

# Full Throttle Discipleship



# FULL THROTTLE STAGE ONE MANUAL

This Manual Belongs to:

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# A Tool for Personal Discipleship

## *PHASE 1*

# *UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE*

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# PHASE 1 CURRICULUM

## *Understanding the Christian Life*

Most believers would greatly benefit from having a personal Spiritual Mentor during this phase but the material can also be used in a class (corporate) setting.

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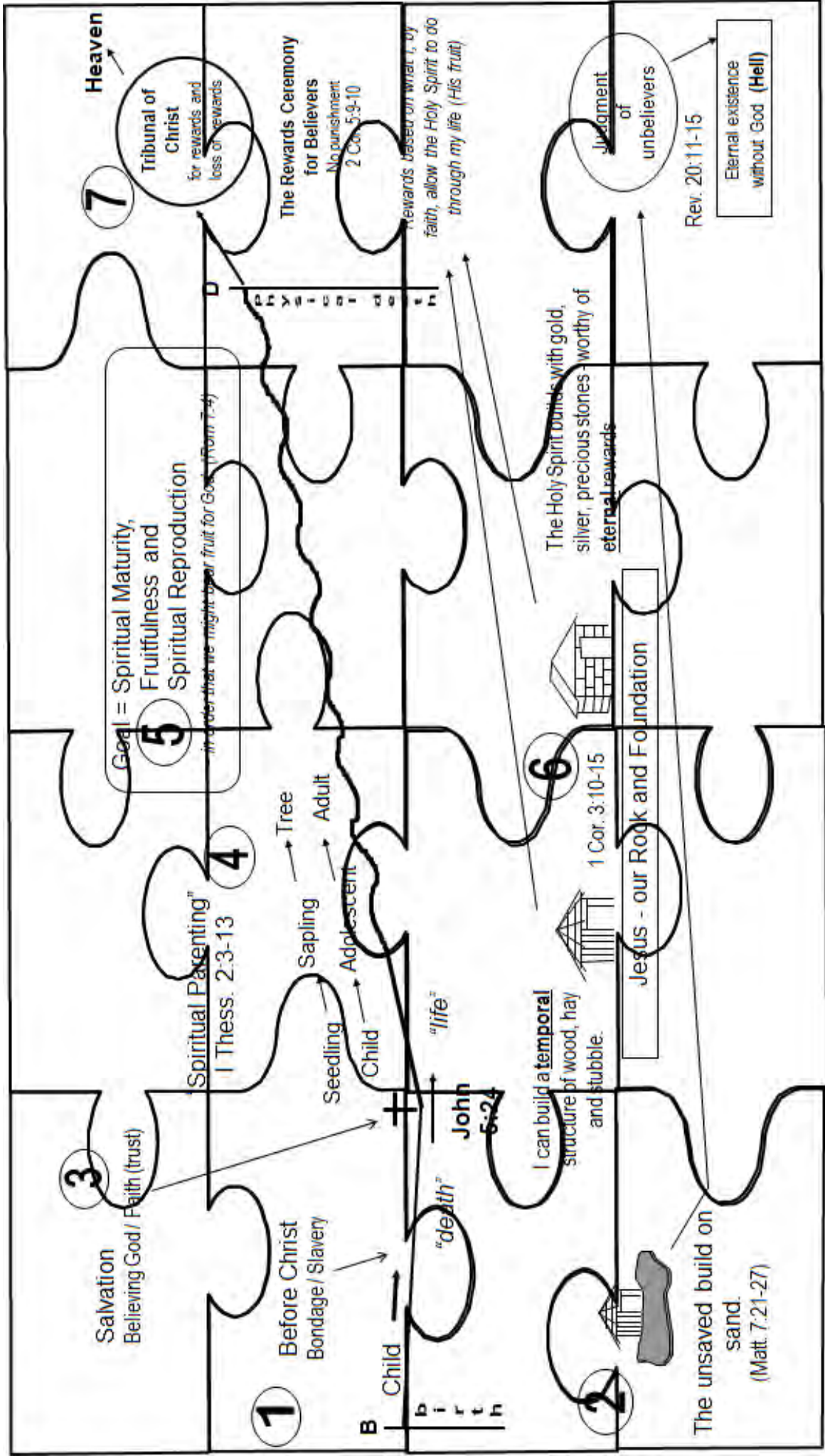
**Notes to the Mentee:** It's important that you commit to going through all 16 Lessons. While there will always be unexpected illnesses and/or circumstances, but honor your pledge as much as possible -- just between you and the Lord.

Estimate meeting weekly for 6-9 months for 1-1/2 hours each time.



# Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

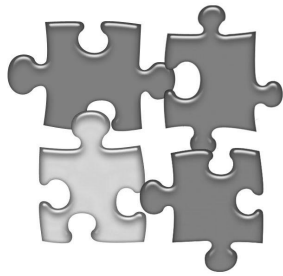
Imagine the Christian Life as the Boxtop of a “Jigsaw Puzzle” and portions of Biblical truth are presented as “pieces of the puzzle”.



# Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

## Explanation of the “Jigsaw Puzzle” Diagram

The main purpose of this lesson is to understand a practical overview of the Normal Christian Life. As I acquire Biblical concepts and knowledge I want mentally to connect the pieces to God’s overall plan for my life.



Consider a **jigsaw puzzle**. Imagine trying to fit together the pieces of a puzzle without being able to refer to the picture **boxtop**. It is much less frustrating when the boxtop picture is available **for reference**.

The second diagram (on the next page), the “Abbreviated Overview”, is like the **puzzle boxtop**, while the **pieces** represent bits of Biblical knowledge.

Typically, I accumulate information from the Bible, friends, books, sermons, podcasts, conversations, etc. I may have difficulty knowing how this new information fits into my everyday life here on earth, or worse yet, I may arrive at wrong conclusions which can distort my understanding of God and the Christian life.

Some newer Christians become frustrated and return to their secular life style. Some may focus only on behaving correctly and develop a list of “do’s and don’ts”. Others may **compartmentalize** their life, resulting in a perceived “spiritual life” separate from a “secular life”. They may attempt to live an acceptable spiritual life before others, while at the same time concluding that Biblical principles somehow don’t apply to their secular everyday life.

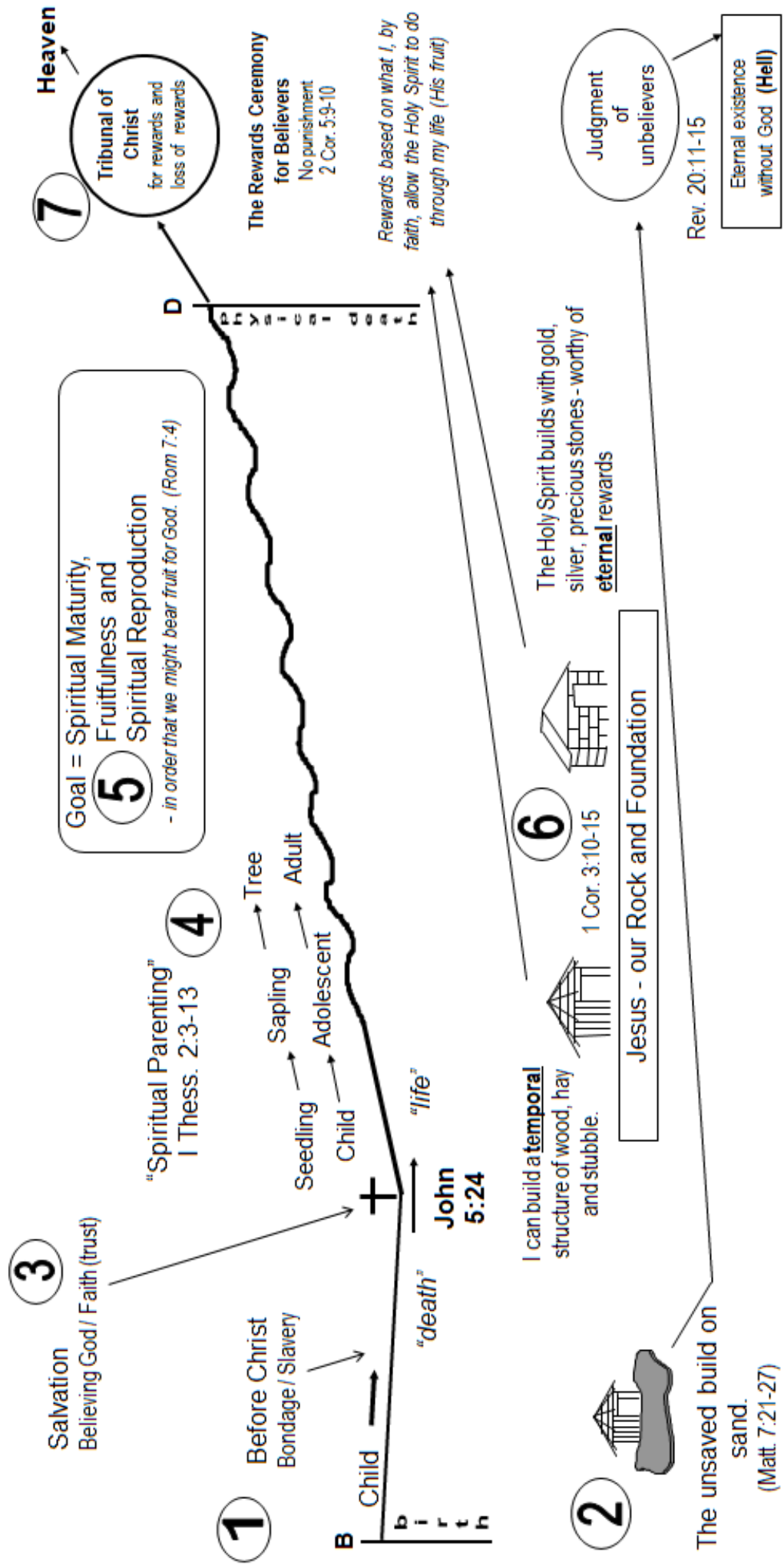
My response should be to view the various components of my everyday life as **a unit**, and involve God in every aspect of my life.

*My goal is to understand how to integrate Biblical knowledge into my daily relationship with God and others, and to protect me from falling into the common practice of simply archiving Biblical information.*

*As I grow, I will become increasingly more aware of my need to walk continually before the Lord (24/7), seeking His approval, and less dependent on the need for approval from others.*



# Abbreviated Overview of the "Normal" Christian Life



## Jigsaw Puzzle “Boxtop” Guide

Discuss the explanations below for each component of the jigsaw puzzle “boxtop”, all of which will be covered later in more detail in the following lessons.

① **Birth to Rebirth** – We should each be able to easily identify ourselves as having gone through this period, alienated from God, living in spiritual darkness, and without hope.

② If a person rejects Christ and dies during this period, that person who has built their house upon the sand without a foundation, will go to the **judgment of unbelievers** to spend eternity separated from God. It is important to understand that this judgment has **nothing to do with believers**, only unbelievers.

Matt. 7:24-27 (*Jesus said*) “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But **everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. And its collapse was great!**”

Rev. 20:11-15 (*The apostle John wrote*) “Then I saw a **great white throne** and One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone **not found written in the book of life** was thrown into the lake of fire.”

③ **The Cross** – This event is by far the most important happening in my life. From God’s perspective I have passed from “death” (without His life) to “life” (the Lord indwelling), from hopelessness to hopefulness.

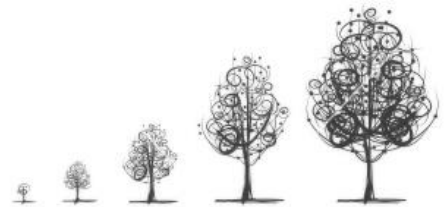


John 5:24 “I assure you: Anyone who **hears** My word and **believes** Him who sent Me **has** eternal life and will **not** come under judgment but has passed from **death to life.**”

④ **The New Life** – It is important that I understand the event of salvation is the **entrance** into a new life with God, prepared by Him to completely meet my every need as I fit into **His** design. I am introduced to the concept of fitting into **God’s plan** for my time here on earth, which is but a small part of His **eternal** plan for me. Two Biblical analogies can illustrate my Christian life: that of a plant growing from a seedling to a tree, and that of a human growing from a baby to an adult. Again, the event of salvation is just the **beginning** of the new life of learning to walk with God. During this period of time it is **very important** for a new believer to be **disciplined** (“**spiritually parented**” / **mentored**”).

1 Thessalonians 2:7-13 ... we were gentle among you, **as a nursing mother** nurtures her own children. We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also **our own lives**, because **you had become dear to us**. ... **like a father** with his own children, we **encouraged**, **comforted**, and **implored** each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, **the message of God**, which also **works effectively in you** believers.

5 The Intended **Objective** (Goal) – Just as I would expect a healthy sapling to grow into a fruit-bearing tree, and a healthy infant to grow into an adult and become a parent, so God’s intention is to make of a healthy spiritual infant a **spiritually mature and fruitful** Christian.



6 **God’s Foundation** and **My Building Options** – God has laid a Foundation, Jesus Christ, which represents my salvation. This is equally true for **all** believers. However, **each** of us individually has a choice as to how we will build **on** that Foundation. The buildings represent **the use of my resources (time, energy, possessions)** during my physical life here on earth. If **I allow** the Holy Spirit, as the Master Building Contractor, to use my resources, **He** will use those building materials to **create for me** an **eternal** structure of gold, silver and precious stones. That which **I deny** Him use of will produce a structure of wood, hay and stubble.

1 Cor. 3:10-15 (*Paul wrote*) According to God’s grace that was given to me, I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But **each one must be careful** how he builds on it. For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on that foundation with **gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw**, each one’s work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one’s work. **If** anyone’s work that he has built survives, he will receive a **reward**. If anyone’s work is burned up, it will be **lost**, but **he will be saved**; yet it will be like an escape through fire.

7 These verses speak of a future **rewards ceremony** called The Tribunal of Christ (or The Judgment Seat of Christ) at which time each believer will **individually** appear before Jesus Christ to be rewarded (**for eternity**) for what he/she has **allowed** the Holy Spirit to do through their life while living here on earth.

There should be **no fear of punishment** at this event, although I need to be aware of the potential for **loss of eternal rewards**, since all that is wood, hay and stubble will be turned into worthless ashes. It is important to note that **no unbeliever** will be present at this event.

2 Cor. 5:9-10 Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be **pleasing to Him**. For we must **all** appear before the tribunal of Christ, so that **each** may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless.

Matt. 6:20-21 But collect for yourselves treasures **in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

# Knowing God

## 1. His Perspective – My Perspective of Life

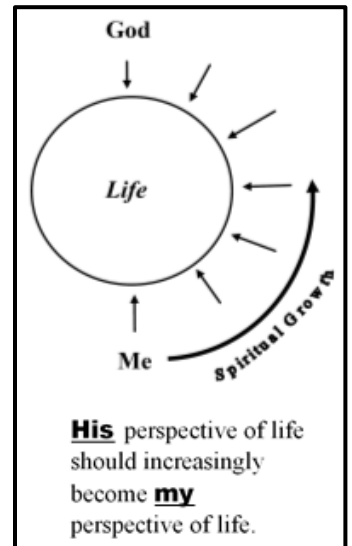
God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him. From birth until I received Christ as my Savior, I formed habits of worldly understanding. Now He wants to gradually **transform my understanding** of Him so that I increasingly view life from **His** perspective. **A godly perspective produces godly behavior**. It does not please God if I simply attempt to change my outward behavior without allowing Him to transform my inward thinking.

If I want my relationship with God to grow, I need to make **conscious choices** to seek Him **wholeheartedly**, in much the same way that a marriage relationship needs to be nurtured.

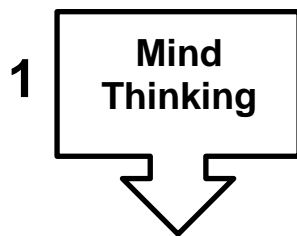
In order not to hinder God's work in and through me, I need to maintain an **open, honest** and **teachable** attitude towards Him. Since **He alone** really knows me, **my** role is to willingly allow Him to make the appropriate changes in my **understanding**. Jesus is the **visible** picture of God's character, and the One in whose image God will mold me, **as I allow Him**.

God desires for me to know Him **intimately**, in a way that goes beyond mere knowledge "about" Him.

Romans 12:2 tells me that God wants to transform my thinking so that I increasingly think more like Him. That change will result in an attitude adjustment, resulting (over time) in behavior that is acceptable to Him. *Do not be **conformed** to this age, but be **transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**, so that **you** may discern what is the good, pleasing, and **perfect will of God**.*

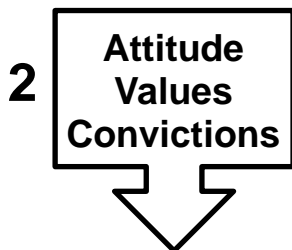


The following three steps will help me to understand this critical process.



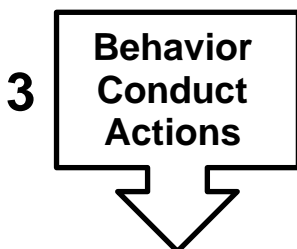
God wants to gradually **transform my understanding of Him** so that I increasingly view life from His perspective.

I **willingly choose** to allow Him to make the appropriate changes in my understanding.



I need to **maintain an open, honest and teachable attitude** towards Him.

I need to **make conscious choices to seek Him** wholeheartedly in my daily spiritual walk.



As I am abiding in harmony with the Holy Spirit, **He will progressively transform my understanding and values**, which will result in behavior that is increasingly pleasing to Him.

*Godly behavior is the natural outcome of His continuing inward transformation of my convictions and values*

1 Sam. 16:7... *Man does not see what the Lord sees, for man sees what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart.*"



**2. My attitude**

**a. God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him, to know His heart.**

Jer. 9:23-24 This is what the Lord says: The wise man must **not** boast in **his wisdom**; the strong man must **not** boast in **his strength**; the wealthy man must **not** boast in **his wealth**. But the one who boasts should boast in this, **that he understands and knows Me**....  
John 17:3 (*Jesus said*) **This** is eternal life: that they may **know You**, the only true God, and the One You have sent—**Jesus Christ**.  
Rom. 12:2 ...do not be conformed to this age, but **be transformed** by the renewing of **your mind**, **so that** you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.  
2 Cor. 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and **are being transformed** into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.  
Eph. 3:16-19 ... that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and **to know the Messiah's love that surpasses knowledge**, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

*The highest goal of learning is to know God!*

**b. In order to grow I need to actively pursue a closer relationship with Him.**

Psa. 63:1 (*David wrote*) God,... I **eagerly** seek You. I **thirst** for You....  
Prov. 2:1-5 (*Solomon wrote*) My son, if you **accept** my words and **store up** my commands within you, **listening closely** to wisdom and **directing** your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you **call out** to insight and **lift** your voice to understanding, if you **seek** it like silver and **search** for it like hidden treasure, **then** you will **understand** the fear of the Lord and **discover** the knowledge of God.  
Matt. 7:7-8 "**Keep asking**, and it will be given to you. **Keep searching**, and you will find. **Keep knocking**, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks **receives**, and the one who searches **finds**, and to the one who knocks, the door **will be opened**."  
1 Peter 2:2-3 Like newborn infants, **desire** the pure spiritual milk, **so that** you may **grow** by it for your salvation, since you have tasted that the Lord is good.



### 3. God's Word

**Truth does not originate from me, or from any other human, but only from God himself. Therefore, all “perceived truth” must be compared to, and verified by, God’s word – the Bible.**



#### a. One way God transforms me is through His Word. His Word is trustworthy.

Psa. 119:89 Lord, Your word is **forever**; it is firmly fixed in heaven. (*see also 1 Peter 1:25*)  
Matt. 24:35 (*Jesus said*) Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words **will never pass away**.  
John 14:6 Jesus told him, “**I am** the way, **the truth**, and the life...”  
John 17:17 (*Jesus said*) Sanctify them by the truth; **Your word is truth**. (*See also Psa. 119:160*)  
Rom. 15:4 For whatever was written in the past was written **for our instruction**, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures.  
Eph. 4:21 ... **the truth is in Jesus**.  
2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for **teaching**, for **rebuking**, for **correcting**, for **training** in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.  
1 John 5:6 ...And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because **the Spirit is the truth**.

#### b. God’s Word should become as essential as food in my daily life.

Deut. 6:5-9 “...These words that I am giving you today are to be **in your heart**. **Repeat** them to your children. **Talk about** them **when you sit** in your house and **when you walk** along the road, **when you lie down** and **when you get up**. ... **Write them** on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (*See also Deut. 11:18-21*)  
Job 23:12 (*Job said*) “I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have **treasured** the words of His mouth **more than** my daily food.”  
Psa. 119:16 I will delight in Your statutes; **I will not forget** Your word.  
Psa. 119:103 How sweet Your word is to my taste—**sweeter** than honey in my mouth.  
Matt. 4:4 But He (*Jesus*) answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on **every** word that comes from the mouth of God.”

#### c. Memorization and meditation on His Word will help me grow.

Psa. 1:1-3 How happy is the man who ... his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he **meditates on it day and night**. He is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.  
Psa. 119:11 I have treasured Your word **in my heart** so that I may not sin against You.  
Psa. 119:97 How I love Your instruction! It is my meditation **all day long**.  
Psa. 145:5 **I will speak of Your splendor and glorious majesty and Your wonderful works**.  
Prov. 22:17-18 Listen closely, pay attention to the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge. For it is pleasing if you **keep them within you and if they are constantly on your lips**.  
Col. 3:16 **Let** the message about the Messiah **dwell richly among** you, **teaching** and **admonishing** one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.

### Suggestions:

- Record a Bible verse with your phone and play back as you drive or do chores.
- Write a verse on a card and tape it where it is visible or write it on your mirror with a dry erase marker. (Practice erasing a word every couple of days and repeat the verse!)
- Create a picture verse in YouVersion or other app and make it your home screen on your digital device. Meditate on that verse during the day.
- Journal what God shows you in Scripture.

### d. God's Word is like a light shining into my life, disclosing the secrets of my heart and helping me to see myself as God sees me.

Psa. 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.  
Psa. 119:130 The revelation of Your words brings light and gives understanding to the inexperienced.  
Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.  
Heb. 4:12-13 ... For the word of God is living and effective ... It is able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart. ... all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

### e. God alone gives understanding of His Word. Even though some portions may appear difficult to understand, as I am honest and open to Him, He will reveal His Word to me as I have need.

Deut. 29:29 The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law.  
Luke 24:45 Then He (*Jesus*) opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.  
1 Cor. 2:12-14 ... Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. But the unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it ...  
2 Pet. 3:15-16 (*Peter wrote*) ... our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters in which there are some matters that are hard to understand....

### f. The following recommendations may be helpful as you consider what Bible translation to use, where to start reading, and some verses to memorize.

**Bible Translation:** There are several dozen English Bible translations. It may be helpful to consult with a spiritual leader for a recommended version. Different versions can also be seen at [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com), [www.YouVersion.com](http://www.YouVersion.com) and/or [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Standard Christian Bible.

**Where to Start Reading:** John, Luke, Acts and Genesis are good starting points. Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians and Proverbs should also be on your "short list".

**Helpful Verses to Memorize:** John 3:16-17, Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:28, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 John 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 5:24, Romans 12:1-2 will all be helpful, along with other verses.

#### 4. Prayer - conversing with God



I should think of Prayer as an intimate conversation with my Creator and Master, who is majestic in His creation and control of the universe, while at the same time so loving and caring that He wants to be involved in the most minute details of my life.

I should approach God with a reverent awe, always conscious of the fact that His accessibility is only due to the merit of His Son, not a result of any goodness on my part. I should count it an extreme privilege to approach the God of all creation.

As in any conversation, **listening is a major component**. Occasionally my time with God will consist mostly or entirely of contemplating and **listening to Him** as He speaks to my heart or reveals to me something new. He wants me to look to Him **with expectation**.

One way of honoring God and giving Him His rightful recognition in my heart is by actively seeking and accepting **His** priorities. This will necessitate forming the habit of not giving Him the leftovers of my time, energy and possessions, but rather offering Him the best of my resources.

##### **a. Conversation with God will be enhanced by a heart preparation, an honest assessment of my priorities, and an awareness of His majesty.**

Psa. 5:3 At daybreak, LORD, You hear my voice; at daybreak I plead my case to You and **watch expectantly**.

Psa. 37:7 **Be silent** before the LORD and **wait expectantly** for Him....

Psa. 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry out for help; I **put my hope** in Your word.

Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; **in all your ways acknowledge Him**, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)

Isa. 50:4 ... He awakens Me each morning; He awakens My ear **to listen** like those being instructed.

Matt. 6:31-34 "So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ... your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But **seek first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all** these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Luke 10:38-42 ... He (*Jesus*) entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who also **sat at the Lord's feet** and was **listening** to what He said. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand." The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but **one** thing is necessary. Mary has made **the right choice**, and it will not be taken away from her."

Eph. 2:18 For **through Him** (*Jesus*) we both **have access by one Spirit to the Father**.

Col. 3:2-3 **Set your minds on what is above**, not on what is on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.

Heb. 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. **Therefore let us approach the throne of grace** with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.

1 Peter 5:6-7 **Humble yourselves**, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, **casting all your care on Him**, because He cares about you.

**b. Prayer includes adoration, thanksgiving (gratitude), and praise.**

Psa. 145:2-3 (*David wrote*) I will praise You every day; **I will honor Your name forever and ever.** Yahweh is great and is highly praised; His greatness is unsearchable.

Psa. 146:1-2 Hallelujah! My soul, praise the LORD. I will praise the LORD all my life; **I will sing to my God as long as I live.**

Daniel 6:10 ... Daniel ... went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and **gave thanks** to his God, just as he had done before.

Eph. 5:19-20 Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and **making music from your heart to the Lord, giving thanks** always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil. 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition **with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Col. 4:2-4 Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it **with thanksgiving**....

1 Thess. 5:16-18 Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks **in everything**, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**c. Prayer includes confession, reconciliation and forgiveness of others.**

Psa. 32:5 Then **I acknowledged** my sin to You and did **not conceal** my iniquity. I said, "I will **confess** my transgressions to the LORD," and You took away the guilt of my sin. (*See Psa. 66:18*)

Prov. 28:13 The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever **confesses** and **renounces** them will find mercy.

Matt. 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something **against you**, leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled** with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Mark 11:25 And whenever you stand praying, **if you have anything against anyone, forgive** him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.

Rom. 12:18 **If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone.**

1 John 1:9-10 If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, "We don't have any sin," we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

**d. Prayer includes supplications (*appeal*), and requests for my personal needs.**

Prov. 2:6 For the LORD gives **wisdom**; from His mouth come **knowledge** and **understanding**.

Matt. 6:5-8 ... But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is **in secret**. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.... because your Father knows the things you need **before** you ask Him.

Matt. 6:25-34 ... "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all** these things will be provided for you...."

James 1:5 Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should **ask** God, who gives to all **generously** and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.

## e. Prayer – Battle in “The Secret Place

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*But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. —Matthew 6:6*

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Jesus did not say, "Dream about your Father who is in the secret place," but He said, ". . . pray to your Father who is in the secret place . . ." Prayer is an effort of the will. After we have entered our secret place and shut the door, the most difficult thing to do is to pray. We cannot seem to get our minds into good working order, and the first thing we have to fight is wandering thoughts. The great battle in private prayer is overcoming this problem of our idle and wandering thinking. We have to learn to discipline our minds and concentrate on willful, deliberate prayer.

We must have a specially selected place for prayer, but once we get there this plague of wandering thoughts begins, as we begin to think to ourselves, "This needs to be done, and I have to do that today." Jesus says to "shut your door." Having a secret stillness before God means deliberately shutting the door on our emotions and remembering Him. God is in secret, and He sees us from "the secret place"—He does not see us as other people do, or as we see ourselves. When we truly live in "the secret place," it becomes impossible for us to doubt God. We become more sure of Him than of anyone or anything else. Enter into "the secret place," and you will find that God was right in the middle of your everyday circumstances all the time. Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless you learn to open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day, you will be working on the wrong level throughout the day. But if you will swing the door of your life fully open and "pray to your Father who is in the secret place," every public thing in your life will be marked with the lasting imprint of the presence of God.

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**Suggestion: To minimize distractions when you meet alone with the Lord, have a notepad handy to write down any thoughts that you may need to act upon later.**

## f. Prayer includes intercession, requests for the needs of others.

2 Cor. 1:8-11 (*Paul wrote of his afflictions in Asia*) ... we even despaired of life....God ...He has delivered us from such a terrible death,... that He will deliver us again while you join in helping us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many.

Eph. 6:18-20 (*Paul wrote*) Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough in Him to speak as I should.

Col. 4:12 (*Paul wrote of Epaphras*) ... always contending for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills.

**g. Prayer is continual, anytime, but should also include, as possible, regular daily special times set apart. It pleases God when I seek His direction for appropriate times and places.**

Psa. 55:17 I complain and groan morning, noon, and night, and He hears my voice.  
Psa. 119:62 I rise at midnight to thank You for Your righteous judgments.  
Psa. 119:164 I praise You seven times a day for Your righteous judgments.  
Daniel 6:10 ... Daniel ... three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.  
Rom. 12:12 Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.  
1 Thess. 5:17 Pray constantly.

**Note on 1 Thess. 5:17** “Continual prayer is not prayer that prevails without any interruption, but prayer that continues whenever possible. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.)

**h. Our Daily Bread (September 19, 2004)**

**Informing God**

We cannot tell God anything He doesn't already know. When we pray, we simply put into words what He's been aware of all along.

That doesn't make prayer unnecessary; rather, it encourages us to pray. We find relief in talking to Someone who knows us and our situation fully. It's a comfort to know that God's response arises not from information we give Him, but from His perfect knowledge of our circumstances. He knows all conditions—past, present, future—that bear on our well-being.

"Your Father knows," Jesus said in Matthew 6:8. He knows our thoughts, our intentions, our desires. He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). He knows the anguish of our heart, the strain of continual frustration, the enemies inside and outside that war against our souls.

So, can we presume to dictate the time and terms of our deliverance from trials or adversity? Can we say our way is better, more likely to develop our soul? No, we cannot teach God anything. He alone knows the way to bring us to glory. Out of all possible paths, He has chosen the best, the route most adapted to who we are and what He has in store for us.

We cannot teach God knowledge, but we can love and trust Him. That's all He asks of us.  
—David Roper

*The answer God may choose for me  
Is sure to be the best,  
So may I always thankful be,  
And in His goodness rest. —D. De Haan*

**God knows the end from the beginning, so we can trust Him with everything between.**

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**5. I must make it a priority to gather together with other believers on a regular basis, for teaching, prayer, Bible study, accountability and encouragement.**

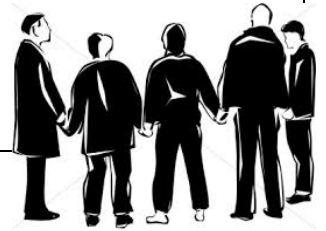
As I ask God, He will lead me to or confirm the Church body where I can be used by Him in service to others and participate with other believers in the fellowship that I need, continuing to learn and grow through teaching, praying and worshipping together.

Matt. 18:20 For where **two or three are gathered together in My name**, I am there among them.

Acts 2:42 And they **devoted themselves** to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

Heb. 10:24-25 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. (ESV)

Acts 16:5 So the churches **were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily**.



**CONCLUSION: As I trust God, I can always be assured of His love, knowing He will only act toward me in my best interest, even though at times it may not appear that way. For Him to do otherwise would be contrary to His character.**

Psa. 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and **His ears are open to their cry for help**.

Psa. 37:4-5 **Take delight in** the LORD, and **He will give you your heart's desires**. **Commit your way** to the LORD; **trust in** Him, and **He will act**.

Psa. 86:5 For You, Lord, are kind and ready to forgive, **rich in faithful love** to all who call on You.

Psa. 145:18-19 The LORD is **near** all who call out to Him, all who call out to Him **with integrity**. He **fulfills** the desires of those who fear Him; He **hears** their cry for help and saves them.

Jer. 10:23 I know, LORD, that a man's way of life is **not his own**; **no one** who walks **determines his own steps**.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything **according to** His will, **He hears us**. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, **we know that we have what we have asked Him for**.

*Yet I am always with You; You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me up in glory. **Who do I have in heaven but You?** **And I desire nothing on earth but You**. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever. (Psalm 73:23-26)*

Suggestion: Read and meditate on Psalm 73 this week.



# Salvation Principles

Like physical birth, spiritual birth is the entrance into a new life. The purpose of this lesson is to explain some things that happen to a believer at conversion. Obviously there are other principles and truths that can be added.

## 1. Mercy & Grace

“*Mercy*” = When I am not given what I deserve.

“*Grace*” = When I am given what I don’t deserve.

### Illustration of Speeding Ticket -

“*Good fortune*” - if you’re not caught.

“*Justice*” - if you’re caught and given a ticket.

“*Mercy*” - if you’re caught, but not given a ticket.

“*Grace*” - if you’re caught, given a ticket, but the officer pays the fine.



## 2. The Apostle Paul describes what I was like before God saved me, and what God has done for me. (discuss terminology as needed.)

Rom. 3:10-12 As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

Rom. 5:6-10 For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly... But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!

Eph. 2:1-9 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.

Eph. 2:12 At that time you were without Christ, ... without hope and without God in the world.

Eph. 4:17-19 ... darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God,...

**NOTE:** God does not judge us “on the curve”. We tend to evaluate ourselves as compared to others, whereas God compares us to Himself."

### 3. God's principle of substitution

#### a. God's grace was evident even when Adam and Eve first disobeyed Him.

Genesis 2:15-17 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."

2:25 Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

3:6-7 Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.



3:8-12 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Then He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Then the man replied, "The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

3:13 So the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

3:21-24 The Lord God made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them. ...

Adam & Eve were given one commandment, which they disobeyed. Then they tried to make themselves acceptable to God - represented by the fig leaf cover-up. They each blamed someone else. They got what they deserved - Justice. Then God gave them what they didn't deserve - Grace - represented by His animal substitute. An innocent animal's life was sacrificed as a result of their sin. This substitutionary animal sacrifice was a representation of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sin of the entire human race.

#### b. The Passover - another picture of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice.

Exodus 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

12:12-13 I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. I am the Lord; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

12:21-22 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go, select an animal from the flock according to your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. Take a cluster of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and brush the lintel and the two doorposts with some of the blood in the basin. None of you may go out the door of his house until morning."



12:23 “When the LORD passes through to strike Egypt and sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, He will pass over the door and not let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you.”

12:24-27 “Keep this command **permanently** as a statute for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as He promised, you are to observe this ceremony. When your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ you are to reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, for He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and spared our homes.’” So the people bowed down and worshiped.

12:29-30 Now at midnight the LORD struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn’t a house without someone dead.

John 1:29 The next day John (*the Baptist*) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is **the Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!”

1 Cor. 5:7 ... for **Christ our Passover lamb** has been sacrificed.

The Israelites were in **slavery** to the Egyptians. A lamb was killed as a **substitute**.

Wherever there was **blood** the inhabitants of the house were spared from God’s judgment.

When the Lord saw blood on a doorpost, He could say, “**Judgment has already been here**”.

(Illustration: One of the safest places during a forest fire is **where the fire has already burned**).

### c. **Jesus Christ’s sacrifice as our “Substitute” was God’s plan for our salvation.**

Isaiah 53:4-6 Yet **He Himself bore our sicknesses**, and **He carried our pains**.... But **He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds**. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and **the LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all**.

2 Cor. 5:21 For our sake He made Christ **to be sin** Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [viewed as being in] the righteousness of God [acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness]. (*Amplified New Testament*)

Gal. 3:13 Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation] by [Himself] **becoming a curse for us**, for it is written [in the Scriptures], Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (is crucified); (*Amplified New Testament*)

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, **the Righteous** for the unrighteous (**the Just** for the unjust, **the Innocent** for the guilty), that He might bring us to God. ... (*Amplified N.T.*)



### 4. **I have been saved by His love, not because I am deserving.**

I need to clearly understand that “salvation” is God’s work, start to finish. I have been accepted as a child of God, not based on any merit on my part, but only by the “grace” and “mercy” of God (as explained in Point #1). The expected result of a correct understanding should be "a thankful heart" for the great gift I have freely received.

Secondly, and of significant importance, this correct understanding will strengthen me whenever the enemy attempts to condemn and deceive me to focus on my own unworthiness and lack of godliness, which can cause me to question and doubt the validity of my salvation.

John 6:37 (*Jesus said*) **Everyone the Father gives Me** will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out.

John 6:44 (*Jesus said*) **No one can come to Me unless** the Father who sent Me **draws him**, and I will raise him up on the last day.

Rom. 3:10-12 as it is written: ... There is ... **no one who seeks God**...

Rom. 4:4-8 Now to the one who works, pay is not considered as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares the **ungodly** to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness. Likewise, David also speaks of the blessing of the man God credits righteousness to **apart from works**: How joyful are those whose lawless acts are **forgiven** and whose sins are covered! How joyful is the man the Lord **will never charge with sin!**

Eph. 1:3-8 Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. For **He chose us** in Him, **before the foundation of the world**, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He **favored** us with in the Beloved. We have **redemption** in Him through His blood, the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches of **His grace** that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Titus 3:3-8 For we too were once **foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved** by various passions and pleasures, **living in** malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. But when the **kindness of God** our Savior and **His love** for mankind appeared, He saved us—**not by works of righteousness** that we had done, but according to **His mercy**, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He poured out His Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by **His grace**, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy....



## 5. What is the difference between “religion” and “Christianity”?

“Religion” worldwide teaches that there is something **you** can do to make yourself acceptable before God. “True Christianity” teaches that only **what Christ has done on your behalf** makes you acceptable before God.

John 14:6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one** comes to the Father except through **Me**.”

Acts 4:12 “There is salvation in **no one else**, for there is **no other name** under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

## 6. Jesus gave an overview of salvation. (John 5:24 - great to memorize)



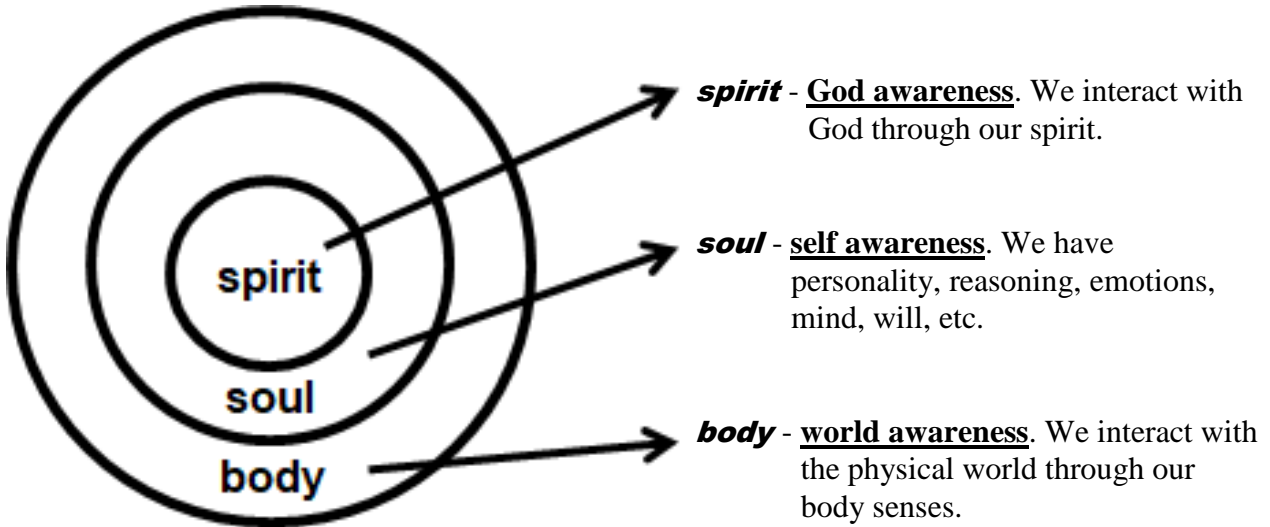
(Jesus said) “*I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.”*

Eternal life is **not an object**, but rather an endless quality of existence with God.

# The Spiritual Anatomy of a Christian

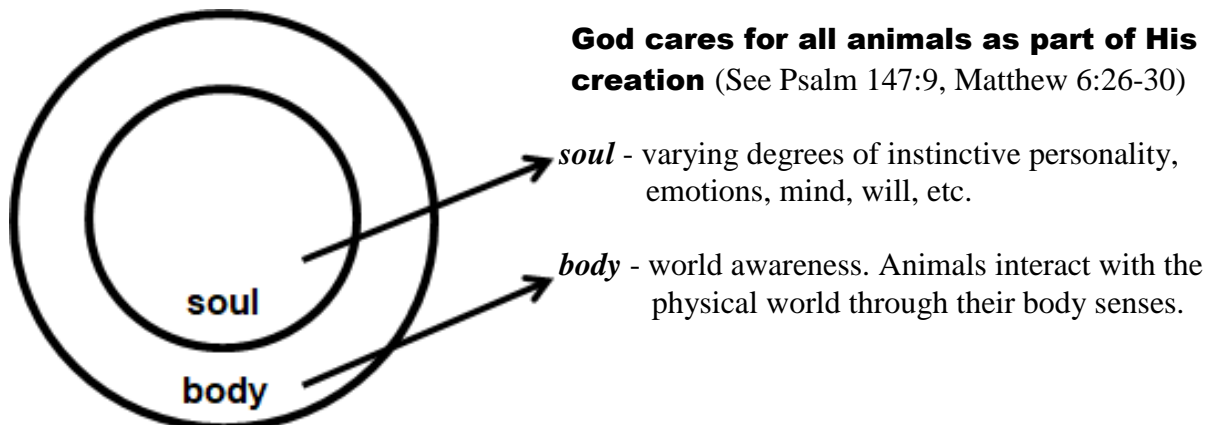
1. Mankind is a unique creation of God, set apart from the rest of His creation. People alone have been given a “spirit”, through which they can know God.

*Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.* Genesis 2:7



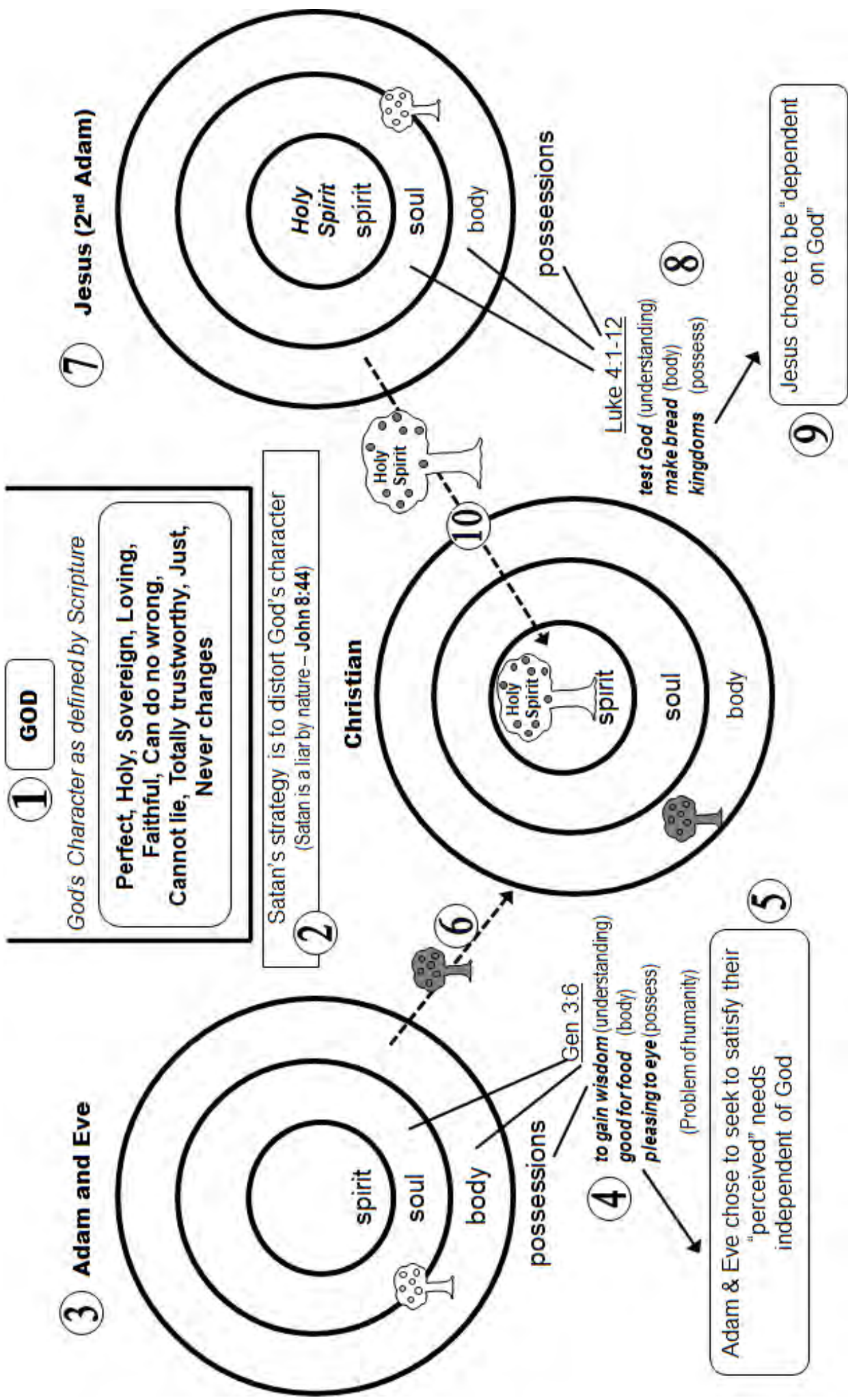
1 Thess. 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
 Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children.  
 1 Cor. 14:15 (Paul wrote) ... I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with my understanding.

2. The entire animal kingdom was created by God. (Gen 1:20-25) However, the animal kingdom is limited in scope, and without a “spirit”. (In Genesis 2:7, God breathed into man alone His “breath of life.”)

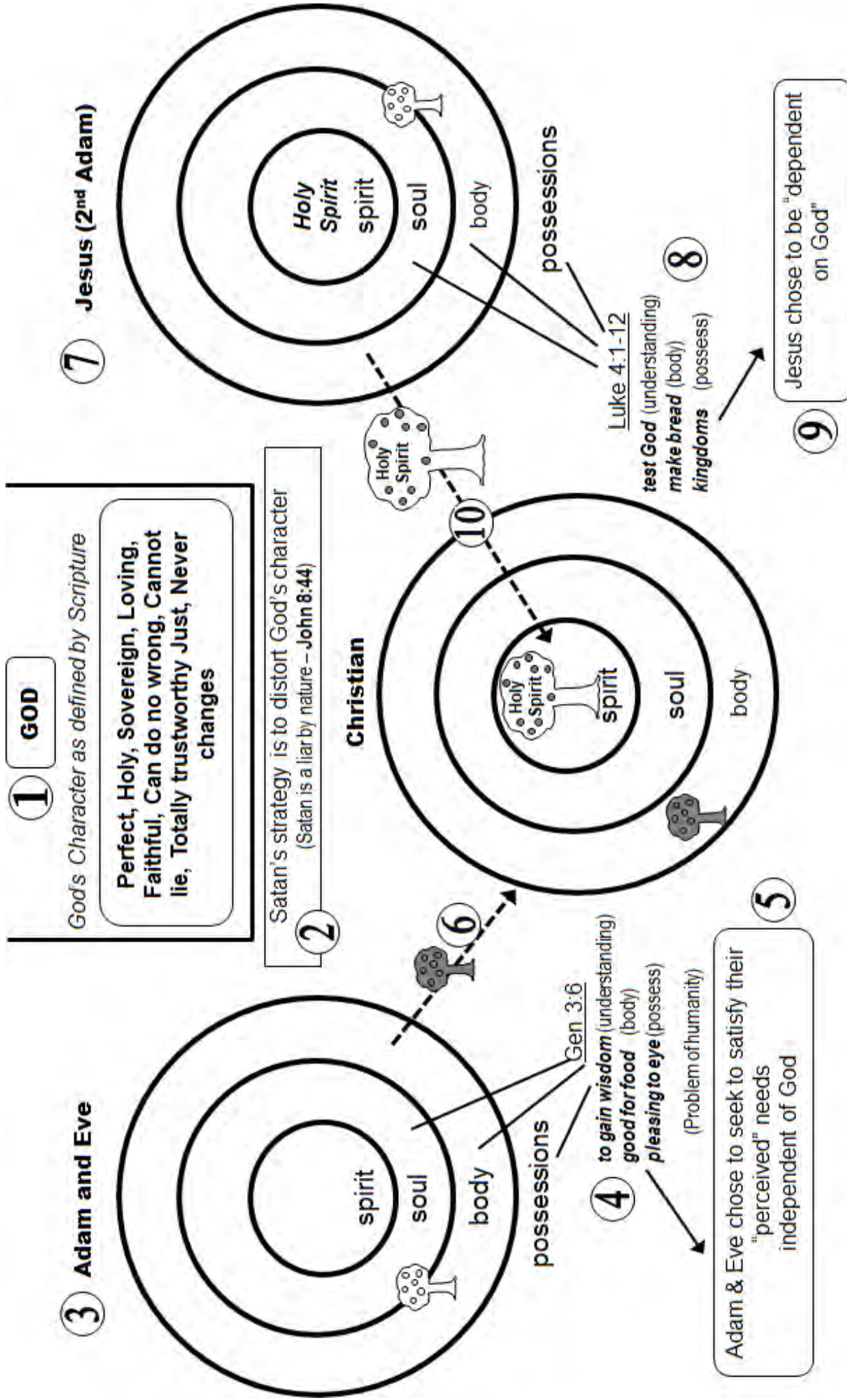




# God's Divine Nature (His Character) and My Human Nature



# God's Divine Nature (His Character) and My Human Nature





# God's Divine Nature (His Character) and My Human Nature - Guide

The main purpose of this lesson is to help clarify the events which have led to my present condition as **a believer having two natures**. A number of foundational Biblical principles will be introduced which should help me to more easily understand other truths as they are presented in subsequent lessons.

① **The Character of God** --- It is important to understand the significance of Biblical terms that describe His attributes. His attributes will be reinforced, as I allow the Holy Spirit to speak to me **through His written Word**.

**IMPORTANT: The main purpose of presenting the attributes of God's character is to demonstrate how reasonable it is to trust Him.** As an unbeliever I was accustomed to trusting in myself, but as a believer I need to form the habit of trusting God in my daily decisions. I must reason out that if God's character is as portrayed in the Bible, then it is very **logical** to trust Him completely, and very **illogical** not to trust Him. There is **no** reasonable logic for not yielding to Him.

A major reason for distrusting God is my tendency to impute to God **my** character. If God were like me then it would be quite **reasonable** to distrust Him.

## A Sampling of Verses Related to God's Character

Take some time now to read (aloud if possible) the following verses on God's character.

### GOD IS LOVE

1 John 4:16 ... **God is love**,...

Rom. 5:8 **God proves His own love for us** in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

John 3:16 "**For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son**,..."

1 John 3:16 **This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us**. ...

### GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Job 34:14-15 If He put His mind to it and withdrew the spirit and breath He gave, **every living thing would perish** together and mankind would return to the dust.

Prov. 21:30 **No** wisdom, **no** understanding, and **no** counsel will prevail against the LORD.

Isa. 46:11 ... Yes, **I** have spoken; so **I will** also bring it about. **I** have planned it; **I will** also do it.

Dan. 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted **as nothing**, and **He does what He wants** with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is **no one** who can hold back His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Acts 4:24 ... they all raised their voices to God and said, "Master, **You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them**."

## **GOD IS RIGHTEOUS, HOLY AND PURE. HE CANNOT LIE, HE CAN DO NO WRONG**

Deut. 32:3-4 Declare the greatness of our God! The Rock—His work is perfect; **all His ways are entirely just**. A faithful God, **without prejudice, He is righteous and true**.  
Lev. 19:2 “Speak to the entire Israelite community and tell them: Be holy because **I, Yahweh your God, am holy**.”  
Job 34:10 **It is impossible for God to do wrong, and for the Almighty to act unjustly**.  
Psa. 18:30 God—His way is **perfect**....  
Isa. 57:15 For the High and Exalted One who lives forever, **whose name is Holy** ...  
Hab. 1:13 **Your eyes are too pure to look on evil**,...  
Luke 1:49 Because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and **His name is holy**.  
Heb. 6:18 ... **it is impossible for God to lie**,...  
Rom. 3:25-26 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. ... **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. (NIV)

## **GOD IS PERFECT**

Deut. 32:3-4 Declare the greatness of our God! The Rock—His work is **perfect**....  
2 Sam. 22:31 God—**His way is perfect**; the word of the LORD is pure....  
Matt. 5:48 ... **your heavenly Father is perfect**.

## **GOD NEVER CHANGES**

Psa. 102:25-27 Long ago You established the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, **but You will endure**; all of them will wear out like clothing. You will change them like a garment, and they will pass away. **But You are the same, and Your years will never end**.  
Malachi 3:6 “**Because I, Yahweh, have not changed**,...”  
James 1:17 Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights; **with Him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning**.

## **GOD IS FAITHFUL, TOTALLY TRUSTWORTHY AND DEPENDABLE**

Deut. 32:3-4 Declare the greatness of our God! ... **A faithful God**,...  
Psa. 33:18-21 Now **the eye of the LORD is on those** who fear Him—those who depend on His faithful love **to deliver** them from death and **to keep them alive** in famine. We wait for Yahweh; He is **our help and shield**. For our hearts rejoice in Him because we trust in His holy name.  
Psa. 34:4-8 I (*David*) sought the LORD, and He answered me and **delivered me from all** my fears. ... This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and **saved him from all** his troubles. **The Angel of the LORD encamps around those** who fear Him, and rescues them. Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the man who takes **refuge** in Him!  
Psa. 36:5 **LORD, Your faithful love reaches to heaven, Your faithfulness to the clouds**.  
Psa. 86:15 But You, Lord, are a **compassionate** and **gracious** God, **slow to anger** and **rich in faithful love and truth**.

Jer. 29:11 “For I know **the plans I have for you**”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“plans for **your welfare**, not for disaster, to give you **a future** and **a hope**.”

Rom. 8:28 We know that **all** things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.

1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. **God is faithful**, and **He will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide **a way of escape** so that you are able to bear it.

1 Thess. 5:24 **He who calls you is faithful**, who also will do it.

2 Thess. 3:3 But **the Lord is faithful**;

2 Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, **He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself**.

1 Peter 4:19 So those who suffer **according to God’s will** should, while doing what is good, **entrust themselves to a faithful Creator**.

- ② **Satan’s strategy** --- is to persuade me that God is **not trustworthy**, by undermining my confidence in **God’s character**. **Example:** In Genesis 3:1-5 he sought to instill doubt, insinuating that God is a liar, suggesting that God did not have their best interest at heart, and implying that He was withholding that which in some way would be good for them. If God did not love them, how then could He be trusted?

Gen. 3:1-5 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God really say**, ‘You can’t eat from **any** tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’” “**No! You will not die**,” the serpent said to the woman. “In fact, God knows that when you eat it **your eyes will be opened** and you will be **like God, knowing** good and evil.”

- ③ When Adam and Eve were created they were made **perfect**, as was all creation. They were complete and **totally** satisfied, not lacking in any way. Everything they did was in total harmony with God’s character. **Death did not exist before that time**.

Rom. 5:12 ... just as sin entered the world **through one man**, and **death through sin**, in this way death spread to all men, because all sinned.

1 Cor. 15:21-22 For since **death** came through a man, ... **in Adam all die**,...

- ④⑤ Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lie about God’s character and ate the fruit, choosing to pursue self-satisfaction “**independent**” of God. The choice to live independent from God was evident in **three areas**:

1. The **human understanding** (desirable for obtaining wisdom)
2. The **appetites of the body** (good for food), and
3. **Possessions** (delightful to look at).

(Temptations also fall into one of these three areas.) It is important to see this my “**predisposition toward independence**” as **the “root” problem of humanity** and one of the driving forces behind the global and individual resistance to God.

Gen. 3:6 Then the woman saw that the tree was **good for food** and **delightful to look at**, and that it was **desirable for obtaining wisdom**. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

- ⑥ Every person born into the **human race** inherits the sinful human nature (*pictured as a dark tree*) of Adam, **through their biological father**. Consequently, every human is born with a **disposition of resistance** toward God.

Gen. 5:3 ... Adam ... fathered a son **in his likeness**, according to **his image**,  
Gal. 5:16-23 ... For **the flesh desires what is against the Spirit**,...

- ⑦ Jesus was born into the human race, but **without a sinful human father**. As the **second Adam**, He was born with the same **sinless** human nature that Adam had before he fell. The righteous character of Jesus, as seen in His life, is what God had originally intended for Adam.

1 Cor. 15:45-46 ... The first man Adam became a living being; the **last Adam** became a **life-giving Spirit**....  
Rom. 5:19 For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made **sinners**, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made **righteous**.

- ⑧⑨ Jesus was tempted in the **same three areas** as Adam, but Jesus chose to entrust Himself into God's care instead of believing Satan's enticement to seek to live independent of God.

- ⑩ **Upon believing**, I as a new believer was born into the **spiritual race**, and received the divine nature **in the Person of the Holy Spirit**. **Important**: The sinful human nature can **never** be improved. (See Gal. 5:17 below.)

John 3:3, 6 Jesus replied, I assure you: Unless someone is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Whatever is **born of the flesh** is flesh, and whatever is **born of the Spirit** is spirit.

Rom. 7:14-25 For I know that **nothing good lives in me**, that is, **in my flesh**. So I discover this principle: When I want to do what is good, **evil is with me**. For **in my inner self** I joyfully agree with God's law. But I see a different law **in the parts of my body**, waging war against the law of **my mind** and taking me prisoner to the law of sin **in the parts of my body**. So then, **with my mind I myself** am a slave to the law of God, but **with my flesh**, to the law of sin.

Gal. 5:16-23 I say then, walk **by the Spirit** and you will not carry out **the desire of the flesh**. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are **opposed to each other**. Now **the works of the flesh** are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control.

# How to Relate to the Holy Spirit

**Note:** During this lesson, discuss the consequences of not understanding each concept. For example, what would be the typical result of not thinking of the Holy Spirit as a Person? How was Jesus limited by a physical body, but the Holy Spirit is “omnipresent”?



## 1. I should interact with the Holy Spirit as a person, for He is God himself. I should not think of Him as just an “inspiration”, a “presence” or an “influence”, without personality.

Acts 5:3-4 ... Then Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds from the field? Wasn’t it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn’t it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God!”

1 Cor. 2:10-11 ... the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (*see also Phil. 2:1*)

Eph. 4:30 And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by Him for the day of redemption.

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me,...

The Holy Spirit is a Person. He is not an influence, or a force, or an inspiration, but God Himself. He is like a best Friend, yet so much more. My relationship with Him is in many ways to be similar to a good spousal relationship. What are the implications of such a relationship? Respect? Communication? Interaction? Nurturing? How would I treat a “force”?

## 2. He lives in me, His temple. He owns me (whether I believe it or not). His ownership does not become true after I believe it.

1 Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (NKJV)

1 Cor. 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (NKJV)

God’s ownership of me is a factual truth, which is not dependent on my acknowledgment of it. I do not bestow ownership, I can only acknowledge and act upon what He states to be already true. What are the implications of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership?

New believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because they don’t have preconceived ideas of God’s expectations. In contrast, older believers tend to accept this truth intellectually, but be resistant to the implications.

### 3. He is the seal (deposit, guarantee, evidence) that I am God's child.

Rom. 8:9, 14-16 ... **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.**  
... All those **led by** God's Spirit **are** God's sons.... The Spirit Himself **testifies together with our spirit** that we are God's children.

2 Cor. 1:21-22 Now it is God who strengthens us, with you, in Christ and has anointed us. **He has also sealed us** and given us the Spirit as **a down payment** in our hearts.  
(See also 2 Cor. 5:5)

Gal. 4:6 And **because you are sons**, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,...

Eph. 1:13-14 When you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed in Him, you were also **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit. He is **the down payment (pledge, guarantee, deposit)** of our inheritance,...

1 John 3:24 ... And the way we know that He remains in us is **from the Spirit** He has given us.  
(See 1 John 4:13)

The Holy Spirit is **God's evidence** of my salvation. I should **actively** seek after the Holy Spirit and be open to His guidance and instruction. As a disciple I should grow **increasingly more dependent** on the Holy Spirit and increasingly less dependent on a discipler (mentor). I should **increasingly recognize** the Holy Spirit's promptings in my everyday life.

### 4. He has a plan for every day of my life. He wants me to learn to follow and obey Him. He does not expect to follow my plan.

Psalms 139:16 Your eyes saw me when I was formless; **all** my days were written in Your book **and planned** before a single one of them began.

Jer. 10:23 I know, Lord, that a man's way of life is **not his own; no one** who walks **determines his own steps.**

Jer. 29:11 "For I know **the plans I have for you**"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

John 14:16-17 (*Jesus said*) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Counselor** to be with you **forever**....

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will **teach you** all things and **remind you** of everything I have told you.

John 16:13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, **He will guide you** into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also **declare to you** what is to come. **He will glorify Me**, because He will take from what is Mine and **declare it to you**....

1 Cor. 2:9-14 But as it is written: What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind— God prepared this for those who love Him. Now **God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit**,... Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, **so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God**....

I need to fit into **God's plan** for my life. God wants me **to follow** Him, He does not want me to view Him as **my Servant**, fitting into **my** plans and assisting me whenever **I** determine I need His help. I should feel free to make **tentative** daily and future plans, while always being mindful that He may want to change my plans.

## 5. He intercedes to the Father for me and teaches me to pray.

Rom. 8:26-27 In the same way **the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness**, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but **the Spirit Himself intercedes for us** with unspoken groanings.... He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.  
Eph. 2:18 For through Him (*Jesus*) we both have access **by one Spirit to the Father**.  
Eph. 6:17-18 ... **Pray at all times in the Spirit** with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.  
Jude 20 But you, dear friends,... **pray in the Holy Spirit**,

I need to maintain **a continual active** communication with the Lord, through conversational prayer, reading and studying the Word, listening to teachings, etc.

## 6. He baptized me into the universal body of Christ, with all true believers (refers to “spiritual” baptism, not to water baptism).

Matt. 3:11 (*John the Baptist said*) “I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. ... He Himself will baptize you with **the Holy Spirit** and fire.”  
1 Cor. 12:12-13 For as the body is **one** and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are **one** body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by **one** Spirit into **one body**—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were **all** made to drink of **one** Spirit.

I need to understand my **oneness with all** members of the universal Body of Christ, the **one** and **only** true Church, bonded together by the Holy Spirit. There are some doctrinal and cultural differences between Christians that should not create divisions or resentments.

NOTE: **Water baptism** for a Christian speaks of “identification with” Christ. While water baptism has no merit before God for salvation, it is to be taken seriously as an **outward witness** of what He has already done inwardly in my life. I am expressing to others that I have died with Christ and died to myself, and that I want to live a new life in obedience to Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within me. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10:47-48; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3; ) Recommendation: talk with your Pastor if you have questions on baptism.

## 7. He wants to use me to testify about Jesus to unbelievers.

Mark 13:11 So when they arrest you and hand you over, don’t worry beforehand what you will say. On the contrary, whatever is given to you in that hour—say it. For **it isn’t you** speaking, but **the Holy Spirit**. (*See also Matt. 10:19 / Luke 12:11*)  
John 15:26 “When the Counselor comes, the One I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—**He will testify about Me**.”  
John 16:8-11 “When He (*the Holy Spirit*) comes, **He will convict the world** about sin, righteousness, and judgment.”  
Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power **when the Holy Spirit has come on you**, and **you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

God desires to use me **to attract unbelievers** to a believing faith in Jesus Christ. This should be through **spoken words** as well as the **example** of my life yielded to Him.

St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying – “preach the gospel – and if necessary use words.”



## 8. He wants to use the spiritual gift(s) He has given me for others.

Mark 9:35 ... He ... said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and **servant of all.**”

Rom. 12:4-8 Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are **one body** in Christ and individually **members of one another.** According to the grace given to us, **we have different gifts:** If **prophecy**, use it according to the standard of one’s faith; if **service**, in service; if **teaching**, in teaching; if **exhorting**, in exhortation; **giving**, with generosity; **leading**, with diligence; **showing mercy**, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor. 12:4, 7-11 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. ... the Spirit is given **to each person** to produce what is beneficial:... But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing **to each person as He wills.**

Phil. 2:3-4 Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider **others** as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also **for the interests of others.**

1 Peter 4:10-11 Based on **the gift each one** has received, use it **to serve others**, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God’s words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, **so that God may be glorified** through Jesus Christ **in everything.** To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.



Each disciple is unique in the plan and purposes of God. He wants to produce **interaction** and **involvement** between believers. (*Jesus said*, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, **if you have love for one another.**” John 13:35) He wants to minister **to other believers through me.** He doesn’t want me to simply focus on how others can meet **my** needs.

How am I **investing my resources** (time, energy, possessions) in other believers to help them toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness (**spiritual reproduction**)?

**Important:** In the physical human body each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members.

## 9. He alone can produce spiritual life in and through me.

John 6:63 (*Jesus said*) “**The Spirit is the One who gives life.** The flesh **doesn’t help at all.** The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

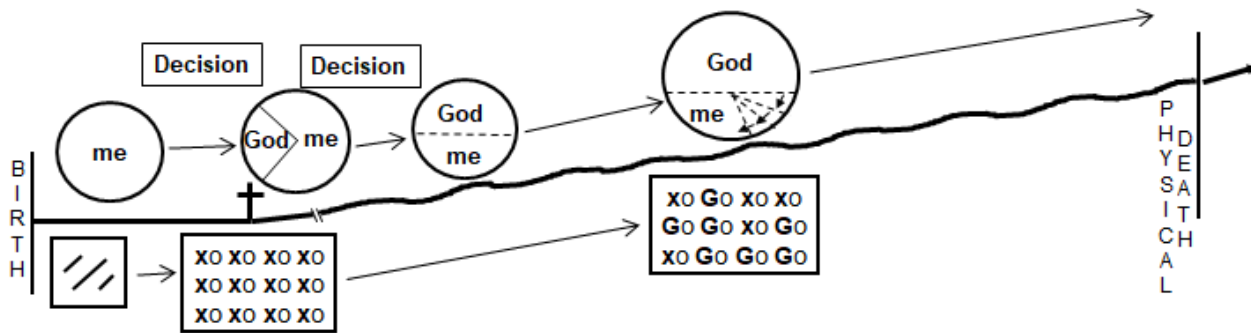
2 Cor. 3:6 ... the letter kills, but **the Spirit produces life.**

Eccl. 3:14 I know that **all** God does will last **forever**; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of Him.

Anything of eternal value **must** have **its origin** in the Holy Spirit. I am, and will continue to be, tempted to rely on myself until I leave this body. I need to be aware of **this tendency**, and not think of it as abnormal.

# Lordship and Surrender

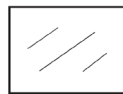
## The Normal Progressive Development of a Christian



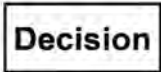
This diagram presents the Lordship decision as an event, which preferably takes place at conversion, followed by the growth process in which God’s perspective of life is increasingly becoming my perspective.



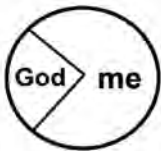
This circle represents me as an unbeliever.



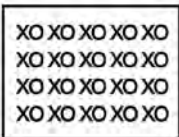
At birth my mind was like an empty whiteboard.



Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I must recognize my hopelessness, and make a “decision” to call out to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation.



As a new believer I receive eternal life (an event) and the Lord begins to dwell in me as the Person of the Holy Spirit. During this phase it is natural for me to be focused on “external behavior.”

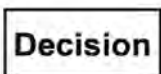


This graphic represents my understanding about life, values, etc. that has been acquired from birth to conversion as a result of the influence and learning from my parents, peers, media, culture, etc. That understanding (my worldview) does not disappear at salvation. I now need to learn to walk with the Holy Spirit as a habit. The function of discipleship is to facilitate that process.

**Note:** Much of this understanding is contrary to God, but He alone can correctly manage the process of transformation.

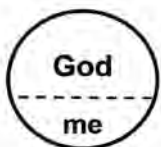
**Note:** X = Understanding that is contrary to God

O = Understanding that is not necessarily contrary to God.



In order for spiritual growth to continue, I need to come to an agreement with the Lord as to who is best capable of managing the growth process. Preferably this takes place at conversion, but often is not understood and accepted until later, unfortunately.

Typically, there are three motivators that will help me make the decision to surrender and accept the Biblical Master-servant relationship. They are: 1) Persecution, 2) Crisis, and 3) Personal discipleship.



This graphic represents me, having made the decision to yield up my independence, and have acknowledged His rightful Lordship of Christ over my life. I understand that God alone is capable of overseeing my life.

**CONSIDER:** Surrender consists of two parts.

1. First I make the Lordship **decision** to surrender my **will** (an acknowledgment of His ownership of my life and the obvious implications of the Master-servant relationship.)
2. This decision is then followed by the **daily process** of yielding up areas of my understanding. The Holy Spirit seeks my cooperation in allowing Him to transform me into an increasingly mature and fruitful Christian.



**CONSIDER:** A **one-time surrender** of the “will” precedes a **progressive yielding up** of “behavior.”

*from Oswald Chambers*

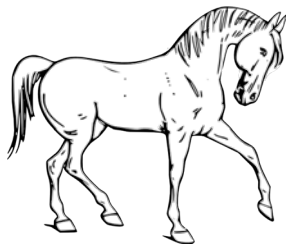
“True surrender is not simply surrender of **our external life** but surrender of **our will** - and once that is done, surrender is **complete**. The **greatest crisis** we ever face is the surrender of our will. Yet **God never forces** a person's will into surrender, and **He never begs**. He patiently waits until that person **willingly yields** to Him. And once that battle has been fought, **it never needs to be fought again.**”

Jesus says, “If you want to be My disciple, **you must give up your right to yourself to Me.**”

“And after you surrender - then what? Your entire life should be characterized by an eagerness **to maintain unbroken fellowship** and oneness with God.”

(Taken from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers – Sep. 13. (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

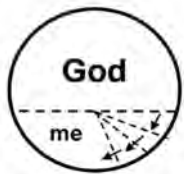
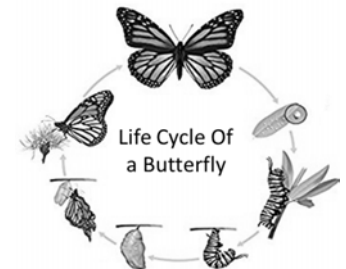
**CONSIDER:** “**Inward transformation**” will produce “**outward behavior changes.**”



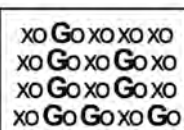
To make a wild horse useful, there are 2 steps:

- 1) Break the horse's will
- 2) Train him to be useful

Metamorphosis is a natural example of inward transformation



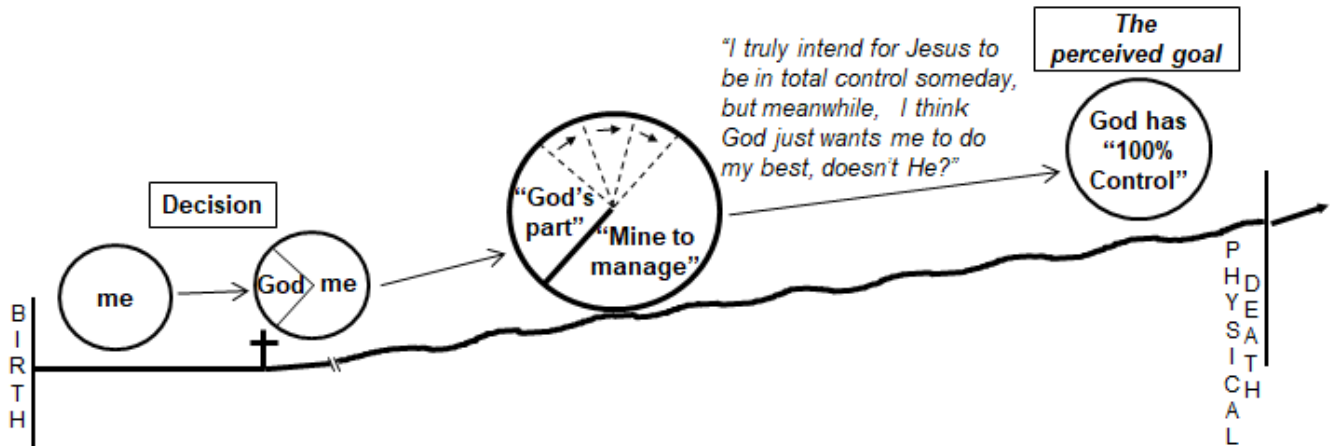
**THE GROWTH PROCESS:** As I allow Him, God will use His Word and circumstances to gradually illuminate areas of my understanding that He wants to alter. This process is called “Sanctification” (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24) “**Spiritual growth is the process in which God's perspective of life is increasingly becoming my perspective.**” God does not want me to be a mindless robot, but rather a servant companion who increasingly enjoys fellowship with Him.



“As a Christian is **transformed in his mind** and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

**Note:** The **G's** represent areas of my understanding that God has changed to **His** perspective.

## The Common Misconception of “Progressive” Surrender



What is the important difference between this diagram and the previous one depicting the Normal Christian life?

The Lordship decision is missing from this Christian’s life, resulting in a perceived partnership relationship with the Lord, with the goal that “one day God will have 100% control of my life”. This diagram represents the **abnormal** development of a Christian.

This view of the Christian life usually results from a lack of personal spiritual mentoring and/or an unwillingness to surrender their will to His Lordship.

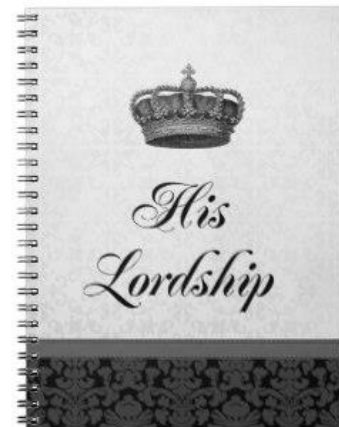
**CONSIDER:** If I view my relationship with God as depicted here, a critical error is to attribute to God, authority (Lordship) over only certain designated parts of my life, as if He had not bought **all** of me.

**CONSIDER:** If “Lordship” is presented as incremental surrender of my behavior, then I can conclude that the logical evidence of my “total surrender” (Lordship) is when I am **totally obedient**.

If I am **in charge** of this process, it can lead to cycles of frustration and discouragement, since I never see myself as being **totally** obedient.

**CONSIDER:** Since tithes and offerings are “God’s share,” doesn’t that imply that I have the **right to manage** the rest of my material wealth? (Read Malachi 3:7-10; 2 Cor 9:7-9; Mark 12:41-44; Proverbs 3:9-10; Matthew 6:19-33; 1 Tim 6:6-10; 17-19).

If “my time” at church on Sunday, reading my Bible daily, praying, etc. is understood to be God’s part (spiritual), doesn’t that imply that I have the **right to manage** the remaining hours in my day?



## **Additional Problems Associated with Progressive Surrender :**

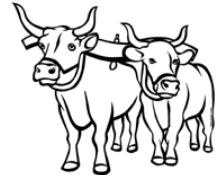
### **1. It tends to result in my asking, “will God take advantage of me?” such as:**

- a. “What will He ask me to do that I can’t do, or don’t want to do?”      b. “What will He keep me from doing that I want to do?”  
c. “What will He take away that I hold dear?”      d. “Will God fail me if I entrust “this” to Him?”

### **2. I view myself as being in charge of the process of spiritual growth,** making the determination as to what can and should be yielded up to the Lord. In other words, I set down the rules and limits. This perception is typically based on **pride**, an inflated view of my own discernment and capabilities, and **a distorted understanding of God’s character**. (If needed, review the Scripture verses related to “God’s Character” in Lesson 1-5.)

**CONSIDER:** **There is no reasonable logic for rejecting His yoke of Lordship.** A lack of acceptance is typically based on: 1) a fear of the unknown, 2) an unwillingness to relinquish perceived control, 3) an unwillingness to leave a comfort zone, or 4) an over-estimation of my own capabilities to determine and manage my future.

Jesus said: “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*” (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV)



**Jesus did not say, “learn about Me, and if you like how I do things, then take My yoke!”**

**CONSIDER:** The real question: **Is God trustworthy?** If God were like you or me, we would have good reason to be fearful. Ask: Does God love me? If God’s character is as described in the Bible, and if He promises to do only that which is in my best interest, what do I have to fear?

Did He design me? Did He give me life? Does He maintain my very existence? Who besides God knows what will really satisfy me? Does He alone know what is best for me? Does He alone know how to shape my life and use me for His eternal purposes?

**CONSIDER:** God’s **ownership** of me is a factual truth, which is **not** dependent on my acknowledgment of it. **I do not bestow ownership**, I can only **acknowledge** and **act upon** what He states to be already true. **New** believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because **they don’t have preconceived ideas** of God’s expectations. In contrast, **older** believers tend to **accept this truth intellectually**, but be resistant to the implications.

What are the **implications** of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership? Do I acknowledge that I live in a spiritual “**kingdom**”, not a spiritual democracy? What is the difference?

*Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.*  
1 Cor. 6:19-20

***If God loves me, can only do what is in my best interest, and never makes mistakes, what would be a logical reason for not embracing Him as Lord?***

## Analogy: The Rooms of My “House”

† Does Jesus have access to all the rooms of my house?

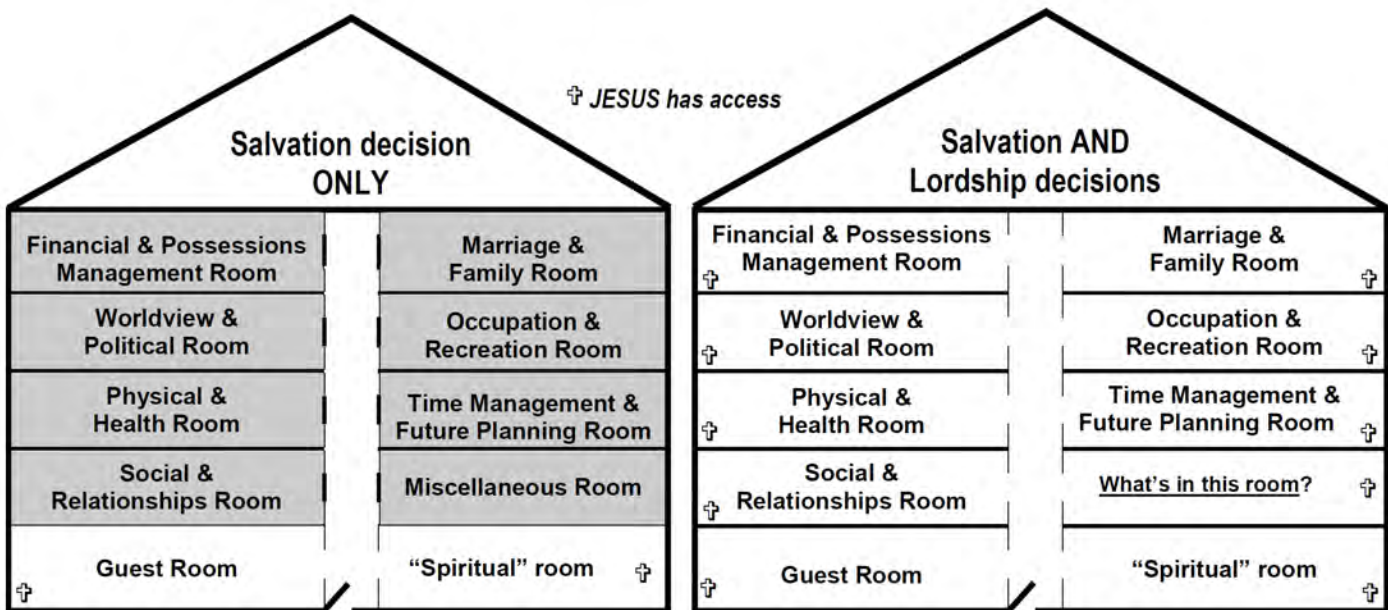
### A story of two believers...

When Jesus knocked at the front door of their hearts (Rev. 3:20) and asked permission to enter, both of these persons gladly received Him, realizing that His absence had been the reason for the emptiness they had always sensed (**the Salvation decision**).

Revelation 3:20 *Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me.*

As new believers each was overjoyed that Jesus was in their house and that their sins were forgiven. Each had a new happiness and an assurance of going to heaven.

Jesus was allowed to occupy the “**Guest Room**” – which was always kept clean and presentable for visitors – and He was also allowed to reside in the “spiritual” room – where the believer went to church services, prayed and read the Bible.



**But one day soon Jesus asked each of them for permission to make some changes in other areas of their houses**, such as adopting new management procedures, rearranging items, throwing out worthless things, and bringing in some new items.

Jesus asked for access to every “room”. **Each believer had a different response.**



## Salvation decision ONLY

The believer in the house on the left was reluctant to grant Jesus' request on the grounds that he was not yet prepared for major changes. However, he would thoughtfully consider any suggestions, and might allow some minor changes that wouldn't seriously disrupt his lifestyle and future plans.

Jesus informed him that He (Jesus) is the only One who is really capable of making the correct decisions as to the above changes, since He alone knows what is needed to make the house into a suitable dwelling for God, one that would be usable for His eternal purposes. Jesus clearly explained His good intentions, even guaranteeing that the believer would be more than totally satisfied with the finished product.

**The believer replied that while the offer sounded very attractive, he considered himself to be a good judge of the appropriateness and non-disruptive pace of any changes, based on his past experience.** He expressed his appreciation for Jesus' presence and blessings, and his desire to make the Guest Room as comfortable as possible for Him.

He assured Jesus that as time went on, he would certainly give Him access to other rooms.

"Jesus, I'm thankful You live in my house! I'm really happy to know that I can count on You to be there whenever I find circumstances too difficult to manage on my own."

## Salvation AND Lordship decisions

The believer in the house on the right was also reluctant to grant Jesus' request on the grounds that he was not yet prepared for major changes. However, he was aware that he had been **bought** at a great price and therefore Jesus was **the rightful Owner**.

He reasoned, "If Jesus owns me, how can I deny Him access to every room of His house?" (*the Lordship decision acknowledging Jesus as **Master of his life***).

The believer was somewhat apprehensive, as he didn't understand how this decision would impact his future. **But he reasoned that since Jesus had done so much for him already, it seemed logical that He was trustworthy to continue doing what was in his best interest.**

"Jesus, welcome to my house! I don't know what You have planned for my life, and to be honest I have some fears, but I fling all the doors to my rooms open, because I understand that you own me and can only do what's in my best interest. I will need your help with the rooms that I'm not sure how to handle. I want to trust you alone about what my house needs to look like - what my life needs to look like. I give my "house" to you because I know that you know what's best for me. Thank you for letting me be part of Your plans. Wow!"

*Don't you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own**, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)*

While making the Lordship decision gives the Lord access to all the rooms in my house, He alone decides what needs to be changed. The Holy Spirit will manage these changes as He determines best. This is part of the continuing growth process.

WHAT ROOMS ARE IN MY HOUSE? Can I trust God with ALL the rooms? I should prayerfully consider which "rooms" I have given Jesus access to – **after all, He owns "my house."**

Note: Use the "Rooms of My House" blank diagram on the next page to complete your own "personal inventory".

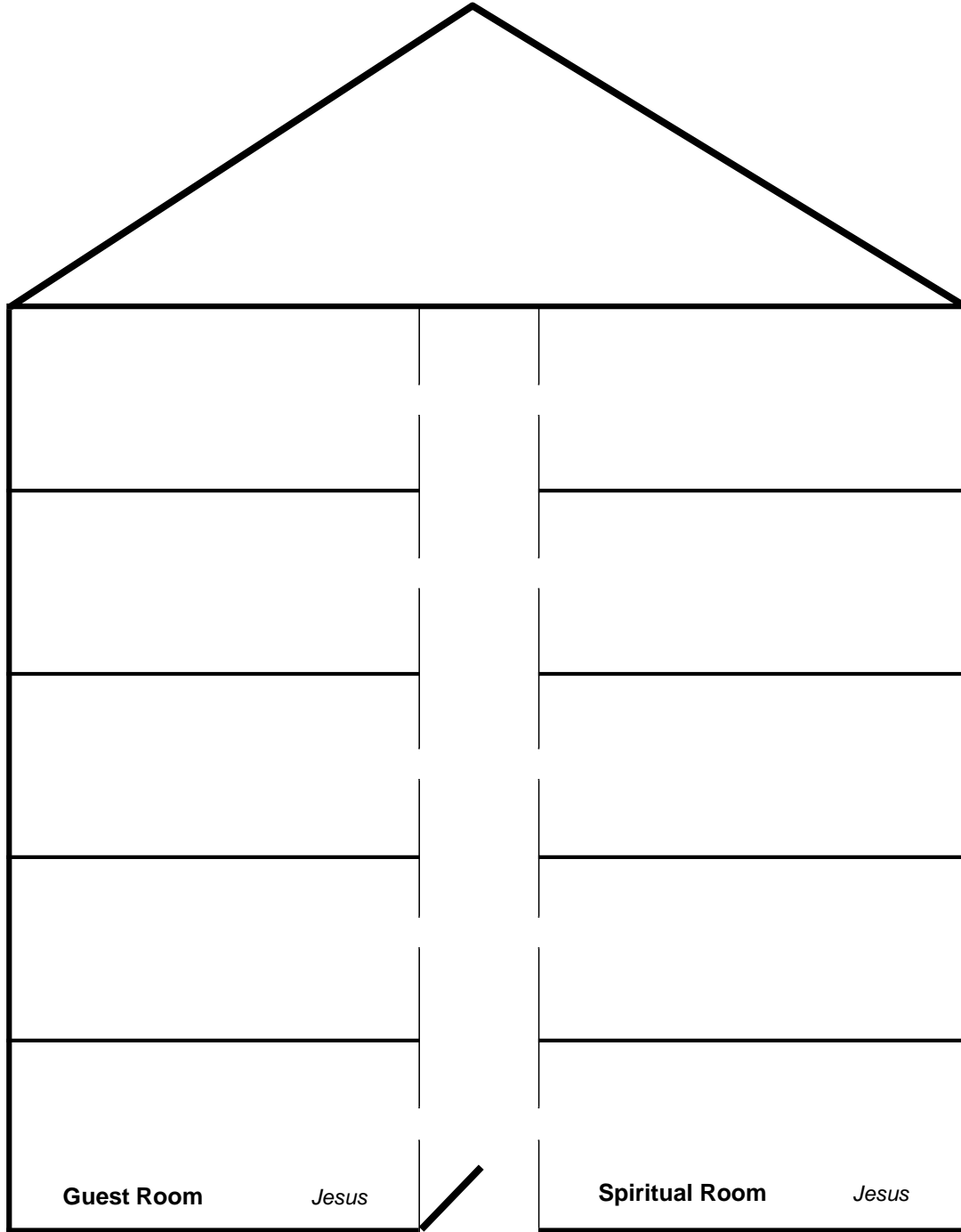
***Upon viewing the finished product, nobody will ever regret having made the decision to choose Him as the Master of their life.***





## What Rooms are in MY House?

Use this “Rooms of My House” blank diagram to complete your personal inventory.



WHAT ROOMS ARE IN MY HOUSE? Can I trust God with ALL the rooms?

I need to think carefully and prayerfully if Jesus has access to my entire house – after all, He owns it! Are the doors open or closed to all the rooms? Is there a “closet” in one room that I deny Him access to?

I need to pray honestly and sincerely about giving Jesus access to ALL areas of my life.

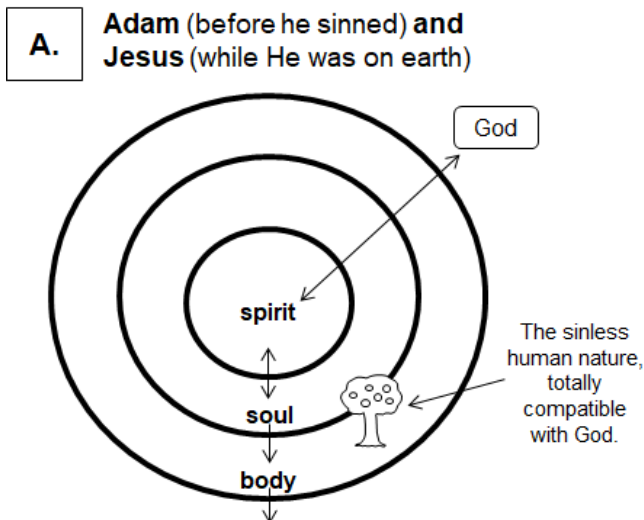
# Review of My Two Natures

This lesson builds on the discussion of my two natures introduced in lesson 1-5. Understanding how my two natures interact will lay the groundwork for studying abiding in the next several lessons.

## 1. The following three diagrams depict three spiritual conditions.

**Diagram A** portrays Adam as God intended (before he sinned) and Jesus while He was on earth (never sinned). Jesus was called the second Adam, because Jesus, a life-giving Spirit, was God's plan for saving mankind due to Adam's sin.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 *So it is written: The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth and made of dust; the second man is from heaven. Like the man made of dust, so are those who are made of dust; like the heavenly man, so are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the man made of dust, we will also bear the image of the heavenly man.*



All behavior was in total harmony with God's character, totally pleasing to God



= The sinless human nature, totally compatible with God

Gen 2:7 Then the Lord God ... breathed the **breath of life** into his nostrils, and the man became a **living** being. (*only said of man*)

Gen 1:31 God saw **all** that He had made, and it was **very good**.... (*no imperfections, nothing lacking*)

Rom 5:14 ... He (*Adam*) is a **prototype** of the Coming One.

1 Cor 15:45 ... The **first** man Adam became a living being; the **last** Adam (*Jesus*) became a life-giving Spirit.

Phil 2:5-7 ... Christ Jesus, ... emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, **taking on the likeness of men**.

Heb 4:15 (*Jesus*) ... One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet **without sin**.

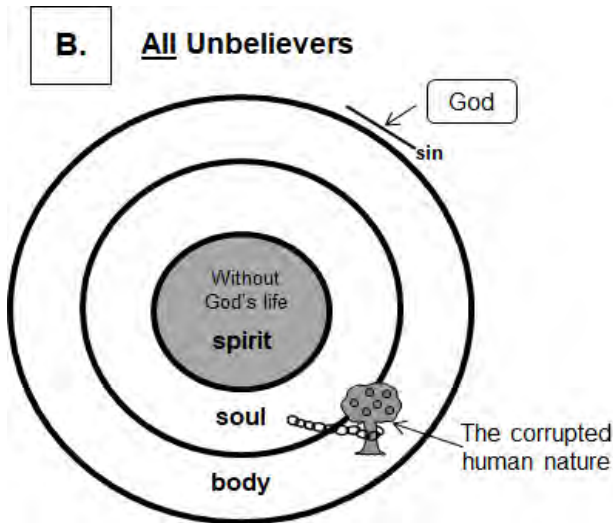
Adam made the decision to sin against God and fulfill his perceived needs independent of God. Jesus chose to remain dependent on God and not sin.

Because we are from the race of Adam and because Adam sinned, everybody who was born in the lineage of Adam is like **Diagram B**.

**Diagram B** depicts the unbeliever who was born as a descendent of Adam and is dead spiritually, represented by the dark circle in the middle, indicating the spirit without God.

The dark tree represents the corrupted human nature, and the chain extending from the tree illustrates this person is in bondage to the sinful nature.


As an unbeliever, my sin nature is a barrier that separates me from God. God's purpose for showing us sin is so we recognize it, acknowledge it before Him, and let Him forgive it so that He can make us into the image of His Son. He continually woos and calls the unbeliever to come to Him.



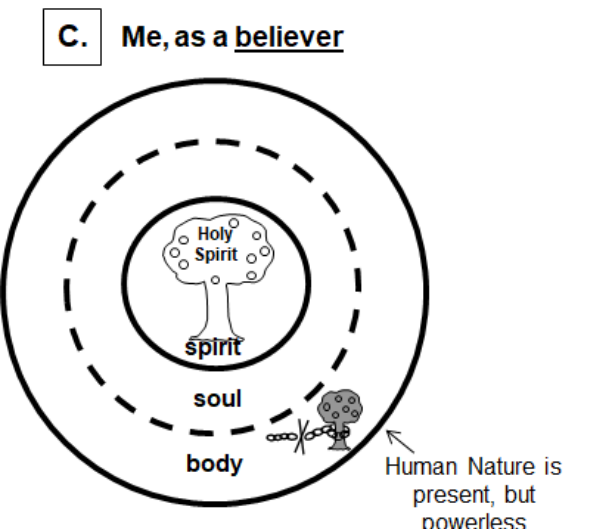
Rom 3:23 For **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God.  
 Rom 3:10-12 ... There is **no one** righteous, **not even one**. ... there is **no one** who seeks God. ... There is **no one** who does what is good, **not even one**.  
 1 Cor 15:22 For as in Adam **all die**,...  
 Eph 2:12 ... **without hope** and **without God** in the world.

**Thought:** God can only accept that which is **perfect (100%, without blemish)**. **Nothing** that originates from the human nature has that quality. The unbeliever is devoid of His life. **Only God alone can produce anything of eternal value.**

Their works (fruit) have **no life** (eternal), are **imperfect** (flawed), and therefore **unacceptable** to God.

 = The sinful human nature is **incapable** of producing "perfect" eternal fruit.

**Diagram C** depicts me as a believer who has put my faith in Christ as my Savior, and in that moment the Holy Spirit came into my life and resides in my spirit. While the Holy Spirit resides in me, so does the sinful nature, which is not improved, changed or renovated and on its own cannot produce fruit that is acceptable and pleasing to God. However, as I walk in the Spirit, I will not carry out the desires of my flesh or sinful human nature.



Gal. 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, ...  
 Gal. 5:16 I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

**All** that is **not** motivated by the Holy Spirit is **temporal**, without His life and **not** rewardable (wood, hay, stubble).

## 2. God uses trees and plants to contrast the two natures.



### The Divine Nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Jer. 17:7-8 The man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence indeed is the Lord, is blessed. He will be **like a tree planted by water**: it sends its roots out toward a stream, it doesn't fear when heat comes, and **its foliage remains green. It will not worry in a year of drought or cease producing fruit.**

Psa. 1:3 He (*a righteous man*) is **like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.**

Matt. 7:17-18 In the same way, **every good tree produces good fruit, ... A good tree can't produce bad fruit**;...

Gal. 5:22-23 ... But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2 Pet. 1:4 ... He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them **you may share in the divine nature**,...

***... walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.***

Galatians 5:16)



### The corrupted sinful human nature from the 1st Adam

Jer. 17:5-6 This is what the Lord says: The man who **trusts** in mankind, who makes human **flesh** his strength and turns his heart from the Lord is cursed. He will be **like a juniper in the Arabah**; he cannot see when good comes but dwells in the parched places in the wilderness, in a **salt land where no one lives.**

Matt 7:17-18 ... but a **bad tree** produces bad fruit. ..., **neither** can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Gal. 5:19-21 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, ... Now **the works of the flesh are obvious**: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar....



## 3. James compares the human nature to a “salt water” spring and the divine nature of the Holy Spirit to a spring of “living water.”

James 3:9-12 ... Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs? **Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.**

John 7:37-39 ... Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have **streams of living water flow from deep within him.**” He said this about the Spirit.... (See John 4:13-14)

**4. In Romans, Paul contrasts how we were before salvation, and how we are now as believers.**

**NOTE:** In the following verses, “*death*” refers to “absence of life”, that is, devoid of life originating from God. (for example, a salt water spring).

**a. As an unbeliever I was dominated by my sinful nature, which resides in my physical body.**

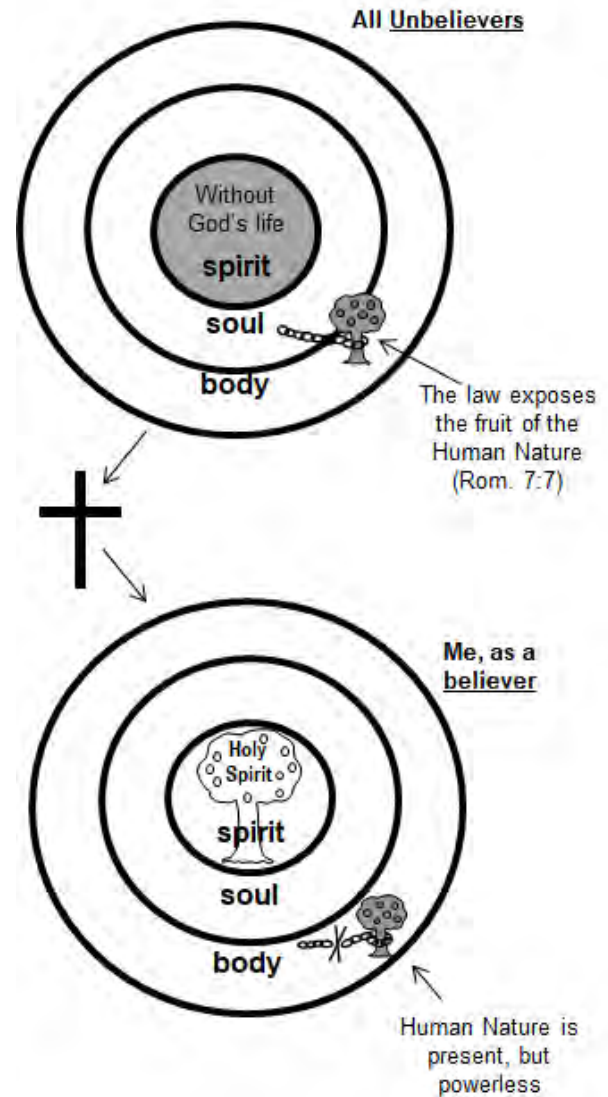
Rom 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death (absence of life).

**b. Now, as a believer, I have been freed from bondage to the sinful nature.**

Rom 7:6 But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

**c. From God’s perspective I have “died to” (freed from) the sinful nature, and have been joined to Christ.**

Rom 6:18, 22 ...and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. ... you have been liberated from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the end is eternal life!  
 Rom 7:4 ... you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God.



The fact is, Christians died to sin. The Greek past tense for “died” suggests a specific point when the action occurred, at salvation. Death, whether physical or spiritual, means separation, not extinction (Rom. 6:6-7, 14). Death to sin is separation from sin’s power, not the extinction of sin.

Being dead to sin means being “set free from sin” (Rom. 6:18, 22 above). That being true, Paul asked, “How can they live in it any longer?” Obviously believers cannot *live* in sin if they *died* to it.”

Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Pub., Inc.

# Abiding

## Maintaining Continual Fellowship with the Lord

### Introduction

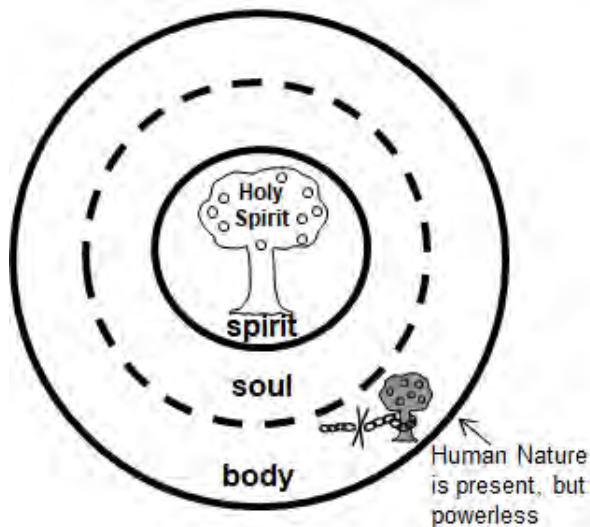
“To Abide” simply refers to the moment-by-moment experience of walking in harmony (communion, fellowship) with the Holy Spirit; that is, without any “unresolved offenses” that are disrupting that communion.

The two diagrams below represent a snapshot of the same believer at two different points in time.

#### Condition of “Abiding”

The normal Christian Life  
*“walking in the Spirit”*

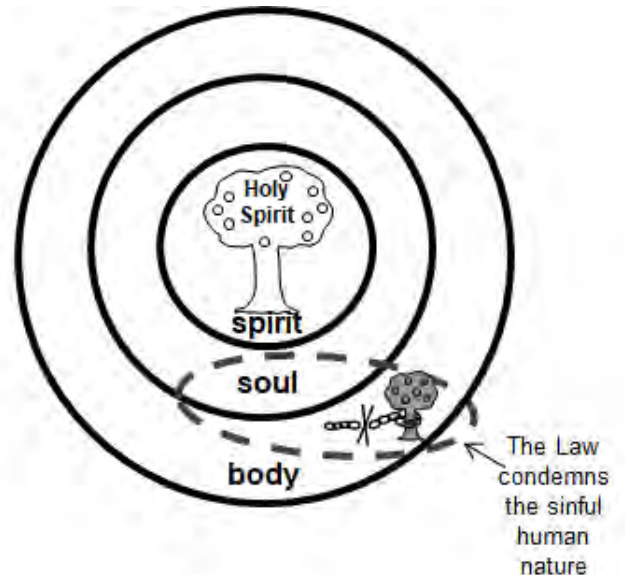
All that I allow the Holy Spirit to do through me is eternal and rewardable at the Tribunal of Christ (judgment seat) (gold, silver, precious stones). 1 Corinthians 3:10-15



#### Condition of “Not Abiding”

Having unresolved issues(s) with the Holy Spirit  
*“walking in the flesh”*

All that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is temporal, without His life and not rewardable. (wood, hay, stubble.) 1 Corinthians 3:10-15



NOTE: the circular dotted line represents the “conditional” aspect of abiding.

**Explanation of the Conditional Aspect of Abiding:** Although I am a believer, I still have the sinful human nature and I can choose at any given moment to remove myself from fellowship with the Holy Spirit by allowing an unresolved issue(s) to come between the Holy Spirit and me.

While the Holy Spirit does not change, my relationship with Him is “conditional” upon my choosing to walk in harmony with the Holy Spirit rather than walk in the flesh.



# Abiding Principles

## 1. Why is it so important for me to abide?

- a. God is looking for **available vessels (instruments)**. God has eternal purposes that He wants to complete in and through my life. While I am abiding in fellowship, the Holy Spirit is free to produce His fruit through me as a **usable vessel (conduit)**.

At any given moment I can **allow** myself to become **unusable** through my unwillingness to remain in fellowship with Him. I should picture myself as an instrument, a vessel, a water glass, etc. A vessel's main function is to be **available** and **usable** by its owner, not to perform on its own. Is God as the Potter free to use me **at any moment as He chooses?** (Rom. 6:13,19; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; 2 Tim 2:20-21)

- b. We tend to focus on **performance**, but this lesson is not about **doing**, but rather about **being**. What I do is a **result** of what I am being. What is the function of a branch? To **be**, or to **do**? (Jesus said) *"I am the vine; **you are the branches**. The one who remains (abides) in Me and I in him **produces** much fruit, because you can do **nothing** without Me."* (John 15:5) ... *For the mouth speaks **from the overflow of the heart**.* (Matt. 12:34)
- c. It will help to look at this lesson as if it were entitled "**How To Live In Continual Harmony With My Spouse or Close Friend,**" because this is the clearest **model** God designed and gave us. Examining the husband - wife model (or a close friendship) will give me many insights into my relationship with the Lord.

## 2. It may help to think of abiding as having three dimensions:

**W**

**Width** could refer to the "**daily**" aspect of abiding. I should view my relationship of abiding in fellowship with the Lord as only encompassing "**TODAY.**" Yesterday's issues **should have already been dealt with**, and I need to believe God's promises that His grace will take care of **tomorrow's issues**, when they become "today's" issues. (discussed further in Lesson 1-11)

### a. The Lord promises to meet my "**daily**" needs.

Matt. 6:8-11 ... Give us this day our **daily** bread.

Exodus 16:4-30 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather **a day's portion every day,**" ... he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack;...

Psalms 68:19 Blessed be the Lord, who **daily** bears our burden,...

### b. Jesus said to take up my cross **daily**, anything greater can be **overwhelming**.

Luke 9:23 ... If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross **daily** and follow Me.



### c. Thoughts to consider.

I must pursue the habit of keeping “**short accounts**” with the Holy Spirit, in other words, to consciously choose to acknowledge (confess) **quickly** any unresolved conflict when I have offended Him. The missionary Hudson Taylor stated, “*We should **never** be conscious of **not** abiding in Christ*” (*Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*). The same holds true for fellowship with my spouse, or a close friend. We are told in Eph. 4:26-27: ... **do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.** Paul stated in Acts. 24:16: ... *I also do my best **to maintain always a blameless conscience** both before God and before men.*

**Important:** The **Holy Spirit alone** determines when I am being held accountable for offending Him, **not me**. Likewise, **listening** to the offended spouse (or friend) is usually the quickest first step to restoring fellowship.

During the time I am walking out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit I am **forfeiting His intended blessings** (eternal fruit), **and** will probably reap **unintended consequences**. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (worthless fruit),...* Gal. 6:7-8

God promises to meet my needs (Matt. 6:19-21, 25-34). Being prudent and responsible toward the future is appropriate. But if I allow that “concern” to negatively affect my relationship with the Lord, then “worry and anxiety” can easily become sin. He wants His peace to reign in my heart. *Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down,...* Prov. 12:25 (see also Col. 3:15)



**Height** could refer to “**an open line of vertical communication**” between God and me. I should jealously guard our fellowship by monitoring our communication **moment by moment**, being vigilant **not to allow** anything to disrupt it. **I need to form the habit** of not just waiting to check in from time to time at my personal convenience. It is a 24-hour per day, 7-day per week relationship.

### a. Thoughts to consider.

I am told to **pray continually**. *Rejoice always; **pray without ceasing**; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thess. 5:16-18) “Continual” prayer is not necessarily conversation without any interruptions, but prayer that continues whenever possible. The adverb for “**continually**” was used in Greek to describe a hacking cough. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken. (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

The **husband-wife (or other close) relationship** will also deteriorate unless it is **consciously nurtured**. (Ephesians 5:25-32)

**Caution:** Busyness can easily be a trap, **causing me to neglect** the Lord. Both the Holy Spirit and my spouse or close friend will be offended if I carelessly disregard or ignore them. Neglect often conveys unimportance. If I will ask Him, **the Holy Spirit will always be faithful to reveal to me any unresolved problems between us**. I should never allow what I am **doing** to become more important than my fellowship with Him.



**Depth** could refer to my deepening relationship with the Lord, getting to know Him, as in a marriage or close friendship. The concept of “**spiritual growth**” and the “**maturing process**” imply that there are things presently in my life that are displeasing to God. Even though the Lord is aware of those displeasing aspects of my character, He only holds me accountable for those issues that He wants to deal with **today** as He matures me.

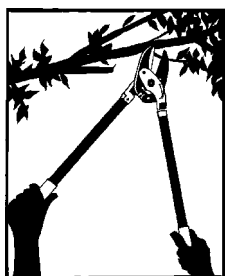
**a. Illustration.**

If I look at the air in a room, it looks relatively pure (my perspective). If a ray of light appears, many dust particles would suddenly be visible (God's perspective). Even though my sinful human nature is totally corrupted and unholy as compared to His holiness, He sees me "in Christ," and He only holds me accountable for the issues (dust particles) that He is presently bringing to my attention. The dust particles existed, even though I was not yet conscious of their existence. My responsibility is to be attentive to the Holy Spirit so that He can easily show me what areas of my understanding and/or behavior He wants to change. He will never burden me with more than I can handle.



God deals with me according to my maturity level (just as good parents do with their children) and my willingness to learn from Him. *He has not dealt with us according to our sins,... He is mindful that we are but dust.* (Psa. 103:10, 14)

**b. As I allow Him, God prunes me so that I will bear more eternal fruit.**



God's process of making my life more fruitful is described as "pruning." ... *every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.* (John 15:2) Pruning is usually not enjoyable, but always results in more fruitfulness if I allow God to finish His project. An area of my life that appears to me to be beneficial or harmless, may from God's perspective be distracting or harmful, and a hindrance to what He wants to do in my life. God determines what needs to be pruned. My responsibility is to be teachable and attentive to Him, careful not to allow my "good" things to rob me of God's "best." (e.g. Martha – Luke 10:38-42)

**c. Caution: I should not be surprised by the sinfulness of my human nature.**

As I grow spiritually, I will increasingly see my human nature as God sees it. Flaws become more visible as they are more exposed to light. The closer I am to God the more repulsive my human nature will become to me. (*Everything exposed by the light is made clear,*... Eph. 5:13)

**3. How do I know if I am not abiding – or out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Ask the Holy Spirit if there are any unresolved issues.**

Even though I am walking in fellowship with the Lord and have no unresolved issues, not all that I do is motivated by Him, or is even pleasing to Him. As I allow Him to grow and mature me, He will increasingly have more freedom to bear His fruit.

If I find myself out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, it is by my choice. I do not need to be out of fellowship with the Lord any longer than I choose to be. Restoration to the condition of abiding fellowship will take place immediately upon confession of the offense(s) for which the Holy Spirit is holding me accountable.

**How can I know if I'm out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit?** Usually symptoms indicate an ailing body. Similarly look for on-going spiritual symptoms of the sinful nature, such as:

- stumbling
- impatience
- frustration
- dissatisfaction
- worry
- striving
- lack of peace
- sense of defeat
- complaining
- anxiety
- anger
- irritability
- addictive behavior
- critical or judgmental attitude
- other on-going symptoms?

#### 4. Common misconceptions about the condition of abiding.

- a. **Misconception:** As a believer I can keep myself in the condition of abiding through my own efforts. **Reality:** At salvation I was put into the conditional state of abiding fellowship with the Lord as a result of what Jesus did on the cross, not because I deserve it. My goal should be to please Him, and be sensitive to Him so that any issues He brings to my attention do not remain unresolved. Those unresolved issues can disrupt my fellowship with Him, just as in human relationships.
- b. **Misconception:** God's greatest concern about my sin is the degree to which it falls short of His standard of righteousness, and "avoiding sin" should be the primary focus of my Christian walk. **Reality:** God is most concerned with the disruption sin causes in His continual abiding fellowship (communion) with me, and that it consequently hinders Him from accomplishing His purposes in and through me. The writer of Hebrews tells us: ... *let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus,...* (Heb. 12:1-2)
- c. **Misconception:** The condition of abiding is somehow "attained to." **Reality:** Abiding is the birthright of every child of God; it is not about achieving a certain level of maturity. Does a child have to earn the privilege of being in fellowship with their parents? God has made provision for every Christian to live consistently in harmony with Him without extended periods of being out of fellowship.
- d. **Misconception:** Abiding is restricted by my lack of knowledge, past experiences, or personal limitations. **Reality:** What hinders God from blessing and using me as He desires is only my choice(s) and unwillingness to acknowledge and confess unresolved issue(s). The Biblical "normal" Christian life is one of habitually abiding; not to abide is abnormal. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
- e. **Misconception:** Since my natural tendency is to categorize or classify "acts of behavior" and

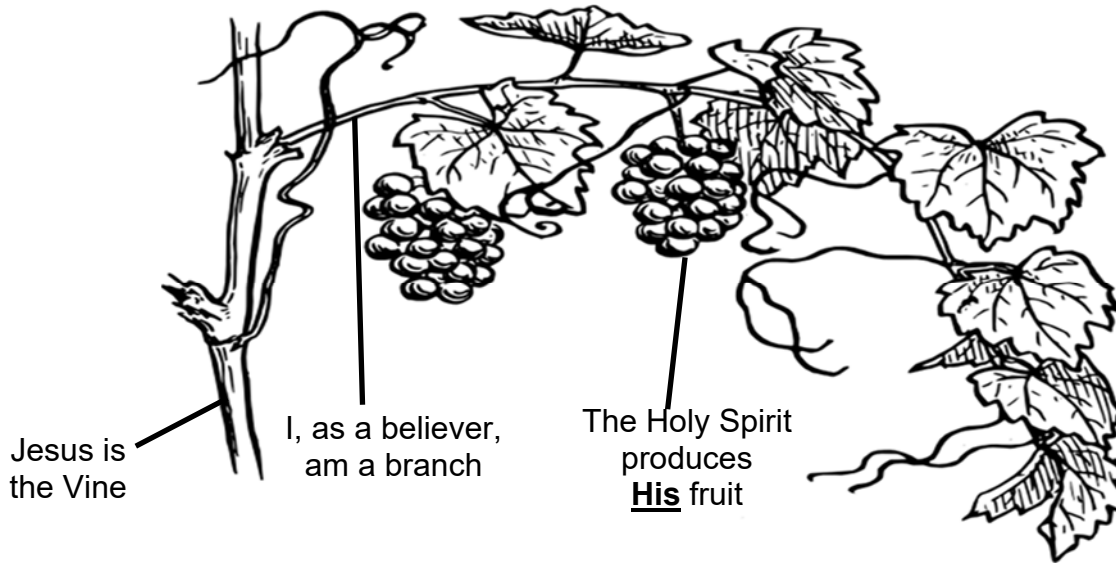


build mental lists of "do's and don'ts," it is easier to follow "my list" of perceived expectations. **Reality:** As the Holy Spirit leads me moment by moment, I will increasingly form the habit of carefully looking at each choice, judging or discerning if it is pleasing to Him. What I tend to consider "insignificant" may be very significant to Him. It will help me to consider "sin" as "anything that is displeasing to God."

**Example:** Do you think reading the Bible can ever be sinful? Imagine you are resting on a riverbank reading your Bible. You notice a child struggling against the current, being swept downriver. You faithfully continue reading. Suddenly, a mother appears frantically asking if you've seen her child. You tell her that you would have saved the child if you hadn't been reading God's Word. Imagine her response (and God's)! This example may seem extreme, but it illustrates the danger of categorizing acts of behavior because what God deems "correct" today may be "incorrect" in a similar situation tomorrow.

John 5:30 (*Jesus said*) ... I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.  
2 Cor. 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, ... to be pleasing to Him.  
Eph. 5:8-10 ... walk as children of Light ... trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.  
Romans 14:23 ... whatever is not from faith is sin.

## Abiding Verses and Illustrations



### 1. As I am “abiding” I am depicted as a fruit-bearing branch on a tree.

**NOTE:** in some versions of the Bible "abide" is translated "remain". The following passage from John is from the ISV.)

John 15:1-6 (*Jesus said*) “I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vintner [Vineyard Keeper]. He cuts off every branch that does not produce fruit in Me, and He cuts back [prunes] every branch that does produce fruit, **so that it might produce more fruit.** **You are already clean** because of what I’ve spoken to you. “Abide in Me, and I will abide in you.

Just as the branch cannot produce fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in Me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because **apart from Me you can do nothing.** Unless a person abides in Me, he is thrown away like a pruned branch and dries up. People gather such branches, throw them into a fire, and they are burned up.

(Note: see Lesson 3-10 for a more detailed explanation of John 15)

:7-11 “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and you’ll receive it. **This is how My Father is glorified, when you produce a lot of fruit** and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. **So abide in My love.** If you keep My commandments, you’ll abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. I’ve told you this, so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

:12-17“This is My commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. No one shows greater love than when he lays down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. I don’t call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn’t know what his master is doing. But I’ve called you friends, because I’ve made known to you everything that I’ve heard from My Father. **You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.** I have appointed you to go and produce **fruit that will last,** so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. I am giving you these commandments so that you may love one another.”

Galatians 5:22-23 But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

**NOTE:** "To abide" simply refers to the moment-by-moment experience of walking in harmony(communion, fellowship) with the Holy Spirit; that is, without any "unresolved offenses" that are disrupting that harmony (communion, fellowship).

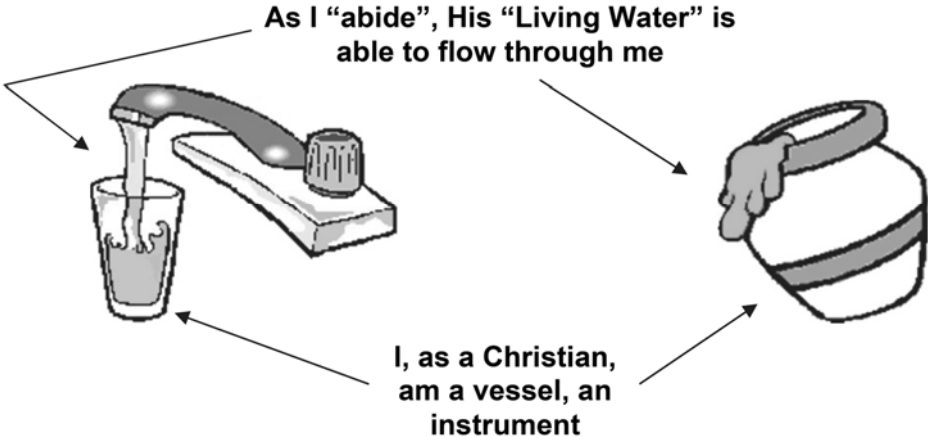
*Does the branch produce the fruit, or is the branch simply a conduit (instrument, vessel) through which the life of the Vine flows?*

**2. Abiding Illustrations**

**a. As I am “abiding” I am depicted as a vessel, an instrument.**

2 Tim. 2:20-21 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver bowls, but also those of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be **a special instrument**, set apart, **useful** to the Master, prepared for every good work.

A **faucet** with “living” water can be a useful illustration. Although the water pressure is always constant, the “on-off” feature has to be maintained in the “On” position for the water to freely flow. During the time I am not in abiding in harmony (fellowship) with the Lord the on-off feature is in the “Off” position.



**b. As I am “abiding”, I allow God’s “living water” to flow through me as through a container or a serving vessel. (see also Ezek. 47:1-12)**

Jer. 2:13 “For My people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned Me, **the Fountain (Spring) of living water**, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.”... (see also Jer. 17:13)

John 4:14 (*Jesus said*) “But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become **a well of water springing up** within him for eternal life.”

John 7:37-39 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have **streams of living water flow from deep within him.**” He said this about **the Spirit.** Those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been received because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

James 3:8-12 But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. We praise our Lord and Father with it, and we curse men who are made in God’s likeness with it. Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

**c. As I am “abiding”, I am depicted as a conduit or vessel through which God’s light is able to shine.**



The *electricity* represents **GOD’S LIFE** flowing through me.

The *bulb* represents **ME** as a Christian

The *light* that is given off represents **the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

As I remain in harmony (fellowship) with the Holy Spirit (*connected, light switch “On”*), I am allowing His life (*electricity*) to increasingly flow through me (*bulb*), which He will then use to influence and attract others (*light*).

Matt 5:14-16 (*Jesus said*) **“You are the light of the world.** A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, **let** your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and **give glory to your Father** in heaven.”

2 Cor 4:6-7 For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be **from God and not from us.**

Phil. 2:15 ...so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom **you shine like stars in the world.**

**d. As I am abiding, I am walking in the light of God’s presence.**

1John 1:5-10 Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him. If we say, “We have fellowship with Him,” yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us



our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We don’t have any sin,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 2:8-11 Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn’t know where he’s going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”

### **3. God has designed the on-going healthy harmony (communion) between a Christian husband and wife to be a picture of the on-going harmony (communion) between the Lord and a Christian.**

**One of the purposes of a God-centered Christian marriage is meant to be a demonstration to others of how He can bring about a consistent harmonious relationship between two unique individuals that are surrendered to Him.**

**If I am in doubt as to how I should relate to the Lord, I can ask myself, "how should I relate to a spouse (or to a close friend)?"**



Eph. 5:21-33 ...submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, since we are members of His body. For this

reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

John 17:11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You.

Holy Father, protect them by Your name that You have given Me,

John 17:21-22 May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one.

Galatians 3:28 There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gen. 2:24 This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

1 Cor. 6:17 But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.



Col. 3:18-19 Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and don't be bitter toward them.

1 Peter 2:18 – 3:7 Household slaves, submit with all fear to your masters, not only to the good and gentle but **also to the cruel**. For it brings favor if, mindful of God's will, someone endures grief from suffering **unjustly**. For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God. For **you were called to this**, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you **an example, so that you should follow in His steps**. He did not commit sin, and **no deceit** was found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.... **In the same way**, wives, **submit yourselves to your own husbands**.... Husbands, **in the same way**, live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature yet **showing them honor** as coheirs of the grace of life, **so that your prayers will not be hindered**.

Marriage consists of an **event** (a ceremony, **a covenant**), followed by a **process**. The ceremony represents a **relinquishment of my right to make independent decisions**, in favor of being joined (yoked together) with another.

The marriage process is designed to be a growing relationship, learning to live and walk in harmony with a spouse. This process represents the manner in which a Christian learns to live and walk in harmony with the Lord.

Malachi 2:14 Yet you ask, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have acted treacherously against her, though she was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant.

# Abiding Today - The Present - This Moment

God wants me to be free from the burden of “unresolved issues” of the PAST or the FUTURE, allowing Him freedom to produce His fruit through my life.

## PAST

- Do I need to resolve issues from my past?
- Do I need to forgive or reconcile with someone, or confess a wrong to someone?
- Do I need to make restitution for harm done? (physical, financial, etc.)
- Do I need to confess any sins to the Lord?

## PRESENT

“Am I in fellowship with (“abiding with”) the Lord at this moment?”

**IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

## FUTURE

- Do I have worries about the future disrupting my fellowship with the Lord?
- Do I need to acknowledge my worry or anxiety as sin?



### 1. Issues related to others - in the past, or at this moment.

- a. **If I think I can maintain good fellowship with God, and at the same time disregard relationships with others, I am deceiving myself.**

1 John 2:9-11 The one who says he is in the light but hates (*see note*) his brother **is in the darkness** until now. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates (*see note*) his brother is in the darkness, **walks in the darkness**, and doesn't know where he's going, **because the darkness has blinded his eyes**.

1 John 4:20-21 If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates (*see note*) his brother, he is a liar. For the person who **does not love** his brother he has seen **cannot** love the God he has not seen. And we have this command from Him: The one who loves God must also love his brother.

**NOTE:** “Love” is a choice “to do what is best for someone.” That is not necessarily the same as “doing what is pleasing to someone” (see also Heb. 12:6,11). I do not have to “feel affectionate” toward someone, but I do have to “love” them. In this context, don't equate “hate” to “hostility” or “intense dislike”, but rather as “not doing what is in someone's best interest,” (the absence of love or not loving).

- b. **My unwillingness to forgive someone can limit my availability and usefulness to God, and can thus affect His fruit through my life.**

Mark 11:25 And whenever you stand praying, if you have **anything** against **anyone**, **forgive** him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.

Col. 3:12-13 Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting one another and **forgiving one another** if anyone has a complaint against **another**. **Just as** the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.

**c. Does the Holy Spirit want me to apologize to someone I have offended? It is my responsibility to pursue restoration of fellowship.**

Matt. 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

**d. Does the Holy Spirit want me to pursue reconciliation with someone who has offended me? It is my responsibility to pursue restoration of fellowship.**

Matt. 18:15 If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.

**e. Does the Holy Spirit want me to make restitution to someone to whom I have caused loss? (Repay a debt? A loan? Taxes owed?)**

Num. 5:5-7 The LORD spoke ... When a man or woman commits any sin against another, that person acts unfaithfully toward the LORD and is guilty. The person is to confess the sin he has committed. He is to pay full compensation, ... to the individual he has wronged.

Rom. 13:8 Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another,...

**f. I am not responsible for someone else's unwillingness to love or forgive me, but God does hold me accountable for loving and forgiving others.**

Rom. 12:10 Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Rom. 12:16-18 ... Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone.

Rom. 12:20-21 But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.... Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

Phil. 2:1-4 ... Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

**NOTE:** Remember – “Love” is a choice “to do what is in someone’s best interest.”

**2. Personal issues - just between the Lord and me.**

**a. Is there an unresolved personal issue(s) that the Holy Spirit wants me to acknowledge and confess to Him?**

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We don’t have any sin,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

## **b. Important points to contemplate:**

**1) Accountability** - Most Christians subconsciously reason that God leaves it up to them to determine when there is a problem between them and God that needs to be resolved. That is wrong! I am **not** the one who decides for what I am being held accountable. The Holy Spirit **alone** makes that determination. In a parent-child relationship, the parent's responsibility is to **explain** to the child the nature of the problem. The child's responsibility is to **attentively listen** and **respond**.

**2) Disagreements** - Newlyweds often have many differing opinions. Hopefully, as they nurture their relationship, many of those differences will diminish. Some will not. Some differences of opinion will remain until death. That is okay; we are each designed with a unique personality, and we should respect that difference in others. Do I really want everyone to think as I do? My goal should be to live in harmony (fellowship) with others, not to pressure everyone to hold my views. That is true of my spouse and my children as well as others.

I need to ask myself: Am I bothered by my spouse's (or friend's) behavior, or views, because it's not the way "I" do things, or the way "I" think? Does God say their behavior or view is displeasing (sin) to Him? If I am bothered or offended by another's beliefs or behavior, yet God does not say it is sin, then I may need to examine my own heart. Maybe I'm judgmental. Maybe God is trying to show **me** an area He wants to change in **my** life. It is perfectly normal to hold different opinions and yet maintain mutual respect and fellowship.

**3) Growth** - Having no unresolved issues for which I am being held accountable does **not** mean that everything I am now doing is pleasing to God. What does the concept of growth mean? We grow "**to**" something and "**from**" something. As we grow physically, we are advancing **from** a level of weakness **to** a level of increased physical capability. Likewise, as we grow spiritually, we are advancing from a level of reliance on **self** to a level of increasing reliance on **God**.



I need to understand that spiritual strength is not what **I** can do, but rather what God is able to do through me. There is only one thing that hinders the Lord from using my life, unconfessed sin (anything that displeases the Lord) for which He is holding me accountable. The term "**growth**" implies then that there are things in my life today that are displeasing to the Lord, hence the need "to grow." Thankfully He does not hold me accountable for all that displeases Him. In fact, I am not even aware of all that He would like to change. If I am growing spiritually, I will become increasingly more sensitive to His voice. He wants me to learn to hear His whisper without having to shout at me.

Consider this age-appropriate growth example: My 6-month old baby messes in his diaper. Am I shocked? Do I scold him or spank him? Do I find it pleasing that he ruined his diaper? Of course not! I know that he does not yet understand. However, if he does the same thing when he is 6 years old, it will be quite different. That is the same way the Holy Spirit trains me, except that He is more patient and gentle than we tend to be.

Again, what I need to remember is that the Holy Spirit is the **only One** who is able to determine what is displeasing to Him. He is not waiting for me to make those determinations. Do you expect your baby to tell you the rules by which he will live in harmony with you? That would be ridiculous. Neither does the Holy Spirit expect **me** to tell Him what is acceptable!

**3. Issues related to the future. God does not want me to be weighed down by either the past or the future.**

**a. It is good to be “concerned” about the future, but concern can become worry, and worry can become anxiety. I need to be careful to not allow those emotions to become a pretext for not trusting in God’s care for me.**

**CONCERN    ➡    WORRY    ➡    ANXIETY    ➡    PANIC**

**b. It is okay to be concerned (wise, prudent) and to plan and prepare for the future. Paul’s “concern” for the welfare of the believers was correct.**

2 Cor. 11:28-29 (*Paul said*) ... there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?  
Prov. 10:5 The son who gathers during summer is prudent; the son who sleeps during harvest is disgraceful.

**c. But I am told to “not worry” about the future. I should not regard that instruction as just a “suggestion.” Worry and anxiety about the future can be the evidence of an unwillingness to trust God, and can become sinful.**

Matt. 6:31-34 So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ... your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.  
Phil. 4:6 Don’t worry about anything,...

**d. I can count on the Lord to faithfully and lovingly take care of my need.**

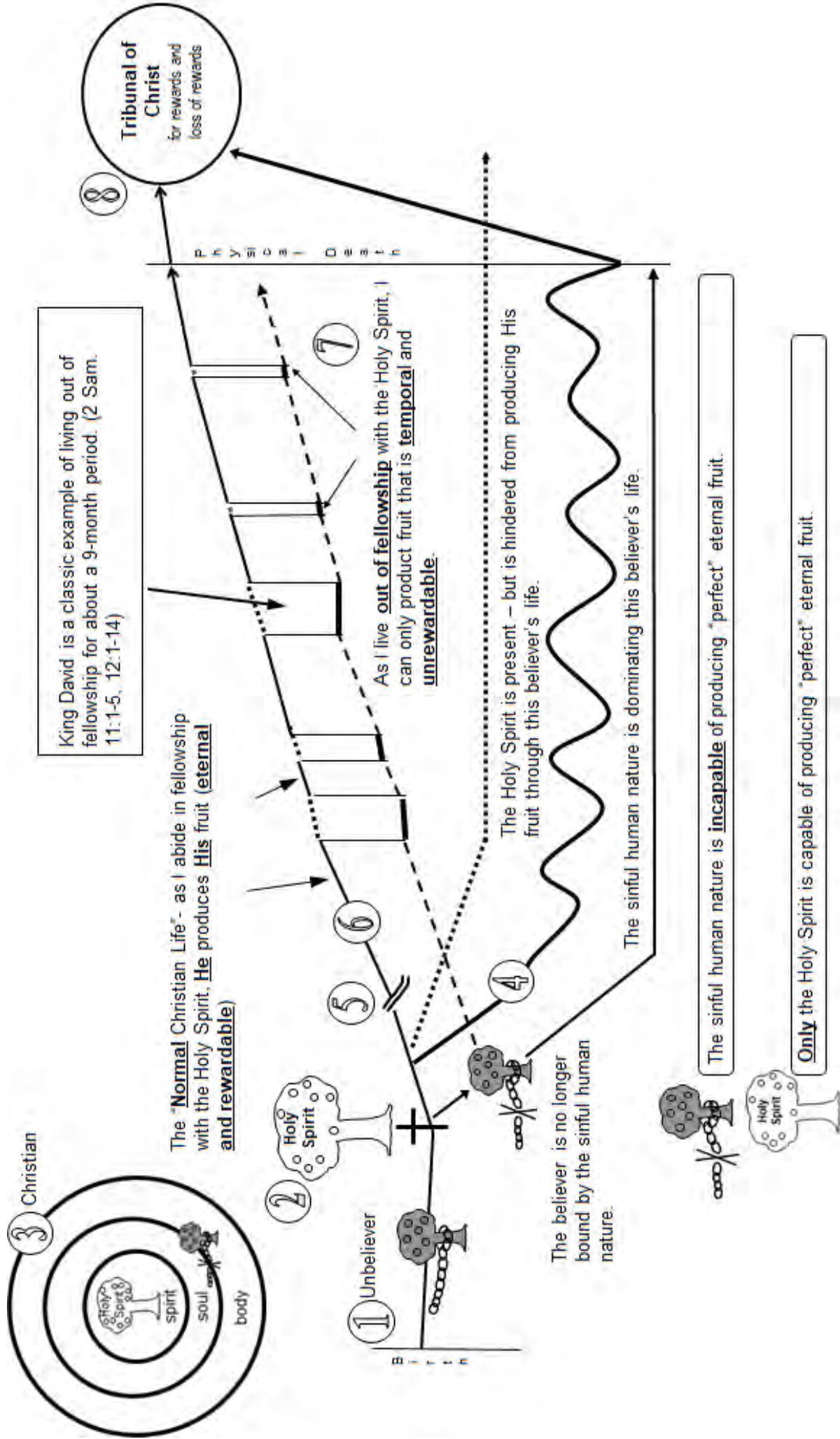
Phil. 4:6-7 Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.

**e. I am told to “follow” Him, even though it is always tempting to “lead.” He wants me to allow Him to be intimately involved in all my future plans.**

Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)  
Luke 9:23-24 Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me...”  
James 4:13-17 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” You don’t even know what tomorrow will bring ... Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”



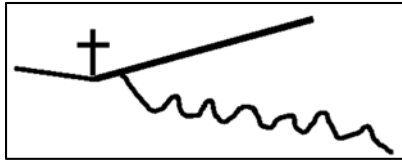
# Living Daily In (or out of) Fellowship with The Lord





## Living Daily In (or out of) Fellowship with the Lord

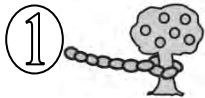
This lesson is an overview of concepts previously covered. This lesson should help me understand my continual interaction with my two competing natures, and how that impacts my daily abiding relationship with the Lord.



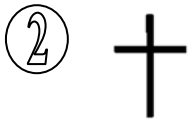
After Salvation there are two paths for the new believer. Note that both of these paths represent believers.

1. One line gradually goes upward and into the "spiritual Promised Land." This upper path represents a believer who sees the Lord as his **Master**, that is, the One who oversees and manages his life.

2. The lower path leads into a "spiritual desert." This lower path represents the believer who, either out of ignorance or choice, **has not acknowledged** the Lordship of Christ over his life.



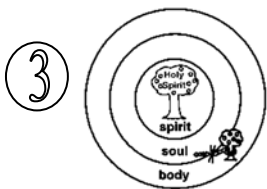
① Before salvation, I was an unbeliever, bound to the sinful human nature (represented by the chain around the darkened tree).



② At the cross I was delivered from the "**penalty**" of sin (represented by the "broken chain" around the darkened tree). During this life, from the cross until death, I am being delivered from the "**power**" of sin. And at physical death I will be delivered from the "**presence**" of sin.

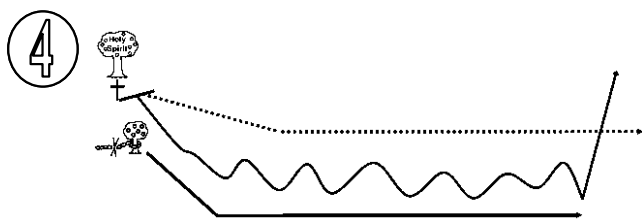
At the moment of salvation, I was freed from the mastery of the sinful human nature, and received the Holy Spirit, Who indwells the believer from that time forward. I started the Christian life abiding in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and choose to take one of two paths: (#4 or #5/6)

It is important to note that while **the believer has been set free from bondage to the sinful human nature, the sinful nature does not cease to exist and will continue in me until physical death occurs**, at which time I will be freed from the presence of the sinful nature.



③ Upon believing, I was born into the spiritual race, and received God's divine nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit. I am **no longer bound** to the sinful nature, although it is still present. Paul wrote: *For we know that **our old self was crucified with Him**,... so that we may **no longer be enslaved to sin**, since a person who has died is **freed from sin's claims**.* (Romans 6:6-7)

The unbeliever has no option but to be mastered or dominated by the sinful nature, producing **only flawed** fruit. However, the believer is only dominated by the sinful nature **by choice**.



The lower wandering line represents the "abnormal" Christian life. If not spiritually mentored and instructed on **how to follow the Holy Spirit**, many believers find themselves modeling their behavior after other believers, rather than following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The typical result is that

the believer will at some specific time ignore or discount the leading of the Holy Spirit, choosing rather to follow the example of peers.

As a result of spiritual ignorance, or by willful disobedience, if I am unwilling to allow the Holy Spirit to manage my life, I will find myself in a "desert" experience – never quite being able to gain victory over the pull of the sinful nature.

These believers typically see God as their "**Junior Partner,**" rather than their Master. They conclude that "He is always there when they can't cope and **they determine** He is needed to deliver them out of circumstances." They typically consider their own goals and aspirations to be of greater importance than those of God. They desire for God to fit into **their** plans, rather than fitting into **His** plan. Their lives are characterized by a "**disposition of self-dependence**." (As illustrated by King Saul – see Lesson 3-3)

Note that the Holy Spirit (His presence is represented by the dotted line just above the wavy line) is constantly wooing the believer to yield to Christ as Lord and Master of his life. The Holy Spirit is not the dominant force in this believer's life. As a consequence He doesn't have the freedom to produce His fruit through the believer, who is **forfeiting God's intended fruitful Christian life**.

The solid line at the bottom represents the dominance of the sinful human nature. This believer typically relies on his own understanding to make decisions. By not allowing the Lord to rule in his life, the human nature is allowed to rule. Submission to the human nature will cause problems for the believer, and hopefully he will become so dissatisfied and frustrated (usually through a crisis) that he will finally make a decision to acknowledge Christ's Lordship over his life.

These believers are described in the parable of *The Sower* (Matthew 13 & Luke 8) as being **distracted, not maturing**, resulting in **not bearing eternal rewardable fruit**, until they choose to acknowledge His authority over their life, and begin to "abide." Although saved, they can potentially lose all rewards. *If anyone's work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire.* (1 Cor. 3:15)

To believers that have habitually lived in a desert experience, often for years, the thought of consistently abiding in fellowship with the Lord seems unrealistic and "super spiritual." Such a biblical relationship with the Lord is often perceived as idealistic and beyond the attainment of the average believer. The simple truth is that it is not a matter of attaining to, but rather by faith taking advantage of what God has already made provision for.

If a believer simply understands the need to let the Lord manage his life (Lordship) and learns how to consistently abide in harmony, he will experience God's designed normal Christian life. It's not something you "attain to," it is yours through spiritual birth. **Every Christian has a right to live in the spiritual Promised Land. For many believers this desert experience could have been avoided, or significantly shortened, had they been personally mentored ("spiritually parented," "personally disciplined") when they first believed in Christ.**

5



The short parallel lines, located at the fork in the believer's life, represent the "spiritual Jordan river" and the believer's choice to acknowledge His Lordship and enter the "spiritual Promised Land." This indicates the "event" in the believer's life to "choose" to let the Lord control and manage his life.

This is not a decision to "try my best," or to "behave better in my own strength," but rather a decision to surrender my "will," accept His yoke, and allow Him to live His life through me.

(Jesus said) "*Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" (Mat. 11:28-30)

(Paul wrote) ... and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

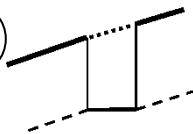
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Once the believer makes the Lordship decision, then the normal Christian life is one of consistently "abiding in fellowship (harmony)" with the Lord.

The solid line at the top represents the time in which the believer is in fellowship with the Holy Spirit ("walking in the Spirit"). The presence of the sinful nature in the spiritual believer is represented by a dashed line.

7



Notice that there are breaks in the line, which represent periods of time during which the believer is out of fellowship (not abiding) with the Holy Spirit.

The third dip depicts the example of King David. When King David climbed up to the roof of his house he may or may not have been in fellowship with the Lord.

When he chose to commit adultery and murder, he was clearly out of fellowship. He remained out of fellowship with the Lord for approximately a nine-month period. Fellowship was not restored until just before the baby was born, when David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. As soon as David confessed his sin to the Lord he was immediately restored, even for murder and adultery. Yes, he suffered consequences through the rest of his life, but as far as God's forgiveness was concerned, he was immediately forgiven and restored into fellowship. Being restored into fellowship does not mean that there are no consequences, but it does mean that there is complete forgiveness.

As shown above, the acceptance of Christ's Lordship over one's life is no guarantee of continual unbroken spiritual fellowship. Abiding fellowship is conditional. At any time the believer may allow his fellowship with the Holy Spirit to be disrupted, and find himself "walking in the flesh" (submitted to the sinful nature). At any given moment we are either submitted to the Holy Spirit or we are submitted to the sinful nature. We are either "walking in the Spirit" or "walking in the flesh."

God has made provision for every believer to consistently "walk in the Spirit" (the "normal" Christian life). A believer may excuse sin using the pretext of "that's just the way I am," or cite verses from Romans 7, where Paul describes his struggle with the sinful nature. It should be noted however that Paul's spiritual life was better characterized by Romans 8. Certainly every believer will be out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit at times, but such periods should be the exception, not the rule. And those times of being out of fellowship (walking in the flesh, dominated by the sinful nature) should diminish in both frequency and duration as the believer matures.

The Holy Spirit **will** produce His fruit as we abide in Christ. Our part is **not to strive** to produce fruit. Or worry about it. Our part is to **abide in fellowship** with Him, and the fruit will come **naturally**. The Holy Spirit will only produce **good** fruit. I should not assume that everything I do while I am abiding is pleasing to God. He will only hold me accountable according to my maturity level, just as loving parents train their children. *For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but He does it for our benefit, so that we can share His holiness.* (Heb. 12:10)

During periods when we are out of fellowship (when we're not abiding) the Holy Spirit is not free to produce His fruit through our lives. *The Spirit is the One who gives life. **The flesh doesn't help at all.** The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.* (John 6:63)

⑧ God wants to reward every believer. He is preparing eternal rewards that cannot be compared with the things of this world. Jesus commanded us to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven, not here on earth. The treasures in heaven are so wonderful, they will make everything in this world that we're familiar with pale in comparison. Each believer has to decide if he wants to lay up **eternal** treasures in heaven or **temporary** treasures here on earth. Jesus said: *But **collect for yourselves treasures in heaven**, ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matt. 6:20-21)

1 Cor. 3:10-15 speaks of potential "loss" at the Rewards Ceremony for believers. It is important to distinguish between "loss" and "punishment." **Loss is not punishment.** Consider a graduation ceremony as an example. You may go to a graduation where you receive a diploma. Others may receive accolades and awards in addition to their diploma. Because you only received a diploma it would not be correct to view yourself as being "punished." Those who have received special awards were honored because of their priority decisions. You could also have received special awards had you not chosen to forfeit them in favor of other priorities that you considered to be more important.

The believer who is walking in the flesh can do "good" things (from the human perspective), just as an unbeliever can. Anything, however small, that is motivated by the Holy Spirit is **eternal** and **rewardable**. Anything, regardless of outward appearance, that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is **flawed**, less than perfect, and of **no** eternal or rewardable value.

Paul warns us: *If I speak human or angelic languages but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am **nothing**. And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body in order to boast but do not have love, **I gain nothing.*** (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

**Only that which is produced by the Holy Spirit is perfect and can enter into eternity.** Only the Holy Spirit can produce perfect fruit. It is not what I do "for" God that is important, but rather what I allow the Holy Spirit to produce through me. (see Eccl. 3:14)

The issue is not one of fruit or no fruit that we have to be concerned about. What we need to be concerned about is **where does the fruit originate**. As we abide in harmony with the Holy Spirit, He **will** bear **His** fruit through our life. It's as simple as that!

(Jesus said) *"I am the vine; you are the branches. **The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.**"* (John 15:5)

# The Normal Healthy Christian's Primary Spiritual Development

## Salvation (Decision)

①

John 5:24  
I assure you:  
Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.

1 John 5:13  
I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

## Lordship (Decision)

②

Matt. 11:28-30  
(*Jesus said*) ... take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Heb. 3:19, 4:11  
... they (*Israelites*) were unable to enter because of unbelief. Let us then make every effort to enter that rest...

1 Cor. 7:23 ... he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price....

## Abiding In Christ (Process)

③

The goal is "continual" fellowship, To be a "usable" vessel (instrument)

John 15:1-17 ...and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Rom. 6:13 ... do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.

2 Tim. 2:21 So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

## As I Abide, God Increasingly Produces His Fruit Through Me

Eternal spiritual fruit is whatever the Holy Spirit produces through my life

The Holy Spirit is producing His fruit through me  
Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.  
John 15:5 ... The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit,... (see also Rom. 7:4)  
John 15:16 ... I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain,...

God is glorifying Himself through me  
John 15:8 My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit...

He is maturing me  
John 15:2 ... and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.

He is using my spiritual gift(s)  
1 Cor. 12:4-11 ... A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial...

He is preparing eternal rewards for me  
2 Cor. 4:17 ... producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.

He is attracting others to Himself through me  
Acts 1:8 (*Jesus said*) ... you will be My witnesses....

## The following true story about “Vera”, illustrates the 3 Major Phases of the Christian life

- 1) Even though a Lordship decision should be made at conversion, sometimes it is not made until years later.
- 2) A true surrender of the will is followed by changes in behavior. (review lesson 1-7, if needed)

*(This testimony is segmented to better demonstrate the major phases of the Christian life.)*

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Salvation (Decision)</b></p> <p><b>Christ as “Savior”</b></p> <p>Vera recalls <u>her conversion</u> in a little church in Kansas:          “When the invitation to receive Christ as Savior was given, I knew I should go forward. But my feet seemed glued to the floor. Finally on the last verse of ‘Almost Persuaded,’ I went and made my confession of faith.”</p> <p><b><i>This new believer should have been personally disciplined at this critical time, which probably would have averted the following years of desert experience.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Desert Experience</b></p> <p>After <u>graduating</u> from high school, Vera <u>taught</u> in an elementary school. Her teaching career ended when she <u>married</u>.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Lordship (Decision)</b></p> <p><b>Christ as “Lord”</b></p> <p><b><i>(After some years of wandering)</i></b></p> <p>Vera relates. “I had been married <u>several years</u> when the Lord got my attention,” “At home one day, I came under deep conviction, and knew I had to ask Jesus to be <u>the Lord of my life</u>.”</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Abiding In Christ (Process)</b></p> <p><b>Changed behavior brought about by the Holy Spirit’s transforming power</b></p> <p>“<u>Changes came that I can’t explain</u>, except that I know it was <u>the Lord’s work in me</u>.”</p> <p>Vera <u>contacted</u> people she felt she might have wronged and <u>apologized</u> to them. She developed a <u>hunger for Bible study</u>. “As a child I’d learned John 3:16 and Psalm 23, but I hadn’t been interested in learning anything else,” she confesses. “<u>Now I wanted to learn</u> everything.”</p> <p>To further <u>her search</u> for understanding of God’s Word, she tuned in to Gospel programs on her radio. And she began to make <u>prayer</u> a part of her daily routine.</p> <p><u>Through the years</u>, as she helped with farming and raising their son, Vera continued <u>to study the Bible</u> and <u>maintain her prayer regimen</u>. When Vera and her husband decided to retire, they moved and joined a Bible-teaching church, where Vera was soon recognized for her Bible knowledge and <u>her faithfulness</u> in prayer.</p> <p>She didn’t plan it, nor is her intercession organized, yet through telephone or personal visits she has <u>encouraged many lives</u>. Seekers have been <u>counseled</u> as Vera <u>shares spiritual truths</u> from a <u>lifetime relationship</u> with the Lord.</p>
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# Hardships, Suffering and God's Sovereignty

Jesus clearly tells me that I cannot be His disciple unless I make the commitment to follow Him. Quite regularly, as I follow Him, He will allow me to encounter circumstances that I will perceive as unpleasant and often beyond my human ability to cope.

The purpose of this lesson is to help me understand the process in which every circumstance, even those that appear insignificant, whether good or bad, pass through God's permissive will. He uses every circumstance in His process of transforming me into a holy and useful vessel through which He can accomplish His eternal purposes. In other words, I may not know in my lifetime on earth why He allowed a given circumstance.

A Christian who does not understand the significance of God's sovereign control over all circumstances will typically respond with complaining, blaming, self-pity, anger or bitterness, because these events may appear to be random. It pleases God when I choose to cooperate with Him by acknowledging to Him my acceptance of what He allows, and seek His direction for the appropriate and godly response, as well as for any lessons He may want me to learn.

- 1. Is God in absolute control over all that happens in the universe and on earth? Does there exist some person or force that can somehow affect God's sovereign power? Does He always do what is right? Can God do wrong? Can He make mistakes? Is He totally trustworthy?**

Deut 32:4 The Rock—His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true.  
Psa 18:30 God—His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is pure....  
Prov 21:30 No wisdom, no understanding, and no counsel will prevail against the Lord.  
Job 34:12-16 Indeed, it is true that God does not act wickedly and the Almighty does not pervert justice....  
Isa 46:11 ... Yes, I have spoken; so I will also bring it about. I have planned it; I will also do it.

- 2. Is God in absolute control over all the circumstances and details of my life? (Read and contemplate Psalm 139.)**

Acts 17:25 ... He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.  
Jer 10:23 I know, Lord, that a man's way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps.  
Jer 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."  
Matt 6:25-27,34 "This is why I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."



Rom 8:28 We know that **all things work together for the good** of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. **God is faithful**, and **He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation **He will also provide a way of escape** so that you are able to bear it.

**3. The Bible tells me that I should consider hardships and suffering a normal part of my Christian life here on earth.**

**I should not assume that experiencing hardships and suffering is an indication of God's displeasure. Nor can I assume that His blessings always imply my faithfulness. He is a loving God, and loves me even when I grieve Him.**

**Note:** Consider hardships and sufferings [difficulties] as “anything that **I** personally find unpleasant.” We all understand physical suffering as undesirable. However, because of our diverse personalities, we may have different reactions to difficulties. In other words, one person may watch or participate in a sporting event or other activity and find it exhilarating, while another would view it as a totally unpleasant experience.

**a. Here is one example of a believer who was suffering poverty from the world's perspective, but was rich before God. She was not being punished but was temporarily poor so God could make her eternally rich.**

Mark 12:41-44 Sitting across from the temple treasury, He (*Jesus*) watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. And **a poor widow** came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. Summoning His disciples, He said to them, “I assure you: This poor widow has put in more than all those giving to the temple treasury. For they all gave out of their surplus, but **she out of her poverty has put in everything she possessed—all she had to live on.**”



**b. The apostle Paul did not view hardships as something unusual. In fact, this long list of hardships happened while Paul was in the center of God's will, seeking to please Him as His servant.**

Acts 9:15-16 (*God said of Paul*) “... this man is **My chosen instrument** to take My name to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. I will show him how much **he must suffer for My name!**”

2 Cor 6:4-10 (*Paul wrote*) But as God's ministers, we commend ourselves in everything: by great **endurance**, by **afflictions**, by **hardship**, by **difficulties**, by **beatings**, by **imprisonments**, by **riots**, by **labors**, by **sleepless nights**, by times of **hunger**, by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the message of truth, by the power of God; through weapons of righteousness on the right hand and the left, through glory and **dishonor**, through **slander** and good report; **as deceivers** yet true; **as unknown** yet recognized; **as dying** and look—we live; as being **disciplined** yet not killed; as **grieving** yet always rejoicing; **as poor** yet enriching many; **as having nothing** yet possessing everything.

2 Cor 11:23-27 ... with far more **labors**, many more **imprisonments**, **far worse beatings**, **near death many times**. **Five times** I received **39 lashes** from Jews. **Three times** I was **beaten with rods** by the Romans. Once I was **stoned** by my enemies. **Three times** I was **shipwrecked**. **I have spent a night and a day in the open sea**. On frequent **journeys**, I faced dangers from **rivers**, dangers from **robbers**, **dangers from my own people**, **dangers from the Gentiles**, **dangers in the city**, **dangers in the open country**, **dangers on the sea**, and **dangers among false brothers**; **labor** and **hardship**, **many sleepless nights**, **hunger** and **thirst**, **often without food**, **cold**, and **lacking clothing**.



Phil 3:7-11 ... **I also consider everything to be a loss** in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him **I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth**,...

Phil 4:11-13 I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. **In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content**—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

2 Cor 1:7-9 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that **as you share in the sufferings, so you will share in the comfort**. For we don't want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in Asia: we were **completely overwhelmed**—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, so that **we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead**.

### c. Neither did the other apostles find hardships and suffering to be unusual.

Acts 5:40-41 After they (*Jewish leaders*) called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name**.

1 Cor 4:9-13 For I think God has displayed us, the apostles, in last place, like men **condemned to die**: We have become **a spectacle** to the world and to angels and to men. We are **fools** for Christ,... We are **weak**, ... we are **dishonored**! Up to the present hour we are both **hungry** and **thirsty**; we are **poorly clothed**, **roughly treated**, **homeless**; we labor, working with our own hands. When we are **reviled**, we bless; when we are **persecuted**, we endure it; when we are **slandered**, we respond graciously. Even now, we are like **the world's garbage**, like the **dirt** everyone scrapes off their sandals.

Rev 1:9 I, John, your ... partner in the **tribulation**, kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of God's word and the testimony about Jesus.

**d. Neither should I find it unusual when I encounter hardships and suffering.**

John 15:18-21 (*Jesus said*) "... because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will also keep yours. But they will do all these things to you on account of My name, because they don't know the One who sent Me."

John 16:33 "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

Acts 14:22 "It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God."

Phil 1:29 For it has been given to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him.

2 Tim 1:8 ... share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.

2 Tim 3:12 In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Peter 4:12-16 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory. If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.... But if anyone suffers as a "Christian," he should not be ashamed but should glorify God in having that name.

1 Peter 5:10 Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little.

Rom 8:35-39 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than victorious through Him who loved us.

**4. God typically allows suffering for one or more of the following:**

- a. To build character into my life**
- b. As a consequence of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness**
- c. To be "cast on the Lord" and not rely on myself**
- d. To help me understand the needs of others**
- e. To use my life to be a blessing to others**

- a. God uses hardships and suffering to build character into my life and to shape me into a usable and holy vessel. He alone knows what influences and circumstances will best enable Him to bless me and use me for the purposes that He has designed for my remaining time here on earth.**

Rom 5:3-4 ... we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Heb 5:8-9 (*speaking of Jesus*) Though He was God's Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered....

1 Peter 4:12-16 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you **to test you** as if something unusual were happening to you....

**b. I may suffer the consequences of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness. Even then, God is faithful and loving and may use my situation as a teaching experience to discipline me. For example, if I am careless with my diet, I may as a result experience physical discomfort or suffering.**

1 Cor 11:27-34 (*Paul wrote*) Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord.... For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. **This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep**. If we were properly evaluating ourselves, we would not be judged, but when we are judged, **we are disciplined by the Lord**, so that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you gather together you will not come under judgment....

Heb 12:6-11 for **the Lord disciplines the one He loves** and punishes every son He receives. Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? ..., we had natural fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but **He does it for our benefit, so that we can share His holiness**. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields **the fruit of peace and righteousness to** those who have been **trained** by it.

**c. Sometimes God allows me to suffer, so I learn to depend on His faithfulness, power, and sufficiency, and not on myself, (Proverbs 3:5-6) and recognize my personal weaknesses. (If you are never in a battle, you can't experience a victory.)**

2 Cor 1:8-9 (*Paul wrote*) For we don't want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in Asia: we were completely overwhelmed—**beyond our strength**—so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, **so that we would not trust in ourselves** but in God who raises the dead.

2 Cor 12:7-10 ... a thorn in the flesh was given to me, (*Paul*), a messenger of Satan to torment me **so I would not exalt myself**. Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected **in weakness**." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in **weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions**, and in **pressures**, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**d. Sometimes God uses suffering to help me identify with the suffering of others in order to be able, with sincere compassion to be helpful to them.**

2 Cor 1:3-5 (*Paul wrote*) ... God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, **so that we may be able to comfort those** who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, **so through Christ our comfort also overflows.**

Heb 2:10, 17-18 ... it was entirely appropriate that God ... should make the source (*Jesus*) of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Therefore, **He had to be like His brothers in every way, so that He could become a merciful and faithful high priest** in service to God.... For since He Himself was tested and has suffered, **He is able to help those who are tested.**

1 Peter 5:9-10 (*Peter wrote*) Resist him (*the devil*) and be firm in the faith, knowing that **the same sufferings** are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. Now the God of all grace... will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little.

**e. Sometimes God allows me to pass through hardships in order for Him to shine through my life in a greater way so that others see Him through me. (A light is most visible and significant in the darkness.)**

Matt 5:14-16 (*Jesus said*) “You are the light of the world.... **let your light shine** before men, so that they may see your good works and **give glory to your Father** in heaven.”

John 9:1-3 As He was passing by, He saw a man **blind from birth**. His disciples questioned Him: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about **so that God’s works might be displayed in him.**”

Acts 16:22-34 Then the mob joined in the attack against them (*Paul & Silas*), and the chief magistrates stripped off their clothes and ordered them to be **beaten with rods**. After they had inflicted many blows on them, they **threw them in jail**, ordering the jailer to keep them securely guarded. Receiving such an order, he put them into the inner prison and **secured their feet in the stocks**. About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God**, and **the prisoners were listening** to them. Suddenly there was such a violent **earthquake** that the foundations of the jail were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains came loose. When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison open, he drew his sword and was going to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out in a loud voice, “Don’t harm yourself, because all of us are here!” Then the jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he escorted them out and said, “Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**” So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the message of the Lord **to him along with everyone in his house**. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away **he and all his family** were baptized. He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and **rejoiced because he had believed God with his entire household.**

**5. God will sometimes require me to re-prioritize the things I hold dear [my idols] so He can replace them with His best, which will have eternal benefits for me and others (e.g. contentment, material possessions, friendships, health, etc.).**

Matthew 5:11-12 (*Jesus said*) “You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. **Be glad** and **rejoice**, because **your reward is great in heaven**. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Acts 4:32-35 Now the large group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and **no one said that any of his possessions was his own**, but instead they held everything in common.... all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet. This was then distributed for each person’s basic needs.

Rom 8:17-18 (*Paul wrote*) ... seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing** with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

Heb 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, **offered up Isaac**....

1 Peter 1:6-7 You rejoice in this, though **now for a short time** you have had to struggle in various **trials** so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though **refined by fire**—**may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**.

**6. My responses to His designed circumstances are an indicator of my willingness to accept what He has planned for me and to entrust myself into His care.**

**a. Jesus showed me by example what my attitude and response should be.**

Matt 26:51-53 ... one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear. Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its place ... **Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me at once with more than 12 legions of angels?**”

John 19:9-11 (*Pilate*) said to Jesus, ... “Where are You from?” But Jesus did not give him an answer. So Pilate said to Him, “You’re not talking to me? Don’t You know that I have the authority to release You and the authority to crucify You?” **“You would have no authority over Me at all,”** Jesus answered him, **“if it hadn’t been given you from above....”**

Heb 12:2 ... **keeping our eyes on Jesus**, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him **endured a cross** and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.

1 Peter 2:19-23 For it brings favor if, mindful of God’s will, someone **endures grief from suffering unjustly**.... But when you do what is good and suffer, **if you endure it**, this brings favor with God. For **you were called to this**, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you **an example, so that you should follow in His steps**. He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when He was reviled, **He did not revile in return**; when He was suffering, **He did not threaten** but **entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly**.

**b. The apostle Paul chose to entrust himself into God's loving care.**

Acts 20:22-24 ... I (*Paul*) am on my way to Jerusalem, bound in my spirit, **not knowing what I will encounter** there, except that in town after town the Holy Spirit testifies to me that **chains and afflictions are waiting for me**. But **I count my life of no value to myself**, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus,...

2 Cor 12:7-10 ... He (*God*) said to me (*Paul*), "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly **boast all the more about my weaknesses**, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I **take pleasure** in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Phil 4:12 I (*Paul*) know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. **In any and all circumstances** I have learned **the secret** of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need.

**c. Consider Job's response to losing almost all he possessed (Job 1:1-19), including his children, and then his physical health (Job 2:1-8). Job's response pleased God.**

Job 1:20-22 Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and **worshiped**, saying: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will leave this life. The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. **Praise** the name of Yahweh. **Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything.**

Job 2:10 ... "Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?" **Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he said.**

**d. Consider Joseph's response to the hardships that God allowed.**

- His jealous brothers **hated** him and **sold him into slavery to foreign traders, who took him to Egypt (Gen. 37:3-36).**
- Then he was **falsely accused of attempted rape and innocently suffered in prison (Gen. 39:1-40:23 and Psa. 105:17-19).**

**In these verses, Joseph spoke of God's faithfulness and sovereignty to his brothers.**

Gen 41:52 ... "**God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.**"

Gen 45:5 And now don't be worried or angry with yourselves **for selling me** here, because **God sent me** ahead of you to preserve life.

Gen 45:8 Therefore it was **not you** who sent me here, **but God.**

Gen 50:15, 19-20 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another, "If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will **certainly repay us for all the suffering** we caused him."... But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You **planned evil against me; God planned it for good** to bring about the present result—the survival of many people."

## **7. Our Daily Bread (March 21, 2005) – A Bumpy Road**

When people tell me life is hard, I always reply, "Of course it is." I find that answer more satisfying than anything else I can say. Writer Charles Williams said, "The world is painful in any case; but it is quite unbearable if anybody gives us the idea that we are meant to be liking it."

The path by which God takes us often seems to lead away from what we perceive as our good, causing us to believe we've missed a turn and taken the wrong road. That's because most of us have been taught to believe that if we're on the right track God's goodness will always translate into a life free of trouble.

But that's a pipe dream far removed from the biblical perspective. God's love often leads us down roads where earthly comforts fail us. Paul said, "To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). When we come to the end of all our dark valleys, we'll understand that every circumstance has been allowed for our ultimate good.

"No other route would have been as safe and as certain as the one by which we came," Bible teacher F. B. Meyer said. "If only we could see the path as God has always seen it, we would have selected it as well." —David Roper

*If some darker lot be good,  
Lord, teach us to endure  
The sorrow, pain, or solitude  
That makes the spirit pure. —Irons*

**No trial would cause us to despair if we knew God's reason for allowing it.**

**FOR FURTHER STUDY** Go to <http://www.rbc.org/rtb/4rsn/>  
**"10 Reasons To Believe In A God Who Allows Suffering"**

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## **8. Wisdom from Oswald Chambers – The Surrendered Life**

We are not fundamentally free; external circumstances are not in our hands, they are in God's hands, the one thing in which we are free is in our personal relationship to God. We are not responsible for the circumstances we are in, but we are responsible for the way we allow those circumstances to affect us; we can either allow them to get on top of us, or we can allow them to transform us into what God wants us to be.



**CONCLUSION: God is worthy of my trust. I can always count on Him to do what is in my best interest.**

**When I stand before Him in heaven, and understand what He was doing in my life here on earth, I will have no regrets for the times when I trusted Him fully.**

**He does not desire for me to look at hardships with solemn resignation, neither to pursue suffering for its own sake, but rather with childlike faith to accept what comes from a Father who loves me beyond human understanding.**

I Peter 4:19 So those who suffer according to God's will should, while doing what is good, entrust themselves to a faithful Creator

Psalms 33:18-21 Now the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him—those who depend on His faithful love to deliver them from death and to keep them alive in famine. We wait for Yahweh; He is our help and shield. For our hearts rejoice in Him because we trust in His holy name.

Psalms 34:4-8 I (*David*) sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears.... This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!

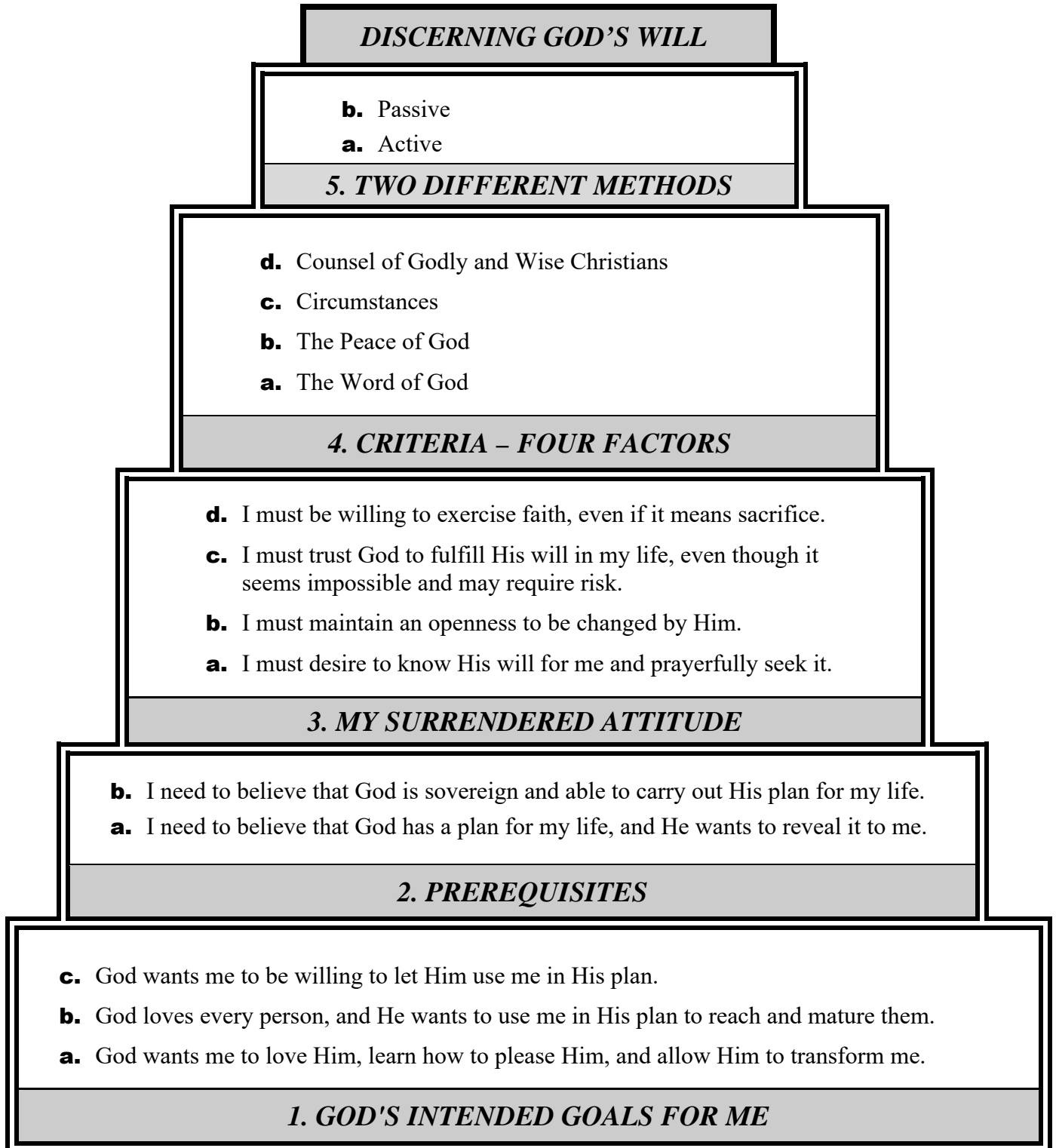
Rom 8:31-32 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything?

1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

# Making Right Choices, Discerning God's Will

I can look at making choices as a pyramid. As a believer, God has intended **goals** for me, and as I make decisions, certain **prerequisites** need to be in place. My **attitude** should be surrendered to Him and then **criteria** helps me discern His will. Then consider the two different **methods**.

**Read from the bottom to the top** for an overview of this lesson before we dig deeper into each section.



***"God will always give the very best  
to those who leave the choice with Him"***

**1. God's goals for my life serve as foundational guidelines:**

- a. God's desire for me is to love Him (demonstrated by my willingness to trust in His character and to surrender and obey Him), to grow in my understanding of how to please Him, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform me into the image of His Son
- b. God loves every person in the world, and He wants to use me in His plan to reach unbelievers with the good news of salvation and to bring believers to maturity in Christ.
- c. God wants me to be willing to let Him use me in His plan, resulting in my being blessed both here on earth as well as eternally in heaven.



**2. Prerequisites for understanding God's will.**

**a. I need to believe that God has His tailor made plan for my life.**

Psalm 139:16 Your eyes saw me when I was formless; **all my days** were written in Your book and **planned** before a single one of them began.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but **the LORD determines his steps.**

Proverbs 20:24 A man's steps are **determined by the LORD**, so how can anyone understand his own way?

Jeremiah 10:23 ... a man's way of life is **not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps.**

Acts 13:36 For David, after serving his own generation **in God's plan**, fell asleep (*died*), was buried with his fathers, and decayed.

**b. God wants me to know His will for me, He doesn't want to hide it from me. He may not give me as much evidence as I want, but He gives me enough to intelligently follow Him by faith.**

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.**

Ephesians 5:17 So don't be foolish, but **understand what the Lord's will is.**

Colossians 1:9-10 ... since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with **the knowledge of His will** in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and **growing in the knowledge of God.**

**c. God is sovereign and perfectly able to carry out His will.**

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that **all God does will last forever**; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of Him.  
Proverbs 19:21 Many plans are in a man's heart, but **the LORD's decree will prevail**.  
Isaiah 46:9-10 ... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and **I will do all My will**.  
Daniel 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted **as nothing**, and **He does what He wants** with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is **no one** who can hold back His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"  
Acts 17:25 Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone **life** and **breath** and **all things**.

**3. I must have a surrendered attitude to Him.**

**a. I must honestly desire to allow God to fulfill His will in my life, and prayerfully seek His will for me.**

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me **with all your heart**.  
Proverbs 2:1-6 My son, if you **accept** my words and store up my commands within you, **listening closely** to wisdom and **directing your heart** to understanding; furthermore, if you **call out to insight** and **lift your voice** to understanding, if you **seek** it like silver and **search** for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. For **the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth** come knowledge and understanding.  
James 1:5-8 Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him **ask in faith** without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **An indecisive man is unstable** in all his ways.  
Luke 6:12-13 During those days He went out to the mountain to pray and **spent all night in prayer to God**. When daylight came, He summoned His disciples, and He chose 12 of them.

**CONSIDER: If Jesus prayed all night before making this important decision, shouldn't I also pray about my decisions?**

**b. I need to choose to humble myself before God with a submissive attitude, "allowing" Him to teach me and change my priorities, as He deems best.**

Psalms 25:9 **He leads the humble** in what is right and teaches them His way.  
Psalms 32:8-9 I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with My eye on you, I will give counsel. **Do not be like a horse or mule**, without understanding, that must be controlled with bit and bridle or else it will not come near you.  
Acts 13:22 ... He raised up David as their king and testified about him: 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man loyal to Me, **who will carry out all My will**.'

- c. The choices I make that have eternal rewards (that is, motivated by the Holy Spirit) always require a measure of faith, and include a perception of risk. Someone has said, “Don’t ask if something is possible, but rather ask, ‘Is it God’s will?’, because if it is God’s will, He will make it possible”.**

2 Cor 4:16-18 ... we do not give up.... For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. **So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen.** For what is seen is temporary, but **what is unseen is eternal.**  
Gal 3:11 ... the righteous will **live by faith.**  
Heb 11:6 ... **without faith it is impossible to please God...**  
1 Peter 1:6-7 ... now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials **so that the genuineness of your faith**—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- d. Choices based on faith may result in sacrifice and/or suffering. There is a price for obedience to His will. Trials ought not to be viewed as an enemy.**

Luke 21:1-4 He looked up and saw the rich dropping their offerings into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow dropping in two tiny coins. “I tell you the truth,” He said. “This poor widow has put in more than all of them. For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but **she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.**”  
Heb 5:8 Though He was God’s Son, **He learned obedience through what He suffered.**  
James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that **the testing of your faith produces endurance.** But endurance must do its complete work, **so that you may be mature and complete,** lacking nothing.

#### **4. Criteria - Four factors to consider in making right choices:**

- a. The Word of God: Does the Bible say something specific about the matter, or present principles related to it?**



Psalms 119:105 Your word is **a lamp** for my feet and **a light** on my path.  
2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable **for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training** in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.  
1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for **this is God’s will for you** in Christ Jesus.  
1 Thess 4:3-5 For **this is God’s will,** your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality, so that each of you knows how to control his own body in sanctification and honor, not with lustful desires, like the Gentiles who don’t know God.  
Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able **to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart.**

## b. The Peace of God: Do I have God's peace?

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.  
Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of the Messiah, ... control your hearts (*that is: "act as an umpire"*). Be thankful.  
Philippians 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**CAUTION: "Feelings" and "desires" may be deceptive. My natural tendency is to be independent rather than to follow His direction. I must be honest with myself! It is often helpful to ask myself (and God), "Would this be pleasing to God?"**

Proverbs 16:2 All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD evaluates the motives.  
Proverbs 28:26 The one who trusts in himself is a fool, but one who walks in wisdom will be safe.  
Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?  
Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

**CAUTION: I need to confess any known sin.**

Psalms 66:18 If I had been aware of malice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.  
Proverbs 28:9 Anyone who turns his ear away from hearing the law—even his prayer is detestable.  
Proverbs 28:13 The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.  
James 4:3 You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires.  
1 John 1:5-10 Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him. If we say, "We have fellowship with Him," yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, "We don't have any sin," we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

### c. Circumstances:

- God wants every believer to be aware that He alone is sovereign over ALL circumstances, and He orchestrates them in such a way to mold our character and strengthen our faith in Him.

#### *The Undetected Sacredness of Circumstances*

*By Oswald Chambers*

The circumstances of a saint's life are ordained of God. In the life of a saint there is no such thing as chance. God by His providence brings you into circumstances that you can't understand at all, but the

Spirit of God understands. God brings you to places, among people, and into certain conditions to accomplish a definite purpose through the intercession of the Spirit in you. Never put yourself in front of your circumstances and say, "I'm going to be my own providence here; I will watch this closely, or protect myself from that." All your circumstances are in the hand of God, and therefore you don't ever have to think they are unnatural or unique....

#### *Oswald Chambers, The Love of God—The Message of Invincible Consolation, 674 R*

The fiery furnaces are there by God's direct permission. It is misleading to imagine that we are developed in spite of our circumstances; we are developed because of them. It is mastery in circumstances that is needed, not mastery over them.

- **Finances?** (Caution: If not used carefully, credit cards (and debt) can be a hindrance to God's freedom to use finances as a tool to guide me.)
- **Is the obstacle (problems) I am experiencing a "Trial" or a "Direction?"**

The path of least resistance may not be God's will. Difficulties or suffering do not necessarily prove that I am not in the center of God's will any more than material and comfort blessings prove that I am in the center of His will.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (*Paul*) ... we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, **so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God** who raises the dead.

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (*Paul, in the center of God's will*) Five times I received 39 lashes from Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods by the Romans. Once I was stoned by my enemies. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers; labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing. Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches.

**d. Spiritual counsel: I should seek godly and wise counsel.  
(My spouse may also "balance" me.)**



Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will listen and increase his learning, and **a discerning man will obtain guidance.**  
Proverbs 12:15 A fool's way is right in his own eyes, but **whoever listens to counsel is wise.**  
Proverbs 15:22 Plans fail when there is no counsel, but **with many advisers they succeed.**  
Proverbs 19:20 **Listen to counsel and receive instruction so that you may be wise** later in life.

**CAUTION: Counsel can be wrong.**

Job 2:9 His (*Job's*) wife said to him, "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die!"  
Job 42:7 ... He (*The LORD*) said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "I am angry with you and your two friends, for **you have not spoken the truth about Me,** as My servant Job has."  
(See also: 1 Kings 13:1-26)

**5. Making Right Choices: Two different methods.**

**a. "Active" - Unless otherwise directed I cautiously move ahead in what honestly appears to be the best direction, consciously trusting God to confirm or to restrain, by either opening or shutting doors.**

**(You can't steer a parked car, or a boat that's tied to the dock.)**

**Note: This is usually the way we seek a spouse or a job, buy a house or a car; that is, things we desire.**

Psalms 37:23-24 A man's steps are established by the LORD, and He takes pleasure in his way. Though he falls, he will not be overwhelmed, **because the LORD holds his hand.**  
Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He shall direct your paths.** (NKJV)  
Isaiah 30:21 ... and **whenever you turn to the right or to the left,** your ears will hear this command behind you: "This is the way. Walk in it."  
Acts 16:6-10 They (*Paul and team*) went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and **were prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in Asia.** When they came to Mysia, **they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.** So, bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas. During the night a vision appeared to Paul: A Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, **concluding that God had called us** to evangelize them.



**b. “Passive” - I wait for God to do something “special” to confirm His guidance.**

I can often find myself using this method regarding things I may not desire to do. I am told to “wait” on the Lord, but I need to be careful that I don’t use that as an excuse not to move forward in obedience, especially if I already understand what I should do, but am reluctant to trust.

We need to be honest with ourselves. Someone has said, “God will give us enough evidence to act upon, but usually not enough to convince”.

Exodus 14:14 The LORD will fight for you; you must be quiet.

Psalms 27:14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and courageous. Wait for the LORD.

Psalms 37:7 Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for Him;...

**Questions to ask myself:**

- If I could choose one course for my life, would it be one of my choosing or one of God's selection?
- Do I prefer to know God's plan and purpose for my daily life while I'm still here on earth and am able to act upon it, or would I rather wait until I stand before Christ at the Tribunal of Christ? (2 Cor. 5:10)

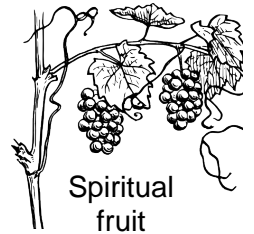
It seems reasonable that each of us is going to become aware of His purpose and plan for our life, either here on earth -- or there.

# Christian Maturity – A Summary

***My level of spiritual maturity is the degree to which God's perspective of life has become my perspective.***

## 1. What does Growth in Spiritual Maturity refer to?

Growing in Spiritual Maturity refers to the process in which the Holy Spirit transforms my spiritual understanding (values, priorities) in order to increase the flow of His life (His Living Water) through me. As more of His life is free to flow through me, there will be an ever-increasing measure of His spiritual fruit in my life.



**ABIDING FELLOWSHIP** with the Holy Spirit has to do with whether or not His life is able to flow through me at any given moment.

**SPIRITUAL MATURITY** has to do with how much of His life is able to flow through me at any given moment (in the context of abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit).

## 2. Spiritual Maturity does not necessarily speak of how much Biblical knowledge I possess, but rather of how willing I have been to allow the Holy Spirit to transform my understanding of Him, and of life.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ... But the one who boasts should boast in this, that he understands and knows Me.... This is the LORD's declaration.

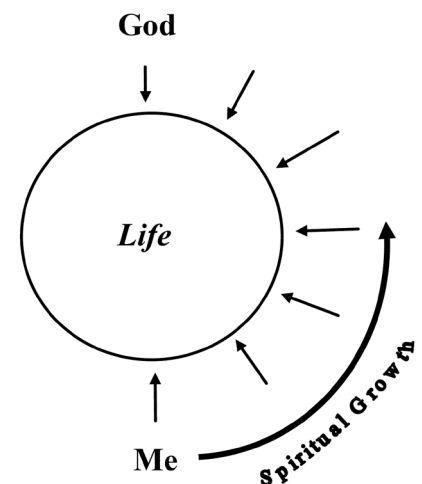
John 17:3 This is eternal life: that they may know You,...

Rom. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

2 Peter 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 1:10 ... that you may walk ... bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.

2 Peter 3:17-18 Therefore, dear friends, ... be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....



**His perspective of life should increasingly become my perspective of life.**

**3. I can limit the flow of His life through me by focusing on my perceived personal capabilities or limitations.**

My natural tendency is to limit God according to my personal understanding of Him and how He acts. As He trains me, He will speak to me about different areas of my understanding that are restricting the free flow of His life in and through me. I need to continually maintain the attitude of a disciple (an apprentice learner), a child (eager to listen and believe), so as to minimize the time that the Holy Spirit has to expend teaching me in any given area of understanding. I need to consciously allow Him access to any area of my life, aware that He will never make any changes except what is in my eternal best interest.

*Look at how we limit the Lord by only remembering what we have allowed Him to do for us in the past. We say, "I always failed there, and I always will." Consequently, we don't ask for what we want. Instead, we think, "It is ridiculous to ask God to do this." If it is an impossibility, it is the very thing for which we have to ask.* (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 29 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

**As I grow spiritually, my focus will shift from my capabilities to His capabilities.**

**CAUTION: It is an unyielding “strength to resist” that hinders God, not weakness.**

2 Cor. 12:9-10 (*Jesus told Paul*) “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me.... For when I am weak, then I am strong.

*To honestly recognize my own capabilities is okay, but to limit God’s power to my perceived personal capabilities is an insult to Him.*

**4. Spiritual growth (learning process) should continue until I move on to heaven.**



A trap that awaits me as I grow is the illusion that I will somehow arrive at a spiritual plateau after which spiritual growth will continue with minimal discomfort. God wants to exercise my faith and increase my understanding of how He thinks and acts, in order for me to increasingly think like Him, and to bear more eternal fruit. Even though every step of faith involves a “perceived” risk, I can rest in the assurance that I am never out of God’s sovereign oversight and care, and He will never allow me to suffer beyond His sufficient provision of grace to sustain me. The process will continue until I leave this earth and step into God’s presence. Growing believers find that their life is a constant warfare. There are no plateaus, just “rest stops.” Be aware of a tendency to be complacent and satisfied with your level of spiritual growth. We resist change.

Romans 5:3-5 ... but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

## 5. Biblical illustrations of the maturing process:

### a. Rivers of Living Water: A trickle becomes a stream, which becomes a river.

John 7:38-39 (*Jesus said*) “The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” He said this about the Spirit.... (See also John 4:14)

As I live in abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit His “Living Water” is free to flow through my life. The volume of His Living Water that is able to flow depends on my spiritual maturity.

### b. A Branch on a Vine: A twig becomes a branch. Obviously, as the branch grows(matures), more fruit can be produced through it.



John 15:1-2, 8, 16 (*Jesus said*) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. ... and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain...”

Romans 7:4 (*Paul wrote*) ... you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God.

### c. The Growth / Maturing Process: An infant (baby, child) becomes an adolescent, who becomes an adult.

Characteristics of an infant / baby: (1) hungry, (2) dependent on others, (3) self-centered.

Stages of growth: The immature Christian tends to focus on self needs, then as they grow, the needs of others become the focus, and as they mature, God Himself becomes the main focus.

Psalm 73:25 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.*

#### ➤ Infants / Babies / Children:

1 Cor. 13:11 (*Paul writes*) When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child....

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn infants, desire the pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it for your salvation,...

1 John 2:12-14 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven because of Jesus’ name.... I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father.

1 Thess. 2:7 Although we could have been a burden as Christ’s apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother nurtures her own children.

1 Cor. 3:1-3 Brothers, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still fleshly....

Heb. 5:12-13 Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God’s revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant.

1 Cor. 14:20 Brothers, don’t be childish in your thinking, but be infants in regard to evil and adult in your thinking.

➤ **Young Adults:**

1 John 2:14 (*John writes*) ... I have written to you, **young men**, because you are **strong**, God's word **remains in you**, and you have had **victory** over the evil one.



➤ **Adults:**

1 Cor. 13:11 (*Paul writes*) ... When I became a **man**, **I put aside childish things**.  
1 Cor. 14:20 Brothers, don't be childish in your thinking, but be infants in regard to evil and **adult** in your thinking.  
Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the **mature**—for those whose senses have been **trained** to distinguish between good and evil.  
1 John 2:13-14 (*John writes*) I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to **know the One** who is from the beginning....

➤ **All Believers (the Church):**

Col. 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, warning and teaching **everyone** with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone mature** in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.  
Eph. 4:11-15 And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, **to build up** the body of Christ, until we all **reach** unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into **a mature man** with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will **no longer be little children**, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us **grow** in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.  
Rom. 8:29 For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to **the image of His Son**.

➤ **The Spiritual Growth of Jesus: (Note: His spiritual growth had nothing to do with sin. He was never disobedient or less than perfect.)**

Luke 2:40 The boy **grew up** and became strong, **filled with wisdom**, and God's grace was on Him.  
Luke 2:42, 46-52 When He was **12 years old**, they (*Joseph and Mary*) found Him in the temple complex sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all those who heard Him were astounded at **His understanding** and His answers.... And Jesus **increased** in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.  
Heb. 2:10 It was entirely appropriate that God, ... should make the source of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**.  
Heb. 5:8-9 Though He was God's Son, He **learned obedience** through what He suffered. After He **was perfected**, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

Congratulations on your continuing choice to grow in the Lord! However, Phase 1 is not the end of your spiritual growth but only a stepping stone to even more.

Prayerfully consider who the Lord would have you mentor / disciple and go through Phase 1 with that believer. To assist you, review the guidelines found in Phase 2 - Mentor Training.