect the child from harm and negative consequences. The father does not one day eliminate the rules. This is the same truth as what our Father in heaven has done. He will not stop loving us and therefore He has made a way for us to be in relationship with Him again however, He has never simply done away with His commandments.

### **John 8:11 (ESV)**

She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on, sin no more.” Jesus was very clear in His teaching that those who love the Lord would follow Him and do what He has commanded them to do. On multiple occasions when He would heal and forgive people, He would tell them to go and sin no more or to come and follow Him. In one translation it is written that Jesus told the person to “leave your life of sin” after Jesus had forgiven them their sins.

The fundamental question that I would pose to anyone who would make this statement is this, what is your motivation for wanting to believe that the commands of the Lord do not apply? Like other objections to obeying the commands of the Lord the most common motivation is a desire to be able to do what the person would like when the person would like to do it and also avoid any of the negative consequences of the action.

[If I can never be perfect why should I even try?](#)

### **Romans 3:23 (ESV)**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

### **Romans 3:10 (ESV)**

As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;

God is very clear when in telling us that we are in capable of attaining perfection in this world and in this life. Every single person, aside from Jesus, has sinned and fallen short of the standard established by God. Likewise, there will never be a single person will be able to meet the standard as well. This fact is the reason why God sent Jesus into the world and made a way for us to be reconciled with the Father. However, because we cannot reach the goal and live a sinless life this does not mean that there is no point in pursuing it. God is not looking at our result but He is interested in our heart and to see what we choose to pursue with our heart.

### **Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT)**

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved



it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

When it comes to our obedience to the Lord, He is looking at our effort and our desire to obey Him. He already knows that we will not be perfect and in fact, we are incapable of being perfect while we are still a part of this fallen world where sin has corrupted. But when we demonstrate our love for Him throughout obedience and actions, we are showing that our decision to follow Him is genuine.

## What are God's Commands Conclusion and Closing Prayer

This lesson has been one of the most challenging that I have written. The topic of obedience is a delicate one to broach in our modern church. We have come to an understanding of the Grace of God yet we must also balance that grace commands that God has given to us. We have talked about what a commandment truly is, we have talked about why we need to obey the commands, as well as what happens when we obey and what happens when we disobey. We have discussed what God's commands are and have reviewed many of the specific commands that He has given us in His Word to us. Finally, we reviewed a variety of the excuses and arguments that are given as to why it is ok to disobey or even why we do not need to obey at all.

As we come to the end of this lesson, I hope that you have seen that our obedience to the Lord is not about us. Obedience should never be about what we can gain or what we could lose. Obedience never determines if the Lord loves us or how much He loves us. Obedience does not determine our salvation and where we will spend our eternity. If these things did depend on our obedience then I am sorry to say that heaven would be devoid of any humans. No, obedience is always about the Lord and our love for Him. Jesus could not have made this anymore simple when He said in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Having looked more into what His commands are and why we should obey may question for you is this, do you love Jesus? If you do, obey Him.

Father, we are so blessed to know that You love us so much. We know that You have sent Jesus to become the salvation for our sins and we also know that You have created commands for us to follow. Lord, we pray that we will demonstrate our love to You by keeping Your commands. Father, we desire to hear Your voice and do what You call us to do. Lord, I pray that You will speak to each person who has read these words and they will be convicted to draw closer to You and to obey what You have commanded. May they each be a light in this dark world and may they each be pleasing to You. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen and Amen!

## What Does it Mean to be a Christian Introduction

Up to this point in the series we have been reviewing what the Bible tells us about itself, about Who God is and also about what it is that God has commanded us to do. Our next lesson is going to begin to look at what happens when a person has believed and what changes they will experience in their life. Not only will we talk about the changes that they will experience but we will also discuss the responsibilities that they have as a believer as well.

The reality is that the question of what makes a Christian should be an easy one to answer. Jesus made it very clear when He was here on earth that anyone who believes in Him will be with Him in heaven. The complication comes in, however, when we do not apply proper understanding or give appropriate weight to what the word "believe" means.



And, there are no shortages of opinions. For many people it would refer to anyone who has said that they believe. Maybe they recited “the sinner’s prayer” at an altar call in the past and thus believe they are saved. Others would say that if you are a good person and work to do good then you are saved. And still others would say that it doesn’t matter what you do or choose because God has already chosen who He will save and who He won’t and therefore we in fact have no choice.

Because of these opinions and theories, we will not be, just as we have with the other lessons in this training series, using any reference to any source other than God’s Word itself, the Bible. The reality of a true Christian is that belief and salvation can, on the surface, appear to be a bit of a contradiction. It is completely free, yet it costs us everything. There is nothing we must do, or that we even can do, to gain it, yet it requires action. However, there is no contradiction in God’s Word and as we go through this lesson, we will see that the Bible makes it very clear as to what being a Christian truly means. Before we begin let us pray.

Father, we are so blessed that we have Your Word. We are so blessed that we are able to come to You and to talk with You. Lord, as we go through this material, we pray that Your Holy Spirit will be the true teacher and that You will reveal the truth to us. Lord, may we have wisdom beyond our understanding and may we understand that the truth. Lord, may we be encouraged in some areas and challenged in others to draw closer to You and to know You more deeply. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray, Amen and amen!

## A Christian Experiences a Metamorphosis

### **2 Corinthians 5:17 (EVS)**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

I believe that when we think of the word metamorphosis one of the first examples that would come to mind is that of the caterpillar and the butterfly. Most of us remember this from our elementary school days when we learned about how the caterpillar goes into its cocoon and then later emerges have changed into the beautiful butterfly. The process of this change is called a “metamorphosis” and this in fact reflects what happens in a person’s life when they become a Christian.

### **Romans 12:2 (KJV)**

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God.”

The definition of metamorphosis is as follows: a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means. When we review the verse above, we see the word “transformed” and this is true in almost all translations. However, when we dig deeper and study the original Greek that was used, we see this word being the Greek word, “metamorphousthe”. This is the where the English word metamorphosis is derived. This English word indicated a more fundamental change than the English word transform. There is something that takes places on the foundational level when metamorphosis occurs. It is not simply a change in something or a rearrangement of what already exists. It indicates that a to change to something completely different. So much so that what exists after the metamorphosis is unrecognizable when compared to what existed before the metamorphosis. This is just as we see in the example of the caterpillar and the butterfly.

In addition to the metamorphosis which takes place we also see the words “by the renewing of your mind” used. In this portion of the passage the original Greek uses the word “anakainoó”, which can literally be read as an ongoing renewal which is performed by God. This passage therefore indicates to us that a person, upon becoming a Christian goes through an initial metamorphosis in which they are changed into a new creation. However, this metamorphosis is not



the end. Afterwards, God begins a process of renewal in that person's life by which they are further changed and refined. Another definition that is used for the word renewal in this context is: moving from one stage to a higher, more developed, one.

### **Philippians 1:6 (NLT)**

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

As we can see, this process is neither a one-time occurrence nor is it something that a person is capable of doing on their own. There is an initial metamorphosis which occurs at the time a person believes in Christ, however, this point in time is not a destination but a beginning. It is from this point that the work of the Holy Spirit begins in the life of the Christian and over time, day by day, the Holy Spirit will change and refine a person preparing them path that the Lord has for them, a path that ultimately lead to that person entering into heaven and being with the Lord for all of eternity.

So how does this metamorphosis work and what actually takes place in a person's life when they go through it? As we continue to go through this section we will be talking about these details and what is to be expected. However, the first thing that must happen is a decision, the most important decision that a person will ever make.

## A Decision is Made

### **Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NLT)**

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

The bible clearly tells us that each one of us has a choice to make. We can choose life or death. In an earlier lesson in this series we talked about what true life was as well as true death and that each one of us will make a decision as to which one we will experience. There will be no excuses and no free passes when it comes time for the judgement to be made. God has shown us what death looks like and He has shown us what life truly is and has given us the decision to make.

We must also come to understand that we cannot choose to ignore this decision. Anyone who has not believed in Jesus has, by default, made to choose death. The decision that we must make is to reject and turn from death and choose to believe in Jesus. It is when we do not choose to believe in Jesus and reject this truth that we, as a result, choose death.

### **Ezekiel 18:20 (NLT)**

“The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent's sins and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.”

We will all be held personally responsible for the decision that we make and we will each experience the consequences of the decision. We can influence others and live an example to others. We can try to teach others and guide them, but each person must make this decision on their own and they alone will be held responsible for the decision that they make. A parent is instructed to teach their child in the way that they will go, but when the child has reached an age in which they are accountable, they will be judged based on the decision that they have made. Likewise, a child, a brother, a sister, a friend, a husband, or a wife cannot live a life in which they can create salvation to have in another's life.



**Romans 10:9 (KJV)**

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Just as this decision is entirely personal, this decision is also to be taken with absolute sincerity. Just as you cannot earn salvation through works, you cannot earn salvation through mere words either. This decision, the decision to believe in Jesus, must come from a person’s heart. A person cannot simply recite a few words such as, “sure, that sounds good” and be saved. There is a deep and fundamental shift that will take place when this decision has been made and from that moment on, a person's life will forever be changed. They will look back at that moment as being the moment when they entered the cocoon and the Lord began the metamorphosis within their life.

**A New Heart, Mind, and Soul****Ezekiel 11:19 (NLT)**

“And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart...”

As we learned at the beginning of this session, when we believe in Jesus, we undergo a metamorphosis. This process affects every part of who we are. Our hearts will forever be changed. We will begin to have a heart that is after the things of God. A heart that is thirsty and hungry for the Lord and His words. Our heart will begin to place the feelings and needs of those around us above our own needs. Our hearts will begin to break for the things that break the heart of the Lord. We will begin to see others with the compassion and love that the Lord has for them and our desire will be to do for them what God would want us to do.

**Romans 12:2 (KJV)**

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God.”

In addition, to changing our hearts to new ones, our mind will also undergo a similar process. Our thoughts and our thought process will begin to change as well. We will begin to think about the things of the Lord rather than dwell upon the things of the world. Our thought life, the things that we think about that no one else knows about, will begin to change. This change will represent a fundamental change in the way that we think and as this change occurs it will begin to affect our words and our behaviors as well. It has been said that the way a person thinks will ultimately be reflected in the way that a person talks and behaves. Because of this, when our mind is transformed to one that thinks of the things of the Lord, our words and our actions will change as well. People will begin to see the difference reflected in our lives and this change is a testimony to what the Lord can do in our lives.

**2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)**

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

When we have made a decision to believe in and follow Christ our souls become saved. Our souls which were in sin and in eternal separation from the Father are restored and made sinless. We are, through the blood of Christ, restored into a relationship with the Father and this change renews our soul. The renewal of our souls changes us on an equally fundamental level and the way that we experience life changes. Instead of a future of eternal separation from the Lord, we can move forward with the assurance of an eternity of relationship with our Father and with our brothers and sisters in Christ.



## A New in Motivation

### **Colossians 3:23 (NLT)**

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

When we have believed in Jesus and have become a new creation, not only will our actions and our behaviors begin to change, our fundamental motivations will as well. Before a person believes in Christ typically, they are motivated by selfish desires. They may be willing to do things that seem good, but, when it comes down to it, when things begin to become tough and they are not experiencing the return that they believed they would, they will stop. So much of their concern, if they are honest, revolves around the question, “what is in it for me?”

However, when we believe and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us, this area will also begin to change. Our concern will change from furthering our own interests to building the Kingdom of the Lord. Instead of doing things that we believe will be of benefit to ourselves we will think about what it is that God has called us to do and we will begin to put the needs and the feelings of others above our own. Whenever we are thanked for what we have done, instead of receiving that thanksgiving for ourselves, we will redirect it to the true source, the Lord. Our motivation will be to lift the name of the Lord high and to see all praise, honor and glory to Him and Him alone. We will not be concerned about what we receive but instead what we are able to give.

### **Genesis 6:5 (ESV)**

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This motivation represents a striking difference between the way our society views life. Our society, and truly humanity in general, puts the focus of almost all of a person’s motivation directly on one thing, themselves. Think about it, so much of the intention that people live for is to achieve their own happiness and contentment. People are routinely told to find what makes them happy and follow their heart. This sounds very lovely on the surface but the reality is this is an evil lie. The truth is the Word of God tells us that when apart from God every thought in the human heart is evil all of the time. So, we have a world telling us to follow our own hearts desires and that our focus should be upon doing what makes us happy. Yet if we were to follow our heart and following the desires within it, we would unleash absolute evil. Our motivation changes, not after our own heart and our own desires, but towards intense pursuit of the heart of God and to do what He desires. Our focus is no longer about what we can achieve or even about our own happiness but it is instead focused on nothing but bringing joy to the Lord and obeying what He has told us to do.

## A New Allegiance

### **Philippians 3:20 (NLT)**

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

As we have seen, when we accept Christ our lives fundamentally change. This change extends to our allegiance and citizenship as well. Each person is born somewhere upon this earth. Normally, the place that we are born in will determine the country that we are a citizen of. Anytime a person wishes to change their citizenship to that of another country there is almost always a long process that must be followed. This process is not trivial or to be taken lightly. In the event of a conflict or war the citizenship of a person could determine their fate.

Consider this example, two people go on a vacation to a different country. The first person is a citizen of country A and the second person is a citizen of country B. If war were to occur in the country they were visiting together the first



citizen would need to go to the embassy of country A, while the second person would need to go to the embassy of country B. Their citizenship would determine where they had to go and where they were allowed to go.

### **Ephesians 2:19 (NLT)**

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

When we accept Christ, we immediately become citizens of heaven. This change in citizenship happens immediately and there are no other tests, rituals, oaths or any other activity that we must complete in order for it to occur. This citizenship will never change, no matter what country we are in, what the world we are visiting, or what is going on around us. We will always be citizens of heaven. Though this process may seem simplistic when compared to the process of changing citizenship in the world, the consequences and effects are in fact much more serious and important. The reality is that this decision, this allegiance to Christ and to His Kingdom will become, must become, the foundation of our lives. All that we do will have Him and His kingdom in mind and our desire will to please Him and bring glory to His name.

### **1 Peter 1:4 (NLT)**

and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

This change in citizen also means that the rights of a citizen of heaven also become ours. We become the heir to an inheritance from our Father, the King. No government or person on earth has authority to take these rights and this inheritance away from us.

## A Christian Follows Jesus

### **John 10:27 (KJV)**

“My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.”

When a shepherd has a flock of sheep the sheep would follow the shepherd whenever he went. The sheep were so in-tune to the voice of their shepherd that shepherds could come together to have fellowship allowing their flocks to intermingle. Then, once their time of fellowship was over the shepherds could each go their own way, call for their sheep and each sheep would go with their own shepherd. They knew the voice of their shepherd and they were able to recognize it from all other voices. When the voice of their shepherd called them, they came and they did what the shepherd wanted them to do.

This same obedience and understanding is what Jesus has taught us to do. He is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. Our desire and our intention should be to come to know His voice in such a way that we can differentiate it from all others. And, when we hear Him speaking to us, giving us instruction and wisdom, we should act upon and do what He has told us to do. How is this done?

As a married person, if my wife were to call me, the moment I heard her say her very first word, I would know that it was my wife calling. She would not need to tell me who it was or make any introduction. I know what her voice sounds like, I know the tone of her words, I know cadence in which she talks, there would be no doubt in my mind that this was my wife. However, when my wife and I first met and I had not heard her voice before, I would have no idea if it were her or not. This change came as a result of getting to know her. It came because I talked to her every day for hours and hours. I wanted to hear her voice, I wanted to know what she was thinking and I desired to learn everything I could about her. Through this process I learned to know her voice and I will never mistake it for anyone else.



If we wish to learn the voice of our Lord, we must spend time listening for it and seeking it. We must search for Him and search for His direction in our life. When we search and listen with a sincere and expectant heart, He will begin to speak to us and we will begin to learn what His voice sounds like.

## Jesus Heard and Obeyed His Father

### **John 14:15 (NLT)**

“If you love me, obey my commands.”

If we are to be followers of Jesus, we must know that the foundation of everything He did was in His obedience to His Father. Every act that He performed, every word that He said, and every place that He went was because He heard His Father’s voice and He obeyed the instructions that His Father gave to Him. There was never a time in which Jesus heard the direction of His Father and did not do it and there was never a time when He disobeyed one of the commands of the Father. In His teachings He never indicated in any way that it was ok to disregard anything that the Lord has instructed us to do.

Jesus started this obedience by spending time with His Father. As you read through the account of Jesus’s life in the New Testament you will find that Jesus regularly spent time alone with His Father. No matter what was going on around Him, what situation He was facing, or what He needed to do, He made spending time with His Father a priority.

If Jesus consistently and passionately sought to spend time with His Father, to seek His instruction and then to completely follow whatever instructions God gave to Him, should we not also seek to do these same things? Yes, we absolutely should seek to follow the example of Jesus! We should seek to spend time with Him, we should seek to read His Word, we should seek to understand His commands and most importantly of all, we should seek to not be hearers of the Word only, but to truly do the things that God has told us to do!

## Jesus Took Up His Cross

### **Matthew 16:24 (KJV)**

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

What does taking up our cross actually mean? Before we discuss what it means, let’s take a moment to talk about what it does not mean. Taking up our cross is not a reference to us carrying our burdens or responsibilities. It does not mean that we are to continue to move forward and follow Christ in spite of the consequences of our sin or the responsibilities that we have in this world. It is not an indication that the path of following Jesus is going to be hard and therefore going to take work, like carrying a heavy load, in order to follow. These possibilities fail to show the true seriousness that this statement carries with it.

In the time that Jesus lived, crucifixion was something that was known and feared throughout the land. It was a means of execution and it was considered to be possibly the most traumatic and painful way that a person could be put to death. If someone heard about an individual being required to “carry their cross” there would have been no question about what was taking place, that person was on their way to be put to death. There would have been nothing inspirational about it nor would there have been any thoughts of a person “preserving through until the end of the race.”

What does this context tell us about what Jesus was talking about? Let’s break down the following three statements based on the historical context that we just discussed. “Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”.



When a person had been sentenced to death by crucifixion, they would have no choice as to if they would go through with the execution. They were forced to proceed regardless of if they wanted to or not. However, Christ was different. At every single moment as He was being sent to the cross He had absolute power, authority and ability to stop. There was no one forcing Him to go forward and there was no one who had any power or authority above His. He denied His right to say no and instead willfully laid down upon the cross and allow Himself to be executed. When this passage instructs us that we are to deny ourselves it means that we have a similar decision to make. We do not have to accept the salvation of Christ and we do not have to obey His commands. We have a decision to make as to if we will follow Him or not. We may reject to lay ourselves down or we may choose not to. To deny ourselves is to give up the ability that we have to choose to stand up and instead, do as the Lord has called us to do. It means that we obey what He tells us rather than our own desires and ultimately, our desire will become His desires over the course of time.

The second portion of this statements tells us that we are to take up our cross. Having first made the decision that we will not purpose our own desires but instead do the will of the Father, Jesus now reveals to us what He has called us to do. We are to lay our lives to the will of the Father, just as Jesus laid Himself down. This is a holistic commitment that we make to sacrifice all that we are for the sake of the Lord.

## A Christian “Fights the Good Fight” Daily

### **2 Timothy 4:6-7 (NIV)**

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time for my departure is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Something that we as Christians must come to grasp is that when we refer to fighting, we can never begin to believe that we are the ones doing the fighting. A true Christians warrior is an individual who recognizes that within themselves they are capable of doing nothing. They understand that there is no weapon that they possess that can be effective in the battle they are in. Instead, they will recognize that it is only the Lord who can fight the battle. Because of this understanding and this truth, instead of standing up to fight, they will humble themselves in prayer. Instead of taking matters into their own hands, they will, by faith, relinquish complete and total control over to the hands of the Lord. As mentioned in the verse above, we must allow our lives to be poured out as a drink offering. The liquid in the container has no ability to control what is happening nor can it even try to take control. It is poured out at the will of the cupbearer. The Christian warrior recognizes the cupbearer is Christ and allows Christ to rule in every aspect of their lives. When a Christian submits this level of authority to the Lord, all authority within their lives, they are a warrior for Christ and no power, no plan, no scheme, or activity of the enemy can stop what God sends them to do.

### **Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)**

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Another lesson that each Christian must learn is that the true battle that we are engaged in, “the fight” that the Bible talks about taking place, is not one that we can see. When we think about warfare, we think about the images of warfare which occur in the world. We will tend to think about the situations that are going on around us, whether they be illness, money issues, family or relationship issues, work issues, or anything else, as something that we must do something about in order to be solved. For instance, if an individual is experiencing attacks within their marriage, they may begin to look at a variety of changes they can make in their relationship or begin to look at things they can do to try to make the situation better. However, very few people will engage in the true fundamental battle that is taking place. There is a struggle in the spiritual realm in which the enemy, the Devil, is seeking to destroy the things that God has created. This includes you and me and the purpose that He has created us each with.



As Christian warriors, we must begin to see the true root of the problem, a spiritual problem and we must begin to learn to engage in this battle accordingly. But how does the Christian warrior begin to fight this battle? What has the Lord told us to do when we find ourselves on the spiritual battlefield? The Bible gives us much instruction on how to engage in this fight, but four points the Lord has led to be a part of this training are in the following four sections.

### Turns to The Lord for Help

#### **Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)**

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Turning to the Lord for help. This may almost seem so simple that it should not have even been mentioned, yet I tell you the truth, very few people truly practice this within their lives. So many people will work tirelessly to fight their own battle, leaving the Lord as the final option they turn to when all their other plans seem to have failed. If there is an illness, a huge majority of people immediately consider what doctor they can go to or what medicine they can take and then if those are not effective they then turn to the Lord in desperation. I tell you, this is backwards. The very first and in fact only place we should turn to is the Lord Himself.

This can also be the beginning of idolatry. You may wonder how this could lead to idolatry? I know of many people who are on medication and upon facing a situation in which they may not have that medication anymore make statements like, “I cannot live without that medication, it saved my life!” I must say, that medication has no power or authority to grant life or death. The Bible tells us that all authority on heaven and on earth belongs to Christ. If this is true then how could a person view that medication with that much passion? The answer is that the person has ascribed undue authority to an object and that medication which God had provided has now turned into an idol. We must each examine our lives to determine if there are areas in which we do not seek first God and His help. If there are areas in which we do not seek the help of the Lord as our first course of action then we need to recognize that changes need to take place within our lives.

#### **John 14:26 (NIV)**

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

The help that is offered from the Lord is not like the help that we can find in the world. When we face a situation in this world and seek help from this world, we may go to see someone, make phone calls, or go through some type of process before we can begin to receive it. However, the Lord has sent His Holy Spirit to us to live within us. God is with us in every situation and He never leaves us nor forsakes us. Where others may not hear your cry for help, ignore you, or be delayed in responding, the help of the Lord is always near because He is always right beside us and His very Spirit dwells within us. We must develop the understanding of the habit to call upon the Lord immediately in all things and seek His help.

### Turns to The Lord for Strength

#### **Philippians 4:13 (NIV)**

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

#### **Isaiah 40:39 – 31 (NIV)**



“29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

When we engage in spiritual battles, we must always recognize that it is never within our own ability that we fight. We have authority in spiritual battles because the Spirit of the Lord is with us, but we in our own ability and strength, can do nothing. My spiritual father and mentor told me once about the difference between power/strength and authority. He said to imagine a large truck driving down the road. In front of the truck a government police officer steps out and raises their hand, signaling the truck to stop. If this happens the truck driver will recognize that the police officer has been given authority by the government and will comply with the request of the police officer to stop. The truck did not stop as a result of the police officers' power or strength. If the police officer had tried to stop the truck using their own personal strength they would have been hit and crushed without any resistance. When we engage in spiritual battle, we must always remember that we are just like the police officer in this scenario. Within ourselves we are entirely incapable of fighting the battle, but when we turn to Christ and His strength and claim His authority then we are equipped for the battle.

When we face the circumstances of this life, we cannot rely on our own strength and ability. We must turn to Christ and seek Him. The Bible tells us that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus and against Him there is nothing that can stand.

### Turns to the Lord for Guidance

#### **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)**

“5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.”

This could be one of the most difficult tasks that a Christian who truly seeks to follow Christ may face. The process of trusting in the Lord completely and not acting based on our understanding, knowledge or logic is at the same time very simply, yet also very hard to do for most. We may be in a situation in which the way seems very obvious and yet, the Lord asks us to do the opposite of what our logical mind tells us to do. The Bible tells us that there are ways that may seem right to us but it is the Lord that will tell us the correct way to do. We cannot see into the future and therefore when we make decisions, we cannot have the full perspective of what we need to occur. Yet the Lord knows exactly what is going to happen and if we listen to Him and obey, we will find that because of His complete knowledge and understanding, He can place us in positions that we could have never thought were possible. Likewise, when we hear and obey His direction, He can also steer us clear of situations and circumstances that we have otherwise destroyed us.

#### **John 16:13 (NIV)**

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

How do we receive this direction from the Lord? How does He communicate His desires to us? It is done through the Holy Spirit. When we accept Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives the Spirit of God, His Holy Spirit will come and live within us. This is the gift that God gives to those who believe in Him. He will come and make His dwelling within our heart and we will be able to hear Him speak to us. This will not necessarily be an audible voice that we hear, but a prompting within our heart and mind. This voice will lead us and guide us along the path and the plan that He has for our lives. All we need to do is to listen and obey.



## Does Not Look Back

### **Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)**

“18 Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

### **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here!”

One of the primary tools that the enemy will use on the Christian warrior are the weapons of guilt and shame. When a person gives their lives to Christ the Bible tells us clearly that the old is gone and the new has come. We are made a new creation and the sin that once held us no longer can have any authority over us. In addition, that sin is gone, whipped away by the blood Christ. We no longer carry the weight and the guilt that we did as a result of that sin. The question we must wrestle with is this, if God has forgiven us and has given us a new life, can we and should we also forgive ourselves and allow the sin of our former lives go as well?

It sounds like it should be basic, yet so many Christians continue to punish themselves for the sin that the Lord has already forgiven them for. The enemy will constantly remind us of the shame and sin in our former lives in an attempt to make us feel as though we are not worthy of the forgiveness of the Lord or and that we are not qualified to do the work that the Lord has called us to do because of that sin. We cannot allow the enemy to use our past in that way. We cannot allow guilt to come back into our lives once we have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus.

There is only one way in which we should reflect upon our past, through testimony. When we look upon our past and tell others about the sin we were once in and do it so that we can demonstrate the redemption that we have received through Christ, this brings glory to the Lord. We do not look back and tell others because we feel guilt or shame but we do it so that they can see the love of the Father and the forgiveness that only He can bring into our lives. When we tell our testimony, we do not point to the sin that had once held us captive, but to the power of the Lord to break the sin in our lives and forgive us. We do it so that others may experience the same love that we have and can be saved from the sin of the world and lies of the enemy.

## You Are Either for The Lord, Or Against Him

### **Matthew 12:30 (ESV)**

“Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

Humanity has many different ethnicities and cultures and we seem to be professionals at dividing everything and everyone up into groups. However, when we look at the reality of God’s Word there is only a point of distinction that matters. You are either a follower of Christ, or you are not.

Over the past two thousand years we have, as we humans seem to always do, taken this simple distinction and truth of God’s Word and completely muddied the waters in an unbelievable way. If you were to do a search for the total number of Christian denominations in the world you would likely find estimates to be between thirty to forty thousand. While we have certainly made things more complicated than it should be, this number is not quite accurate as the vast majority of this number do not represent differences in belief, but rather different independent organizations. If we look at actual beliefs, we will find that there are roughly forty different Christian denominations, or belief systems, in the world today. We are most certainly familiar with some the different names of these belief systems such as: Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Protestant, Catholic, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Assemblies of God,



Evangelical, Church of God, Eastern Orthodox, Church of The Nazarene, Disciples of Christ, Church of The Brethren, Apostolic, Full Gospel, Fundamentalist.

### **Galatians 3:25-29 (NLT)**

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

What a travesty and mockery we have made of His church! The fundamental truth is that this tangled and ugly mess is the product of human logic and reasoning. When this life is over and we stand before the throne of the Lord to give account of what we have done, not a single one of these human labels will be brought up for consideration by the judge. He will not question if you tithed to the Baptist denomination, He will not question if you attended a Pentecostal church and He will not ask if you went through a Catholic catechism. The judge will not put all of the Evangelicals in one room and all of the Calvinists in another and judge them with different standards. No ritual, or sacrament, or decree by any of these groups will do anything to sway the Judges verdict. There will be one distinguishing factor alone that will determine the saved from the unsaved on that day. Are you a follower of Jesus?

This question is not a surface question. It is not simply asking if you know of Jesus or know about Him or who He is. The meaning of the word "know" in this context is far deeper.

## What Does it Mean to be a Christian Conclusion and Closing Prayer

### **John 13:34-35 (NIV)**

"34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Throughout this world there are many different beliefs and there are many different doctrines about what it means to be a Christian. There are many who believe that there are different ceremonies that you go through or commitments that you make in order to be a Christian. There are some who believe that if you join a specific denomination or group then you will be a Christian. There are those who believe that if you learn enough Bible verses, you say the right words, you perform enough good deeds, then you will be a Christian. God's Word tells us, however, that none of this is true.

A true Christian is a person who genuinely believes in Jesus with all of the heart, mind and soul. Because of this their lives are changed and they hear and obey the direction that He gives to them through the leading of the Holy Spirit. There is no more. There is no church that you can belong to, no works that you can perform and no amount of money that can buy it. We must come to know Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our lives and we must tell other people about Him and His wonderful love for each of us.

Father, as we come to the conclusion of this lesson, I pray that each person will have come to know You more deeply. Lord, I pray that they will seek You and Your voice more and more and that they will not be hearers of Your Word and Your direction but that they would take action to do the things that You are leading them to do. May they each be blessed and may they each hear the calling that You have placed upon their lives and go forth to do the good work that You have called each of them to do. We give You all of the praise, the honor and the glory for all things, both now and forever. In the name of Jesus, we pray these things, Amen and Amen!



## What is The Church Introduction

### **Matthew 16:18 (KJV)**

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Having now gained an understanding of what the Bible is, who God is, what God’s commandments are, and what it means to be a Christian, we can now go further into understanding what it is that God has called us to do. So far with the topics that we have discussed we have in many ways talked about our relationship with God and how we are to understand Him and interact with Him. In this section, “What is The Church” we will begin to review how we now go out into this world and become an influence for Christ to the people who we are in relationship with.

As we begin to discuss this topic, we will first review what the church is not. Over the course of history there have been many different ways of describing the church and many different understandings of what the church is as well as what its function is. However, the only source which can truly tell us the answers to these questions is the Word of God and its teacher, the Holy Spirit. We will find out that many of the beliefs and understandings about what the church is are not based upon these sources but upon human logic and traditions.

We will then move to reviewing what the Bible says the church truly is. We will find that the Bible is quite clear in its description of the church and also provides us with significant insight into how the church is formed. Finally, we will begin to understand what the function of the church is and what we are to do. The church has many different functions and each part or member of the church has a unique and specific role. Before we begin to dive into these topics, let us first pray...

Father, we thank You for this time. We seek Your Holy Spirit to lead us and to guide us into this truth. We know that the wisdom of man cannot provide the insight that we need. We know that what we truly need is You. Lord, let us know more about what You have created us to do and how You have called us to function in this sinful world. May we truly be Your hands and Your feet so that all who we encounter may see Your love in action through our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen and Amen!!

## What The Church is Not

### **Matthew 16:18 (NIV)**

“And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

From the time that the Holy Spirit was imparting to the disciples and the work of the church on earth began, we have seen significant division within the Body of Christ. Throughout the centuries whenever there has been a disagreement about the interpretation of a particular doctrine or teaching within the Bible a new “denomination” has been established in order to classify those who hold to that interpretation or belief. As these denominations grew and became more organized, they began to be viewed as almost their own religious group. Instead of being a Christian, you were now a Catholic, a Protestant, a Baptist, a Calvinist, a Methodist, and the list could go on and on. However, these labels and divisions are not from the Word of God and are in fact contrary to Jesus’s desire for His church. He does not instruct us to be divided, but to be one, united in word and deed.

With that said, each individual within the Body of Christ has their own unique purpose and calling. These unique individual characteristics are designed by the Lord to work in harmony with those of the people that He places around us. The moment that humans begin to introduce conflict we are no longer working as effectively as He has intended us



to be. This however does not mean that we are not observant of what others believe. We must also use discernment. When another person or group begins to espouse beliefs that are contrary to the core doctrines of the Word of God then we must be willing to stand for the truth. Let us review two examples which illustrate this difference.

Example 1: Group A believes that it is a complete sin to ever consume an alcoholic beverage, while group B believes that it is not a sin as long as the person does not become drunk or it becomes an addiction.

Example 2: Group A believes that Jesus Christ was the son the God but, He was not actually God and was truly only human. Group B believes that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and is also fully God Himself.

In example 1 we see a circumstance which should not be the cause of a group of believers to become divided. However, many groups and churches have split for even more trivial reasons and disagreements. When this happens it truly grieves the Lord to see His children in such division. In example 2 however, we see a situation in which there is a true and fundamental disagreement about who the Lord is. We know from the Word of God that Jesus is also God Himself. With this understanding about who Jesus is, if another person or group professed that Jesus is not God then this would constitute a break in fellowship.

## The Church is Not an Organization or Denomination

### 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NIV)

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

As we have mentioned multiple times throughout this series, the church we see today is one that has been divided. There are dozens of different fundamental denominations and if we were to begin to count the subdivisions of those fundamental denominations, we would see that the number of separate groups would be well into the thousands. An overwhelming majority of these divisions are caused by small differences in beliefs and the people involved have chosen to break fellowship rather than come to a place of cooperation.

It is my own personal belief that there are few things that grieve the heart of the Lord more than to see His children in division like we see today. I understand and agree that the Body of Christ is to have order and that there will be differences in gifting and calling in both individuals and groups, however, these differences should be viewed as sources of division but sources of cooperation. We should never identify and divide ourselves by denomination in a way that projects that we are not one Body. If an unsaved person were to ask a follower of Christ what they believe, the answer should simply be that they are a Christian and believe in Jesus. The answer should not be that they are a protestant, a catholic, a Calvinist, a Methodist, or a Presbyterian. Those names in the eyes of the Lord are void and meaningless.

There is only one division that is of concern. Does a person believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came to earth to be sacrificed for our sins so that we could be forgiving and reunited in fellowship with our Father? That is where the divide exists. That is the question that matters. For those that profess this to be true and live their lives as such, there is no division and no contradiction. The Church of Christ is One and there is no division in it.

## The Church is Not a Building or Specific Location

### 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NIV)

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred and you together are that temple.”



A fundamental error that has made its way into the Body of Christ is a belief that “church” is a building you go to on Sundays to worship and hear a preacher. I do not believe that the issue is that we have buildings in which we gather together to fellowship and worship, but the issue arises when we begin to view that physical location as the church. There are many who put a significant emphasis on the church building. They seek to improve it and make it bigger and more extravagant. They seek to attract more and more people to the building and we may often hear a phrase like this, “If we can just get people into the church, they would accept Jesus.” The mindset places the emphasis on the physical location and the building in which the Body of Christ gathers for fellowship.

In addition to the building and physical location, there is also a tendency to place a significant amount of focus upon the things within the church building. So many spend a lot of time and money installing the latest and greatest sound systems, media systems, lighting systems, and extravagant stage backdrops and while there is nothing inherently wrong with these things, they must never be viewed as a substitute for the pursuit and presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as with the physical location or a building, the things within the church building have nothing to do with the true Church of Christ.

## The Church is Not a Series of Human Traditions or Rituals

### **Mark 7:6-8 (NIV)**

“He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

There are so many believers and many denominations who view church as a series of rituals and traditions that, if and when observed, constitutes church. If a group of people do not perform these traditions when they gather or do not engage in these rituals in their lives, then they are not a part of the church. This practice is embraced in a wide variety of churches and denominations today.

There is no question that there are some actions, namely remembering the last supper of Christ and baptism, that the Bible still instructs us to observe. However, we must remember that these practices never constitute church or salvation. They are instead an outward sign of what has already taken place within the heart. There is no ritual or tradition that you can partake in that will bring the presence of the Lord into your heart and life. There is only one way in which we can find salvation and be united in relationship with God and that is by believing and accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

## What The Church Is

### **Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV)**

“19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

As with most of the topics that are covered within this lesson series, if we were to do an exhaustive study on what the Bible says the Church is, we would be unable to carry the book because it would be too heavy. For the purposes of this study, we will be reviewing three of the most significant attributes of the Church of Christ. There are many others that could have been included, however, these three, when truly understood and embraced, provide a significant foundation on which we as the church can build upon. These speak to our identity and our purpose in the Kingdom of Christ.



## The Church is People

### **Romans 12:4-5 (NIV)**

“4 For just as each of us has one body with many members and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body and each member belongs to all the others.”

When a person believes in and accepts Christ the Holy Spirit comes and dwells within them. That person is the Church. Whether that person goes, the Church is there. Wherever believers gather together for fellowship and worship, that is the Church. This place may be at a church building, or it may be in someone's home. In addition, it could be on the street corner, the workplace, a restaurant, a park, a shopping mall, or any place. Wherever a believer goes, they are taking the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Church, with them.

You should know right now, that wherever you may be reading this, if you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior then you are the church. The presence of the Lord is with you in this very moment. You do not need to go anywhere in order to experience Him. You do not need to refer anyone to a building or a specific location if they also desire to know Him. You can introduce the people who may be around you to the Lord right where you are.

## The Church Represents Christ's Presence on Earth

### **Ephesians 1:22-23 (NIV)**

“22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

What we must remember as Christians is that we represent Christ. This does not simply mean in character or that we serve as His representatives, but means that we truly are meant to be like His very presence here on earth. Wherever we go and whatever we do we not only take His presence with us there but we ourselves are acting like His actual hands and feet. When we pray for someone it is as though Jesus were praying for them. When we give someone a hug, invite someone into our homes, take food to someone who is hungry, or help someone who is in need, we are serving as Jesus Himself who is doing the work.

Just as a physical body has different parts and each part has its own unique role, the Church of Christ works just like the Body of Christ. It is the physical presence of Christ on the world. Jesus serves as the head of the body and as such, is in the control of the whole body, telling each part when and how to move. As parts of the body, we should each be seeking His direction and move when and how He tells us to move.

## The Church is The Bride of Christ

### **Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)**

“25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing[a] her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

One of the most significant representations that the Lord has given to us is that of husband and wife. This relationship is designed to mimic and represent the intimacy that is to exist between us and the Lord. The Bible tells us very clearly in the New Testament that we as the church also represent the bride of Christ. This should not be viewed in terms of male or female rather, in the intimacy and love that are shared between a husband and wife. Jesus loves his church with the same passion, protection and caring that a husband should love his wife. In that way, Jesus is the husband and each person who has accepted Him and their Lord and Savior is the wife.



We can see this depth of love in the verse above. It says that He gave Himself up for her, her being us the church. That means that He gave even to the point of death so that we may live. But He did not stop there either. It continues on to say that He washes her clean so that she could be presented to Him as a perfect and holy partner. We must recognize that Jesus loves us in this way and we must understand that there should be no other response than to love Him back with all that we are as well.

## What is the Function of The Church

### **Ephesians 2:20-22 (NIV)**

“Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

Now that we have come to an understanding of what the church is and is not, we will begin to discuss what the role of the church is. God has not only saved us through His Son, but He has also given us a plan and a purpose. As part of the church we each have a role to play. There is no doubt that as we read through this topic that they are big callings. There is no way that we as individuals would be able to work towards any of them. However, when we work as unto the Lord and we also work together as one body, we will see the Lord do amazing things.

As we go through the remainder of this lesson reflect on what it is you feel called to do within the Body of Christ? What specific area of service has He called you to and what specific tasks has He prepared you to perform? Who are the people that He has placed around you and how can you serve them? These are all questions that can help you to hear and obey what the Lord is calling you specifically to do.

## The Church is to Bring Glory to The Lord

### **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)**

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

One of the fundamental functions of the church is to bring glory to the Lord. It is through the church the Lord moves and works in this world. As we have discussed, we function as the very hands and feet of the Lord. As we step out and faith and do the things that the Lord is calling us to do, we will begin to see the Holy Spirit do things that go beyond what we could ask or think. When this happens, our response should not and cannot be to point people towards us, but we must always give the credit, give the glory, to the One who is actually doing the work. The Lord is the One who is doing the work and therefore, He should be the One who always receives the glory and the praise.

This is one area in which so many Christians struggle in, however. The enemy uses pride as a means to break this down and when this occurs, we begin to take some of the praise for ourselves. Pride so often is something that develops slowly, in the background and often it may not even be noticed at first. Christians can be so susceptible to this as well. We hear the call of the Lord and we begin to move forward as He directs us. The effort starts to produce fruit and other people begin to notice. Soon, those people begin to come to us and tell us how the work that we are doing is good and how the work is a blessing to others. Over time, we can begin to have thoughts about the role that we played in these accomplishments and how we have done so well to trust in the Lord and stay so humble. Did you catch that? The seed of pride has started. It seems like on the surface that there is nothing wrong with what I have described. We heard the call, we did the work, we saw the increase and now we are feeling good about the result. It is so subtle that most of the time we do not even notice it. I can say this because this is describing me and the person that I once was.



In everything that we do, we should be examining ourselves to determine who we are giving the glory to. When others come to us to give us compliments and kind words, we should immediately point them back to the One who should receive the Glory. We must not allow even one inch for the enemy to gain ground in this area.

### The Church Is to Demonstrate Love

#### **John 13:34-35 (ESV)**

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

There is little to no doubt that at the heart of everything that the Lord has done for us is love. Love is one of the fundamental things on which everything is built. As a result, the church is also built upon a foundation of love. No matter what it is that we have been called to do individually or corporately, if we are doing it out of a heart of love, then we have missed the mark. We may provide eloquent teaching, exciting events, financial support and other work for others, but if we do not demonstrate love then none of it will have any lasting meaning.

This love is also not limited to any specific group of people. We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ because he has called us to love each other. When people see us working together, they should not see fighting and bickering, but instead they should see people who put the needs of the other above their own. They should be us demonstrating the same love that Christ showed to us to each other. Likewise, we are also to love those who are not a part of the Body of Christ in the same way that Christ loves us as well. Remember, when Jesus went to the cross the Bible tells us that it was when we were still sinners. He loved us even before we understood how much we needed Him and gave our lives to Him. He was not concerned with what He could get from us or what we could do for Him in return. As we interact with others, we must allow the Holy Spirit to instill this same love and devotion for others in our own hearts. There is nothing that we as the church can do that is more important than to demonstrate the love of Jesus to all people.

### The Church Is to Use Their Gifts for Each Other

#### **Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)**

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

We have talked multiple times about how God has created each one of us with gifts and how each person has a unique set of talents and abilities. What are those gifts for and how are we supposed to use those talents and abilities? One of the primary ways in which we are to use the gifts that God has given to us is in service to others.

No matter what the gift that we have we can choose to use it for the benefit of others, or we can choose to use it for our own self benefit. What does this look like? Consider a person who has been blessed with a beautiful singing voice. It would be very easy for this person to set out to have a successful career for themselves and work to make money and collect expensive possessions. On the other hand, this same person could, recognizing that their gift is in fact from God, choose to use their voice to worship for Lord for what He has done and, in the process, lead others to open up into worship of the Lord. In both of these scenarios the person is using their voice to sing but the motivation and result of each is completely different.

A question we should always be asking ourselves and answering honestly is this, who am I doing this work for? The answer we should always have is for the Lord and for other people. We should never place the focus upon ourselves or seek gain from the work that we do. Instead we should seek to give without expectation of return, just as Jesus gave His life for us.



## The Church is to Make Disciples

### Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

In addition to loving each other, loving the lost, and serving others, God has given us an additional task, one that will have eternal impact on others. We are to seek to make disciples of other people. To be a disciple means that a person is actively seeking to be transformed to become more like Christ. This cannot be something that is forced. In order for a person to be a disciple they must choose and desire to be one. We are to desire to instill the love and passion that we have for Jesus in the hearts and minds of other people.

The one thing that is an absolute requirement in order for us to accomplish this task is that we are disciples of Jesus ourselves. This means that we cannot simply say what needs to be done, we must be actual doers of it. We must live out the principles that Christ taught us and we must be committed to growing closer to Him.

Being a disciple and having a disciple also means sharing our lives together. We cannot ignore the need for a relationship and we must actively pursue the relationships we have with each other. A person cannot be a disciple of another person if they do not communicate or share their lives together. We must seek first to be a disciple of Jesus and then we must seek to share our lives together with other people. Through this they will see the change that the Holy Spirit is causing in our own lives and we will see the change that is taking place in theirs. This will encourage us to grow even closer to the Lord and continue our pursuit of Him.

## What is the Church Conclusion and Closing Prayer

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