

International Church of Christ, Nigeria www.icocnigeria.com

The Power of One

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Printed in the Federal Republic of Nigeria

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The Power of One

- A Forty Day Devotional Guide on Unity of Faith, Purpose and Mission-

Preface		4
Book One:	ONE BODY	5
	- Many parts, but one body	
	- Weaker but indispensable parts	
	- When one part suffers	
	- When parts are honoured	
	- God's gifts to the body	
Book Two:	ONE SPIRIT	14
	- Led by the Spirit	
	- Do not resist the Spirit	
	Live by the SpiritTemple of the Spirit	
	- Fruit of the Spirit	
	- Spirit vs. Sinful nature	
Book Three	e: ONE HOPE	25
	- Called to Hope	
	- Against all Hope	
	- Christ in you, the hope of glory	
	- Joyful in Hope	
	- Hope is Patient	
	- Hope of transformation	
	- Endurance inspired by hope	
Book Four:		36
	- Lord of my Day	
	- Lord of my thoughts	
	Lord of my timeJesus is Lord	
	- Christ, the image of God	
	- Set apart Christ as Lord	
Book Five:	ONE FAITH	46
DOOK TIVE:	- Live by faith	
	- Faith without work	
	- Increase our faith!	
	- Contend for the faith	
	- Faith to the end	
	- When Faith gets tested	
Book Six:	ONE BAPTISM	57
	- What Baptism did you receive? Part 1	
	- What Baptism did you receive? Part 2	
	 In him, you were also circumcised Buried in Baptism & raised with him through your faith 	
	- Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved	
	- Baptized into his death	
	- Clothed with Christ at Baptism	
Book Sevei	n: ONE GOD	68
	- One God, Father of all	
	- One God over all	
	- One God through all	
Appendix:		74
	- Be completely humble Part 1-3	
	- Be Patient	
	- Bear with One another in Love	
	- A life worthy of the Calling	Ci
	- Church Traditions You Won't Find in The Bible Part 1: "The	Sinner's Praye
	- You Can Make a Difference	
	- Prayers in the Bible Part 1-4	

New Testament One another Passages

PREFACE

It's been five years since the first edition of the "Power Series" rolled off the press. From our first title, "Back to Life", it became evident that many members of our church desire a periodic quiet time journal to help channel their thoughts as they step into a new year. Our first edition, which was meant to be a one-off exercise, (so we thought) was designed to encourage, inspire and challenge members of our local congregation to faith as we all step into a New Year. That first edition was inspired by a similar work by Brother Jimmy Allen. So encouraging was the reception we got from that debut edition that the Lagos Church staff decided to produce a sequel the following year. "The Most Excellent Way", "Worthy of His Calling" and "A Call to Build" kept us busy for the succeeding three years. Special PDF web editions of these publications were equally posted online for free download.

Not only has the "Power Series" enjoyed local acceptance here in Nigeria, we have received several email requests for permission to translate these works into other foreign languages and adopted by several congregations across the globe for private and group studies. This overwhelming acceptance encouraged us to open up submission of materials for subsequent editions from disciples in other countries. So far, we have had contributors write from Ghana, U.K, U.S.A., Nigeria, Kenya, Canada, Cote D'Ivoire and The Philippines.

We have themed this fifth edition, "The Power of One". Motivated by Apostle Paul's inspired letter to the Ephesians, in chapter four, verses one through six, we have divided this edition into seven book segments. Each "book" will focus on expounding the various central subthemes found in Ephesians 4:4-6; (One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism and One God.) Additional studies and resource materials ranging from, Humility, Prayers and a catalogue of the New Testament's 59 "One Another Passages" and more are captured in the Appendix segment. Readers will find this edition faith building and challenging as we delve into some "hot issues". In all, we hope for all to be encouraged.

To spice up the segments, punchy Cartoon, Jokes, notable quotes, engaging word games and heartwarming illustrations are also featured. Beyond providing a healthy spiritual companion for our readers, it is our prayer and hope that this fifth publication will be, a timeless "collector's edition", serving the saints for decades to come.

May God bless all the brothers and sisters across the globe who contributed directly and indirectly to the success of this labour of love. We thank individuals and organisations who graciously granted us rights to reproduce materials from their blogs and websites. May God, by His Spirit, bless and strengthen our unity, our hope, our love for one another and faith, so that all Nations will know that we belong to His Son, Jesus-Amania.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. - **Eph. 4:1-6**

Head of Editorial

2015 Power Series Committee

Book One

We who are Many

- Many Parts, But One Body
- Weaker But Indispensable Parts
- When One Part Suffers
- When Parts Are Honoured
- God's Gifts To The Body





MANY PARTS, BUT ONE BODY

'Let's stop believing that our differences make us superior or inferior to one another' - Anonymous

1 Corinthians 12:14-20 (Please read)

There are strength and great benefit in diversity. If the body is made up of the same parts, it will then cease to be a body. So also, the church, described as a body is made by different members who are diverse in talents, abilities and personality.

Like a football team made up of different players of diverse skills manning different positions for the success of the team, so also is the church made by different members of different abilities deliberately by God for the well-being and growth of the church. There will be greater and many problems if the church is of the same kind of members.

As a disciple in God's church, you must never see yourself as inferior or less important to other members. Whatever you possess, given by God or acquired over time through experience, exposure, education and environment should be used to encourage other disciples to advance God's cause.

Yes, one player in a football team may be the captain, and some may be more skilled than others or even be responsible for the goals that win matches for the team. Despite the reality that others may emerge as MVPs or "stars" of the tournament, every participant is still important to the squad.

In the same vein, some members in the church may end up being in the forefront or spotlight; they get to be called upstage or asked up regularly to serve in a certain dignified capacity, you as a person if not so privileged does not mean you are irrelevant in the scheme of things in the church.

Romans 12:3-8 (please read)

Yes, you are expected to be humble in whatever position or ability you have, still God expects you to use what you have in making the church (body of Christ) powerful and performing. You are not here to make the church weak and waning because you see yourself as 'not usable'. You are blessed and should forever be a blessing to others – please, contribute.

You may not be endowed with the oratory gift to preach and convict tens or hundreds of disciples like some may be doing, but you can speak same too, if just to one person.

Your name may not be mentioned or given accolades in gatherings of many disciples because of some "great" feats you have accomplished or for some "wonderful" accomplishment you did, your name should be mentioned to even one person for "little" acts of service you provide.

Bottom-line, you can't grow beyond your influence.

Today's Action plan:

Read and meditate on Romans 12:3-5 throughout today and be resolved to see yourself as one
important part of one very important body.

"Churchgoers are like coals in a fire, when they cling together, they keep the flame aglow; when they separate, they die out". - Charles de Gaulle



WEAKER BUT INDISPENSABLE PARTS

22" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty", -1 Cor 12:22-24 NIV

I was filled with doubt the first time I read that "Iron" (Fe) in its natural form has no significant strength/hardness without the element carbon (C) and pure gold is so soft, it can only be handled for luxury until combined with other elements to give it a reasonable strength. "How can carbon, a gas increase the hardness of the metal iron?" I asked myself. The simplest answer to this principle that governs many aspects of nature is thus: it is God's intelligent design to teach us unity.

Nature has a lot to teach us about the harmony in unity. Take a look around your room and observe a few appliances. It is key to note that every appliance or tool is a combination of more than one material. Independently, these materials are useless. This same principle is well defined in our ecosystem; an inclusive system where every element has a role to play. Whether weak or strong, solid, liquid or gas, dynamic or static, the harmony of our ecosystem is highly dependent on the effective interaction and appreciation of every constituent of the system.

Using the human body and its parts, the Apostle Paul explained the essentiality of this unifying principle to the church in Corinth. A church where division prevailed and religious segregation were at its peak (1st Corinthians 1: 10-12). He emphasized equal concern for every part as opposed to the Corinthian pattern of religious segregation which gives honour mostly to the "seemingly strong" parts. In point of fact, Paul made us understand that the parts that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

Q: Which parts are weaker and which are stronger?

Q: Which is more honourable and which is less honourable?

Instinctually, humans bend towards a strong branch. We give regard and recognition to seemingly "active parts" in a system than the passive (which isn't necessarily inactive, but is usually active in a transient manner). For this reason, we can infer that the Corinthian Christians deem it fit to accredit strength and spirituality to dramatic religious braggarts who claim to speak with the **gift** of tongues than one with the **fruit** of the spirit. A carnal and flawed method of distinguishing between a weak and a strong disciple. To my shame, I once had this unsound notion.

My insatiable appetite for knowledge bent me towards bible talk leaders, preachers, and disciples who actively run the activities in the church. I would even dare to say "brothers are stronger than sisters" because brothers run the "show". Thankfully, spending quality time with the faceless brothers and sisters who serve outside the "spotlight" has exposed my weakness to me. The weakness of being nearsighted – not being able to see the strength in all.

God declared that all he created was "good" and just as God did not distinguish in his creation, whether weak or strong, better or best, Paul too did not support any exclusive segregation in the church.

"Churchgoers are like coals in a fire, when they cling together, they keep the flame aglow; when they separate, they die out". -Charles de Gaulle

The strength of our church isn't in the margin between the perceptibly strong and the seemingly weak, the strength of our church is in the communal strength we draw from every single person because you and I are indispensable.

Today's Action plan:

- How is your relationship with the disciples (strong or weak); are you welcoming?
- Strategize ways you can complement the church

Further Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 12:25-26
- Romans 12:3-8
- Ephesians 4:11-13





WHEN ONE PART SUFFERS

1 Corinthians 12:26 (a) reads:

"If one part suffers every part suffers with it";

We can all relate to this because of the way it applies to our physical bodies. Even though it has happened to me several times, I never cease to be amazed when the discomfort or pain in a tiny part of my body makes me feel unwell all over. This teaches us that the health of every part of our body is important. Think about it. This is exactly the way it works in the church. In biological terms the bond of blood is thick. In spiritual terms, the bond in the blood of Jesus is thicker. Once we are baptized into his blood we are bound in a strong bond to every saint in the world. "We are one" is not just a nice cliché; it's a fact with major implications.

Your personal spiritual condition affects the condition of the entire church. As a result, the more strong disciples, we have in our church, the stronger our church. In the same way, the more weak disciples, we have in our church, the weaker our church. This is evident in a number of ways. For example, your spiritual condition will affect others for good or bad. Have you noticed how some conditions (e.g. Bad attitudes) can be highly contagious? Again, when you are weak you cannot help to strengthen others. That is why we are admonished to obey **Hebrews 3:12-13**. (Please read)

When you are weak in your personal Bible study, you will be more likely to fall into sin. And how can you spur other disciples towards love and good deeds when you are in the habit of missing meetings of the body? **Read Hebrews 10:24-25**.

Think about how this applies to you. In your present state are you strengthening or weakening the church? Believe it or not, the health of the church depends on you too.

It is also possible to be strong in some areas and weak in other areas at the same time. While a Christian may sin, because of our fallible, sinful nature, it's important that we do not continue in sin. **Read Romans 8:1-17** (very carefully).

Praise God for the help of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is a daily thing. There is no sin too big for God to forgive. On the other hand, no sin is too small to be radically repented of, because all sins affect the church.

The church is not exempted from human suffering. Human suffering can be physical or emotional. It is God's desire and our goal that if any Christian suffers he/she will not suffer alone. **Acts 2:42-47** is a classic blueprint of this example. The Bible in **James 2:14-17** teaches us that we must grow in our actions in showing love to others when they suffer.

Today's Action plan:

- In what ways are your weaknesses and sins affecting the church?
- What will you do this week to turn these weaknesses into strengths?
- Put down the names of at least 2 disciples that you will help as they go through a time of suffering.

Further Reading:

Ephesians 4:15-16



WHEN PARTS ARE HONORED

1 Cor 12:26

26 "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it". "One of the important marks of human maturity and self-awareness is a growing understanding and respect for one's own body. There is a parallel in our spiritual life: As we mature in Jesus Christ, we gain a deeper understanding and a more respectful appreciation for the church, which is the body of Christ". - Doug Goins

It is an established fact from the earlier verses of the above scripture that the body of Christ is the church. There is one body of Christ. As disciples, we form the body of Christ as individual parts of the body. We shall concentrate this session on the last aspect of the scripture "If one part is honoured."

Q: What does honour mean to you?
Webster's dictionary defines honour as:
"To hold a person in high regards" or "to treat with great respect"

We are obligated to honour one another. Honouring one another should become a characteristic of our relationship with one another. This will go a long way to maintaining the one body mentality.

"We are defined by our actions toward others, not others' actions toward us".

Q: How can honouring ourselves become a Characteristic of Our Relationship with One Another in Christ?

God First

".. My salvation and my honour depend on God, he is my mighty rock, my refuge..." – **Psalm 62:7**Honouring one another begins by honouring God first. The temptation is to honour ourselves, which most of us have spent a lifetime doing. When we put Jesus first in our lives, the desire to honour yourself begins to fade.

We must be like **Phinehas** who was zealous for the honour of his God **(Number25:11-13).** We must not follow the example of **Eli, who** was rebuked because he honoured his sinful sons more than he honoured God **(1 Sam 2: 29)**

Others Next

".. Honour one another above yourselves..." - Romans 12:10

Jesus humbled himself before others. He took the heart of a servant and attitude of bringing honour to the father.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

- Take time to appreciate what others have done for you. This will create a sense of gratitude and destroy the temptation to be critical.
- Make a decision to love the ministry of Jesus more than your position. This destroys any sinful competition.

Today's Action plan:

- Start giving others the credit they deserve.
- Encourage others for things they are doing.
- Seek the honour of God by applying your mind to righteous expectations.
- Affirm those who have helped you grow spiritually.

Further Reading:

• Philippians 2:5-11





GOD'S GIFT TO THE BODY

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."- Rom 12: 6-8 NI

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31

The body of Christ can be compared to the human body. Each part has a specific function that is needed for the growth and advancement of the entire body. The body of Christ is the Church and us as members, make up the parts.

Each part is different and unique for a purpose and, though different, they must work together for the well-being of the entire body.

As a disciple of Christ, you are unique and a gift to the Church – the body of Christ! God has a purpose of making you a part of his earthly family and wants you together with others to work in unity to achieve his goal for the glory of his name.

We must avoid two common errors:

- 1. Being too proud of your abilities, or
- 2. Thinking you have nothing to give to the body of Christ

There is nothing further from the truth!

Instead of **comparing** ourselves to one another, we should use our different gifts to **complement** each other, as we spread the good news of salvation to a lost world. We need each other! We need You!!

The Church is made up of many types of people from different backgrounds, races, languages, gifts and abilities. It is easy to allow these differences divide us. However, we must understand that we have one thing in common – Our faith in Christ Jesus! It is in this that the Church finds unity.

In our individual identity, God in his wisdom has given us a new birth into a new family according to our faith in Christ! You did not bring yourself; God bought and brought you into his household of believers. His purpose is to make us who are many to become one.

Q: Do you value the different gifts that others bring into your life?

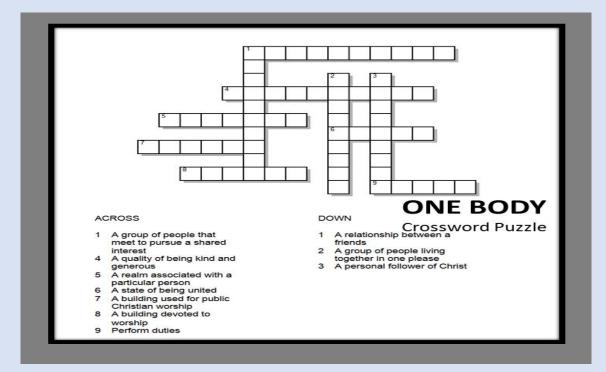
Q: Do you know the gift you have? Are you willing to use your gift to bless others in the Church?

When a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit is given as a deposit or seal guaranteeing their inheritance as Children of God. This is a gift, so no one person can boast. Therefore, we should never look down on anyone or on ourselves. You are a blessing to the body of Christ! Rise and Shine!!!

Today's Action plan:

What gift are you using to serve the Church? If in doubt, ask a trusted disciple how best you can use your gift or gifts to serve the Church?

Further Reading: Ephesians 4:15-16 Acts 11:17 1 Cor 7:7 2 Cor 9:15



ONE BODY WORD SEARCH

COMMUNITY | UNITY | FELLOWSHIP | KINGDOM | CHURCH | FRIENDSHIP | DISCIPLES | SERVE GENEROSITY | TEMPLE

Book Two

Comforter & Counsellor

joy

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- Led By The Spirit
- Do Not Resist The Spirit
- Live By The Spirit
- Temple Of The Spirit
- Fruit Of The Spirit
- Spirit Vs. Sinful Nature



LED BY THE SPIRIT

".... For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" - Rom 8:13-14

Today we learn one of the most important roles of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He leads us as children of God. In other words, the Holy Spirit guides us, goes ahead of us and shows us the path to take. He does not lead us for our own selfish interests, but to consistently put to death the things that are from our sinful nature so that we can live victoriously for God.

How Does The Spirit Lead Us?

He leads us through the Word. John 6.63

Jesus says that His word is Spirit. When we read and meditate on God's word, it is His Spirit that communicates with our hearts, giving us understanding, conviction and spiritual growth as we put the Word **into practice**.

He leads us through the inner prompting. Acts 8:29

Have you ever experienced a time that you felt a strong urge or a gentle nudge or even a "still small voice" telling you to do something for God that you ordinarily might not have done? Yes, could be the Holy Spirit! Philip obeyed the Spirit's prompting and the result was the conversion of a Soul.

Okay, we realize that this can turn out to be subjective and even be abused. So how do you know what you are thinking or feeling is from God? By subjecting it to the word of God! Does it go against the will of God? Being led by the Spirit is not subjecting God's word to your feelings, but vice versa.

10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. – **Ps. 143:10**

He leads us away from dangers, temptations or other unfruitful ventures. In Acts 16:6, He prevented the
apostles from going into Bithynia and led them to Macedonia instead.

Not All Situations Are "From the Lord"

In **1Samuel:26**, King Saul's bodyguard lets him down. David and Abishai could have easily killed Saul, but instead, they only took his spear and water jug. Read an Abishai's interpretation of the situation:

"Today God has given your enemy into your hands" (1Sam. 26:8)

Abishai was arguing, in effect, "look, it's from the Lord; this turn of events reveals God's will for you, David." The man of god, however, knew that a higher principle was at stake.

A similar situation occurs in **1Sam. 24**, where Saul, having entered a cave to relieve himself, was completely off guard, and yet David refused to lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. (**1Sam. 24:6, 26:11**)

No, events are not a trustworthy indicator of God's will.

Yes, whatever happens, God has allowed to happen, and this is part of this sovereign will, but God tests our motives and actions through events.

Being led by the spirit is a learning process, not just following hunches and impulses. (Psalm 143:10) Being led by the spirit is putting the flesh to death (Rom. 8:13-14 | Gal. 5:16-18)

Today's Action plan:

- Strive for a consistent time each day in the Word of God when you can listen to God's instruction.
- Is there something God's Spirit is prompting you to do that will bring glory to Him? Go ahead and do it. The blessing will be yours.
- Ask! Jesus promises the help of the Holy Spirit if only we ask for it.

Further Reading: Numbers 20:2-12 | 1Kings 12:1-15 | Num. 20:2-12 | Ezekiel 36:27



DO NOT RESIST THE SPIRIT

Acts 2: 38-39 gives us the assurance that we received the gift of the Holy Spirit when we got baptized. **Romans 8:9-17** gives us an in-depth reminder of the purpose of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit marks us as God's children because His Spirit enables us to overcome our sinful nature. According to **Galatians 5:22-25** when we live according to the Spirit, we will produce these spiritual fruits in our character. It says "against such things, there is no law". Who wouldn't like to be around someone who is full of gentleness and patience?

We all desire to live and grow in this way, yet we often fall very short. Despite our desire to keep in step with the Spirit, we sometimes find ourselves resisting the Spirit.

In **Acts 7** from verse **1**, Stephen had been reminding the Jews how their forefathers rejected Moses. Read verses **51-53** where Stephen pointed out that these Jews were exactly like their forefathers because the Jews of Stephen's days had rejected Jesus Christ. They committed the grave sin of resisting the Holy Spirit.

We can avoid resisting the Holy Spirit when we:

Read and Obey the Scriptures. (Psalm 119:9)

The Jews read the scriptures in the synagogue every Sabbath. Their problem was not lack of knowledge, it was a lack of obedience. It can indeed be difficult to obey the scriptures, however, it is possible with faith and humility. Refusing to be convicted, arguing, making excuses, and being defensive, show that we are hardening our hearts to the scriptures and thereby resisting the Spirit. Confess any ways in which you have stopped obeying the scriptures and make the decision to repent. Read **Acts 3:19**

Grow in the Fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22)

It is important for us to continue to grow in developing the fruit of the Spirit. For young Christians, this is, even more, important because you cannot survive the long haul, without developing your Christian character. As older Christians, we must realize that we still have ways to go towards becoming like Christ. None of us can beat our chest that "we have arrived". Therefore, we all must humble ourselves and keep fighting to grow. Look at the list in **Galatians 5:22** carefully. Pick one of the fruits of the Spirit and work on developing that aspect of your character. Share with your discipling partner or a friend, the one area that you will focus on in the next few weeks so that they can encourage you, pray for you and hold you accountable.

Grow in Love and Good Deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)

There are so many ways in which we can grow in love and good deeds. Good deeds include: being active in sharing our faith (2Tim. 4:2); practicing hospitality (Romans 12:13, 1Peter 4:9); helping the poor (Proverbs 22:9); giving to the church (Luke21: 1-4); serving in the church (Romans 12:5-8) and living wisely (Ephesians 5:17-20).

Our lives will change radically for the better if we all grow in these areas one by one. In this way, we will surely keep in step with the Spirit.

"God will never direct us to be prideful, arrogant and unforgiving, immoral or slothful or full of fear. We step into these things because we are insensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit within us." - Charles Stanly

Today's Action Plan

• Determine specific things you will start doing from all 3 areas mentioned above to avoid resisting the Spirit.

Further Reading: 1 Peter 4:9 | 1 Thessalonians 5:19 | Hebrews 10:29 | Isaiah 63:10 | Revelation 2:7



LIVE BY THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:4-11

Our text reveals that there are only two ways to live life – A life that is being controlled by the sinful nature and that which is being controlled by the Holy Spirit.

To walk in the Spirit is to be **"in step"** with the Spirit. Life in the Spirit means to follow His lead and remain in His control

If a person is not in step with the Spirit, he will be controlled by the flesh. He lives in a way and manner that is being dominated by sinful human nature, whose focus and center of attention is self. This person's life is lived only to satisfy selfish, human desire.

Each person is responsible for the mindset he pursues. Paul draws several contrasts between a life ruled by the flesh, and that which is ruled by the Spirit.

Those who are controlled by the Spirit make every effort to sow towards the things of the Spirit (righteousness) which in the long run leads to eternal life with God, while those that are being controlled by the sinful nature propagate towards the things of the flesh (ungodliness) which, in the long run, brings destruction (Gal.6:7-8).

No believer can produce the fruits of the Spirit, God envisioned for His children unless he's being led and guided by the Holy Spirit. The sinful nature and the indwelling Spirit are in conflict.

To walk after the Spirit is to align or subject oneself to the workings of the Spirit. The man who walks after the Spirit cannot act independently of Him. He acts in subjection to or in accordance with the Holy Spirit. He may have many failures, but his basic orientation and uppermost concerns have to do with the things of the Spirit. The things of the Spirit are the things which the Spirit proposes and approves (Gal.5:16-18).

Your mind is the battleground where victory or failure happens.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

As Christians, we are to be self-disciplined, not only in our physical appetites but also in our thoughts. To lose the focus of our minds is to fall prey to the devil. Satan wants to control your mind. He will use your thinking as his weapon to control you, defeat you (spiritually), and eventually devour you. If you don't learn to control/master your thoughts, Satan will win the inner war. You must win the battle for your mind! (Gen. 4:7)

Being led by the Spirit involves the desire to hear, the readiness to obey God's word and the sensitivity to discern between feelings and Holy Spirit's prompting.

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. They are the by-products of Jesus' control over His followers and can't be obtained without having a close relationship with Him (John 15:4-5)

Q: Which of these qualities do you want the Holy Spirit to produce in your life this Year?

The Roles / Functions of The Holy Spirit

- He serves as a comforter and counsellor that will teach and remind a believer (especially when going off the track) the life we're called to (John 14:16-17; 26).
- He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11).
- He will help believers act as Christ directs (Romans 8:5) and also find help in his daily struggles and challenges against sin through prayers (Romans 8:26-27).
- He will prepare and empowered us to serve God and do His will (Acts 1:8).
- He will help us become a part of God's plan to build up His Church (Ephe.4:12-13).

Today's Action plan:

Write out your plans on how you want to start living by the spirit and hold a disciple to be accountable

Further Reading: John 14:16-17; 26 | John 16:7-11 | Romans 8:5 | Romans 8:26-27 | Acts 1:8



TEMPLE OF THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 6: 19

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies"

The Jews viewed the Temple as a sacred symbol of God's holiness and providence. It was a place of worship and sacrifice. It was a place of cleansing and purification. It could not be profaned or desecrated by anyone. This is the Old Testament view and belief.

Today, as Christians, we are called to see our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our body does not belong to us any longer! It is Holy and Consecrated to God!!

Many people say that they have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies. Not so with a disciple of Christ! Although they think this is freedom, they are only enslaved to their sinful desires. It is to set us free from the bondage of sin that Jesus went to the cross.

When we become Christians, we are filled with the Holy Spirit and no longer own our bodies. We were "bought at a price" (the precious blood of Jesus). Christ's death freed us from sin, but also obligated us to his service. We no longer belong to ourselves, but to God who redeemed us from the bondage of sin. Therefore, we are not our own anymore. Christians are free to be all they can be for God, but they are not free from God!

Because our bodies belong to God, we must not violate his standards for living as long as we remain Disciples of Christ.

Galatians 5: 13, 16-23 (Please read)

What must we do with the Temple of God?

Serve one another in Love! Look for areas to expend yourself to the service of others. Remind yourself of Jesus' command to love others as you love yourself (**Matthew 22: 39**). Selfishness and Pride are in the heart of every sin.

We have the freedom to bear the fruits of the spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous and deliberate work of the Holy Spirit. It produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ.

Look at verse 22-23

Which of these qualities do you want the Spirit to produce in you? Remember, that the God who sent the law also sent the Holy Spirit, the by-product of the Spirit-filled life are in perfect harmony with the intent of God's law. A person who exhibits the fruits of the Spirit fulfils the law far better than a person who observes the rituals but has little love in his or her heart.

Let's grow above being Churchgoers to people who are transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Today's Action plan:

Make a list of the fruits of the Spirit in **Galatians 5: 22-23** you want to produce and commit to studying, pray and fast until you make a change.

Note: All Credits, Life Application Study Bible, NIV by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois. And, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

GALATIANS 5:22-23

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

Are you ready for a pop quiz?

How many fruits are there of the spirit?

Your guess is as good as mine, what comes to our minds is NINE, definitely, nine, but I'm sorry to say that you are so wrong!.

Note: that "fruit" is singular and not plural.

The nine according to the passage are simply parts of the fruit of the spirit that is produced in us and not nine different fruits. The passage introduces ONE singular fruit manifesting in nine distinct qualities.

"The fruit of the Spirit" is a biblical term used to sum up the nine visible attributes of a true disciple. Those nine are characteristic of life in Christ. When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, the spirit will produce the ninefold (fruit) that is embedded in those who truly lives as Christians

Paul's vision of the fruit of the spirit needs to be seen in the context of true freedom, this freedom enables us to transcend the narrow limits of obligations and Law while also sounding a clear warning so as not to reject the spirit.

Some Of The Ways We Can Respond negatively to The Spirit

Resisting the Spirit - Acts 7:51

• Grieving the Spirit- Isaiah 63: 10, Eph 4:30

Quenching the Spirit – 1 Thess. 5:19

In order to experience the fullness of the fruit of the spirit, we need to be set free, set free from the bondage of slavery to the elemental spirit of this life.

When we are set free from the "works of the flesh", we can become energized and enlivened by God's spirit.

Evidently, the fruit of the spirit is the visible growth in Christ Jesus.

Paul carefully defines freedom and what it requires. He reveals that freedom in Christ is not freedom towards self-indulgence rather, the exercise of loving service which is the true measure.

So What Are We Set Free To Do As Disciples?

Set free to Live (Gal 5:13-18)
 Set free to Serve (Luke 22:27)

3. Set free to transform the world (Gal 5:1 | Jer 17: 5-10)

4. Set free to be "Slaves" to righteousness (Rom. 6;18)

Being a disciple is allowing yourself to be claimed by God, shaped and formed by Christ, made in his image to become a brand new person and to live in the world differently.

We Must Also Put Into Consideration the Attributes This Spirit Produces

- 1. The 1st three qualities have to do with the level of impact of our relationship with God through Christ; "love, joy, peace"
- 2. The 2nd three qualities have to do, primarily with the relationship and interactions with people; "patience, kindness, goodness"
- 3. The 3rd three qualities have to do, primarily with our own inner state of being; "faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"

When I was younger, at a point our neighbour had an orange tree and I love to sneak over to pluck an orange off its branches, every once in a while.

One day, I broke a little branch off the tree, took it to my backyard, plunked it down into the ground watered it and checked it daily on my own.

Those oranges, of course, never came. I thought that the power to produce oranges was in the little branch, but the branch only bore the fruits, it didn't produce the fruit so long it was severed from the tree, the branch could do nothing. Jesus likewise said Abide in me and I in you

As the branch, you cannot bear the fruit of yourself unless you abide in the vine.

I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in me and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5)

The fruit of the Holy Spirit cannot be produced by us apart from a dependent connection to the Holy Spirit.

Today's Action Plan

Make efforts to live by and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit today.

Further Reading

- Ephesians 5:8-9
- Romans 5:5
- Colossians 3:14
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8



SPIRIT VS. SINFUL NATURE

Galatians 5:16-21

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NIV)

Good morning!

It's five o'clock in the morning, the sound of the bell goes off in the "boxing ring of your soul". Caught inbetween dreamland and reality, you can hear that tournament announcer. You know what you are hearing. It's the same voice and sound you hear every morning... "To the right corner is 'The Spirit Nature' while to the left is a formidable opponent, 'The Sinful Nature'!" Today, as always, both sides are fighting for dominance over "The Ring" (your mind, the battlefield of the soul). It's a winner-takes-all event. Who do you think will win? Go ahead and place your bet, scores will only be announced by the end of the day!

Yes, you know the question, you know the drill. You know because you go through this EVERY MORNING... You stop to ponder, "Which will dominate my mind today?"

At every point, there is a battle waging to gain control over your actions. The most prominent is the battle within between the Spirit and Sinful Nature.

Let's consider both opponents and their resumes:

The Sinful Nature (aka "The Flesh Eater")

Very spontaneous with an inbuilt, natural tendency to rebel. Strong, persistent and demanding. Its thirst and hunger are easily and temporarily satisfied. This monster has a history of cheating and cutting corners to win. Where all fails, the sinful nature is programmed to self-destruct.

Side Note: The reason many will find this nature attractive and worthy of their time and hard earned resource is because it mostly demands what is in contrast to the will of God (**Eph 2:1-3**).

This contestant's **DNA** is clearly stated in **Galatians 5:19-21**

Now to the opposite corner-

The Spirit Nature (aka "Life-Giver")

God's own nature. Very gentle, unbelievably persevering, patient, peaceful and not pushy. This opponent will go the distance and settle for nothing less than a unanimous victory. This nature remains joyful, even when taking hits. With an insatiable thirst for excellence and a desire for fair play, this opponent has been known to lose supporters who are only in the game for a quick return on investment.

His **DNA** is also clearly stated in the "rules of engagement manual", under the section marked, **Galatians** 5:22-23

The above comical description of the inner forces that wage daily battles within us is not meant to diminish or downplay its severity. Who wouldn't want to go with the Spirit?

Sadly, we sometimes allow our sinful nature to overwhelm us.

We must always remember what the Bible warns in Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ESV

How Then Can We Battle The Flesh?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ESV

That's it! Take every evil thought **captive** to obey Christ, you have the capacity to control what happens in your mind. You have to break that sinful habit because it's not getting you any closer to God, why gratify the desires of your sinful nature and almost immediately be drained of life and full of regrets and self-condemnation?

Today's Action plan:

In everything you do, determine to live by the Spirit, because only then are you be guaranteed victory in this battle by the end of today. Get ready for another round... tomorrow!

Further Reading:

- Galatians 5:16
- Matthew 5:28
- Romans 6:23
- John 8:34
- James 4:7

JUST FOR LAUGHS!

"THE CONFESSION"

(MAN went to a catholic priest for confession.)

MAN: I have stolen a fat goose from a poultry yard!

PRIEST: That is very wrong.

MAN: Would you like to accept it, Father?

PRIEST: Certainly not- return it to the man whom you stole it from.

MAN: But I have offered it to him and he won't have it.

PRIEST: In that case you may keep it yourself.

MAN: Thank you, Father.

Later, the PRIEST arrives home to find one of his geese had been stolen!

WE ARE ONE IN THE SPIRIT

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We are one in the spirit
We are one in the Lord (x2)
And we pray that our unity
Will one day be restored

CHORUS

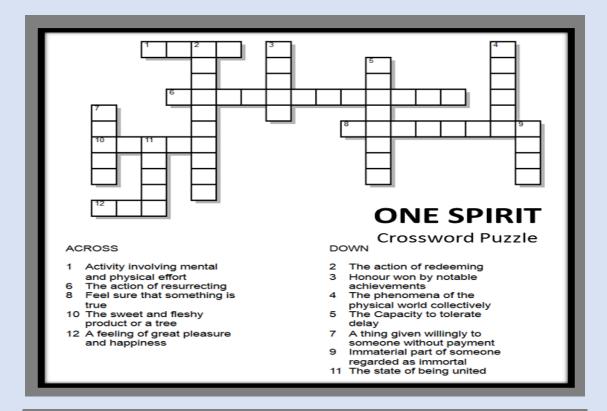
And they'll know
We are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes they'll know
We are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand (x2)
And together we'll spread the news
That God is in our land

We will work with each other
We will work side by side (2x)
And we'll save each man's dignity
And crucify our pride.

We will serve one another
We will spur each other on (2x)
And together we'll build the Church
And make the body strong.

We will trust in God's power
We will seek Him every day (2x)
We will study God's word
And let His Spirit lead the way.



ONE SPIRIT WORD SEARCH

RESURR EC Т F М В В S Y Z ı Е Т т E P ı ı X E S Ν Т T М В ı Т K X X В Ν

PATIENCE | NATURE | WORK | SOUL | FRUIT |
GIFTS | JOY | UNITY | RESURRECTION | BELIEVES
REDEMPTION | GLORY

Book Three

Anchor For Our Souls

- Called To Hope
- Against All Hope
- Christ In You, The Hope Of Glory
- Joyful In Hope
- Hope Is Patient
- Hope Of Transformation
- Endurance Inspired By Hope





CALLED TO HOPE

HOPE – Confident Expectancy

In the Bible, the word "hope" stands for both the act of hoping (Romans 4:18; 1 Corinthians 9:10) and the thing hoped for (Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:3). Hope does not arise from the individual's desires or wishes, but from God who is Himself the believer's hope: "My hope is in you." (Ps 39:7). Genuine hope is not wishful thinking, but a firm assurance about things that are unseen, still in the future (Rom. 8: 24-25; Heb. 11:1, 7).

Hope distinguishes the Christian from the unbeliever who has no hope (Eph. 2:12; 1Thess. 4:13). Indeed, a Christian is one in whom hope resides (1 Peter 3:15; 1 John 3:3). In contrast, the Christian hope is far superior to Old Testament hope (Heb. 7:9).

Christian hope is centred on God (Romans 15:13) and especially His calling (Eph. 1:18; 4:4), His grace (2 Thess. 2:16), His Word (Rom. 15:4) and His gospel (Col. 1:23). This Hope, is directed toward God (Acts 24: 15; 1 Pet. 1: 21) and his son, Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:1). Hope's appropriate objects are eternal life (Titus 1:3; 3:7), salvation (1 Thess. 5: 8), righteousness (Gal. 5:5), the glory of God (Rom. 5:2; Col 1:27), the appearing of Christ (Titus 2:13), and the resurrection from the dead (Acts 23:6; 26: 6-7).

Moment of Introspection: What are the objects of your hope? Are they in line with God's promises in Scripture?

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit [f] of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:15-21)

When we are ignorant of the hope to which God has called us in Christ, we become like the man who saved his money for a long time to go on a cruise. The price of the ticket took all his money, so he had none left for food. For one week he ate the crackers and cheese that he had brought in his suitcase. On the last day of the cruise, a steward asked if there was something wrong with the ship's food. The man assured him that it was probably very good, but that he could not afford it. The steward's reply was, "But, sir, you don't understand. All the food you are to eat is included in the price of the ticket!"

There was plenty of food; he just didn't know it was already his.

All he had to do was claim it!

God promises in His Word to give us a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11-14) based on His great and precious promises to us in Christ (2 Peter 1:4).

Moment of Introspection: How would people describe you?

As a hopeful person or as one who easily despairs?

Is your joy level, depend on life's circumstances or is your hope built on the solid rock of God's Word? The litmus test is the way you react to life's unforeseen challenges.

Today's Action plan:

• Ask your closest friends or your spouse (if you are married) what they think about the way you react to life's challenges.



AGAINST ALL HOPE

I had an interesting experience this morning on my way to work. We gave a ride to a couple on our way, just for my wife to ask if my shoes were on the floor of the back seat so we could create room for their feet. I then remembered that I had put the shoes on the stepping platform of the SUV to get them polished, but in the morning rush, forgot to put them back into the vehicle. Given that we had already gone through a very bumpy road, my wife lost hope that the pair of shoes were still on the platform. She was about to call somebody to help look for my pair of shoes on the road when I insisted (against her despair) that we open the door of the vehicle to still find out if the shoes were there. Behold! The pair of shoes was still glued to the stepping platform of the vehicle!

What's the morale of this story? Even though my wife's logic made perfect sense – that there's no way the pair of shoes would have remained stuck to the car with the bumpy roads, "Hope" defied her logic as decided to "hope against all hope". Imagine for a moment that I had also despaired.

Abraham had to do exactly that when faced with a much greater challenge as he realized how old he was and that his wife had gone way beyond the age of childbearing.

18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:18-21)

There is a direct correlation between hoping against all hope and faith. Abraham's "faith" sustained his "hope" to see God's promise fulfilled (**Numbers 23:19**) even when it defied human logic.

Moment of Introspection: What are the seemingly impossible situations you are faced with at the moment? Do you have the faith that God can keep His promise in your situation? Do you know the specific promises of God that apply to these specific situations?

Today's Action plan:

- Learn specific promises that apply to your situation each time you are faced with seemingly impossible challenges.
- Make a conscious effort to stand on these promises even when it defies human logic.

"Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality". - Jonas Salk

"Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us". - Samuel Smiles



CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY

Colossians 1:27

To them, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (NIV)

What a misery it will be if all our reward end here on earth! Our hope of eternal glory is assured because we have Christ in us.

At one time in our lives, we were all destined for destruction, each of us going our own way, doing the best we could with the hopes that one day we will reign with God (or maybe God was completely out of your radar). Thanks be to God for his unconditional love (**Rom 5:6**)

Personally, I am eternally grateful to God for saving my soul. Like Saul of Tarsus, before he became, the Apostle Paul, I also remember my life before I became a Christian; I was very religious, zealous and passionate for the "things of God", I took up responsibilities to share "my faith", even early on Sunday mornings before service, I'd go from house to house; room to room, sometimes I'd go to a major bus stop to preach before going to my regular job. All these I did with the belief that I was right with God and had a crown of righteousness waiting for me. That was my hope of Glory! I later found out, after a careful study of scripture that I was far from Christ!

What amazing grace was made available to me! I met Christ and he helped me make the decision to follow him the bible way, now, humbled, I know for sure that I have a hope of eternal glory.

However, the scriptures make me understand that it's not a once-and-for-all ticket to glory (1 Tim 4:16, Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26)

This means that **as long** as I remain on this train, I'll arrive at the desired destination, I have to make conscious efforts to remain in the Kingdom of God, knowing fully well that it will be a rough ride. Now, despite this assurance of faith, I am also expected to "glory in suffering" (**Rom 5:1-5**) because they will produce the best in me, sustaining me till I meet my Lord Jesus in glory.

"When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me" – Erma Bombeck

Further Reading:

- 1 Peter 3:15
- Titus 2:13
- Galatians 5:5
- Romans 5:1-5
- Romans 15:13



JOYFUL IN HOPE

Romans 12:12

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13)

Take time and carefully read the entire chapter of **Romans 12**. It is in this context that we are encouraged to be joyful in hope.

I think I speak for all of us in stating that there are *many* times when joyful in hope is the *last* thing on my mind. Many times I am angry, anxious, fretful and ungrateful. Is it only me? I think the following will help me and I believe it will help you too.

Joyfully Look Back (Gratitude)

Make a habit of recalling God's deeds in the past. Time and again, Jesus had to remind his disciples about how he had worked in the past. When he fed 5000 people (Mark 6: 30-44), he expected his disciples to remember this miracle and to trust that he would do it again. By the time a similar situation arose in Mark 8:1-9, he expected the faith of his disciples to have grown. In the same way, God has come through for us so many times; recall God's past deeds in your life. Thank God again. He does not get tired of hearing "Thank You Father..." If you are in a tough situation, recount to God how he helped you in times past. Then you can pray joyfully even in your present situation. Read Philippians 4:6; psalm 50: 14a

Joyfully Look Around (Faith)

Hebrews 11: 1 tells us that faith involves being certain of things that ordinarily we will not see. We can never truly please God without 'eyes of faith' (**Hebrews 11:6**). This is why Jesus was impressed with the centurion in **Matthew 8:5-13:** "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." When you look around through 'eyes of faith', your faith will increase and your joy will overflow. Look at your situation. Even if it's bad, it could have been worse. In the midst of it all, there are many blessings in disguise. Challenge yourself that God will be impressed with your genuine trust and faith as you joyfully look around.

Joyfully Look Ahead (Hope)

The journey to develop hope often begins from the very point of suffering. Read carefully **Romans 5:3-5**. As you grow in gratitude and faith, your Christian character is developed. These, in turn, will build up a mature hope in God. As Christians, we are reminded that ultimately our hope goes beyond this earthly life. "... And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (**Romans 5:5**). His Holy Spirit guarantees our final salvation and hope of heaven.

Please read **2 Corinthians 5:5**. The God who has given us His spirit as a deposit will surely come back for us.

Today's Action plan:

Make that decision to remain joyful in hope today.



HOPE IS PATIENT

ROMANS 8: 22-25

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Imagine for a moment, that you are walking along a path. The sun is out and the temperature is absolutely perfect: not too cold and not too hot. The path is smooth and easy, and the view is breathtakingly beautiful, with the ocean to your left and mountains to your right. There are trees to provide shade and beautiful flowers to please your senses. Although you walk the whole day, you don't tire, hunger or thirst. You experience no pain, discomfort, suffering or trouble whatsoever. Your walk is, in every sense of the word, perfect from start to finish.

Wouldn't it be great if the path we take to glory is like this path? How wonderful if our lives on earth were trouble free: no pain, no worries, no difficulties, no suffering, and no heartache? Smooth sailing from start to finish. And then, Glory!

Creation, however, is not the only thing longing for our future glorification. We ourselves long for it. We wait with eager anticipation for the redemption of our bodies (**vs. 23**). Since we have been saved and thus have the first fruits of the Spirit, we have a taste of glory now and yearn for the rest of it. In fact, in this hope of future glory, we have been saved. The gospel is about this life and the life to come.

Our minds and lives, therefore, should be oriented to the future. Hope is a defining characteristic of the Christian. And we hope as Paul says, for what we do not yet see or experience (vs. 24). When the soldier goes out to war, the wife waits, hoping for his return. But we do not see or experience the redemption of our bodies and of creation. And so we live in hope and we wait for it with patience (vs. 25).

The joy that we will one day experience will make us forget the pain in this life. The challenges of this present time, though very real now, are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **2 Cor. 4:17**: "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

It is this future, glorious, and incomparable reality that we need to think about and hold on to as we walk along the path of suffering.

Keep your eyes on the prize as you run the race that God has set before you.

Today's Action plan:

- Take some time to meditate and write out the hope we have in Jesus.
- Are they worth being patient for?
- Study the followings: Philippians 3:20-21, 1Cor 15:57-58, 1Thessonian 4:15-17



THE HOPE OF TRANSFORMATION

There is an Adage in French that says "I'espoir fait vivre" meaning "hope keeps one going". Hope is a drive that brings a positive feeling of expectation. Faith and endurance are then seen as attributes of Hope. When a dying person is in serious pain he stays alive until he loses hope.

1 John 3: 2-3

²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will have not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (NIV)

We know as disciples of Jesus that we are children of God because we have repented of our sins, baptised for the forgiveness of those sins and are, by his grace, living out our calling. Yet, what we will become is not known. The future is completely in the hands of God. What we were when we lived in sin will not count because our present choice of obeying Jesus and continuing to live our lives for him has nullified our past. What counts now is our present.

What then does the future hold for us who are in Christ? We don't really know. But our present is shaping our future, such that we are sure we will be like Jesus since we are in fact living like him. Also, we shall see Jesus's face. It is this longing (HOPE) to be like Jesus that keeps us living the Christ-like life.

When Jesus spoke about the end of the Jewish era in **Matthew 24:12-13**, he said that wickedness will increase and the love of most will grow cold, but those who keep hoping till the end shall be saved (or escape).

It is amazing to see how wickedness has skyrocketed, even today. The schemes of the diabolic one have always been to distract us from listening and following Jesus; he does that by making sin attractive to us. From that point on, our hope in Christ begins to fade.

The most valuable word I know in discipleship is 'SACRIFICE' or "Self- denial'. These days, commitment to God amongst some who proclaim knowing God is suspect.

Think about it: we have more devices to store bibles and other Christian materials yet most of us read less and learn less about God; we meet more friends on social media, but less evangelism is going on; even our prayers are not much about being like Jesus but being more financially and materially prosperous. This is a strong indication that we are losing hope.

I have just called our attention to our real and honest situation.

There is a way out.

When the Kings and the priests of Israel failed in leading the way, wickedness increased in the land. God raised up prophets to speak against the evil deeds of the people and their leaders and also to call them back to obedience.

Someone Must Speak:

Believe you me, I see many prophets of God all around me. Guess what? You are one of them! This message must start with you, calling yourself to repent and restore your hope in Christ. When you are strong you can call others to repent. God is, first of all, interested in converting the preacher (Prophet) than the audience. As I write this, I am aware that God wants to transform me first then you and others through us.

Let's Get Honest

The following are the excuses you might have: Life is hard, good or even great jobs are hard to find and retain, the seemingly good jobs are too demanding, the economy is bad, war and crime have increased, sickness and poverty are rampant, most of my friends already have churches and are ok with their religious beliefs.

Can you think of more?

All these "excuses" and MORE have been around even before any of us reading this piece was born. A man whose faith is drowning will look for someone or something to put the blame on.

"The Economy is bad" this is true, but you very well know that's not why you failed to pray or evangelize. Have you ever caught yourself saying those desperate victory prayers in aid of your favourite sports team or calling up friends to remind them of game time or to celebrate a much-needed victory? I think you get my point now! ©

"There is fuel crisis" (for those readers who live in Nigeria) that is also true, but that was not really why most missed church. No worker fails to show up at work or student late for his exams.

The truth is the only thing that will set us free. Be honest and admit you have lost or struggling with your hope in Christ.

Transformation or to be transformed means "to go beyond a current stage or position" Two words are found here: Trans and Form. Trans = Beyond. Form= Condition, state, shape. Are you willing to go beyond your current spiritual form? Start by getting inspired by the Hope we have and share as Christians.

Today's Action plan:

Share with someone about your readiness to regain your hope in Christ and ask them to hold you accountable



ENDURANCE INSPIRED BY HOPE

I THESS 1:3

3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Three years ago, during my participation in my countries mandatory one year National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) scheme, I had it in mind to achieve greatness, both for my country and for God. I laid down certain goals in spite of the obstacles and roadblocks that I would undoubtedly face. I was determined within me that it was a done deal, even in this distant community with strange faces and tongues.

During my service year, I was confronted with some unavoidable challenges ranging from weather conditions, people (varying background) and my poor health, in all these, God helped me and I **ENDURED!** I had so many ideas and at so many points did I get discouraged. These discouragements truly dampened my spirit. But I kept reminding myself of my goals since I knew I had HOPES! The adage that kept ringing in my head was-"where there is a will, there is a way" I took one day at a time in the midst of despair.

Days turned to weeks and weeks turned to months. God came through as I reached out to and baptised one soul. I also started a fellowship in this far away land where I was posted. The fellowship quickly gathered momentum. We had up to 15 visitors in attendance to our regular meetings. It was an awesome experience as we made the decision to evangelize every Friday in the community. As a result, we would spend the nights with members of the community, who would invite us to come study the Bible with them. All was not always rosy, however, as many times, we were made a spectacle of disgrace and a mockery by our fellow corps members who obviously, didn't share our convictions. Despite all this, the community was positively impacted and I was also given the platform to embark on a community development social project. This development project brought me to the limelight as I was honoured with an NYSC National award for my meritorious service by my country at the end of my service year.

As I look back now, I'm convinced that my entire NYSC year was encouraged by an **endurance inspired by hope.**

At this point, let's consider the last phrase of the scripture where Paul was commending the Thessalonians for their, "endurance inspired by hope". The scripture frequently stressed the characteristic quality of endurance which brings to mind, words like; "remaining", "bearing trials" and having fortitude" Sadly, this is one of the traits lacking among some disciples today

Q: Do you see challenges as an opportunity to fuel your passion for God?

Q: Will you still endure when all hopes are lost, and dreams and visions are shattered?

An inspiring artist: Thomas Kinkade, paints the following word picture,

"Hope lights our spirit in the midst of despair, it is the life force that through the green stem, drives the flower, it keeps a divine vision alive in the heart of the weak and the needy".

Our work with God will be tested by our faith, love, and endurance that is inspired by hope

Today's Action plan:

- 1. Where do, your biggest hopes lie, personally?
- 2. What are the differences, in nature and content between the hopes of Christians and the hope of the world?

3. What do you think is the secret for Christians to gain strength during awaiting the fulfilment of our hope?

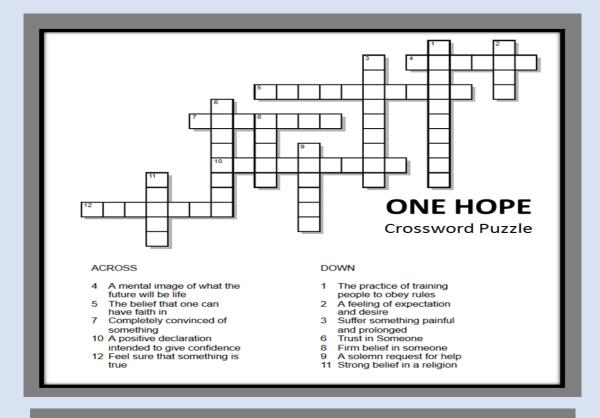
2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (Memory verse)

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Further Readings

- Romans 824-25
- Hebrews 12:2
- Psalm 130:6
- James 5:7-8





ONE HOPE WORD SEARCH

D N A S S U R A N C E R N E I B C B N R N O I S I V C X S Y E E R N N R G Y R N B D C Y R F Q E J R Q G A P E A I I T L H T I A F R T R L D P I A E Y Y M Y U P R E I A L P I L Y W Z D N N U N E O I Z N J Y N N C D C S H V Q N B Y J P E Y E M G T Z E Z E X Y G

ENDURANCE | HOPE BELIEVE | ASSURANCE | RELIANCE | CERTAIN | CONFIDENCE | VISION | FAITH | PRAYER | DISCIPLINE | TRUST |

Book Four

Head of the Body, Church

Kingdom

- Lord of my Day
- Lord of my thoughts
- Lord of my time
- Jesus is Lord
- Christ, the image of God
- Set apart Christ as Lord



LORD OF MY DAY

The expression, "Jesus is Lord" is fast becoming just another cliché. Something said as an expression of shock, a fancy bumper sticker or even worse, something uttered by some religious people when testing microphones in preparation for their events.

Lord means Master. Masters rule, are in control, leading and dominant.

When you make Jesus Lord of your day, you start by laying before him your dealings for the day. You start by dedicating and committing the day to him in prayer. Have you done this already? Was it a "commitment" you made to him this morning or just another emotional trip?

Mark 1:35

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

You just heard the verdict folks. Even our Lord and Saviour Jesus had his priorities straight. He led the way in this level of commitment.

While it's outside the scope of this short segment of our power series to discuss all the intricacies of prayer, it is obvious that a deep relationship with God must start from us communicating with him. Communication is very key in every relationship. God, through the ages, have spoken to us:

Heb 1:1-2

In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **2** but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. **(NIV)**

As you set out today, will you start by making Jesus the Lord of your day?

For a deeper and focused study on prayer, you might want to read the excellent contribution, "Prayers in the Bible" in the appendix section. This piece was written by our dear brother, Dr. Roland Monje of our Manilla, Philippines church

Deborah Ann Belka wrote the poem below and graciously granted us the permission to publish it here. Read it slowly, think through the words and their meaning. Let it inspire your prayer throughout today

MY DAYS ARE THE LORDS

Lord, You know my days, the number of my years	You've given me a chance to choose heaven over hell.	I pray I will not falter,
You know the exact time		on the narrowest of ways
that my life will be here.	I pray I'll be a good steward,	I ask that You will lead me
	in the seasons allotted me	all my nights and all my days.
I pray I will use it wisely,	I ask for Your guidance	
giving honor to Your name	so in eternity, we can be.	Lord, let me not stray,
I ask that You will help me		from You while I am here
not to bring You any shame.	Lord, You understand me,	for You are my Shepherd
	and know my every side	who I trust with all my years
Lord, You have given me,	You've given me Your light	
this place for me to dwell	to be my constant guide.	



LORD OF MY THOUGHT

⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. ⁶And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. - **2 Cor 10:1-6** (NIV)

Prior to verse, 3 of the above scripture, Paul spoke about the MEEKNESS of Christ. This means being powerful but putting your power under control. This is to say that Paul has submitted himself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul was honest about the fact that he is timid when he comes face to face with people but bold with the pen. He was talking to those Christians who live by worldly standards.

Think for a moment about the word, "CAPTIVE"... Synonyms that will flood your mind will include Imprisoned, Incarcerated. Enslaved, Caged, In Prison, Locked Up... Are your thoughts "Captivated", and by whom or what?

A captive is restricted and regulated. Our thoughts must be regulated by the word of God. Thought and heart are sometimes used interchangeably in the bible to describe our inner man. Let us see what the following scriptures below has to say about it:

18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'" - Matt 15:17-20

Luke 6:45

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

- **23** Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
- **24** Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- **25** Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.
- ²⁶ Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.
- 27 Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil. Pro. 4:23-27

Anybody reading this page who knows anything about computers will acknowledge that computers have; input, output, processing and storage devices. Think of your mind in this way for a moment. You can't process what you don't input, neither can you store or output what you didn't input.

A computer owner has several "guards" put in place that protects the computer; the human who is the owner is the first of these guards. An anti-virus software is installed, a power surge protector, padded carrier bag (if it's a laptop), an insurance cover.

How much are you doing to guard your thoughts against lust, pornography, hatred, deceit, lies... what about those wandering thoughts during prayers?

Let Jesus be the lord of your thoughts today!



LORD OF MY TIME

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is. - **Eph 5:15-17**

Many big companies today spend a huge amount on human resource agencies who they contract the task of training their personnel on the act of time Management. There is a belief that productivity is directly connected to how people "manage" their time.

After many years of research in the field of behavioural science, "experts" are beginning to reconsider the various approaches and methods we have been pursuing for decades. Here is the new argument - Before, you can even begin to manage time, you must learn what time is. A dictionary defines time as "the point or period at which things occur." Put simply, time is when stuff happens.

There are two types of time: clock time and real time. In **clock time**, there are 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year. All time passes equally. When someone turns 50, they are exactly 50 years old, no more or no less.

In real time, all time is relative. Time flies or drags depending on what you're doing. Two hours at the department of motor vehicles can feel like 12 years. And yet our 12-year-old children seem to have grown up in only two hours!

The good news is that real time is mental. It exists between your ears. **You create it**. Anything you create, you can manage. It's time to remove any self-sabotage or self-limitation you have around "not having enough time," or today, not being "the right time" for you to start having consistent personal Bible studies, prayer time or share your faith with that coworker or neighbour.

There are only three ways to spend time: Thoughts, Conversations and Actions. Regardless of the type of business, you own, the lifestyle you pursue, your work will be composed of those three items. Now, there you have it. Time management in effect, "LIFE MANAGEMENT", and you don't "find time", you **CREATE TIME**. The key to every life management endeavour is PRIOTISATION the opposite is called, PROCRASTINATION. We must all learn the principle of "URGENT" vs "IMPORTANT". Most people, without realising it, spend most of their time attending to "urgent" matters, while neglecting the "important" things in life. Urgent matters are activities that beg your attention without prior appointments. They are usually unplanned. Think of those unplanned moments when people cut us in the middle of work and ask for those "urgent" favours. Rather than weigh the request and create time for it AFTER you are done with work (the important) many will abandon the important to go attend to that which appears urgent. Think again of those unaccounted-for-moments we lazy about on Facebook, WhatsApp, reading blogs and chain emails that don't add immediate value. Some of you even "forward" them, contributing to national and global time wastage! The "Important" however, are those things if not done will affect you tomorrow. Yes, there will always be emergencies, but you know as well as I do that, not EVERYTHING is an emergency, they only appear that way to get your attention and "Steal" your time.

Today's Action plan:

Ask God to help you in making the most of every opportunity.

In addition to making the famous "to do list", cultivate the lifestyle of identifying and cataloguing a "stop doing list". This list will contain things you need to stop doing to be in more control over how you spend your *life*. You'll be amazed at how much time you can save and thus channel to those important things you have always wanted to accomplish.

THE KING AND HIS FOUR WIVES

Once upon a time, there was a rich King who had four wives.

He loved **the 4th wife**, the most and adorned her with rich robes and treated her to the finest of delicacies. He gave her nothing but the best.

He also loved the 3rd wife very much and was always showing her off to neighboring kingdoms. However, he feared that one day she would leave him for another.

He also loved **his 2nd wife**. She was his confidant and was always kind, considerate and patient with him. Whenever the King faced a problem, he could confide in her, and she would help him get through the difficult times.

The King's 1st wife was a very loyal partner and had made great contributions in maintaining his wealth and kingdom. However, he did not love the first wife. Although she loved him deeply, he hardly took notice of her!

One day, the King fell ill and he knew his time was short. He thought of his luxurious life and wondered, "I now have four wives with me, but when I die, I'll be all alone."

Thus, he asked the 4th wife, "I have loved you the most, endowed you with the finest clothing and showered great care over you. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"No way!", replied the 4th wife, and she walked away without another word. Her answer cut like a sharp knife right into his heart.

The sad King then asked the **3rd wife**, "I have loved you all my life. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"No!", replied the 3rd wife. "Life is too good! When you die, I'm going to remarry!" His heart sank and turned cold.

He then asked the **2nd wife**, "I have always turned to you for help and you've always been there for me. When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?"

"I'm sorry, I can't help you out this time!", replied the 2nd wife. "At the very most, I can only send you to your grave." Her answer came like a bolt of lightning, and the King was devastated.

Then a voice called out: "I'll leave with you and follow you no matter where you go." The King looked up, and there was his **first wife**. She was so skinny as she suffered from malnutrition and neglect. Greatly grieved, the King said, "I should have taken much better care of you when I had the chance!"

In truth, we all have 4 wives in our lives:

Our **4th wife is our body**. No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look good, it will leave us when we die.

Our 3rd wife is our possessions, status and wealth. When we die, it will all go to others.

Our **2nd wife is our family and friends**. No matter how much they have been there for us, the furthest they can stay by us is up to the grave.

And our 1st wife is our Soul. Often neglected in pursuit of wealth, power and pleasures of the world.

However, our Soul is the only thing that will follow us wherever we go.

So cultivate, strengthen and cherish it now, for it is the only part of us who will follow us to the throne of God and continue with us throughout Eternity.



JESUS IS LORD

Romans 10:9

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved". (NIV)

I have given it some thoughts and asked myself, "Why do we really have to declare that Jesus is Lord?" Obviously, it goes beyond the saying.

To think back to when it all started, our brothers and sisters in the early church had to draw a radical line to ascertain for sure those who really wanted to follow Christ. There was an option, a more "favourable" option, to declare that Caesar was Lord. This declaration needed to be done in the open; before witnesses. The refusal to make Caesar Lord was to sign your own death sentence! Hence, it's a very big deal to say "Jesus is Lord" in the open.

This meant that you are ready to live on the edge because you may be arrested and put to death at any time. What a life!

Sometimes we wonder why we find several scriptures that encourage disciples not to be afraid... Surely, God preserves his own till His appointed time. Let's fast-forward 2000 years, does this declaration still have the same meaning?

As we know, the scriptures tell us that one must make that "good confession" "Jesus is Lord" (**1Tim. 6:12**) but the question is: do you live your life today like Jesus is still the Lord of your Life? Or have you taken over the lordship from Him?

Maybe he was the Lord of your life for the first few months or years after you confessed him as Lord.

Consider your ways and your followership! Would you like to be treated the same way you treat Jesus if you were Lord over someone else?

"The story is told of a gentleman who declared Jesus as lord over his Life, his entire life was represented by a building with many rooms. One day, Jesus was doing some inspection of the house and this man was happy to show him through the rooms. As they walked passed a room in the attic labeled as "Private", a strong stench oozed out and the gentleman hurriedly walked past that room hoping Jesus will not notice or ask questions.

Unfortunately for him, Jesus insisted on inspecting that room, with a sad face he reluctantly opened the door to the room and the man himself was surprised. Jesus asked him: Why are you surprised? Didn't you know the condition of the room?

He replied with a sober voice, "It wasn't this bad the last time I was here".

Morale: When Jesus is the Lord of your life, there are no "private rooms". He is in charge of everything. Sometimes, because of the seemingly irrevocable decay, you give up and continue to indulge in your sins. There's still a way out of this entrapment, turn to God, and he will turn to you, make Jesus the Lord of your life and you will be saved! (James 4:8)

Further Reading:

John 14:6 Luke 6:46 John 8:31 | John 3:36 | Jude 1:4



CHRIST, THE IMAGE OF GOD

Col 1:15-16

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him, all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:4

Apostle Paul said that Christ revealed who God is for everyone, except to those who refuse to believe. Satan's goal is to deceive, he uses money, power and pleasure to blind people in the light of Christ's gospel. Christ as the image of the invisible God is one of the strongest statements about the divine nature of Christ found anywhere in the bible.

JOHN 1:18

Christ is the exact representation of God, He not only reflects God, but He reveals God to us. In Christ, God revealed His nature and essence in a way that could be seen and touched. In Christ, God became a man who lived on earth. As a father, those who know me recognise my son whenever they see him, even when I am not physically present.

Christ is the full revelation of God. You can't have any clearer view of God than by looking at Christ. Jesus Christ is the complete expression of God in a human body.

HEBREW 1:3

Christ is not only the creator of the world, but He is also its Sustainer. In Him, everything holds together, he protects and prevents the universe from disintegrating into chaos. Because Christ is the Sustainer of all life, none of us is independent of Him. We are all His servants who must daily trust Him for protection, care and sustenance.

You are in error when you think God can't forgive you your sins. No sin is too big for the ruler of the universe to handle. He can and will forgive you when you open and go to Him through His son.

JOHN 14:8-14

Jesus explained to Phillip, who wanted to see the father that to know Jesus is to know God. The search for God, for truth and reality, ends in Christ. Preacher, teachers and anyone else who talks about Jesus Christ must remember that they stand in God's presence Those who reject Christ and prefer their own pursuits have unknowingly made Satan their god.

The focus of John's preaching was Christ and not Himself. When you teach, tell people about what Christ has done and not about your abilities and when you hear someone preaching himself or His own ideas rather than Christ, beware, He is a false teacher.

When we have Christ, we have all of God in human form.

CONCLUSION

By gazing at the nature of God with unveiled minds, we can be more like him. In the gospel, we see the truth about Christ and it transforms us morally as we understand and apply it. As we learn about Jesus' life and apply it, we can understand how wonderful God is and who He truly is. As our knowledge deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us to change.

Further Reading: Romans 8:29 | Galatians 4:19 | Philippians 3:21



SET APART CHRIST AS LORD

1 Peter 3:15

There are many times in our lives, we set something aside for special use. Monies may be set aside on a regular basis for vacations or retirement. Parents may take the time on Saturday night to set aside the clothes to be worn by their children to church in the morning. Faithful Christians may set aside time each day for personal or family devotions and prayer time.

Apostle Peter instructs us to **Set apart Christ as Lord.** It means Christ should have the special place and purpose in our lives, to be our one and only Lord. No one else should receive such an honour or title. When we set him apart, we acknowledge that he alone is our Savior, our perfect Friend, our hope for eternity. We confess that he alone is the one who deserves our praise and our love.

How Should We Set Apart Christ As Lord? By Living in the hope that He gives

Living in that hope means meeting each day's challenges and responsibilities with a calm confidence that the Lord of your life has all things well in hand.

Living in hope means that we live with an eternal optimism that meets the challenges of each day with a fresh confidence that "Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). Therefore, dear brothers and sisters set apart Christ as Lord by living in the hope that we have in Christ. In our world of uncertainty and change confident living in hope will make you stand out and calm.

Personal sharing: The past year was very challenging for me. I had to battle with the death of the parents of some disciples in my ministry right from the beginning of the year, especially the effect of this incidence on the faith of the concerned disciples. During the same year, my ministry experienced the death of two of our members and some other situations that challenged our faith. What kept me going was my constant reflection on the hope that I have in Christ. The hope that whatever happens, Jesus still remains the Lord and that as long as I hold onto Him my hope of spending eternity with Him is secured. How should we set apart Christ as Lord?

By being prepared to share your hope

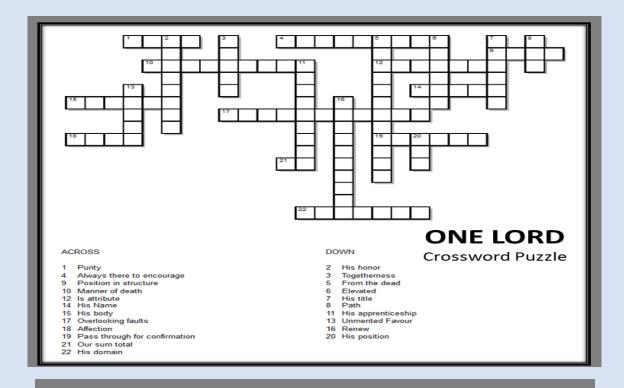
That hope and confidence in your life might become the subject of someone's conversation with you. "You have a strong faith", they might ask. Or, "You always seem to be able to see the positive in such negative situations. What's your secret?" Then the door is open for you. "Be prepared," Peter says. Be prepared to set apart Christ as Lord. Let people know that it is not you who is strong, but Christ who is working with you and through you. It is Jesus and his love that provides the strength to meet the challenges of each day with renewed enthusiasm and calm confidence. Jesus is my Lord and hope.

Prepare yourself for those eternity changing conversations by having spiritual conversations with your family. Turn off the TV, disconnect from the internet and challenge your family to share with each other the spiritual highs and lows of each day.

Prepare to share your hope in Christ by sharing the gospel with your family members, your neighbours, your colleagues, and friends.

Q: What are you going to do different today now that you have studied this devotional? Prepare yourself by setting apart Christ as Lord in your own heart.





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Book Five Assurance of the Unseen

- Live by faith
- Faith without work
- Increase our faith!
- Contend for the faith
- Faith to the end
- When Faith gets tested



LIVE BY FAITH

All over the scriptures, we are flooded with stories of men and women who followed God. From Adam and Eve in the garden to the modern day men and women of the 21 century, following God has been and will always be a challenge because of the natural differences between the two, i.e. God is Spirit and man a physical being. To bridge the gap, God commands us in **Hebrews 11:6** to live by faith! This series is aimed at helping you understand the impact unity has on the whole – as a church or people of God. Paul has something to say about this:

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"- Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

The focus here is to live a life of following Christ Jesus, which boils down to obedience.

Examples of Role Models

Hebrews 11:1-40 is a showcase of our great heroes of faith. What can we learn from them?

- They trusted and committed themselves to a God they could not see.
- As they walked in obedience to him, they experienced his grace and power in their lives.
- With all kinds of challenges and oppositions to their faith, they did not waver but persevere in hope.
- They were certain of their future in him, even though they could not see it at the present.

Falling In Love with God!

I would like to tell a story; "A woman got married to a man who gave her a set of rules to obey in order for them to live and be happy together. This woman had it so rough living with the man as she struggled with obedience to these rules. She became uncomfortable and unhappy and she hated him. As their relationship continued to worsen, the man divorced and sent her away. Years later, she remarried and decided to give it her best. The man returned her love and she found joy in doing everything to make him happy. Without realizing it, she was actually obeying the same set of rules giving by her first husband! Evidently, her problem was not the rules, but her heart and commitment to the marriage".

Lesson: It is difficult to obey with a good attitude without love. God responds to love. How can we love him? In the same vein, anyone can give without loving, but it is impossible to love without giving.

Love His Word

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me - John 14:23-24

God is calling us to the same faith as our forefathers in the faith. Consider the fact that most of them did not have the written word in their days, yet they used their imaginations and reasoning to visualize the creator; his power, splendour and majesty – and they earnestly sought a relationship with Him and put their faith in Him. **Hebrews 11:6**.

If Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Joshua and others too numerous to mention declined living by faith and never told their stories of faith to the next generation, would we have examples to follow today?

Today's Action plan:

Decide to live by faith, and pass on the same Story.



FAITH WITHOUT WORK

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"-James 2:26.

Faith without works is a dead faith because the lack of works reveals an unchanged life or a spiritually dead heart. There are many verses that say that true faith will result in a transformed life, that faith is demonstrated by the works we exhibit. How we live reveals what we believe and whether the faith we profess to have is living or dead.

James 2:14–26 is sometimes taken out of context in an attempt to create a work-based system of righteousness, but that is contrary to many other passages of Scripture. James is not saying that our works make us righteous before God, but that real faith is demonstrated by good works. Works are not the cause of salvation; works are the evidence of salvation. Faith in Christ always results in good works. The person who claims to be a disciple of Christ, but lives in willful disobedience to Christ has a false or dead faith.

Many profess to be Christians or disciples, but their lives and priorities indicate otherwise. Jesus put it this way: "By their fruits, you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits, you will know them."

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers"-Matthew 7:16–23.

Obedience to God is the hallmark of true faith. James uses the examples of Abraham and Rahab to illustrate the obedience that accompanies salvation. Simply put, merely believing in Jesus is not enough nor does just carrying out religious activities.

Faith without works is dead because it reveals a heart that has not been transformed by God. When we have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, our lives will demonstrate that new life. Our lives will be characterized by obedience to God. Unseen faith will become seen by the production of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22). As His sheep, we hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:26–30).

Faith without works is dead because faith results in a new creation, not a repetition of the same old patterns of sinful behaviour. As Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:17** "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Those who pay lip service to God and compromise their faith will hear Christ Himself say to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers" -Matthew 7:23.

Today's Action plan:

As you set out today, Ensure you prove your faith by the things you do; neighbourhood, campus, place
of work etc.

Further Reading:

• John 14:12 | Colossians 3:17 | 1 Thessalonians 1:3

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase". - Martin Luther King, Jr.



INCREASE OUR FAITH!

⁵ "The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ⁶ He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you" - LUKE 17:5-6 NIV.

The Lord warns those who would cause others to stumble are doomed for destruction. He also spoke about our relationships as disciples and the situations that come with those relationships. All of these situations revolve around sin and the ability to forgive each other. The imperfection of the Church is a fact because it is made up of sinners who sin and hurt each other and constantly need to reconcile. Having a wrong attitude towards forgiving others leads to broken relationships and its negative effect on our unity cannot be quantified.

Jesus called the disciple to the possibility of having a forgiving spirit no matter the magnitude of the hurt if only they have a little faith. No wonder the apostles pleaded, "Increase our faith" on hearing Jesus' standard of unlimited forgiveness (even seven times a day!). Our goal as Christians is to be able to forgive quickly and easily.

However, cultivating the right attitude towards those who repeatedly sin against us does not come natural and seems difficult, the big question is why does forgiveness seem an attribute that is not natural and requires faith? Let's consider the followings:

We have "UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS" of each other

Psalm 55:12-14... "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. ¹³ But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, ¹⁴ with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God".

David felt very bad because the offender was someone very close and dear to him. As humans, we unconsciously don't expect close relatives or friends to sin against us. The pain would have been less if it was an outsider. We expect disciples to know better, live without sinning against us forgetting what Jesus said in **verse 1**. Things that cause men to sin abound. People will sin against us at one time or the other our attitude to the offence is all that matters.

OUR BOND OF LOVE

Proverbs 18:19... "An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel".

The measure of how the hurt is felt is based on our relationship with the supposed offender. The higher the capacity to love the higher the capacity to feel pain. The pain seems deeper when we consider our bonds, either they are our spiritual brothers or sisters in the faith, family members, spouse etc. because we have a deep love toward them. We are sometimes quick to say we have forgiven when in real sense we haven't.

Let's sincerely consider the following Litmus test.

Test of Forgiveness

- Q: Am I free to relate to the individual?
- Q: Do I remember the past hurt or situation of hurt when I'm around this person?
- **Q:** Is your relationship the way it was before the hurt?
- **Q:** How is my personal view of them?

- **Q:** Am I judgmental and angry at the sound of his or her name?
- **Q:** Am I quick to bring up the offence at any slight chance?
- Q: Do I talk about it to everyone who cares to listen but the supposed offender?
- **Q:** Do I expect him/her to bring up the matter?
- **Q:** What is my comment about them in their absence?

"But the attitude of faith is to let go, and become open to truth, whatever it might turn out to be."

- Alan Watts

Today's Action plan:

- Ask God to work through your heart to see reconciliation as the ultimate goal.
- Speak to the other party.
- Get the right help if you can't handle it alone.

Further Reading:

• Ephesians 6:16 | Matthew 18:23-35 | Colossians 3:13 | 2 Peter 1:5-6

JUST FOR LAUGHS!

Ebola in Church

During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, a man went to Church on Sunday and testified that he was infected with Ebola and that God had healed him.

When he finished, he tried to give the microphone to the second man who was waiting to give his own testimony, but the man refused to take it:

The following conversation ensued:

2ND MAN: I have no testimony, give the mic to Pastor.

(1ST MAN tried to give the microphone to the Pastor.)

PASTOR: I'm not in charge of testimonies today, please give it to the SENIOR PASTOR.

(1ST MAN goes to the SENIOR PASTOR)

SENIOR PASTOR: Brother in Christ, the mic is yours. It's a gift from the Church. You may take it home.



CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. 4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord. -Jude 3-4 NIV

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines the word "**Contend**" as "to say that something is true, especially in an argument" or "to compete against somebody in order to gain something".

As this definition implies, we contend for the faith, when we make bold to proclaim and assert the true faith we have in Christ Jesus and when we compete against anyone who stands in the way of truth and righteousness in accordance to the faith we profess. Our greatest enemy on both fronts is Satan and his agents of falsehood.

We live in the world where every day we are called as disciples to exercise our faith, in the face of much falsehood and religious confusion. We are challenged to say something, respond to certain situations surrounding our faith, or to act in keeping with the faith we profess. We are called to Contend for that one faith – **Eph. 4: 5**.

Jude in this verse emphasizes the important relationship between sound doctrine and true faith. The truth of the Bible must not be compromised because it gives us the real facts about Jesus and Salvation. The scriptures are inspired by God and should never be twisted, ridiculed or manipulated, when it is, we must stand up and defend it.

Paul in his writing to Titus in **Titus 1: 8** urged him to appoint Elders in the Church in Crete, with the charge for them to hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that they can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Again in Philippians 1: 27-28, Paul admonishes the Church in Philippi saying,

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved – and that by God."

Here Paul encourages the disciples to be unified, as they "stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith". We find that today, much time and effort is lost in fighting and contending with each other over some "Church issues" instead of a united effort against the real opposition! As a thriving Church of disciples, we must be courageous enough to resist in-fighting and to remain focused on our common purpose of serving Christ, one another and the lost.

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase". - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Q: How are you doing in sharing your faith and calling others to do the same? The business and worries and cares of life have a way of distracting us from contending for and defending our faith.

Your friends, family, and neighbours need' God and salvation, and you are God's agent to deliver! How are you doing?

Today's Action plan:

 Make a List of your friends, family and neighbours you will reach out to this week and go for it! God bless your act of faith!

Further Reading:

Mathew 6:30 | Matthew 17:20 | Romans 4:20

"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength." - Corrie Ten Boom



FAITH TO THE END

12"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 I know where you live — where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city — where Satan lives. - Rev. 2:12-13 NIV

"Faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods." -C S. Lewis

Q: What are you going through at the moment? Are you about to give up on God? Sometimes we can't help but pull the, "why should this happen to me as a disciple" question on God.

My Story:

On the 3rd of January 2012, I received a call from my younger brother that my son who traveled upcountry for the Christmas holiday just drawn and died. I couldn't comprehend at first when he said "Orits just drawn", I thought he was talking about someone else because I spoke with him a day before and he was very healthy, I felt a strong pain.

Just about a year later, on the 16th of March 2013, I received a call from my younger sister that my dad was not feeling fine so I promised to go over the weekend only to be informed that he passed-on on the 20th, I felt as if the world was against me.

Just three years earlier my wife was diagnosed with cancer and had to be flown to India for treatment. After seven months of treatment there, she was declared cancer-free and returned home, after two months, she began to complain again of pains. We thought it was due to much stress only for her to be told after a routine checkup that the cancer was back! The news struck us like lightning! We couldn't believe it. We ran some more tests but the doctors couldn't detect the exact problem, so she flew back to India on the 25th of December 2013, I was called later that her condition was terminal, had only eighteen months to live.

At this point, I felt so discouraged that I popped the question, "what have I done, God to deserve this?" As I wandered, lost in grief, I had "friends" and family members who suggested seek alternative solutions from people and places I know very well that my God won't approve, all in search of solutions and answers. I kept my faith and found succor in **Ecclesiastes 9:1-10**,

I flew out of the country on the 10th of January 2014 to join my wife in India. She passed on February 8th, 2014... it takes incredible encouragement and great faith to maintain faith to the end.

In **Job 1:13-20**, just in one day, all that Job had were taken from him; his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels and all his children all gone in just one day. It takes great faith to remain faithful to God to the very end because Job remained faithful to the end, God blessed him even more. **Job 42:10-16**

ABRAHAM

Abraham's faith in God was put to the test when God asked him to sacrifice his only son Isaac to him, Abraham did not hold back, he did as God asked of him, and he knew if he refused, God had the power to take the life of his son.

When we remain faithful to the end there is always a blessing for us **Genesis 22: 15-18** May God see us all through our hard times (Amen).

Today's Action plan:

• God give me the strength to face life and its challenges and to depend on you to rescue me in times of my distress and the grace to trust you all the way (Amen).

Further Reading:

• 1 Cor. 10:11-13 | 1 Peter 1:7 | 1 Thessalonians 3:7-8 | James 1:2-4



WHEN FAITH GETS TESTED

"We are not made for the mountains, for sunrises, or for the other beautiful attractions in life - those are simply intended to be moments of inspiration. We are made for the valley and the ordinary things of life and that is where we have to prove our stamina and strength." — **Oswald Chambers**

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." -James 1:2-4

The scripture doesn't say "if" but "whenever" we face trials. Trials are a fact of life for everyone. If we're honest deep inside, we expect to be spared the trials of life because we have made Jesus Lord of our lives.

The bible teaches us, though, that there is a **purpose** behind our trials. Our 'faith – of greater worth than gold' is being tested and refined. Testing comes in various forms and to different degrees. What is your test – a difficult marriage, health challenges, unemployment, financial hardship, relationship, the death of loved ones, barrenness, a wayward child, needing to forgive a wrong done to you, or perhaps the consequences of a bad decision you made?

Regardless of the trial, the testing of our faith should result in men and women who persevere through to spiritual maturity. It's much easier said than done. In the midst of a trial, sometimes it takes all you have, to simply wake up in the morning and put one foot in front of the other.

The biblical heroes of faith persevered because they saw Him who is invisible. Seeing God inside the storm will help us to:

Lean into God and fix your eyes on him

2 Co 4:17-18 ..." our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal".

- Keep your vision of God sharp, not out of focus. Faith is seeing him who is invisible God, believing
 that he exists and is deeply committed to you. Everything you can see and touch will vanish, even your
 present trial. Only your relationship with God is eternal.
- Lean on God and let him carry you. (James 4:8a), Consistent bible study can be challenging during trials. Draw near to God. Dig into the word, making the effort even when you don't feel like it. You will gain deeper knowledge, greater understanding, and see new facets of God's character that strengthen, comfort and guide. There is no better anchor in a storm than Jesus!
- Pray about everything, at all times, alone and with others Cry out, talk to God.
- This too will pass as difficult and tiring your circumstances are, trials do not last forever.

"Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials".— **1 Pt 1:6**

Trust God

The sun exists even on a cloudy day. Perseverance is built through believing God's love, trusting it even when we don't feel it or see it, responding to it when we don't feel like. **Romans 4:20-21**.

We demonstrate trust by our actions during difficulties – love, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control, rather than impatience, harshness, meanness, rage and loss of self-control. Nahum 1:7

The first things lost during trials are peace of mind and clarity of thought. Trusting God restores both.

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you". -Is 26:3

Praise Him

- Life is a spiritual battle. Go armed with God, praising Him. Your faith is your shield, a critical part of your armor. **2** *Chronicles* **20:20-22**
- Offer up a daily sacrifice of praise When your heart is breaking and you're wondering 'why me', it
 can feel like a sacrifice to praise God. However in the midst of turmoil, there's still much to be thankful
 for. Heb 13:15

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." -Job 1:21

Every act of perseverance, every sacrifice of praise, every prayer offered up in faith in the eye of the storm deepens your faith, draws you closer to God and **results** in 'praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed'. Rejoice!! **1** Peter 1:6-9

Today's Action plan:

- In what ways can you demonstrate your trust in God in your current circumstances? Pray about them with a prayer partner.
- Memorize one of the scriptures used in this devotional, and begin to practice it.

Further Reading:

- Isaiah 57:10
- Colossians 1:23

JUST FOR LAUGHS!

A PASTOR was driving home alone, 1.00am one night when his car was stopped at a police checkpoint.

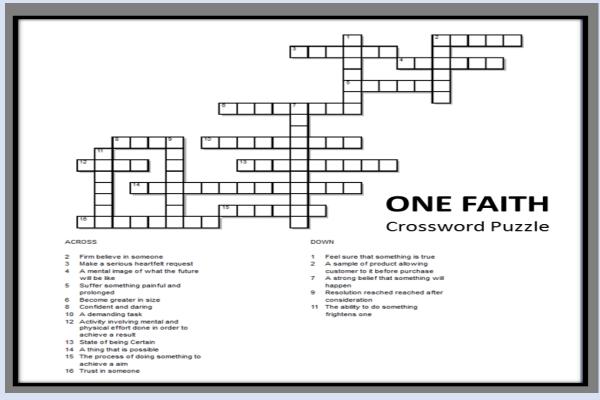
The policeman asked for him to produce his papers. The PASTOR had everything intact.

Upset and still bent on charging the PASTOR, the POLICEMAN said;

POLICE: "I charge you for driving alone at this time of the night, what if you get involved in an accident, who will tell your people?"

PASTOR: (confidently) I'm not alone. Jesus and The Holy Spirit are here with me. Angels Gabriel, Michael and five other angels are also here with me.

POLICE: (with an evil smile) "ALL these people inside this small car? I charge you for overloading!!!



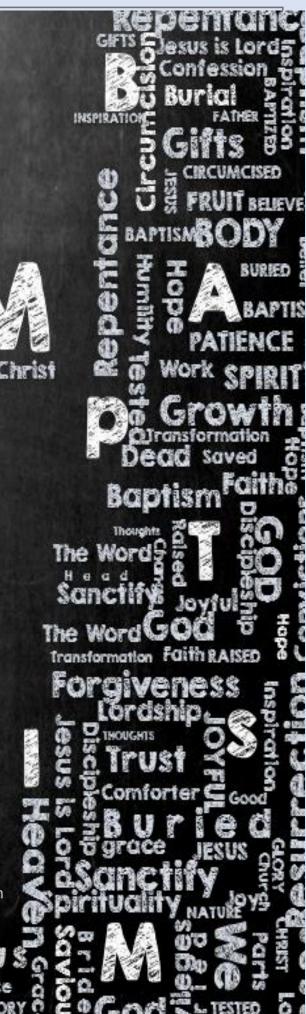
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BELIEVE | INCREASE | DECISION | EXPECTATION |
CHALLENGE | BOLD | ENDURE | WORK |
RELIANCE | APPEAL | CERTAINTY | TESTED
| POSSIBILITIES | ACTION COURAGE | TRUST
VISION



Book Six Book Six

- What Baptism did you receive? Part 1
- What Baptism did you receive? Part 2
- In him, you were also circumcised
- Buried in Baptism 4 raised with him through your faith
- · Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved
- · Baptized into his death
- Clothed with Christ at Baptism





WHAT BAPTISM DID YOU RECEIVE? - Part 1

(The answer to today's question is in two parts and written by two authors, Part 2 will feature tomorrow)

Today's **Part 1** will set the pace by outlining the **Seven Different Baptisms** or inference to baptism mentioned in the New Testament:

- 1. The baptism of John: This was preached and administered for repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah (Matt. 3:4-6, Jn. 1:31). Jesus' disciples also administered this on people (Jn. 4:1). It was an old covenant Jewish procedure with very limited effect in the New Testament era (Acts 19:4).
- 2. Baptism of Jesus: (Matt. 3:13–15). Technically speaking, this is the same "Baptism, of John" discussed above. The only difference, however, is the recipient. Jesus didn't have ANY need for it. When refused initially by John, Jesus had this to say: "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness" (verse 15). Jesus probably used this humbling act to "endorse" John's ministry as well as submit to another earthly channel that would have hindered his acceptance and the ministry he was soon to commence. The gesture can also be interpreted as his "commissioning point" which marked the kickoff of this public ministry, this was confirmed by the voice that came from heaven: 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matt 3:16-17. Whatever position you choose to accept on why he submitted himself to John's Baptism, one thing is clear, it was not for any reason John gave the other candidates.
- **3. Baptism of Fire**: (Matt. 3:11-12) John prophesied this, indicating the judgement of Jesus against the world. This is re-echoed in one of Jesus' parables in Matt. 13:24-30.
- 4. Baptism with the Holy Spirit: Also prophesied by John concerning what Jesus will do (Matt. 3:11)

 This baptism was at Jesus' exclusive discretion and not open to anyone's command or asking. The first recipients of this outpouring was at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). When accused of being drunk and questioned about this phenomenon, Peter, in defence responded (Acts 2:14-16), quoting Joel 2:28-32 that what they saw was a *fulfilment* of Joel's prophecies. Note: neither Peter nor the Apostles saw it coming. They were neither praying for this baptism nor did they command it. The same can be seen in the second and only other biblical example, we have in Acts 10:44-46.
- 5. Baptism of the Cross: (Mark 10:35–39) Jesus used the language of baptism to refer to His sufferings and those of His disciples. He made this declaration when James and John had come to him asking for a place of honour in the kingdom. The "baptism" Jesus speaks of here is the suffering He was to endure. James and John would suffer, as well. It is instructive how modern-day "prosperity gospel preachers" and self-claimed "apostles" never preach about or attempt to "claim" this Baptism.
- 6. The Baptism of Moses: (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). When the Israelites were brought from slavery in Egypt, they were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." That is, they were identified with Moses and his deliverance by passing through the Red Sea and following God's presence in the cloud (Exodus 13:20-22). Paul uses this as a comparison to the way that Christians are identified with Christ and His salvation. Those who followed Moses passed through the water and were thus initiated into a new life of freedom and Law-keeping; those who follow Jesus Christ, who is greater than Moses, pass through the waters of baptism and are thus initiated to a new life of freedom and grace.

Here is where we end **Part 1** of this write-up. The seventh and last Baptism mentioned in the New Testament - "Baptism in the Name of Jesus" or what many would prefer to call, "Believer's Baptism", will be the focus of our discuss tomorrow. This seventh Baptism is in fact, what Paul had in mind when he asked those twelve seekers the lead question in **Acts 19:3** ("What Baptism did you Receive?). You will be fascinated by some of the personal sharing of our "**Part 2**" contributor... See you tomorrow!



WHAT BAPTISM DID YOU RECEIVE? - Part 2

We have a lot of different beliefs on the subject of Baptism. This in a way has thrown many into confusion. Some people had to be baptized several times and others have received different types of Baptisms. This leads to the all-important Question "what baptism did you receive?" Before we go any further, it will be good to define BAPTISM.

The English word "baptize" in the New Testament, is derived from the Greek word "BAPTIZO", from the root word "BAPTO", meaning "to dip". The English word "baptism" is not a "translation" of the Greek word "BAPTIZO", but a "transliteration", or bringing the "spelling" of the Greek word "BAPTIZO" into the English language with a comparable English spelling. Hear what a dictionary has to say: (Transliterate is to write or print (a letter or word) using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language. – Concise Oxford English Dictionary) This means that the English word "baptize" has no original meaning of its own in the English language, so to understand its true meaning, we must look at the uses of "BAPTIZO" in the Greek. What we want to know is what "BAPTIZO" meant to the New Testament writers who used it in the Greek text.

Permit me to digress a little. People are baptized for several reasons: my elder sister was at a time catholic and as a baby underwent a baptism. Did I say baptism? They actually poured water on her head (PROSCHUSIS is Greek for pouring) RHANTISMOS in Greek Means SPRINKLING. This is another practice in the Roman Catholic circles. When she learned that Baptism (BAPTIZO) means to dip or submerge, she realized that her Roman Catholic baptism was not biblically valid. A few months later she had another baptism this time by immersion. She was very confident that this time around she did what the Bible commands. In 1995 in the West African city of Conakry, Guinea, she met someone who added a rather "strange meaning" to her understanding of baptism. My sister tried to defend how correct, she was and that she was not going to have another baptism since she has gotten it right. Something captured her attention for a rethink; that was Acts 19:

Acts 19:1-5

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

 3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. (NIV)

The first lesson we learn here is, it doesn't matter how many times you do or try to do something, you are not done until you've done it the right way. The people in **Acts 19** still had to undergo the scriptural prescription of baptism. Think of it as you would in a case of filling out and submitting a very important document, say an employment, University admission, or even a visa application form. You don't argue or get arrogant when your attention is called to errors you've made while filling them. I bet you'll leap for joy if you are shown and given an opportunity to right your wrong by filling out the form again. Note: I didn't say, "filling out another form" for there is only ONE form, you just have not filled it properly! You don't get rewarded for "attempting" a race, you are rewarded for finishing!

Honestly speaking, the story I shared above was not only about my sister, it was my story too. What then was wrong with our baptism since we had a second, even by immersion? This leads us to **Acts 2**.

Acts 2:38-39

 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call." (NIV)

We noticed we carried out the correct "mode" of baptism, but missed out some very important details: we did not even know and were not told that our baptism was for the forgiveness of sins as stated in **Acts 2:38**. Also, we did not repent of sin before baptism. I still had and held onto my immoral relationships. No one really taught me about all this till 1995 when my baptism was challenged by a disciple of Christ. That was the turning point in my life and my sister's.

Let's see if we can glean additional truths from another Spirit inspired letter of Paul to the Christians in Colosse:

Col 2:9-12

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (NIV)

Paul states the following: We have the fullness of Christ who is God. Baptism is compared to Circumcision; that painful and "bloody" act that automatically transforms an eight day old Hebrew boy child into a Jew. Like the Jewish circumcision which involves the cutting and removal of the flesh, our sins are cut off at baptism (just like in Acts 8) circumcision is used here as corresponding to what happens to believers at Baptism. Unlike the Jewish circumcision, which is done by the hands of another human, this spiritual cutting off is done by Christ and happens at the point of immersion and rising from the waters of Baptism. Another vital point is the "believer's cognizance". (The faith and knowledge of what is happening.) I.e. your knowledge of what is happening is essential for it to be a true biblical conversion. You can't pass an exam, you never took. You can't win a race you never participated in.

Let me round up by outlining the Lessons learned:

- 1. There is one Baptism, yet it must be done correctly (Eph.4:4)
- 2. No matter how many times you were baptized if it is not correctly done, you will require to do it again (Acts19:1-5)
- 3. Baptism is not pouring or sprinkling water, but an immersion into water yet one must first repent of sins and know that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (Acts2:28)
- 4. Baptism is more than an "outward sign of an inward grace" (as many denominations teach). It's not the washing of dirt from the body, but a pledge of a good conscience to God, we are really saved at the point of Baptism (Rom. 6:1-5 | 1 Peter 3:19-21)

No doubt, the topic of baptism have and will always remain a major point of disagreement among many believers in Christ Jesus. The next five days will be spent expounding this topic. If you believe the "One Baptism" statement made in Eph. 4:5, then finding the answer to the question in Acts 19 becomes easier. A vital clue in the quest for a tangible answer rests on the, "What". Remember, it didn't say, "Which Baptism" but "What Baptism". This puts the emphasis on the "importance" of the act rather than the "category". No matter what you choose to believe now or whose side you take, like Paul, to those twelve seeking souls in Ephesus, the big question for us all, might one day be: "What Baptism Did You Receive?"



IN HIM, YOU WERE ALSO CIRCUMCISED

Colossians 2: 11-12

"In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead"

The act of Circumcision dates to the early covenant God made with Abram when he appeared to him. It was the seal or confirmation of that covenant between God and Abram; he will be the father of many nations (Gen. 17: 1-22)

This circumcision involved the cutting off of the foreskin of all the males in Abram's household and that of every male who is eight days old for generations to come, including those born in his household or bought with money, even a foreigner – those who are not his offspring.

Why did God require circumcision?

- 1. As a sign of obedience to him in all matters
- 2. As a sign of belonging to his covenant people. Once circumcised there was no turning back. The man would be identified as a Jew forever.
- 3. As a symbol of "cutting off" the old life of sin, purifying one's heart and dedicating oneself to God.
- 4. Possibly as a health measure.

Circumcision, more than any other practice separated God's people from their pagan neighbours. In Abraham's day, this was essential to develop the pure worship of the one true God.

In this passage to the **Ephesian** Church, Paul related circumcision to baptism; therefore, we must see baptism as the New Testament sign of the covenant, identifying the person (disciple) and the covenant community (the Church). Baptism parallels the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and it also portrays the death and burial of our sinful old way of life followed by resurrection to a new life in Christ.

Remembering that our old sinful life is dead and buried with Christ should give us a powerful motivation to resist sin, as we strive not to allow the desires of our past draw us back or overpower us. We must consciously treat our worldly and selfish desires as if they were dead! Only then, can we truly enjoy our wonderful new life with Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3: 27 says, "for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ". We have set aside our clothing of sin and are now clothed with Christ. Our conduct and way of life must reflect Christ at all times and in every circumstance. More on this will feature in our, "Clothed with Christ at Baptism" article.

Ephesians 4:17-32.

As circumcised people of God, we must endeavour to live as Children of Light in keeping with the truth that we have received. Our old way of life before we believed in Christ is completely in the past, "cut off" in baptism and never to overpower or overshadow our new life in Christ.

People should be able to see the difference between Christians and non-Christians because of the way we live.

Today's Action plan:

- List areas in your "Old way of life" that you still need help in overcoming.
- If you are fasting today, put these before God and resolve to repent and stay repentant.



BURIED IN BAPTISM AND RAISED WITH HIM THROUGH YOUR FAITH

... Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through Faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. - Col 2:12

In our study today we shall be looking intently into these three sub-topics:

- 1. Buried in Baptism
- 2. Raised up with Him
- 3. Faith in the working of God

Buried In Baptism:

This scripture affirms that baptism is a burial in Christ.

The result of this burial is the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38) Our burial into Christ's death would bring us into contact with the justifying blood of Jesus. Col 2:13 specifically relates forgiveness at this event, when it refers to God "having forgiven us all our transgressions"

The idea of a burial implies an accompanying death, namely, our own death to sin which precedes our resurrection to newness of life. Dying with Christ to sin means that our old self is crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with. In baptism by the power Jesus' death and resurrection, we are united with him and our old self is put to death and put off (removed). **Col2:12** says this takes place during "baptism", it affirms that Baptism is an act of Salvation. It does not say this happens "before baptism" or "after baptism" but specifically and clearly in baptism. Baptism is the time or occasion during which God bestows Salvation upon the sinner.

The main point here is that baptism is a spiritual burial which brings us into union with Christ with a resurrection that occurs when we are raised from this watery grave.

Raised Up With Him:

In relation to **Romans 6: 1-5**, The old self is alive and well in control until baptism, in which it is put to death and buried and from which a new self is raised up to take its place. The sinner is raised from this state of spiritual demise and given a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a resurrection from the dead. We are raised up with Him in baptism. Baptism is the time and place when the saving benefits of Christ's own death, burial and resurrection are applied to us.

Faith In The Working Of God

One of the arguments of those who deny that our regeneration happens at baptism always points fingers to it being a "work" and since works don't save, then baptism must then be irrelevant in the process of salvation. Even a casual look at this scripture reveals that the "work" in Baptism, is actually God working. In baptism, we rely heavily on the working of God. It is he who forgives us our sins. We are merely trusting and obeying his words. It is our faith in the working of God, who raised Jesus from the dead. This is why the last part of **verse 12** is there to remind us that the God who has promised to raise us from the dead in baptism has already demonstrated His willingness and power to do so by raising His own son from the dead. This is a great Biblical TRUTH!

Today's Action plan:

- Take some time to recount and write out your baptismal experience.
- What kind of baptism will you say you receive?
- Was your Baptism void of faith?
- Did you really bury your old self? Haven cleansed of your past life, have you turned back?
- What do you think you should do if you fall short of the biblical truth?



WHOEVER BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED WILL BE SAVED

We eat a lot of rice in West Africa. A common form of rice meal we eat is Fried Rice or if you are Nigerian, Jollof rice! Rice is the key ingredient, but not the only. There are other things that we need to blend with the rice to make it fried or Jollof rice. In the same way, baptism goes with other things. This is how the gospel of Mark puts it:

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (NIV)

God's Design

God loves everyone and he has designed a way to reconcile sinful man to him. The channel is evangelism. He entrusted his disciples with the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:18-20)

This is what we call the great commission. Jesus sent his disciples to go and preach the good news to all creation. The gospel is good news and should be preached as good news. Disciples are commanded to preach to all creation, i.e. the poor and rich, the educated and the illiterate, to blacks or whites or coloured, with no discrimination. The reason is because everyone deserves a chance to be a disciple of Jesus. We must never deprive anyone of this God-given grace.

Man's Choice

Verse 16 of Mark 16 says "... he who believes and is baptised will be saved". God has given us the food, the question is, are you ready to eat? It is a matter of choice to believe in the good news and be baptised. No man will blame God for not providing a way out of Sin and a chance to spend eternity with Him. Choose wisely and don't miss the chance to be a disciple of Jesus. This may be very useful for our "kingdom kids" (a pet name some of us use to distinguish children born or raised in the Church). Many of our congregations have a lot of young people who are children of disciples and I believe that most of you will read this book. I encourage you to choose wisely. Your days under the sun are numbered. You will not live forever, there will be a day you will face your creator.

Please don't hide under your parent's commitment or use their lapses as an excuse for not committing yourself to God. Their commitment to God will not save you. I encourage all of you to read the entire **Ezekiel 18:1-32**, you'll be amazed at how much God loves and treats everyone according to what they have done. This is your year, this is your month, this is your week, and I dare say this is your day, a day to decide to follow Jesus.

I have heard stories of some not seeing good examples in their parents or some weak disciples to follow. You may be correct, but think about it this way, Jesus had 12 disciples and one was clearly an instrument of the devil, does that mean that following Jesus was not a good idea because of Judas? Come on let us grow up! This is the time for you to make the move because tomorrow is not guaranteed.

Be honest, are you scared of the water, or are you scared of the CHANGE?

"When a Roman penny was made, the image or likeness of Caesar the emperor was stamped upon it, and those who used it were reckoned as his subjects and expected to obey his laws. Ages ago God Himself made something and stamped His likeness upon it, as a sign that it belonged to Him and must be used in His service. It was not a coin God made. It was a man. And God's image has been stamped upon each of us to show that we were made, not to follow our own pleasure, but to serve him".



BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH

The only relationship in existence that begins with 'death' is the relationship between Jesus Christ and anyone who has pledged to make him the Lord of their life.

'For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it' - Luke 9:24

'If anyone comes to me and does not hate... even his own life – he cannot be my disciple.' - Luke 14:26

'... Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' - John 12: 24-25.

'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' - Galatians 2:20

'What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. – Rom. 6:1-5

Death to the old life

It is clear that we cannot live the Christian life without, first, dying to the old life. This is because the two are completely opposed to each other. Remember that Jesus died in order to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

In response to this we must;

Die To Self / Sin. Our human nature is selfish. As people, our thoughts, activities, and desires are all centered on ourselves. On top of all this, our physical desires are insatiable. Without a conscious and sober decision to die to this, we cannot follow a Holy Lord who is completely selfless. Our Savior's entire existence was about us and never for him. He expects us in the same way to live for him, by living for others. This is a tough call in this selfish world.

Without a doubt, we certainly do have legitimate needs/desires. It is important, however, not to cross the line into selfish living. This will take prayer and being spiritually alert.

Self and sin, surely go hand in hand, since one is the root of the other. It was for sin that Jesus died. How can we continue to live in the very sins that Jesus died for?

As we identify areas to die to, let us also identify areas to grow in living a new life in Christ.

Questions to ponder:

What sins repeatedly came up in my life last year?
What does this tell me about areas of my character that are not Christ-like?
What area of myself needs to die?

Today's Action plan:

Choose one area of your new life in Christ that you will focus on improving this week.

For additional Studies Hebrews10:26-29 | Eph 4:30.



CLOTHED WITH CHRIST AT BAPTISM

Gal 3:27

27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. - NIV

The world we live in each day has so filled our minds and our emotions with deep-seated mistrust, anger, bitterness and ingratitude and many more evil tendencies, that makes it truly difficult for any of us to really put on or be clothed and remain clothed with godly virtues. For this reason, God sent his son into this dark world, so that as many of us who truly recognize his presence and works can turn to God in repentance having faith in him and his power to save us by cleansing us in baptism from sin.

This same blood which we come in contact with, which symbolically is represented by the water (1Pet3:20-21), enable us to receive the Holy Spirit who is Christ in us. He comes into us to develop the Christ-like nature (2Cor. 3:18). He is the person who helps fight in putting off of the sinful nature which has been corrupted by the evil desires in us before we were baptized.

In **Gal. 5:16-17**- The Apostle Paul says that the Spirit, we receive in baptism is at war with our sinful nature. To clothe yourself with Christ means setting your mind on what this Spirit desire to grow in us. Such as love, peace, self-control, faith (**Gal. 5:21-25**). We need to make it a habit, to live out these virtues, because they are of Christ' nature.

The more we practice living right as scripture directs us, we put on or are clothed with Christ. Just as the acts of the sinful nature are obvious (**Gal. 5:19-21**), so also the act of the Spirit's nature should be obvious to us (**Gal. 5:22-23**).

Think of the police or Army, what makes them easily identified? Is it not the uniform they wear? Wherever you are as a soldier, when people see you all they think of, is someone who is very discipline, focus, bold and courageous. That is what the uniform stands for. This is similar to putting on or what being clothed with Christ in baptism should mean to us.

A pledge to live for Christ as Paul will say in Phil 1-21, 27

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel (NIV)

Not just in church, but being Christ-like wherever we are or go to. That may sound quite challenging, but that is exactly what God calls us to. We all need to resolve to live for Christ.

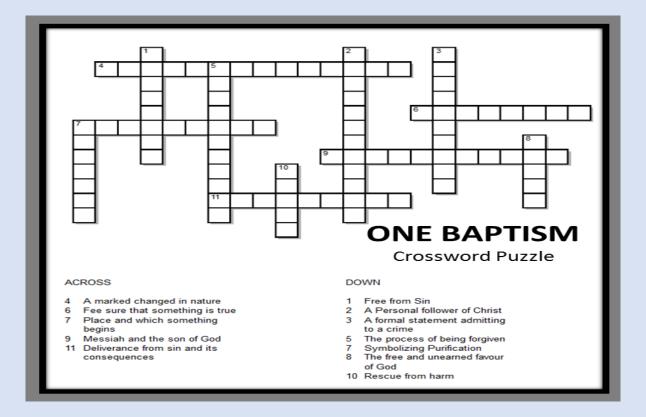
Are you allowing the Spirit's nature to dominate your Character? In **Rm. 12:1-2**, the great apostle mentions that we should be transformed in the way we think as disciples, right from the waters of baptism. This is what the world will see and turn to God, our Christ-like nature. Paul says we have an obligation, it's not to the sinful flesh or ways, but to the Spirit. To live according to what He, the Spirit wants. The Spirit in you always wants to please God who gives him to us. So let's not allow laziness, self-pity and faithlessness make us think we can't live victoriously each day. Yes, the Spirit God has given to us is a Spirit of discipline, self-control, a Spirit of power (**2Tim.1:7**). He is able to make us conquerors in all we do. Don't exchange this new clothing which God has given to us with the dirty sin-stained garment we had in the world. Let's throw them all away and the lord will continue to shine in and through us to glorify himself!

Where is JESUS?









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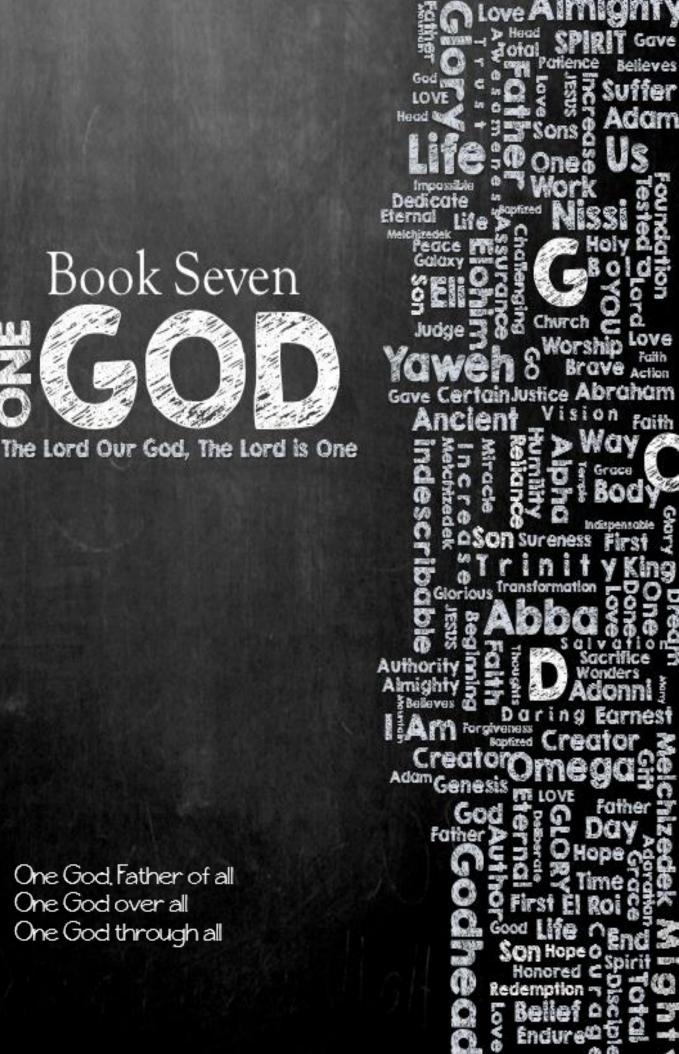
SALVATION | BEGINNING | SANCTIFY | BELIEVES TRANSFORMATION | BAPTISM | DISCIPLESHIP | JESUS IS LORD CONFESSION | SAVED

Book Seven

One God, Father of all

One God over all

One God through all





ONE GOD, FATHER OF ALL

Please first read the scriptures below.

(Acts 17v:24-31 | Isaiah 44:6 | Isaiah 43:11 | I Cor 8:6 | Deut. 6:4 | I Tim 2:5)

"I sought to hear the voice of God and Climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared: "Go down again- I dwell among the people" -John Henry New Man

Even among theologians, the concept of "One God" has been a matter of debate over the years. Different Theologians have argued the idea of Monotheism. Monotheism is defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica as belief in the existence of one god or in the oneness of God.

The city of Athens, with its magnificent buildings and many gods, was a center of Greek Culture, Philosophy and education.

Apostle Paul was filled with a combination of anguish and concern, seeing people spiritually lost, blinded by Satan, and trapped in a pagan culture, this must have put Paul in a state of emotional turmoil. Though highly educated, the Athenians were ignorant of the one true God who is the father of all. It's interesting to note that Paul turned his internal turmoil into positive action; he looked for opportunities to share the truth about Jesus.

Q: Does the lostness of people move you to action? And if so, do you seek opportunities to share the gospel?

Paul's address is a good example of how to communicate the gospel. Paul did not begin by reciting Jewish history, as he usually did, for this would have been meaningless to his Greek audience. He began by building a case for the one true God, using examples they understood (Acts 17:22-23)

Paul did not leave his message unfinished. He confronted his listeners with Jesus' resurrection and its meaning to all people, either blessing or punishment. The Greeks had no concept of Judgement. Most of them preferred worshiping many gods instead of just one God; who is the Creator, not the Creation, and God, the father of all.

Our God is a personal God, he is our Father. One of the Athenian believes is that "we are his offspring". Paul built his case around this "concept" of theirs. If you call God "father", then that makes you a son. If you see yourself as his child, then that equally makes him a "father". If these concepts are true, then the way we WORSHIP should change. The way we see God should also reflect his fatherly nature and glorious majesty. God is Spirit, he is our creator, not just us, but the entire cosmos. We can't reduce him to physical objects or structure in order to satisfy our unspiritual minds. God cannot be boxed!

Q: Who is God to you today? Think about this and may he reveal himself to you, even more.

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ONE GOD OVERALL

ISAIAH 45:14

I remember growing up in my early days as a part of an averagely religious family. Attending regular Sunday services was one of the standing family policies. Moreover, my father was also a devoted daily morning devotion leader of the church. Yet we were still entangled with witchcraft and often visited mediums, spiritists, and shrines to perform different kinds of fetish activities. These acts were being done for the well-being and protection of the family.

The view of my parents then was that God does not oppose any effort that seek to protect oneself, as long as it is not to inflict harm on others.

All this changed when I became a disciple of Jesus some years ago. Confronted with lots of convicting Bible passages, it dawned on me that God will never condone "POLYTHEISM", (the practice of serving many gods).

And indeed, if we take a keen look at today's passage; **Isaiah 45:14**, we will learn that He was and is still re-affirming his supreme authority over everything, both living, and none. This is certainly how He wants to be known by anyone who claims to be his worshippers because He will never share his glory with anything else. And I believed this is also the position of every single disciple today!

Now let us carefully ponder on my next statements. Are you worshipping other gods? Be honest. Are you gradually drifting and becoming more like my physical family I shared about earlier? (**Heb. 2:1**) You might not necessarily be practicing "witchcraft" in the form known to our grandparents, but could it be that there are other things that have stolen your heart and sincere devotion to God? I dare to step even further. Are you involved in any form of modern-day "*Christianized witchcraft*"? You probably didn't see that coming, did you? I'll step even further – you see, you go to church, even serve in one department or another. But are you yielding more to God or that ungodly, popular opinion?

The world has changed in a way, but sin still is sin in the Bible. Many of you reading this piece, probably live in a city. Most of the old, Archaic, African village structures, superstitious beliefs, and "old people's thinking" may not be as visible today as they were decades back. More and more people are embracing organized religion. We're witnessing the emergence of super and mega churches. The sad news however is, we can have all these social and religious advancements and still be living a double standard spiritual life like my parents.

How can a believer exchange the truth of God for a lie today? (Rom. 1:25)

- When your belief in God fails to erode the fear you have of some village witch doctor. (Lk. 12:4-7)
- When your prayer life resembles more of those of the false prophets of Baal than Elijah, the man of God (1Kings 18:27-38)
- When worldliness and materialism steal your devotion to God (2Tim. 3:4-5)
- When you'll rather believe the notion of "someone doing you" than trust God for your security. (Rom. 8:15)

Today's Action plan:

- Therefore, I urge us to diagnose our lives properly and be honest about your findings.
- Make a spiritual U-turn to a positive change of total commitment back to our one and only God in any
 way you may be found wanting.
- Make him, God over All!



ONE GOD THROUGH ALL

JAMES 2:19

¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

The LORD is one! There is but one true God. There are not two, three or more. There is only one true God and many false gods (1 Corinthians 8:4-6). Because of this, some have denied the deity of Christ. Some have denied that The Holy Spirit is God. Some have even denied that the Holy Spirit is a person! They say that only the Father can be God because there is only one God and if Jesus and the Holy Spirit were also God that would make three. I suppose that reasoning would be sound if the word "one" in the phrase "one God" always referred to a mathematical one. It does not!

Deuteronomy 4:35

³⁵ you were shown these things so that you might know that the lord is God; beside him, there is no other

The term "LORD" in these passages is a translation of the Hebrew name "Yahweh" So, "Yahweh, He is God, there is no other besides Him" is an accurate translation of the above verse. The earlier passage could be translated this way: "Hear O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one!"

However, the word translated "God" (**Elohim**) is plural in form. That makes the sentence really interesting and deserving of very careful consideration: "Hear O Israel! Yahweh is our God (plural), Yahweh is one!" It was man's quest to understand the nature of God that gave birth to the word, "TRINITY". This is no easy subject, I assure you. For some of you, it might be more demanding than teaching a three-year-old molecular physics! Biblical Trinity states that there is One God. There are three in personality but one in nature or essence. Father, Son, and Spirit are each God (in essence), but none can be identified with the other. Some "Antitrinitarians" have argued that since the word "Trinity" does not appear anywhere in the Bible, it is false and wrong to use it in describing God. Well, the quick and easy defense will be to state tons of "Christian words" and terms, we often use today, which have no Biblical roots. But again, that will not be a sound argument nor is it in the spirit of **1 Peter 3:15**:

¹⁵ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

So, to get us thinking, we have set up an assignment to nudge us on. Take time out and study the scriptures below. These passages talk about and reveals the triune nature of God. Write out your findings and share with someone. No lazy thinking here folks. If you want to learn more about God, you must be prepared to put in some effort.

Jer 29:13-14

¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," declares the Lord,

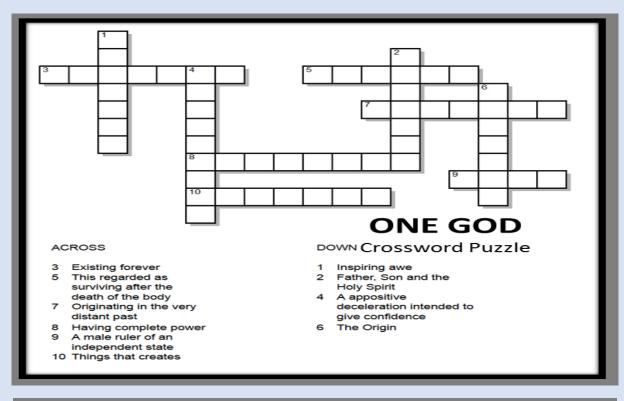
1 Tim 3:16

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God* was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. NKJV

Today's Action plan:

John 10:30 | Matthew 28:19 | 1 Corinthians 8:6 | 2 Corinthians 13:14 | Matthew 3:16-17 | John 14:26 | John 1:14 | 1 John 5:7-8 | John 14:16-17 | Colossians 2:9 | Philippians 2:5-8 | Genesis 1:26 | John 1:1-51 | 1 Peter 1:2 | Ephesians 4:4-6 | 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 | John 10:30-36 | Genesis 3:22 |



ONE GOD WORDSEARCH В L Т R A I Z Ν N R G A I А N S R ı S J

CREATOR | SPIRIT | TRINITY | ALMIGHTY ANCIENT | ETERNAL | KING | AWESOME | GENESIS | ASSURANCE CONFIDENCE

Givers never LACK A YOUNG MAN was sitting in church and it was time for offering, so the collection Lag was passed around. He quickly pulled N10 from his pocket and dropped it in the Bag... Just then, an OLDER MAN behind him tapped The YOUNG MAN felt another YOUNG MAN smiled, placed the "son" tap from behind and heard the N1000 note in the bag and passed That N1000 fell OLDER MAN whisper it on, admiring the OLDER MAN from your pocket for being so generous.

Believer Impossible Dedicate Eternal Li reace And with many other words Justice Forb

- Be completely humble
- Be Patient
- Bear with One another in Love
- A life worthy of the Calling
- Church Traditions You Won't Find in The Bible: "The Sinner's Prayer"
- You Can Make a Difference
- Prayers in the Bible Part 1
- Prayers in the Bible Part 2
- Prayers in the Bible Part 3
- Prayers in the Bible Part 4
- New Testament One another Passages



BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE (Part 1)

"Meekness is not weakness but it is actually strength that is under control" Jack Wellman

The world defines humility as a lowering of oneself in relation to others, a state or the act of being humble, freedom of pride and arrogance, and having a modest opinion of one's own worth. Biblically, humility is not groveling in front of others or being a doormat. Moses was said to be the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). The fact is that "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). The word James uses for "opposes" is the Greek word "antitasso" which means "to rage in the battle against" so we could put James 4:6 like this; "God is in battle against the proud but gives grace to the humble." Until a person humbles himself, he can never receive the grace of God which is a gift that He only gives to those who are of a humble and contrite nature.

Philippians 2:3-4

The person that is truly humble is the person who "counts others more important than" himself because he will "look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others." The application of this would be when others are speaking, don't interrupt, when others are waiting on something, let them go first when someone needs something, supply that need even if it is a personal need. That is true humility. Thinking more highly of others than self and putting their interests ahead of ours.

Ephesians 4:1-3

I think this passage contains an important reminder that the manner in which we walk that is worthy of our calling is to walk with "all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love" and by doing this we can "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" that is necessary for the Body of Christ, the church.

Self-Test: Are You Proud?

- Do you spend more time thinking about yourself than about God or about other people?
- Do you make yourself the center of most conversations?
- Do you compare yourself with others often, judging yourself favorably?
- Do you take credit for your own looks, intelligence, or ability?
- Do you try to make sure that others are aware of your personal gifts or possessions?
- Do you think you deserve more of this world's good things than other people do?
- Are you willing to pursue your selfish goals even if it means others are hurt in the process?
- Do you think God must be pleased with you because of how ethical or religious you are?
- Do you ever think you do not really need God or other people?
 Decide today to start training yourself to be humble in the sight of the Lord.

Additional scriptures:

Exodus 10:3 | Micah 6:8 | Romans 12:3 | Colossians 3:12 | Titus 3:2 | Luke 1:52 | 2 Chronicles 7:14 | 1Peter 5:6 | Psalm 25:9 | Proverbs 15:33 | Luke 18:14 | Matthew 5:5

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, its thinking of yourself less". - C.S.Lewis



BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE (Part 2)

What does it mean to be humble?

The Bible describes humility as meekness, lowliness and absence of self. The Greek word translated "humility" in **Colossians 3:12** and elsewhere literally means "lowliness of mind," so we see that humility is a heart attitude, not merely an outward demeanor. One may put on an outward show of humility but still have a heart full of pride and arrogance. Jesus said that those who are "poor in spirit" would have the kingdom of heaven. Being poor in spirit means that only those who admit to an absolute bankruptcy of spiritual worth will inherit eternal life.

Ephesians 4:2

The apostle Paul makes a powerful and serious statement here. He is addressing the issue of unity in the church and the first statement that comes out of his mouth as he urges these early Christians is "Be completely humble"

What this statement brings out is that it is possible to show signs of humility and yet not be completely humble. As human beings, we always try to put our best foot forward, so it is possible to show some form of humility and yet we are not quite humble.

Paul himself says in the letter to Timothy that in the last day's people will be lovers of themselves...having a form of godliness yet denying its power. So one can have a form of humility and yet not be completely humble.

Humility is very crucial to the unity of the Church and to the success of spreading the gospel. Because of humility we are able to accept one another, serve one another, instruct one another, pray for one another, correct one another all of which are essentials for unity.

But also without humility we end up second guessing one another, mistrust, hating one another, not serving each other, not praying for each other and, therefore, our mission and purpose will fail.

Christ's Humility

When I think of being completely humble, the person that comes to mind is Jesus the son of God. His complete humility is well exhibited by Paul's description of Jesus in **Philippians 2:4-11**. Christ looked not only to his own interests but also to other people's interests, which is why he died on a tree so that we could make it to heaven, fed thousands, taught and healed many. Christ didn't use his status as God's equal or position for selfish reasons being the son of God. It is not something that he kept trumpeting everywhere and using it to gain favors etc. How easily we want to be seen with that VIP or gain favors because of our links with him; Jesus didn't.

Christ made himself nothing by putting on the very nature of a servant and he showed us an example in many ways e.g. the last supper, him washing the disciples' feet. He says, "But the greatest among you is one who serves"

Q: Do you feel great because you are serving or is it not always the opposite? Christ humbled himself and even became obedient to death on a cross for a crime he did not commit and to redeem a people who didn't deserve it at all, the very people who wanted him dead.

Q: would you ever agree to take a punishment for a crime you didn't commit? And especially if that person who committed it is the same one baying for your blood?

As a result, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name; why? Because Christ exhibited complete humility. "Great humility attracts great exaltation"

Jesus expects us to show great humility in all facets of life;

As Children in obeying and honoring our parents, as parents by not exasperating our children, as slaves by obeying our earthly masters out of reverence for Christ, as masters by treating slaves with dignity and love; *Ephesians 6:1-9;* And for husbands and wives to submit to one another with love and respect out of reverence for Christ *Ephesians 5:21*

Q: So where do we go to learn how to be completely humble?

Matthew 11:28-29 – We should go to the master of humility himself and learn from him. Pride is a burden we carry along but when we go to Jesus he will relieve us of that burden and clothe us with humility, giving us rest for our souls. GOD BLESS.





BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE (Part 3)

Eph. 4:2 Says: Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Humility helps us to be more accommodating and tolerant of others and their weaknesses.

What is Humility?

Humility is the quality of having a modest or low view of one's importance.

Humility comes from the Latin word humilis, which literally means low.

Do you think more highly of yourself than you ought to? Do you see yourself far better than others? Do you take the credit (glory) for your successes?...That is not humility.

Humility is required in all areas of our lives for a successful, peaceful and fruitful Christian life. Let's look at some areas humility helps us as Christians:

1. Success and Material Blessings

Deuteronomy 9:4-29

It is not because of your righteousness that God is blessing you the way He is. Why? Because the best of your righteousness is but a filthy rag before God. No! It is just out of His great love and compassion, therefore, your attitude should be that of humility; thanking Him for undeserved blessings.

Genesis 32:10

This was the humility of Abraham, being open about his background and giving glory to God for his blessing. He did not claim to deserve Gods kindness and blessings. You need to always be quick to share about God's goodness in my life. Where you were/coming from, and how far God has brought you. You should never take the glory.

2. Repentance

1 Kings 21:29

Whatever the wrong you might have committed, if you genuinely see your fault and repent, God is willing to forgive. You also need to also reflect such attitude in your relationship with other; when you fall short in your words or action (Prov. 6:1-7).

3. Relationship With Each Other

Romans 16:7

Humility helps you to see the good in others. You need to acknowledge the good in people (their contributions) and commend them accordingly.

4. Relationship With God

Ephesians 5:20

Giving thanks to God in every situation reflects/exhibits humility to God.

5. Service to God

Luke 17:17-10

When you offer your service to God/church, you are not doing God/church a favour, you are only doing your duty, therefore, you should not expect commendation /praise etc for what you do. You are only showing appreciation for the love (blessings) of God in my life. Humility is the secret to this attitude.

6. Attitude to Life

Genesis 45:7-9

Joseph recognized that it was God that had brought him thus far, he did not see it as his own effort, he recognized God's hand in everything, and so was not arrogant to his brothers but humble. This should be your attitude to life. You need to see God's hand in every situation in your life as a Christian, and always recognize Him, giving him all the glory.

7. Vulnerability

Matthew 26:39

Humility helps us to be open, and thus; find help and mercy in time of our need. What are you going through right now? Do you think you are the only one going through it, and that nobody else understands? Be open about your challenge/situation, and you will be surprised at the value of help you'll get from others.

8. Compassion

Matthew 9:36

Humility helps us to be compassionate towards others. If you recognize God's blessings/favour in your life, then you will easily feel compassion for others in their situation. More importantly, you will see the need to genuinely reach out to more people and share your faith, instead of being quick to judge them.

9. Submission to God

Luke 1:26-38

Mary saw her service to God as a privilege. Your service to God is a privilege.

Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph honored God by his action through humility.

Humility helps us to willingly submit to God's will in our life and also give us the grace to go through trying times with a godly attitude.

JUST FOR LAUGHS!

God's Omnipotence

(Sunday school teacher was asking her students some questions after a series of lessons on God's omnipotence. She asked -)

TEACHER: "Is there anything God can't do?"

(All was silent. Finally, one boy held up his hand.)

(on seeing this, was disappointed that they had missed the point of the lesson. She sighed and asked)

TEACHER: "Well, what is it you think God can't do?"

BOY: "He can't please everybody."



BE PATIENT!

Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (NIV)

What does patience mean?

According to Concise Oxford dictionary, patience is defined as "the capacity to tolerate delay, trouble or suffering without becoming angry or upset this definition is quite easy to understand "in the book". Let's come to the real world, how do you describe patience to a married couple who have been trying to have one child for over twenty years?

Or the aging Civil servant who is unjustly denied promotion for over ten years, is it the vibrant student who has relentlessly sought admittance into a tertiary institution for 8 years, how best can you explain the concept of patience to ask inmate who is unjustly condemned to life imprisonment? Or do we talk about that mature brother or sister who longs endlessly to say the words "I do!" The situations are endless.

Let's back up a little and see if we can draw lessons from the situations in the scriptures.

Abraham was given the promise of having the entire universe as his offspring at very old age (**Hebrews 6:15**) while Sarah his wife was told to expect a baby with a retired womb.

Moses knew what patience is while he tried to lead a stiff-necked people to the Promised Land. Certainly, the woman with the issue of blood also got her pound of flesh or our Lord Jesus Christ who is still being patient, waiting for the world to repent!

What's the whole point? All these people in scripture were faced with different situations but one Thread that cuts across is that they all had to wait and, of course, their patience paid off eventually. These stores are there for us to learn from (**Rom 15:4**)

Psalm 37:7-9 (Please Read)

The fact of life is that things will not always work the way you want it, where you want it or when you want it. You become hasty and anxious when things you expect have not happened and this could be because you are comparing yourself with other people (colleague, friends, classmates, relatives and even brothers and sisters in the Kingdom). This is wrong!

You have forgotten so quickly that your father in heaven has uniquely mapped out the course of your life. (Jer 29:11)

The sooner you realize this, the better for you, recognize this plan of God for you, stick to it and persevere in it. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything! (James 1:1-4)

Be patient.

"He that can have patience can have what he will" – Benjamin Franklin

Further Readings

- Romans 12:12
- Romans 8:25
- Galatians 6:9
- Philippians 4:6
- 1 Corinthians 13:4



BEARING WITH EACH OTHER IN LOVE

Eph 4:1-3

- 1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
- **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
- **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

"Bearing with one another in love" — Paul knew that love in the church isn't something that naturally springs from us. The word "bearing" suggests a challenge; note he does not say "hi-fiving" one another in "love" as if the challenge were simply to direct our enthusiasm for one another. Becoming a Christian doesn't automatically make a person instantly loveable and easy to be around. We know better. Relationships rooted in love takes effort.

Leo Tolstoy wrote: "What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are, but how you deal with incompatibility."

If this is true of a relationship between two people, how much more so in a church community of many people.

But why? Why should we bear with one another in love? Is it so that church gatherings will be pleasant? Are we to be nice for niceness sake? Some have commented that many bars are friendlier places than some churches. But is this call to bear with one another in love simply so that we will be the friendliest place in town? A food for thought.

The context of the Apostle's admonition of "bearing with one another in love" is his prayer for the church in the preceding chapter. "I pray that we may have the power to comprehend, with all the disciples, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God." In short - bearing with one another in love is part of comprehending the love of Christ. It is so that we will know real love; the one who is love.

Paul was focused on this point because the barriers throughout the world that divide humanity and the brutal treatment of each other along those lines is clearly one of the chief ills of sinful humanity. The barriers in the ancient world were as ugly as they are today. The Greeks regarded themselves as intellectually superior to everyone else. The Greek language was considered both the most expressive and the most beautiful sounding of any language. Why, compared to the sound of Greek, all other languages had a harsh, unmusical, brutish sound: "bar-bar". Greek people, therefore, regarded everyone else in the world as a "barbarian".

Utterly unhuman were slaves. In the ancient world, the slave wasn't considered to be a human being in any sense. Slaves had no rights. No less a philosopher than Aristotle had said that a slave was a highly efficient **tool** that had one disadvantage not found in other tools: the slave had to be fed.

Women did not fare well in this ancient world either. The mindset of ancient Greece is typified by Socrates who maintained that being born a woman was divine punishment since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal. In the Roman era (following the Greek era) a woman was permitted to accompany her husband socially but was still regarded as humanly inferior.

You can imagine the shockwaves Paul's teaching would send into that world; in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female—all are one in Christ Jesus. Our oneness in Christ Jesus is underscored in this text in Ephesians; *One body, one Spirit, one hope, one lord, one faith, one baptism,*

One God and Father of us all. At the heart of God's project to redeem humanity is Christ's people loving each other as we have been loved by our Saviour.

Bearing with one another in love is the practical application of God's saving work of turning people to himself and then to one another. Our bearing with one another in love is the reversal of humanity's barrier-making sinful ways.

Note in Paul's theology that unity isn't something we **create**; unity is what we **maintain**. We have been united together in Christ and we are to live that union in the church.

Today's Action plan:

- 1. Write out names of brothers and sister that you find difficult to bear with and start making amends in love
- 2. List how you can improve your inter-personal relationships in the kingdom and society at large.

JUST FOR LAUGHS!

GARDEN OF EDEN

(ADAM was walking around the Garden of Eden feeling very lonely, so God asked-)

GOD: "What is wrong with you?"

ADAM: I didn't have anyone to talk to.

GOD: I'm going to give you a companion.

GOD: "This person will cook for you and wash your clothes. She will always agree with every decision you make. She will bear your children and never ask you to get up in the middle of the night to take care of them. She will not nag you, and she will always be the first to admit she was wrong when you've had a disagreement. She will never have a headache, and she will freely give love and compassion whenever needed."

ADAM: (Excited) "What will this woman cost me?"

GOD: "An ARM and a LEG."

ADAM: "What can I get for just a RIB?"

"Life is an echo, what you send out-comes back
What you sow-you reap
What you give- you get
What you see in others- exists in you.
So stay nice even when others are not."



A LIFE WORTHY OF HIS CALLING

EPHESIAN 4: 1-3

Our responsibility: live a life worthy of our calling (vs. 1)

The Christian has received a high and holy calling. We are to live a life worthy *because* we received this calling. Our lives are to reflect the glory of the Saviour who saved us. Our lives should lend credibility to our profession of faith, not undermining its credibility.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live new lives in new ways. That power is available to every Christian, but it's not automatic. We need God's grace to live the Christian life. We're powerless without God.

Our character: living a worthy life flows from a Christ-like character (vs. 2)

...with all humility and meekness... (vs. 2)

These two qualities go together. Jesus used these two terms to describe His character in **Matt 11: 29**, saying we should take his yoke upon us and learn from him for he is meek and humble of heart. So being humble and meek is being like Christ.

Other evidence of pride we should look out for:

- When we think more highly of our opinions than the opinions of others
- When we believe we're always right in an argument (I know what you're thinking: I am right!)
- When we hate it when others or certain people point out our faults.
- When it bothers us when we are overlooked
- When we refuse to forgive those who have hurt us (or we perceive they have hurt us)

Be completely humble...humble through and through.

Meekness: Jesus also describes himself as meek. What is meekness? Meekness is the gentleness of the strong whose strength is under control. It is the quality of moderation. God didn't call us to be wimps - he calls us to be meek. There's a big difference. Jesus was no wimp. Being gentle when we could be harsh. Being firm but caring. Standing for what is right without flailing about in an uncontrolled rage or emotional outburst.

Jesus could have retaliated against all who mocked him and spit on him and oppressed him at any time. He could have called a legion of angels to destroy this sinful world. He had that kind of strength. That kind of power. He was under the control of meekness - held it under the control of love and obedience to His Father. Meek and humble. That is our Savior.

With patience, forbearing with one another

Aggravating people come in all shapes and sizes and stages - Children, Parents, Co-workers and neighbors. People in the church are not immune in any way.

Any group that desires to live in unity must have a spirit of forbearance. We cannot make every issue or disagreement an uphill task. We cannot set ourselves in rigid and inflexible positions that cannot tolerate differences or disappointments. Congregations must forbear. Both of these are the fruit of the Spirit and both characterize the character of Jesus Christ. The Lord is incredibly patient and forbearing with us - should we not also show such patience and forbearance?

Humility...meekness...patience...forbearance...these characteristics are not only Christ-like, they are essential in our obeying the third appeal: to maintain the unity of the church.

Today's Action plan:

- 1. Ask someone who knows you well to be sincere with you and tell you what character you need to change to foster unity.
- 2. Write down in your notepad. Pray about it. Discuss it with your discipling partner or a more mature Christian. Give yourself a timeline of change.
- 3. After this period, go back to the same person for re-evaluation. The same way you go back to a doctor for a checkup.



CHURCH TRADITIONS YOU WON'T FIND IN THE BIBLE: "THE SINNER'S PRAYER"

NOTE: Every church is guided by traditions that guard the doctrinal nuances of a denomination, religious body



or congregation. Most of these traditions are post-apostolic and culturally sensitive in origin and practice. Many are innocent and acceptable. But occasionally some traditions emerge that contain no biblical or historical support. In fact, when deeply considered, these traditions, rituals and spiritual acts can actually detract, delay, detour or distort authentic Christianity. It doesn't take a Bible major to understand these traditions aren't Scriptural, but many Christians still trust their efficacy and practice them with little thought. In this series of articles I'll investigate several such traditions that have emerged in the past 150 years of Protestant evangelical Christianity.

It's the go-to prayer for many evangelicals.

Across the globe, countless new believers are led in a "sinner's prayer" for salvation. It's the moment when the newly converted "asks Jesus into their heart." Many children are led in this prayer by Sunday School teachers, children's pastors and parents. "Just repeat after me," says the evangelist, "and pray this prayer."

Historically, the sinner's prayer emerged in the 19th century and is largely attributed to Dwight L. Moody. Later evangelicals, particularly the crusade preachers like Billy Graham, used the prayer alongside altar calls. It's not uncommon in today's evangelical and non-denominational churches for a preacher to close his sermon with an invitation to close the eyes, raise a hand and repeat a dictated prayer silently. After which, the announcement is made that several "new Christians" are now in the church.

It seems like an innocuous and efficient tradition. What could be wrong with saying a "sinner's prayer?" Actually, there are several problems.

The first problem is there's absolutely no biblical example for a sinner's prayer in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts (which documents how the early church operated in the first-century world, showing how people became Christians). There's no example of a sinner's prayer in church history until the 19th century. Unlike other traditions like baptism, Lord's Supper/Eucharist, preaching, singing and offerings, the "sinner's prayer" (as a vehicle for salvation) is both historically and biblically absent.

The second problem is the "sinner's prayer" could be easily confused as a human work. It's something you do to receive Grace, especially if you must "repeat" or "read" a prescribed prayer. The very act of repeating another person's *specific* prayer is an act or work. You're *doing* it to gain salvation. I realize this is a troubling conclusion but many "Christians" today believe that because they "prayed the prayer" (or any prayer) that they're saved and, biblically, that's simply not possible (as I'll reveal momentarily). Prayer is part of salvation but it's not the golden ticket. In fact, biblically, you can be saved without ever saying a prayer!

A third problem is the idea of "asking Jesus into your heart." This is so common today in churchianity that few believers think twice about it. Jesus lives in my heart, right? Well, that's a very loaded theological question. What I can say confidently is nowhere in the conversion process of New Testament believers did anyone "ask Jesus into their heart" (or even imply it!). To the contrary, the New Testament states a believer "receives" or is "filled" with the Holy Spirit when they're saved. Jesus, according to apostolic writers, is in Heaven to one day return. The Holy Spirit indwells the human heart and is given as a "deposit" to guarantee full salvation when Jesus returns (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:14; Hebrews 9:28).

The fourth problem is the evangelical proposition, in particular, that belief alone grants salvation (and nothing else plays a part). The Protestant Reformation recaptured an ancient biblical truth: we are saved by grace

through faith and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, in the past 150 years, many evangelical and non-denominational churches took it a step further: faith or belief in God *only* saves. But by that definition even the demons could gain salvation (James 2:19)!

So what does the New Testament actually say about salvation? How (or when) is a person saved? It's a rather simple equation: we are saved by grace, through faith, in baptism, for good works.

First, we are saved by GRACE (Ephesians 2:8-9). We can't do anything to gain God's favor or earn His salvation. Grace is free gift. You can't pray a prayer to be saved. You can't do enough good works. You can't even repent (change your habits, attitudes and lifestyle).

Second, we are saved through FAITH (Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 3:15; I Peter 1:9). We must believe only in Jesus Christ. Salvation comes in no other name (Acts 4:12). Our faith is not in our parents, our pastor, our church, our denomination, our nationality, our ethnicity or our goodness. Jesus alone saves us.

Third, we are saved in BAPTISM. When we are baptized, according to apostolic teaching, we are "clothed in Christ" (Galatians 3:27), connected to the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13); resurrected to life and dead to sin (Romans 6:3-14), spiritually washed (Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5) and, yes, saved (I Peter 3:21). In Acts 2:37-38, Peter reveals this simple template for salvation: believe, repent, baptism. It's a popular evangelical idea to add "confession" (cherry-picking Romans 10:9-10) but confession is more a *post*-salvation act that proves your salvation. Paul's point in Romans 10, when writing to Roman *Christians*, isn't to create a formula for salvation (belief and confess) but rather to reveal a continuing example of *what the saved do*: they continue to believe and confess Christ as Lord after baptism (Romans 6:4ff). To learn more about baptism, watch this YouTube video I created.

Finally, we are saved for GOOD WORKS (James 2:14-26). Once we are convicted and believe, then baptized, we experience the power to fully repent (change) and live abundantly (because the Holy Spirit lives inside us). With changed attitudes come changed behaviors. What we do and how we live proves our salvation. James clearly points this out in his epistle. Good works don't save you, but once you are saved (belief, repentance, baptism), you will do good works as evidence you're saved.

I truly don't know how much more simple it can be.

Believe in Jesus. Commit to change. Be baptized. Then live the change.

Throughout the book of Acts, the best textbook to show how the early church believed and practiced, **no one** was saved by saying a prayer alone. No one was saved simply by doing acts of repentance. Baptism, like the Red Sea for the Israelites, was the Divinely-orchestrated event that separated, sanctified and sealed. Salvation didn't come prior to the Red Sea but it was clearly pronounced after Pharaoh's armies drowned in the waters (Exodus 15:1-2). Paul even compared the Red Sea experience to baptism (I Corinthians 10:1-2) and professed that's when he was "washed" and saved (Acts 22:16).

Of course the other cherry-picked Scripture for the sinner's prayer is Revelation 3:20. Jesus is standing at the heart's door, knocking to come if we simply open it. It's a nice painting but a poor interpretation. This passage has nothing to do with individual salvation. Rather, it's a corporate call to an entire first-century congregation to repent (they're already believers!). The whole church has locked Jesus out of their lives.

In summary, the "sinner's prayer" is an evangelical salvation tool without a shred of biblical support and to employ it without repentance and baptism to pronounce a person's salvation is error. If you truly desire salvation, follow Peter and Paul and the rest of the early church: believe in Jesus, commit to change and get baptized.

It's truly that simple.

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YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

I grew up with a lot of idioms. One of them is, "A tree cannot make a forest". Another is, "no man is an island". I guess this was to support the concept of team or group work. Of course, this makes sense. However, as it is the case, there are exceptions to every rule and one of them is the story of Joseph as told in the Bible in the book of **Genesis chapters 37 to 50**. What endears me to Joseph is that he was unique from the other great men of the Bible – he was not really a soldier or a warrior like Moses, Joshua, King David et al.

Here is how I see Joseph as one man that made a difference:

A man of unique dreams

Genesis 37: 1-11. In narrating his dreams to both his brothers and his father, Joseph, was oblivious to the possibility of interpretation that will be inimical to his well-being. I know from time to time I have dreams; some encouraging, some mystifying and at times even fearful. I take solace in that whatever the outcome of the dream is, the reality is in the hands of God. How about you? How do you see your dreams? Do you have dreams about doing great things for the kingdom? Or do you stress out wondering how life would turn out based on your dream? Trust that God is supreme. Whatever type of dream you have just believe that God is in control and that the outcome will be in accordance with his will and purpose for you.

A man of suffering, a man of faith

Genesis 37: 12 – 36. Even when calamity falls on us or evil plans set to befall us, there is always someone or something that will reverse such actions upon us, just like Judah suggested to his brothers to accept a lesser outcome for Joseph, so will God even within or during difficult times: trials, persecutions etc., provide a way out. (1Corinthians 10:13) It may appear that Judah' suggestion was not much of an improvement in Joseph's situation. Don't we sometimes feel that the light at the end of the tunnel seems to deem or recede? Nevertheless, the path of trouble or difficult times may take time through a winding, sometimes narrow, and sometimes rugged route to our deliverance. What is essential is to stay focused, trusting and believing in the one and only true faithful God.

A man of faith, a man of sorrow

Genesis 39. Just when you thought it's over, another problem sets in. This is one part of Joseph's story that really touches me. A story for every single brother and sister to emulate. A true test of faith is not when you overcome negative fate, but how faithful you remain, trusting in God after the fact. Joseph is a unique example for us.

A man of conviction

Genesis 40. As of this stage in Joseph's life, he seems to have matured. From the comfort of his father's love to being sold as a slave by his own brothers, uplifted into a life of comfort and now in prison, Joseph one can say passed the test, and received from God, not the power to have unique dreams but the power to interpret dreams.

What a progress! Notices his acknowledgment in v 8 "...... Do not interpretations belong to God?" Do we glorify God for the victories we have in our lives? How is your conviction today about all that you have gone through or are going through, that God is in total control? Do you realize God could be preparing you for a great task? Do you realize that whatever you are going through there is a reason and that by staying on the course you will come to see the hand of God in your life?

A man in charge

Genesis 41. Here we see the climax of Joseph' travails. After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and giving God the glory, God favoured him, elevating him next to Pharaoh; from prison to palace, having Pharaoh's trust and becoming after Pharaoh the most powerful man in Egypt and beyond. Can you imagine how he must have been feeling and being grateful that he placed his trust in God all through the years of suffering and at times for no apparent reason. And in a foreign land. No matter what you're going through now don't consider yourself inadequate, don't consider yourself immaterial, don't consider yourself inconsequential in the scheme of things. You can make a difference. You can be that one man that is destined for a particular time, one man that God has chosen for a special task, one man that will change the course of history in accordance with God's plan. Joseph will be forever remembered.

A man of compassion, a man of destiny

Genesis 42 to 50. What may appear to be an anti-Climax is really for me the turning point in the story of this great man Joseph. In the beginning, of chapter 45, we see Joseph, not being able to control himself and revealing his identity to his brothers. Later in chapter 50:15 - 21, Joseph a man of compassion, who have experienced God's love all through his trials and now has utilized a great opportunity of mercy reassuring his brothers with conviction would, in his words in verse recorded in verse 19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." He reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Each time I read the story of Joseph and get to this point, my eyes become teary. What a story! What an ending! What a blessed life!

One may wonder how this story fits in with the 2016 focus of spotlighting, strengthening and empowering individual members of the body for works of service. Joseph is one example of that individual that got strengthened by his struggles, was empowered by God because of his faith and became the man that oversaw the 'salvation' of many. You can be that one person in whatever ministry you are serving or will serve, whatever position you hold or as an "ordinary" member even though there is no ordinary member in the kingdom of God. As we continue our journey in God's kingdom here on earth, note that the Christian walk is not a lonely work, however, your walk with God, can determine how he will use you to accomplish His Work. Live out the Power of One!

"The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because he loves us. - **C.S Lewis**

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you" - C.S Lewis



PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE (Part 1)

I recently felt that God was calling me to a deeper prayer life. So I started surveying the prayers of Christ and went on to meditate on the prayers of the Old Testament prophets. As with delectable food, I craved more and ended up scanning the whole Bible on the subject of prayer.

One thing is certain: the Bible has more than enough references to prayer—commands, records, examples, and allusions to show that God desires to have a prayerful people. It was both a sobering and inspiring study for me.

In the following sections, you will find various prayers from different parts of the Bible. The list is by no means exhaustive, but I hope that this summary will encourage you to study out in earnest the topic of prayer. It will doubtless enrich your walk with God.

Here are some helpful study questions when you work through the biblical prayers:

- 1. What caused the person to pray?
- 2. What was the condition of the person's heart when he/she prayed?
- 3. Why was the prayer answered (or not answered)?
- 4. What can I learn here about God's character?
- 5. Is there anything I can change in my prayer life based on this example?

A. Prayers in the Pentateuch

The books from Genesis to Deuteronomy (a.k.a. *The Pentateuch*) record several prayers. Although collectively the first five books comprise what is called "The Law", it is not just a cold, legal document. Principles and patterns of prayer (non-legal in nature) stand out. Most of the prayers are requests and pleas, but there are also praises and complaints:

- 1. Cain's prayer is the first one mentioned in Scripture. In **Ge 4:13-15**, he cried out to God as he bore the consequence of his sin.
- 2. Abraham has several times of prayer recorded in his storyline. He prayed for a son in **Ge 15:1-9**), and for different people as well: for Ishmael in **Ge 17:20** and for Abimelech in **Ge 20:17**. Another time he prayed for the city of Sodom (**Ge 18:23-33**).
- 3. Hagar is recorded as praying for deliverance (**Ge 16:7-13**).
- 4. Lot bargained with God regarding his escape plan in **Ge 19:20**.
- 5. Abraham's servant (possibly Eliezer) sought specific guidance from God in **Ge 24:12-52**. This is a great example of specific, pointed prayer.
- 6. Rebekah cried out to God concerning her pains in pregnancy (Ge 25:22-23).
- 7. Jacob, finally facing up to his faults, pleaded for deliverance from Esau (Ge 32:9-32; 33:1-17).
- 8. Moses had a whole lot of prayers lifted up to God. In Exodus, Moses asked for help at the Red Sea (Ex 14:15-16), at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:25), at Horeb (Ex 17:4-6), and in the battle versus the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-14). In Numbers 11, he went to God concerning the grumbling of the Israelites for flesh (Nu 11:11-35) and in the chapter following in behalf of Miriam's leprosy (Nu 12:13-15).

Questions for reflection:

- 1. How does our character affect our prayer life?
- 2. How did God train Israel to be prayerful? **Note**: Aside from these examples, the Israelites are also mentioned as having "cried unto the Lord" (**Nu 20:16**; **De 26:7**). This means that they had prayed although the actual words of their prayer were never recorded. In each case, Israel is presented as helpless without God, and it is He who is ultimately the Savior of the nation. Without divine intervention, sure ruin would have come to Israel. **Suggested topics for study**: How Moses spoke with God, Jacob's "habit" of altarbuilding; Abraham's call and prayer life, How God trained Israel to pray



PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE (Part 2)

B. Prayers in the History Books

More detailed prayers are given in the history books. Interwoven within the annals of ancient Israel are the lucid narratives of men who sought a deep relationship God. More pronouncedly than the Pentateuch, the History Books portray the intimate connection between a person's actions and his prayer life. Also, with David as a chief example, the History Books give greater detail into how God's people made various requests to God. It is clear that those who rely on God receive favor.

Some of their prayers are listed below:

- 1. **Joshua** prayed a unique, radical prayer for the sun to stand still (**Jos 10:12-14**). This chapter displays God's power over creation in behalf of man.
- 2. **Gideon**, before his debut as Israel's leader, asked for a sign of dew (**Jdg 6:36-40**). The chapter actually records more appeals for proof of God's approval. Gideon's confidence in God's promises needed boosting.
- 3. **Manoah** asked for guidance about his child, saying "teach us how to bring up the boy". This prayer about raising Samson was heard by God (**Jdg 13:8-9**).
- 4. Samson begged for strength one last time, gaining retribution for his demise (Jdg 16:28-30).
- 5. Hannah asked for a child after many years of being barren (1Sa 1:10-17, 19-20).
- 6. **David** has a well-recorded prayer life. His prayers include inquiring whether Keilah would be delivered into his hands (**1Sa 23:10-12**), inquiring about Ziklag (**1Sa 30:8**), asking whether he should enter Judah after Saul's death (**2Sa 2:1**), and asking whether he should go to war against the Philistines (**2Sa 5:19-25**). Some of David's other prayers are found in the Psalms (e.g. **Ps 118:5; 138:3**).
- 7. **Solomon** prayed for wisdom at the start of his reign (**1Ki 3:1-13**). He also prayed at the dedication of the temple (**1Ki 8:23-53; 2Ch 6:14-42**).
- 8. **Hezekiah** prayed to God for a chance to serve a longer time (**2Ki 20:2+**). Hezekiah reminded God of his faithfulness, both in his personal conduct and in his righteous deeds, and of his wholehearted devotion to God. Earlier he had prayed for deliverance from Sennacherib (**2Ki 19:14-20; 2Ch 32:20-23**).
- 9. Elijah's life was built on prayer. Only by asking God was the widow's son raised (1Ki 17:22). At the famous challenge of Mt. Carmel, God answered his plea for fire on his sacrifice (1Ki 18:36-38). Elijah's prayers also affected the rain (1Ki 17:1; 18:1, 42-45; Jas 5:17).
- 10. **Elisha** is recorded as praying to God to open the eyes of his servant. He later leads the Syrian army to submission (**2Ki 6:1, 17-20**).
- 11. Jabez implored for prosperity in 1Ch 4:10.
- 12. **Abijah** asked for victory over Jeroboam (**2Ch 13:14-18**).
- 13. Asa asked for victory over Zerah (2Ch 14:11-15).
- 14. Jehoshaphat asked for victory over the Canaanites (2Ch 18:31; 20:6-7)
- 15. Jehoahaz asked for victory over Hazael (2Ki 13:4)
- 16. Manasseh asked for deliverance from the king of Babylon (2Ch 33:13, 19)
- 17. Ezra prayed to God upon hearing of intermarriage among the people (Ezr 9:5-6; 10:1)
- 18. **Nehemiah** opened his account with prayer (**Ne 1:4-11**). The book has several other prayers and references to prayer (e.g. **2:4**).

Aside from the individuals mentioned above, several groups are mentioned as lifting up prayers to God. The Reubenites pleaded for deliverance from the Hagrites (1Ch 5:20). The priests also offered prayer in behalf of the people in 2Chr 30:27. Although not as specific about prayer, the people of Judah are mentioned to have sought God "with their whole desire" (2Ch 15:15). Upon returning from the Captivity, the Jews also offered up prayers to God while fasting (Ezr 8:21, 23).

Suggested topics for study: Joshua's Radical Prayer, Nehemiah's prayer life, The Heart of David in prayer, Ezra's prayer in Ezra 10, Prayer and Faithfulness



PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE (Part 3)

C. Prayers in the Prophets and Psalms

The prophets acted as God's spokesmen for many centuries. For sure it was vital for these men to have a dynamic walk with the Lord. The instances of prayer mentioned in the prophets--books from Isaiah to Malachi--are few but significant. Of course, it would be impossible for these men to remain in their vocation without powerful prayer.

I am sure that many prayers of the prophets were left unrecorded. In **Isaiah 6** for example, the prophet has a discourse with God in a vision. Elsewhere in the book he does not actually pray to God, but prayer his is mentioned in **2 Ki 20:11**.

Here are some of the instances of prayer mentioned in the prophets:

- 1. **Jeremiah** prayed to God, seeking reassurance for his "risky" purchase of land (**Jer 32:16-25**). This section records an intense conversation between God and the prophet.
- 2. **Ezekiel** bargained for another way to bake bread (**Eze 4:12-15**). This had a spiritual significance in his life as a prophet.
- 3. **Daniel** was known for his consistent prayer life (**Da 6:10-11**). He prayed for divine revelation and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (**Da 2:19-23**) and also interceded for the people (**Da 9:20-23**).
- 4. **Jonah** found himself praying from inside a big fish (**Jnh 2:1**+).
- 5. **Habakkuk** questioned God as he complained and lamented (**Hab 1:2**+).

Questions for thought:

- 1. What was the role of prayer in a prophet's life?
- 2. What could have been some of the prophets' difficulties in prayer?
- 3. What can I learn from the prayers of the prophets?

All the Psalms could be read as "lifting up hearts before God." In this way, the Psalms present a valuable treasure trove of prayer. The Psalms represent the whole range of human emotion and teach us how to express ourselves to God at different times. That is why the Psalms are so "relatable" to us. By reading through the Psalms, meditating on them, and reciting them aloud, we learn to communicate with God the way his ancient peoples did. Please see my book "Into the Psalms" (ipibooks.com) for more.

JUST FOR LAUGHS

"Dear God" SERIES (Various Prayers of Innocent Children)

GIRL: (praying) Dear God, In Sunday school they told us what You do. Who does it when You are on vacation?

BOY: Dear God, Are you really invisible or is that a trick?

GIRL: Dear God, Did you mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident?

GIRL: Dear God, Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't You just keep the ones You have now?

BOY: Dear God, Who draws the lines around countries?

GIRL: Dear God, What does it mean You are a Jealous God? I thought You had everything.

BOY: Dear God, Why is Sunday School on Sunday? I thought it was supposed to be our day of rest.



PRAYERS IN THE BIBLE (Part 4)

D. Prayers of the New Testament

The New Testament chronicles a lesser number of prayers than the Old. Because of the letters however, we are given richer insight into how the apostles prayed: their content and manner.

Here are some prayers recorded in the NT, with the prayers of Christ reserved for later:

- 1. Zechariah prayed for a son (Lk 1:13).
- 2. Anna served God with fasting and prayer (Lk 2:37).
- 3. Paul asked to be delivered from death (2Co 1:9-11).
- 4. Stephen prayed as he neared death (Ac 7:59-60).
- 5. Paul and Silas were praying in prison, being heard by the other inmates (Ac 16:25).
- 6. Peter prayed for the dead Tabitha (Ac 9:40). Another time he is went up on the roof to pray (Ac 10:9).
- 7. Cornelius' piety was shown by his prayers (Ac 10:30).

In Acts, the disciples are seen praying for Peter's protection (Ac 12:5-17). This shows that there was an atmosphere of prayer in the church (check out the role of prayer in Acts 1, 6, and 13). After the gospels and Acts, the Epistles hold a vast number of prayers penned by the authors. These give us insight into how the Apostles prayed. See for example Paul's prayers: for Ephesians (Eph 1:15-19; 3:14-19), for Philippians (Php 1:3-5, 9), for Colossians (Col 1:3, 9), for Thessalonians (1Th 1:2; 3:10, 12-13; 5:23; 2Th 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5, 16), for Onesiphorus (2Ti 1:16, 18), for Philemon (Phm 4).

The prayers of Christ deserve special attention. Not only are they frequent and varied, but they uniquely open a window into the very heart of God. The prayers of Jesus are moving and gripping. They teach us how to approach God humbly yet forcefully.

Here are some passages describing the prayer life of our Lord:

- 1. Jesus began his day early with prayer (Mk 1:35). This reflects discipline and dependence.
- 2. Jesus sought to have private times with God, especially in the mountains (Mt 14:23; Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29).
- 3. Jesus' custom was giving thanksgiving before eating (Mt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-27; Mk 6:41; 8:6; 1Co 11:24).
- 4. Jesus depended on God in times of distress (Jn 12:27; Heb 5:7). He showed this at Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-44; Mk 14:32-35; Lk 22:41-44; Heb 5:7) and on the cross (Mt 27:46; Lk 23:34, 46).
- 5. Jesus blessed children (Mt 19:13, 15; Mk 10:16).
- 6. Jesus prayed for his disciples, just like he told Peter (**Lk 22:31-32**). He also prayed for all believers (**Jn 17:1-26**). This reflects his big heart for people.
- 7. Jesus had specific requests to God. He presented his desires at the grave of Lazarus (**Jn 11:41-42**). He also prayed for the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (**Jn 14:16**).

A study of Jesus' prayer life shows how mortal man can have a dynamic relationship with God. Jesus' prayers, whether on a mountain (Mt 14:23; Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12; 9:28) or in the wilderness (Lk 5:16), give us great insight into true personal worship with God. His example of prayer was one-of-a kind. It is evident from the gospels that Jesus believed in prayer, told men to pray, and prayed a lot himself. Jesus' teachings matched his own superlative example; his prayers were frequent, sincere and personal. You could say he was the most "prayed up" man ever.

Jesus understood that the Father sought worshippers and that our worship satisfies His loving heart. That is why his prayers pleased God; they met God's desire. This was the new spiritual worship that Jesus described to the Samaritan woman. Because God is Spirit, we must worship in spirit. As God is, so His worshippers. Anyone who prays more like Christ is on a good spiritual track.

Closing Thoughts

I hope all this has enthused you to ponder your prayer life. Indeed, the Bible has so much about prayer that a whole lifetime would not be enough to exhaust the learning and the experience.

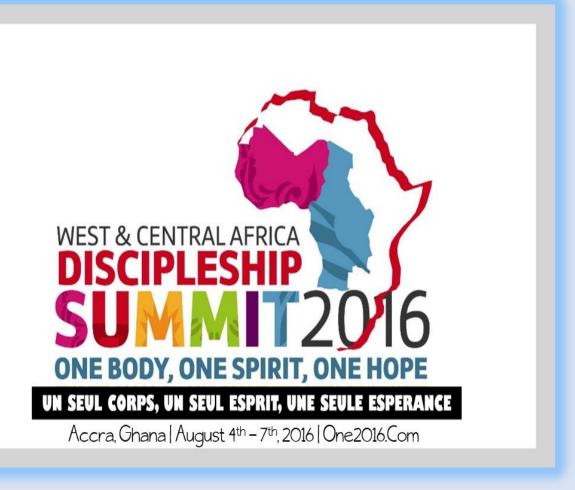
Praise God that he has given us every day of our lives to enjoy our relationship with him. Let us be grateful, for even the chance to approach God is something we don't deserve.

A close walk with God is a priceless treasure; a meaningful prayer life is worth the time and effort. To have a "good talk" with the Lord is better than anything in the world. There is nothing as fulfilling, as enjoyable, or as powerful.

The 59 "One Anothers" of the New Testament

#	Bible Verse	Quote	Check
1			OHECK
1	Mark 9:50	Be at peace with each other Wash one another's feet."	
2	John 13:14		
3	John 13:34	Love one another	
4	John 13:34	Love one another	
5	John 13:35	Love one another	
6	John 15:12	Love one another	
7	John 15:17	Love one another	
8	Romans 12:10	Be devoted to one another in brotherly love	
9	Romans 12:10	Honour one another above yourselves.	
10	Romans 12:16	Live in harmony with one another	
11	Romans 13:8	Love one another	
12	Romans 14:13	Stop passing judgment on one another	
13	Romans 15:7	Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you	
14	Romans 15:14	Instruct one another	
15	Romans 16:16	Greet one another with a holy kiss	
16	I Cor. 11:33	When you come together to eat, wait for each other	
17	1 Corinthians 12:25	Have equal concern for each other	
18	1 Corinthians 16:20	Greet one another with a holy kiss	
19	1 Corinthians 13:12	Greet one another with a holy kiss	
20	Galatians 5:13	Serve one another in love	
21	Galatians 5:15	If you keep on biting and devouring each otheryou will be destroyed by each other	
22	Galatians 5:26	Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other	
23	Galatians 6:2	Carry each other's burdens	
24	Ephesians 4:2	Be patient, bearing with one another in love	
25	Ephesians 4:32	Be kind and compassionate to one another	
26	Ephesians 4:32	Forgiving each other	
27	Ephesians 5:19)	Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs	
28	Ephesians 5:21	Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.	
29	Philippians 2:3	In humility consider others better than yourselves.	
30	Colossians 3:9	Do not lie to each other	
31	Colossians 3:13	Bear with each other	
32	Colossians 3:13	Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another	
33	Colossians 3:16	"Teachone another	
34	Colossians 3:16	Admonish one another	
35	I Thessalonians 3:12	Make your love increase and overflow for each other	
36	I Thessalonians 4:9	Love each other.	
37	I Thessalonians 4:18	Encourage each other	
38	1 Thessalonians 5:11	Encourage each other	
39	1 Thessalonians 5:11	Build each other up	
40	Hebrews 3:13	Encourage one another daily	
41	Hebrews 10:24	Spur one another on toward love and good deeds.	
42	Hebrews 10:25	Encourage one another.	
43	Hebrews 10:25	Encourage one another.	
44	James 5:9	Don't grumble against each other	
45	James 5:16	Confess your sins to each other	
46	James 5:16	Pray for each other	
47	I Peter 3:8	Love one another deeply, from the heart.	
48	I Peter 3:8	Live in harmony with one another	
49	I Peter 4:8	Love each other deeply	
50	I Peter 4:9	Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.	
51	I Peter 4:10		
52		Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another	
53	I Peter 5:5	Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another Greet one another with a kiss of love.	
	I Peter 5:14)		
54	I John 3:11 I John 3:23	Love one another.	
55 56		Love one another.	
56	I John 4:7	Love one another.	
57	I John 4:11	Love one another.	
58	I John 4:12	Love one another	

MARK THIS DATE





We have themed this fifth edition, "The Power of One". Motivated by Apostle Paul's inspired letter to the Ephesians, in chapter four, verses one through six, we have divided this edition into seven book segments. Each "book" will focus on expounding the various central subthemes found in Ephesians 4:4-6; (One Body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism and One God.) Additional studies and resource materials ranging from, Humility, Prayers and a catalogue of the New Testament's "One Another" Passages and more are captured in the Appendix segment. Readers will find this edition faith building and challenging as we delve into some "hot issues". In all, we hope for all to be encouraged. – from the preface

The Power of One

A Forty Day Devotional Guide on Unity of Faith, Purpose & Mission.

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