

 **MPI PUBLISHING**

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW LIFE

SEVEN STEPS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH



JOE WYROSTEK



Welcome to Your New Life: Seven Steps to Spiritual Growth

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Printed in the United States of America.

Published by Metro Praise International Publishing,
Chicago, IL.

Cover Image by Monika Montes.

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DEDICATION

“To Jesus, may your kingdom come and your will be done on the earth as it is in heaven.”

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PREFACE

Great Decision

Welcome to Your New Life!

Congratulations on your wonderful decision to accept Jesus into your life! The Bible says that the angels in heaven are rejoicing right now because you are an adopted child of the King (Luke 15:10). You will forever be glad that you decided to follow Jesus and give your life to Him. Also, "Congratulations!" If you have decided to grow in your spiritual life and have started this book after being saved for a period of time, the church is rejoicing with you.

Today, in life, we are faced with many choices. The choices we make can impact our lives in both good and bad ways. Some choices have positive consequences and others have negative ones. Though we cannot avoid making choices in life, we can learn to avoid making ones with bad consequences and strive to make the right ones.

Following Jesus and living a life that is pleasing to God is the same way. You will be faced with many challenges and temptations as you desire to live for God; however, right now you can make a decision that says, "No matter what, I am going to stay with Jesus!" Then you can choose to reject all other choices and decide to be obedient to God's perfect will for your life.

From this moment on, make a bold choice to never give up on your walk with Jesus. Settle it right now in your heart and confess out loud with authority, "I will love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength; and, I will love my neighbor as myself!" Choose to not just "survive" in your walk with God. Declare, "I am going to 'thrive' in my relationship with God." With that decision and confession in mind, "Welcome to your new life!"

You're Not Alone

My story may be different from yours, but I hope you can find encouragement from it. I was born in a Christian home, but when I was in the 5th grade I began to turn away from God. By the time I was 18 years old I was a high school dropout, had been arrested 8 times, and lived a life full of sin and self-destructive habits. However, November 5th, 1995, at the kitchen table, my Mom led me to the Lord. My life was forever changed. I realized that there, "Ain't no high like the Most High!" Despite my mistakes along the way, God has been faithful and made me fruitful!

Today, I am a happily married father with a beautiful family. I'm a college graduate, successful church planter, author, and pastor with over 15 years of ministry experience. I believe if God could save me and give me a new life, He can most definitely do the same for you. Nothing is impossible with God! All you have to do is keep your faith in Jesus. If you fall down, He will pick you back up. Remember, "You are who God said you are and can do what He said you can do!"

How to Use This Book

This book was designed to be accomplished with the help of a one-on-one mentor. If you don't have one, find a good church and get one! For achieving the best results, it's best to do a lesson by yourself, first, and then go over it with your mentor. Though you can do one lesson per week and, in theory, finish the book in just seven weeks, don't get in a hurry. The desired outcome of discipleship is not just to gain "information," but to receive "revelation" of your "transformation" in Christ. This is why the mentor is an invaluable part of the process. He or she will encourage you in ways that oftentimes you cannot do on your own.

Jesus called this kind of mentor/student relationship, "discipleship." Discipleship was Jesus' main method of spiritual growth and was commanded to be the church's

priority as well (Matthew 28:18-20). Sadly, many churches have lost the zeal for this command and have replaced discipleship with powerless programs, empty events, and shallow services. However, it is my deepest commitment to restore this biblical practice in the modern church, one person at a time.

Furthermore, if you truly have been born again, this book is meant to help you discover all the good things God has already done in your life so that you may do what He desires next in your life. For example, the day you received salvation, the Bible says Jesus gave you everything you would ever need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). It also said that the power of God in you would always be greater than the things that come against you (1 John 4:4).

Paul also declared that you are now more than a conqueror, that nothing can ever separate you from the love of God (Romans 8:37), and that you're the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). As a result, you have already been given everything you will ever need to overcome and conquer every problem you will ever face. You just need the wisdom of how to receive and act on God's abilities and blessings. Spiritual growth is the aspect of discipleship where you receive and put into practice God's wisdom (i.e., "His principles and commands").

Simple Steps for Success

In closing, this book is meant to help you get established and headed in the right direction now that Jesus is the Lord of your life. The next seven lessons are written, plainly, so that you can understand the basic truths about what God has done in your life and how to continue living for Jesus.

Follow along with your Bible (preferably the NIV) and look up all of the verses in each section to increase your knowledge of God. The "Table of Contents" in the front of your Bible can help you find the books of the Bible; and, the numbers refer to specific chapters and verses. For example: "John 3:16,"

means, the book of “John,” “Chapter 3” (the first number), and, “verse 16,” (the second number). It’s easy!

To help you study what you are learning there are review questions at the end of each chapter. Answer them the best you can. They will help you become productive in the wisdom you are gaining. For the sake of space, consider using an extra sheet of paper to thoroughly answer each one.

Try to take notes in a journal (diary) to record what God is speaking to you and always write down any questions you may want to ask your mentor. Don’t forget to memorize each verse at the end of every chapter, because committing God’s Word to memory will help keep your mind focused on Him (Psalm 119:11).

I know it may seem like there is so much to do; however, God has brought you this far and will not let you fail. Buckle up and prepare for the ride of your life! Are you ready? Let’s get started!

Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Loving God and People,

Joe Wyrostek
Metro Praise International
Chicago, IL.

STEP ONE

Doing the Basics

What Happened When I Was Born Again?

The Bible teaches that when you heard the Word of God, faith came into your heart (Romans 10:17). Faith basically means to, “place your full trust in God.” When you heard the Word of God regarding your life and the message of Jesus on the cross, you felt a strong desire to give your life to Him. That desire you felt came from the Holy Spirit, the third person of the God nature (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit used the Word of God to show you your need for Jesus’ free gift of salvation. He then urged you to give your life to Jesus and repent of your sins.

When you made the decision, of your own free will, to put your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit then “birthed” in you a “new spirit.” Therefore, you have now experienced what the Bible calls being “born again.” To be “born again” means, “To be given a new spiritual nature from God” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus said in John 3:3, “*Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.*” Since you have been born again, you can now see and experience the Kingdom of God, which is God’s active power in your life!

The Bible teaches that when you were born, you were born a “sinner” (Romans 3:23). A sinner is, “someone who is dead in his or her spirit and separated from God.” Sin is all the things we do in our lives that are against the commands of God as written in the Bible (James 4:17).

To be born a sinner may sound unfair; however, the Bible teaches that when God first created mankind, He created them “perfect.” Adam and Eve sinned, by their free choice, when they were tempted of the devil and brought the curse of sin upon every person that was to be born after them (Genesis 3:1-19 & Romans 5:12). As a result, now all mankind is responsible

for their own sin because each of us, given enough time, would have made the same kind of mistake they did.

But wait... there's more... the story doesn't stop there! The Bible goes on to teach that Jesus came in the flesh to die on the cross for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Thus, whosoever puts their faith in Jesus Christ and repents of their sins will be saved from the curse of sin (Ephesians 2:1-10 & Acts 2:38). In other words, Jesus took the punishment we deserved to give us the life we couldn't earn. That is called, "grace." Grace is the, "undeserved kindness and gift of God." Jesus died and rose again, so by grace we could be born again!

When you decided to follow Jesus, the curse of sin that was handed down from Adam and Eve was replaced with the blessings of Christ. Furthermore, because of Jesus, you've been blessed with every spiritual gift in heavenly places and lack no good thing (Ephesians 1:3 & Psalm 23:1). Today, you're not only saved from your sins, you're not a sinner anymore. You're a saint (holy person) (Ephesians 1:1).

You can now live holy because God made you holy (1 Peter 2:9). You can do righteous things because you have been made righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21). You can keep all of God's commands because your heart has been changed by the love of God (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Jesus didn't just come to give you a "moral renovation." He came to make you an entirely new "spiritual creation!"

What Do I Do Now?

The best thing you can do now is to begin to develop this new life you have with God and grow up spiritually (1 Peter 2:2). Think of your new life as a baby who needs milk. In time, as you grow stronger, you will be ready for steak. This first lesson is designed to give you the main things you need to do to increase your appetite and develop spiritual muscles!

Think about it like this; before you were born again, most likely, God was probably someone you only thought about when you needed something or were at a religious function.

Now, after being born again, the Father has become your personal Provider and Protector. Jesus has become your Savior and Sacrifice for sins; and, the Holy Spirit has become your Guide and Gift Giver. Therefore, you have many wonderful things to look forward to as you begin to know each person in the Trinity. The more you know God, the more you learn about yourself, and the more you know about yourself, the more you learn about your purpose. In short, if you know God, you will truly know yourself and your reason for living.

This is why it is important to develop these three basic practices: (1) Prayer, (2) Study of the Bible, and (3) Christian Friendship. Let's go over each one individually.

(1) How to Pray

The Bible teaches us that God desires to hear our prayers (Psalm 66:19-20). The word "prayer" in the Bible has two meanings. First, it means, "to make request," and, second, it means, "to communicate." Starting today, and for the rest of your life, you have the privilege of talking to God and sharing your requests with Him.

The Bible teaches that you can talk to the Father as you would to another person, in the name of Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit living on the inside of you (John 14:12-14). For example, you could pray something like this, *"Father, I ask that you bring salvation to all my unsaved family members, today. I believe that you love them and desire their salvation. Please use me to be a witness to them and help me preach your Word so they can know about your love. I thank you for your grace and mercy in my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."* It's that simple!

The Bible also teaches us how not to pray. It tells us not to pray the same prayers over and over again. Some believe that because the "Lord's Prayer" is in the Bible, we should repeat it exactly as it is, over and over. However, when Jesus taught the prayer to His disciples, He was giving it to them as an example of how to pray. He didn't intend for it to be prayed in endless repetitions (Matthew 6:7). Likewise, David taught in the Old

Testament that praying to the Father should be spontaneous and from the heart (Psalms 62:8).

Another thing the Bible teaches us not to do in prayer is to only say prayers that you were taught, or to try to be “religious.” The Bible, especially in the book of Psalms, gives many examples from great men of God, like David, of how to pray from our own hearts (Psalm 5:2). As a result, be sure to make time each day to pray and talk to God from your heart. Avoid vain repetition and lifeless words. I’m sure you have many important things to talk about with Him. Just be yourself.

To increase the benefits of your prayers, Jesus taught us to listen to God as He speaks to us (John 10:27). How beneficial do you think it would be to only talk to your friends and family but never listen to what they had to say? Most people would probably think you were self-centered. When talking to God, remember that He also desires to talk to you.

You may be thinking, “God wants to talk to me?” Yes, He actually does! The Bible teaches us that this is something He has always done with those who love and serve Him. Your next question might be, “How is He going to talk to me? Is He going to speak out loud for everyone to hear like He did with Moses in the burning bush?” Honestly, He probably won’t do it that way (though He could and has at special times). Today, He primarily chooses to speak to people’s hearts, which is your “inner man” or “conscience.”

For example, do you remember those urges you felt before you asked Jesus into your life? That was God speaking to your heart through the Holy Spirit. He will continue to speak to you in that same way, by speaking to your inner thoughts. Just be sure that you’re listening. So when you make time for prayer, also make time to be quiet and listen to your heart so you can hear God speaking to you. He may remind you of something you did wrong during the day and want you to repent and make it right, or He may share His great love for you and your identity in Him. Whatever He says to you will be precious and special.

You will begin to recognize His voice better as you spend more time with Him in prayer. Begin to keep a prayer journal

so you can write down your prayers and record what He speaks to you. Over time you will look back on those journal entries as great reminders of God's faithfulness.

(2) How to Study the Bible

The Bible is the greatest book ever written. The word "Bible" actually means, "book" and the phrase, "Holy Bible," simply means, "The Sacred Book." The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years by 40 different authors from many different walks of life. Each author wrote down the words that God inspired them to write (2 Peter 1:21). This is why, despite there being 40 different authors, the message throughout the entire Bible is perfectly unified, without error, and essential for godly living (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The message of the Bible can be summarized in the following "Seven Acts:"

1. **ACT ONE, "Creation and the Fall":** God created the world, perfect, but mankind fell into sin (Genesis 1-11).
2. **ACT TWO, "Gathering a People":** God chose Abraham and his descendants to be His chosen people (Genesis 12-50).
3. **ACT THREE, "Separating a People":** God raised up Moses and other prophets to teach the Jewish people His commandments (Exodus-2 Samuel).
4. **ACT FOUR, "Maintaining God's Holiness":** God judged His people and sent them into other nations as prisoners when they did not obey His laws or listen to His prophets (1-2 Kings).
5. **ACT FIVE: "Saving a People":** God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to live a sinless life, die on the cross, rise from the

dead, and establish the church (first with the Jewish people and then the Gentiles) (Matthew-John).

6. **ACT SIX, “*Gathering a People*”:** God is working through the Holy Spirit in the church to bring sinners to Jesus (Acts-Jude).
7. **ACT SEVEN, “*Restoring All Things*”:** Jesus is coming back to judge the world and make all things new (Revelation).

The Bible has two main sections: “The Old Testament” and “The New Testament.” The word “testament” means, “covenant or agreement with God.” The Old Testament (or, “The Old Agreement with God”) has 39 separate books and was given to the Jewish people for living in the time before Jesus.

The New Testament (or “The New Agreement with God”) has 27 distinct books and was given for all those who would live after the time of Jesus. Both the Old and New Testaments are beneficial for our time; however, the Old Testament’s rituals, civil laws, and sacrifices were specifically given for the Jewish people and now basically serve as an example for the need of Jesus’ work on the cross (Hebrews 8:13).

As you begin to read your Bible, try to start with the gospel of John and familiarize yourself with the life of Jesus. The word, “gospel” means both, the “good news message of Jesus’ salvation” and, the “biographical writings of the life of Jesus.” When we speak of someone preaching “the gospel,” we are talking about the teaching, revelation, and doctrine of Christ (Romans 1:16). The other four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) narrate the overall history of Jesus’ life and ministry on earth.

Finally, read the Bible in a version you can understand, preferably the NIV, which stands for the, “New International Version.” Also, keep a dictionary handy for any words you’re not familiar with, and, to make sure you’re properly learning and understanding the Bible. Write down any questions you

may have as you read and ask them of your mentor. You'll soon find yourself understanding why the Bible is the most read book in the world!

(3) How to Make Christian Friends

Why is it important to have Christian friendship and attend church regularly? Because Christian companionship will encourage you in times of difficulty, strengthen you in times of weakness, and inspire you to greatness in your life's purpose. Have you ever heard the old saying, "Birds of like feathers flock together?" The saying is also true when it comes to making friends because "like-minded people hang out together." Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "*Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character.*"

You don't go to a chicken coop to find an eagle and you can't find a chicken in an eagle's nest. The world we live in has many "chicken coops," but very few "eagles' nests." Therefore, to stay strong and encouraged in your new life, you must find where the eagles are and learn to soar with them. The best place to do that is in the church.

The word "church" simply means, "the gathered and called out disciples." Though the church can meet in a building, the building itself is not what is important. It is the disciples of Christ who gather there which make the difference. When buildings aren't available, the church has met in homes, under tents, and even in caves during times of persecution (Hebrews 11:38). No matter where the church meets, you should always be there because you are a vital part of the "Body of Christ" (Romans 12:5).

As you share your life with Christian friends they will help you grow and develop in your relationship with God. They will share their experiences and the things they have found to be true in their walk with God (Acts 2:42-47). Consider the three main friendships you will make within the church. Think of the cross as an illustration to see each one's role.

First, “friends from above,” are those who will mentor you and teach you. “Friends by your side,” will be your peers who grow and develop with you. Last, “friends looking up,” will be those new believers who you teach and with whom you share your wisdom. As a result, each of your three kinds of friends will ensure your emotional stability and spiritual health in God’s community.

Christian friendships will be the best friendships you’ll ever make. A true Christian friend will love you as a family member and will be patient with you as you learn to be the person God created you to be. They’ll be able to help you in those areas of your life that you thought no one would ever care about, much less want to help. At the same time, remember, like you, other Christians are not free from making mistakes. Like you, they sometimes do things wrong and need your patience and forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22).

King Solomon taught that to have friends you must first be a friend; and second, that true friends are not easily offended (Proverbs 22:11 & 19:11). Make every effort, today, to find good Christians friends in church and do your best to keep the friendship healthy by staying away from bitterness and selfishness.

Consider joining a small group and attend during the week so you can have time outside of church services to fellowship and study the Bible. Small groups (also known as, “Life Groups”) are informal meetings, usually held in someone’s home, where Christians study the Bible and pray together. This is the perfect place for you to be yourself and meet new people as you learn more about God.

Attend church every Sunday. Make it a consistent part of your life both, for your sake, and for the sake of your family (Hebrews 10:25). On Sundays you’ll be able to participate in the worship service with other Christians who love God like you do. You will soon notice why the church is often called, “The Family of God.” Plus, you’ll be able to hear a clear message that will be relevant to your life and get rocked by the presence of God. Also, both small groups and church services are a great place to invite your unsaved friends and family because they

will be given the opportunity to have a relationship with Jesus, too!

Get Ready, Get Set, Go!

Now it's time to put into practice all that you've read so far. Continue to review the different sections and read all the Scripture references until you feel comfortable with the things you have learned. This is just the beginning! Stay in touch with your mentor because you can be sure that they love you and are praying for you. Last, remember to stay close to Jesus because He loves you more than you could ever know!

Review Questions

1. Describe how Jesus Christ changed your life.
2. How does someone become born again?
3. What are three important practices to do as a Christian?
4. How should you pray? How should you not pray?
5. Why is reading the Bible important?
6. Briefly describe the "Seven Acts" of the Bible.
7. What are the three types of friends you should make?
8. Where is the best place to make new friends?
9. Who do you know that you could invite to church?
10. Name some of the new habits you are going to make in the following three areas of your life: "prayer," "reading the Bible," and "Christian friendship."

Meditation and Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 5:17, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!”*

STEP TWO

Experiencing Jesus' Work on the Cross

His Pain, Your Gain

Have you ever wondered what made Jesus' death on the cross so special? Some have tried to argue that Jesus was just a man and that His death was unimportant. Others think that since they are a "good person" they don't need someone else to save them, because they can get into heaven based on their own "good works." However, the Bible teaches that Jesus' death was very important for mankind and needed for everyone's benefit (Colossians 2:13-14).

The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the 2nd person in the Trinity and that He left heaven to become a man to take the punishment that we, as sinners, rightly deserved (John 1:11-16). In Jesus' day, the cross was the Roman government's way of executing criminals. Jesus was sentenced to die on the cross because jealous, hardhearted Jewish leaders wanted to make Him stop teaching the truth about God.

Some might think the necessity of Jesus' death as a criminal on the cross was a tragedy, but it was a part of God's plan all along. Remember, Jesus wasn't created at His birth, because He existed with the Father before creation (John 1:1). However, He took on an "earth suit" made of flesh so that He might become the perfect sacrifice.

Before the fall of Adam and Eve, Jesus knew that He would have to come to earth and become the sacrifice for sins. John wrote in Revelation 13:8 that Jesus was, "*the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.*" Jesus willingly left heaven to become a man so that He could suffer death on the cross and, by doing so, give us eternal salvation (John 3:16).

Take a moment to read all of Isaiah 53, which was a prophecy given to Isaiah over 600 years before Jesus' birth. Learn, "The Three Things Jesus Accomplished on the Cross."

(1) On the Cross, Jesus Took All Our Sins (Isaiah 53:5).

When Jesus was on the cross, God, the Father, placed on Him all the sins of the world: past, present, and future. There, on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself all the sinful things that have ever been done in the world (everything from Adam and Eve's sinful rebellion to the last sin man will ever commit). He took them all upon Himself.

Since God, the Father, is perfect, no one can come to Him unless they first offer a sacrifice for their sins. Before Jesus' death on the cross the sacrifice required was from an animal. The Bible teaches that, without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22). The sacrifices had to be made often, and with many different animals. When Jesus was crucified on the cross He became the "once-and-for-all" sacrifice for all times and for all people!

The Bible literally says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" On the cross Jesus became what we were (sinful), so that we might become what He is (righteous). This is why, once a person is born again, God no longer considers them a sinner, but a "saint." The word saint means, "a holy person" (Colossians 1:2). Though Christians can sin, it is not their nature because their nature is, "perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Think of it like this; as long as a Christian lives by his new nature, which is perfect and righteous in Christ, he will never sin again! Christians may give into temptation at different times and choose to sin, but Jesus doesn't want us living in the "cycle of sin and defeat" (1 John 2:1). Jesus commanded us to live in the reality of our new life and to walk in total obedience to all His commands. Furthermore, John wrote to his churches that, "*Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did*" (1 John 2:6). So, when we actually believe we have been made "sinless," we will "sin less," and live like Jesus.

From this point on, if a sinner wants to be forgiven of their sin and accepted by God, the Father, all he or she has to

do is accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Then Jesus' sacrifice is applied to their sin and they are made a new creation. As a result, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross 2,000 years ago is all that is needed to forgive everyone's sins and grant them eternal life, both now, and until the end of the time (Hebrews 9:14).

(2) On the Cross, Jesus Took All Our Sickness (Isaiah 53:5).

The Bible teaches that as a result of Adam's first sin, in the Garden of Eden, mankind was placed under a curse in his body, and this curse resulted in sickness and disease (Deuteronomy 28:15-21). However, this doesn't mean that people, today, who are sick are "cursed" or are suffering God's "punishment," but that sickness and disease came to mankind as a result of the curse of sin. Some people, today, still believe that others are sick or crippled because of their sin, but this is not what Jesus taught (John 9:1-3).

Likewise, the Bible teaches that when God first created Adam and Eve, they were perfect and there was no sickness; but, after they sinned, sickness, decay, and infirmities became a part of everyone's lives. Whether it's diabetes, cancer, or needing to wear eyeglasses, all infirmities came after the fall.

For this reason, when Jesus was being tortured and beaten by the Roman government, God, the Father, was pleased. Why? Because the Father allowed the punishment and whippings of Jesus to purchase for mankind the healing they needed from all sicknesses and diseases. In our limited understanding, we may not be able to fully grasp how this happened, but the Bible clearly teaches that by Jesus' stripes (at the cross) we were healed from all of our infirmities. Peter also reiterated Isaiah's promise in his letter, "*by his wounds you have been healed*" (1 Peter 2:24).

Today, if you are sick or physically impaired you can boldly come to Jesus, in faith, and ask for your healing according to His Word. When you pray in faith and do not doubt in your heart, the Bible promises that you will be healed

(James 5:14-16)! Though some may not immediately receive healing in this life, the Bible commands us to continue to pray for everyone, believing God is able, and not to give up until we receive our miracle (Luke 11:5-10). However, even if death comes before we receive our total healing, we can be sure that in the world to come we will never be sick again!

(3) On the Cross, Jesus Took All Our Sorrows (Isaiah 53:4).

Not only did Jesus take all of mankind's sins and sickness, He also took all of our sorrows. God, the Father, allowed all the sorrows and emotional grief of everyone's life to be placed on Jesus' soul. At the time of His crucifixion, Jesus was given all the hurt of the entire world. Jesus could literally feel every emotional pain that has ever been felt and will ever be felt. He took it all!

Jesus was the only person who could endure such emotional agony upon His soul, because He was fully God and fully man. In doing so, Jesus will forever be able to relate to and understand everyone's sorrows in life. When someone comes to Jesus to find comfort in times of emotional hurt, He can truly say, "I know how you feel." No one else on earth can ever say that.

Only Jesus can say He knows every pain and sorrow in your heart. He not only knows your pain, He also has the power to heal and comfort you. On the cross, Jesus broke the power of sorrow and grief in your life. Today, you can come to Jesus and trade your sorrow for His joy, your despair for His hope, and your brokenness for His beauty.

Whenever you are in need of emotional healing, come to Jesus and let Him heal your hurting heart. Give Him all your burdens because He has already carried them for you on the cross. Your sorrows were too much for you to bare alone, so Jesus carried them for you. Don't try to take them back. If you have lost a loved one or have pain from a past relationship, come to Jesus and let Him heal your broken heart right now.

Jesus loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay in your own hurt and pain. Look to the cross in your times of pain and you will find comfort from the Holy Spirit!

Isaiah 61:1-3,

"1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."

Come to the Cross

Paul's main message to all the churches was the power of the cross. He humbly wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:2, *"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."* Today, our goal and message must be the same. We are to make Jesus and His work on the cross our central theme in life. More than anything else, we should desire to know Jesus and the cross, along with the power of His resurrection.

The passion of our lives should be to daily come to the throne of God with confidence in Jesus' finished work on the cross and receive forgiveness of sin, healing from sickness, and joy instead of sorrow!

We should make Jesus' work on the cross our main message to the entire world. Let us shout it out for all to hear, "Jesus died so you could live!" Today, the world is living in sin, but Jesus can forgive everyone because of His atoning work on the cross. Today, the world is suffering from sickness and

disease, but Jesus can heal them all because of His work on the cross. Today, the world is full of sorrows, but Jesus can comfort and give fullness of joy because of His awesome work on the cross!

Remember, today, when thinking about Jesus, He didn't stay on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven. Jesus is alive and is seated next to the Father in heaven and is waiting for you to come to Him and receive the power of the cross!

Review Questions

1. What was the cross used for by the Roman government?
2. Why did the Jewish leaders want Jesus crucified?
3. List the three things Jesus' death on the cross accomplished. Describe each one and how it applies to your life.
4. After a person makes Jesus his Lord is he still a sinner? Explain your answer.
5. Share why Jesus can relate to everyone's sorrow.
6. Describe why we should always pray for the sick.
7. Draw a cross and place in it everything Jesus took for you.

Meditation and Memory Verse

Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

STEP THREE

Overcoming Temptation

The Victory is Already Yours

The word, “overcome,” means, “to be victorious and to prevail over every temptation in life.” This lesson was written to encourage you to overcome every temptation you face because Jesus has already set you free and destroyed all the works of the devil.

John wrote, *“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work”* (1 John 3:8). And, *“for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4). Therefore, the moment you accepted Jesus into your life, the devil’s work of sin was completely destroyed. Now, by faith in God, you can overcome every temptation you will ever face!

God didn’t save you so you could remain enslaved to addictions, be controlled by sin, trapped by fear, or live without His holiness and righteousness. God created you “new,” at salvation, with the purpose of you being free from all sin and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live the “God-kind-of-life!” Peter said that Jesus promised us new birth so we could, *“participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires”* (2 Peter 1:4). It’s time for you to stop participating in the ways of the world (who you used to be) and start participating in the “divine nature” (who God has made you to be).

Two Kinds of Temptations

There are two sources of temptation by which the Christian can be influenced to sin: (1) *Inside*: From the physical body made of

the flesh with its five senses. Example: The hormones of the body may desire sex or cause one to be easily angered. Also, the brain can store past feelings, produce negative thoughts, and create desires for sin. (2) *Outside*: Satanic influences by the way of thoughts coming from the devil and his demons. Example: Satan tempted Jesus, and from time to time demons can try to influence your mind.

Concerning the temptations of the flesh, Paul taught in Galatians 5:19-21, "19 *The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 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.*" He also went on to write in verse 24, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Therefore, we cannot say, "We don't know what sinful desires are," or that, "the flesh made me do it," because the sins of the flesh are, "obvious," and we're to consider the flesh's, "passions and desires," crucified with Christ.

In regards to the devil's tactics, consider his temptations like "radio signals" because it is highly unlikely he will come to you personally like he did with Jesus. His standard operation is to send evil spirits to tempt your mind. Consider your mind to be like a radio receiver. Every working radio can pick dozens of different stations but can only properly play one at a time. Guard your mind and set your thoughts on the Word of God and ignore the "radio station of hell." Paul boldly wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "We 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."

In regards to all temptation, no matter the source (fleshly or from the devil), Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer that we should always pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). Plus, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Therefore, in light

of both passages, we can conclude that temptation is never an excuse to sin because God has promised to always deliver us when we pray.

Next time you are tempted to sin, simply stop and pray. God will show you a way of escape. He will always deliver you from evil when you ask Him for a way out. There will never be a time of temptation when God will not make a way of escape for you. Sin will never be an option for you in God's Kingdom.

The Way of the World

Have you ever noticed how many people, today, are being defeated by the devil and the power of sin in their flesh? Whether by drugs, alcohol, pornography, sexual sin, greed, anger, selfishness, or unforgiveness? Many people are being defeated by sin in their daily lives and the defeat they suffer in one area of their life eventually touches every area.

The person defeated by pornography not only suffers in their purity, but also suffers in their marriage and spiritual walk. The businessperson, who looks great on the outside, but on the inside is consumed with the love of money, is not only suffering in their integrity but also bringing harm to their family. The list of scenarios goes on and on but the bottom line is, "people need to be set free from their sin and live an overcoming life in Jesus Christ!"

The sad truth is many individuals, today, do not know the reason they are living a defeated life is simply because they have rejected the freedom of God. Many people today, even some Christians, don't believe that they can actually be set free from their shackles. Satan has blinded their minds and hearts to make them believe they will never be free. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:4, *"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

Some of Satan's favorite lies to tell people are, "You can never change!" "You will always suffer defeat in this area of your life!" "This is just who you are; get used to it!" Because of

the devil's lies, people continue to live in sin and defeat, but Jesus came to not only expose the lies of the enemy, but to set every captive free!

Jesus Came to Set You Free From Sin

The only one who really wants people defeated and living in sin is the devil. He is the promoter of sin and defeat on this earth. However, Jesus came and died on the cross to forgive our sins and to give us the power over every temptation. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil in everyone's life. Therefore, the question is, "Do you want to be free?"

The work of the devil is to cause people to sin and live in defeat. He tries to work "overtime" on all of us. Today, those who put their faith in Jesus and the work of the cross can have the devil's work, in their lives, destroyed once and for all (1 John 3:8). For the disciple, the "power of sin" has been destroyed, the "presence of sin" has been erased, and the "penalty of sin" has been forgiven! As a result, the lifestyle of defeat has been exchanged for the lifestyle of victory in Jesus!

Before you read the next section, please take some time to prayerfully meditate on the statements just made. If Jesus really has already destroyed the power of sin in your life, then the devil and your sinful flesh has literally been defeated. Do you believe that? If you truly believe what Jesus did for you, then you will be able to live free from sin. You will never be the same again.

Remember, you can't get free with your own "will power." You can only be made free by Jesus' resurrection power. If you're currently being defeated by sin, stop right now and put your total trust in Jesus because He has already made a way of total victory for you. Hallelujah!

Eight Kinds of Temptation to Overcome

As you read the following list of temptations to overcome, please pray and ask God to show you all the mindsets and habits that you need to abandon so that you will not continue in sin. Don't be ashamed or afraid to admit to God your weakness. Come to Him in humility and He will change your heart.

God said, *"26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws,"* Ezekiel 36:26-27. Therefore, it is because Jesus gives you a new, healed, and holy heart that you can live holy. You cannot try to be holy. God must make you holy. You cannot move yourself away from temptation. You must pray and receive God's power to move you in righteousness! Consider the different kinds of temptation below that are common to all people:

1. Sexual Perversion: Galatians 5:19 & 1 John 2:16.
 - a. Sexual actions outside of marriage including oral sex, homosexuality, and masturbation.
 - b. Lust in the form of dirty thoughts.
2. Evil Entertainment: Psalm 119:37 & Philippians 4:8.
 - a. Excessive sin, vulgarity, and glorification of evil in TV, music, and movies.
 - b. Pornography, perverse movies, and indecent TV.
3. Love of Money: 1 Timothy 6:10 & Matthew 6:24.
 - a. Prideful, selfish, and greedy.
 - b. Not a tither, putting money before God, and stingy.

4. False Religion and Witchcraft: Galatians 5:20 & 1 John 4:1.
 - a. False prophets, teachers, and religions.
 - b. Astrology, palm readings, and involvement in the occult.
5. Anger and Unforgiveness: Matthew 6:15 & James 1:19.
 - a. Bitter, unable to forgive, and slanderous.
 - b. Outbursts of rage, disrespectful, and cursing.
6. Ungodliness and Addictions: Titus 2:11-12 & 1 Corinthians 10:23.
 - a. Drug use, drunkenness, ungodly friends, lying, stealing, cheating, and committing crimes.
 - b. Addicted to food, social media, shopping, etc.
7. Fearful Behavior: Proverbs 29:25 & Revelation 21:8.
 - a. Fearing what people think about you and trying to please man, rather than God.
 - b. Fearful of trusting God and following all His commands.
8. Rebellion: 1 Samuel 15:23 & Hebrews 13:17.
 - a. Bad attitude towards leadership and lack of honor.
 - b. Defensive when corrected, complaining spirit, and unwilling to submit to godly discipline.

This list is by no means a complete list of possible sins. It is meant to highlight some of the most common areas where people are tempted. Now that you have read the list, remember what John wrote, “...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). Being an overcomer means to allow God’s power in you to make you an overcomer. Some of these areas will be

easier for you than others, but all of these temptations will be conquered in your life by your faith in Jesus. Always stay close to Jesus in your time of temptation (don't run away and try to hide) and you will be delivered from evil every time!

How Freedom Works

In order to be a true disciple of Christ, everyone must first believe in Jesus for the free gift of salvation. Then, a born again disciple must desire, for the rest of their life, to grow up and live like the person Jesus already created him to be. This lifelong process of growing up and acknowledging the perfect person Jesus created you to be is called, "sanctification." Sanctification simply means, "to be made holy" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

As a result, no matter who you are or where you've come from, the moment you were born again, you were sanctified (made holy like Jesus). Paul wrote concerning your new birth, "*you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Corinthians 6:11). You were sanctified the day you were washed in the blood of Jesus. You are holy because God made you holy.

You're not dirty water in the water plant of heaven, daily being purified over and over again. You were made 100% pure at salvation. Your spiritual growth is now to learn how to live free and remain pure. This is why overcoming every temptation in life is not just an endeavor for the "spiritually elite," but the standard for everyone who has been born again!

Surely, on one hand, if a Christian does sin they can be forgiven. On the other hand, you don't have to keep sinning, because you've been set free from the power of sin. Furthermore, the only time you need to be washed or sanctified, again, is if you sin. Don't think of God's sanctifying grace as a license to sin, but rather the means not to sin. Say to yourself, "I have been washed, sanctified, and made free from sin." Believe it!

In regards to living without willful sin John wrote, *“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child,”* and, *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them”* (1 John 3:10, 2:15). Even though forgiveness is a gift given to the disciple, the greatest gift is the Father’s love.

When your heart is full of the Father’s love you will not have any room to love worldly things. Imagine if you had eaten all your favorite foods and were stuffed, could you then eat more junk food? Certainly not! You would have no room left and, if you tried to eat it, you would literally get sick. Likewise, the way to live holy is by filling your soul with the love of God so that you don’t have any room left in your heart for sin.

Five Points Concerning Freedom in John 8:31-32

John 8:31-32 reads, *“31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* In this short, yet powerful passage, Jesus proclaimed total freedom from everything that keeps us from being like Him, freedom from everything that is called, *“sin,”* (violations of God’s commands). So, the question is not, *“Does Jesus want you to be totally free today?”* The real question is, *“Do you want to live totally free today?”*

Sometimes when I talk to people in the church about living free from every sin they say things like, *“If God wants me to change, He can do it whenever He wants. Until then I’m going to keep living how I’m living.”* *“God knows my heart. I ask Him to forgive me, every day, of my sins.”* *“He loves me just the way I am.”* *“Nobody is perfect. I’m doing the best I can.”* However, all these statements don’t come from the Word of God. They are just excuses to remain in sin and defeat. Jesus wants us free from sin, now. You’re not waiting on Him. He is waiting on you to believe in Him. He will set you free today.

When we look back on the passage in John 8:31-32, we can clearly see five powerful points Jesus teaches on freedom. These five points sound nothing like the excuses noted before. They are the victorious Word of God! Consider each point as you choose to live in God's freedom:

1. Believe in Jesus: *"To the Jews who had believed him,"* v. 31.
2. Continue in the Teachings of Jesus: *"If you hold to my teaching,"* v. 31.
3. Be a Disciple of Jesus: *"You are really my disciples,"* v. 31.
4. Know the Truth in Jesus: *"You will know the truth,"* v. 32.
5. Live Free in Jesus: *"The truth will set you free,"* v. 32.

This passage is intended to encourage every person, who believes in Jesus, to continue in His teachings and live as a true disciple of Christ. As a true disciple, Jesus will set you free from all your sins and everything that holds you back in life.

Notice, the first step to freedom is to "believe" in Jesus. You and I cannot "make" ourselves disciples. We need Jesus to make us disciples. The Bible declares in Ephesians 2:8-9 that we are not saved by "works," but by "grace" through our faith in Jesus. In turn, we must first come to Jesus and allow Him to make us a new person.

Our faith in God, activated by the power of the Holy Spirit, will always give us the ability to please Him. As we walk with Jesus we may sin, but His loving kindness will always lead us to true repentance (Romans 2:4). We cannot truly understand the work of God's amazing grace and forgiveness until we understand and accept the high calling of "being holy for God is holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Grace is often only defined as, "the underserved gift of God's forgiveness." However, Jesus never intended grace to be a dirty rag for us to use to wash our filthy hearts in order to go out and sin again. The other, and often missed definition of

biblical grace is, “God’s power in our hour of weakness.” Therefore, the grace of God is like a safety net beneath a tightrope. When the performer sees the challenge of how high above the ground the tight rope is, he is comforted to know that there is a net to catch him if he falls.

We shouldn’t intend to sin; but, if we do, we can know the net of God’s grace will catch us every time. At the same time, the grace of God is not only there to catch us when we sin, but also to encourage us to put our full faith in God, and cultivate that faith which will produce in us the ability to live without the power, presence, and penalty of sin. The grace of God is all we need to be forgiven of sin and kept from sinning. Remember what Jesus told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*

In conclusion, place your full trust in God’s grace both, to forgive you of your sins, and to empower you not to sin.

Review Questions

1. What does the Bible mean by “overcome?”
2. Name and explain the two different kinds of temptations.
3. Name some excuses people make to not live free from sin.
4. From the list, name the temptations you need to overcome in your life.
5. What does it mean to be “sanctified?” When were you sanctified?
6. Describe the five-fold process of living free according to John 8:31-32.
7. Write a prayer to God using two Scriptures found in the lesson, to ask for power to overcome all your temptations.

Meditation and Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

STEP FOUR

Living by Faith

Walk by Faith with Jesus

Have you ever wondered what made the people of God able to do all the great things they did? Moses split the Red Sea in two... Daniel spent an entire night in a den of hungry lions and wasn't scratched... Peter walked on water to meet Jesus on the stormy sea... Paul raised a man from the dead... Philip saw a whole town convert to Christianity... Timothy built a church as a young man... The first disciples saw 3,000 people saved in one day... John helped build the early church to 5,000 disciples in one year... Phoebe was a female leader in the early church... A jailer's whole house was saved.

Do you ever think about what made them different from you and me? What made Peter so special? Why didn't the other eleven apostles walk on the water with him? What was so special about Moses? Why couldn't Pharaoh and his great army part the Red Sea?

The answer to all these questions is simple: Faith. Faith in God changed their world! Simple faith in God and His Word made them different from every other person in similar circumstances. Hebrews 11:6 states, *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*

God is looking for men and women to please Him by having faith in His Word. God will reward those people of faith with great and mighty works of His power. Decide, today, that you will not walk in the natural, but live and act in the supernatural power of Almighty God!

Choose today, like Peter, that you're not just going to stay in the boat with everyone else. Step out of your human limitations and walk in limitless possibilities with God.

What is Faith?

There are many definitions of faith in the world, but the best comes directly from God's Word in Hebrews 11:1, "*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*" The Bible teaches that faith is the "confidence" of what we hope for and the "assurance" (or "proof") of things not seen. Faith is more than just having hope or wishful thinking. Some people have hopes of winning the lottery. That's not faith. Others think they have faith because they wish they weren't sick anymore, or have hope that all their problems will disappear. This kind of thinking may be considered positive, but it isn't having "faith."

Faith is an assurance only God can give, through His Word, because it is backed up by the power of the Holy Spirit. The foundation of biblical faith, as Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, is to, "*believe that [God] exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" True faith is firmly rooted and grounded in God's Word, not just the wishes and hopes of man. Faith, in action, will lead you to believe what God said no matter what anyone else thinks or how the situation looks. This is why Jesus said faith could move mountains. Biblical faith works in harmony with the perfect will of God.

Consider all the great stories of faith found in Hebrews 11: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, etc., and remember that every one of their epic adventures was because of faith!

The Law of Faith

When God created the universe, He made the laws of nature to govern its existence: gravity, the speed of light, etc. Here on earth, He made the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night. He made DNA to organize all life. He even made the laws of logic to govern the mental world of thoughts and ideas. Greatest of all, He made faith to govern everything in the universe, both in the natural and in the spiritual.

Most scientists and scholars have not yet discovered this great force. Some scientists will spend a lifetime researching and studying human life, plants, physics, and even insects, but will never really study the greater question: How did human life, plants, insects, DNA –and everything we know –come to exist?

The truth is that God made everything. How? By faith! Unlike the naturalist theory of evolution which teaches that everything came from nothing in a “Big Bang,” the Bible teaches that God, through His Word, supernaturally created everything. God said it and “bang” it happened! God had faith in His own Word because He knew whatever He would speak and declare would become reality. Hebrews 11:3 declares, *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*

Sadly, today most people live by sight and not by faith. In other words, they put more faith in the creation than the Creator. Consider how silly this must look to God. People will put their faith in their own lungs, to breathe air they do not see, but will not put their faith in the God who created the very air they breathe and the lungs He gave them to breathe. People will trust a man-made bridge to get them from one side to the other, but they lack trust in the Creator of the universe to lead them through times of trouble! God help us! David said concerning this ignorance in Psalm 14:1, *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”*

Don’t be like the foolish people of today who cannot believe in a God they cannot see, even though they cannot explain the things they do see! Be like the men and women of faith found in the Bible who trusted God, even when they didn’t understand what they faced in life. Say to yourself, “I will walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)!

God is Looking for People of Faith

Today, God is looking for people He can use to operate in His power of faith. God wants you to trust Him and speak His

Word, with faith, to change the world. There are situations you are facing that God can change. All you have to do is have faith in His Word.

It's your turn to change the world through faith in God. Right now you can start living a life based on God's Word instead of living by what you see and feel. Remember, feelings can deceive you. I'm sure Moses "felt" afraid when he stood at the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army was fast approaching; however, He was still willing to trust God to do greater things than what He could "feel." Oftentimes people miss their miracle because they make their "feelings" more important than the promises of God. Have faith in God, not your feelings!

Likewise, the Bible teaches us that Jesus said we could move mountains with just a "mustard seed" size of faith. Jesus even taught that we could do even greater things than He did because He was going to the Father to intercede for us. John 14:12-14 declares,

"12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

Jesus set the example for us. He not only wanted to have us watch Him do great things; He wanted to teach us how to do the same type of great things He did.

He did this because He didn't want the life of faith and miracles to stop with Him. He wanted every generation after Him to walk by faith and experience God's power. Take a moment to read the passage below and ask God to give you insight into Jesus' heart to walk in faith. Matthew 21:18-22,

"18 Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. 19 Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he

said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

20 When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.

21 Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. 22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Can you see the simple truth Jesus was conveying to His disciples? He was boldly teaching them that by faith they could move mountains and change the world. In other words, Jesus was saying, "If you believe, you will receive!" So, the question to you is, "Do you believe?"

What mountains are you facing today? Family troubles? Financial problems? Health issues? Your faith in God and His Word, today, can remove all of the mountains you face. God is looking for people who are "sick and tired" of being "sick and tired." Hanani said in 2 Chronicles 16:9, "*For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*" Are you the kind of person God is looking for? Many people say, "I'm looking for God." But, when you truly have faith in His Word, God comes looking for you!

God is looking for someone who wants to be a world changer, a history maker, and a generation shaker! He wants someone who will believe His Word and do what it says. He wants someone who will go where he leads, say what He says, and do what Jesus did. Are you going to let your mountains move you into defeat? Or are you going to cast your mountains into the sea and live in victory? If the cry of your heart is, "Yes," then you are ready to live by faith!

How Do I Get Faith?

Just like there are many definitions of faith in the world, there are also many supposed places a person can find faith.

According to the Bible, however, there is only one place real faith is found – in the Word of God! Paul wrote in Romans 10:17 (NKJV), *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* As a result, faith is given to us whenever we hear the Word of God, whether spoken or written. So, if you want faith, listen to the Word of God.

Don't be like some people who blame God for their lack of faith. Faith doesn't magically come to some people and not to others. If you're not hearing the Word of God, faith is not coming. It's plain and simple. If you “lack faith” or have “lost your faith,” start reading the Word of God and speaking it out loud in prayer, because faith always follows the Word of God. You don't lose faith like you lose car keys. If you don't have faith, today, like you did yesterday, it's because you stopped hearing the Word of God.

Take for example Moses and the Red Sea. When God spoke to Moses and commanded him to stretch out his hand over the Red Sea, God's Words contained all the faith Moses would ever need to see his miracle. Remember, just a mustard seed size of faith can cast a mountain into the sea! Once Moses acted on God's Word, the natural universe knew it had to obey the law of faith which had created it. There wasn't an argument or discussion. The Red Sea obeyed Moses as it did the day God separated the seas from the land at creation (Genesis 1:9).

Sadly, some people get confused and become overzealous in regards to walking by faith. They try to redo everything the people in the Bible did. However, if God didn't speak those words to them directly, it will not work. Peter could only walk on the water after Jesus said, “Come.” If he would have jumped out of the boat, beforehand, he would've sunk. Likewise, if the other disciples tried to follow him, they most likely would have gone under because it was a word only spoken to Peter. Think of it this way, Peter walked on the Word of God, “C-O-M-E,” not, “H-2-O,” because God had spoken His perfect Word to him through Jesus. Peter was able to do the impossible because he believed and acted on the Word of God.

Today, as you read the Bible, listen to what God is saying directly to you through His Word. There are literally hundreds

of promises in the Bible and they are potentially all available for you. Whenever you hear God speaking to you through His Word, either by reading it or hearing it preached, believe and you shall receive!

The Promises of God

The Bible contains two kinds of promises, “general” and “specific.” First, general promises are for all people at all times. Simply by reading these promises in God’s Word you can be confident that these promises are for you and everyone who reads them. These promises are given below so you can begin to exercise your faith.

Second, specific promises are the kind of promises that deal directly with God speaking only to a specific person or situation. Some examples would be God speaking to Moses about parting the Red Sea and Peter walking on water. Certainly, as noted in the previous section, God can still give specific promises to you, but it’s important to be sure that it is from God. For example, God may tell you to go apply for a certain job because He is going to give it to you. However, this kind of personal promise will not work for everyone. It is specifically given to you for your particular situation.

Here are some guidelines to use when reading the Bible to help you discern God’s general promises for everyone: (1) General promises mainly come in the form of commands, (2) They have a timeless sense about them, (3) They are directly seen as principles in a variety of people’s lives, and last, (4) They are found in the context of general audiences, like the letters written to the “churches” in the New Testament.

Take some time and read the following general promises which are for everyone. Remember, as you read them, hear the Word of God in the verses listed and accept them by faith.

1. Having a Blessed Marriage (Mark 10:9).
2. Raising Godly Children (Proverbs 22:6).

3. Living in Financial Prosperity (Philippians 4:19).
4. Serving Others (Matthew 23:11).
5. Walking in Righteousness (Psalm 23:3).
6. Bringing Transformation to Your Community (John 12:32).
7. Working a Job with Purpose (Colossians 3:23).
8. Making Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).
9. Operating in Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1).
10. Being Full of Wisdom (James 1:5).
11. Walking in the Joy and Pleasures of God (Psalm 16:11).
12. Having Peace of Mind (Philippians 4:7).

How Do I Act in Faith?

After faith has been planted like a seed in your heart through hearing and receiving God's Word, it then must be acted upon for God to respond in power. The Bible teaches that for faith to be used by God, it must have a voice and an action. Someone must speak the Word of God, in faith, and act upon it.

The human voice is the single greatest weapon God has given us. Proverbs 18:21 declares, *"The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."* We need to learn to speak the Word of God in faith. In the gospels, Jesus always spoke with faith-filled words and His words always accomplished what He said. There are two main places our words can come from: faith or fear. Fear comes from the devil and our own humanity. Faith comes from God and His Word. Fear leads to death. Faith leads to life.

Today, what kind of words do you speak over your life? Where do they come from? Are you speaking words from your fears or are you speaking words from your faith in God? For example, if you are facing the mountain of financial trouble, don't speak from your fears and keep saying, "I'm so broke," "I don't think I can pay my bills," "We're not going to make it through this," or "I'll always be this way." These types of thoughts and attitudes lead to "emotional death" in the form of depression, anxiety, and despair. Also, speaking from fear can actually be bad for your health because stress can cause harm to your physical body.

Instead, speak from faith in God's Word and say things like, "Praise God, I am blessed to be a blessing!" "My God will supply all my needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus." "I will make it through this because God is with me!" Talking like this will not only encourage you, it will also lead to answered prayers and miracles in your life!

How Do I Fight the Good Fight of Faith?

Now that you have decided to live by faith, you are going to face various trials and tests. You may face situations that make you want to give up on God's promises; however, you have to "*fight the good fight of faith*" (1 Timothy 6:12). Each day you must determine to "hold on to faith" like a soldier "holds on to their weapon." It is your spiritual duty to keep speaking to your mountain until it moves. So many people have given up right before their miracle. Hold on. You will experience God's victory if you don't give up!

The Bible says the devil is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). A roaring lion wants to scare you and put fear in your heart. The devil will try to come and make you feel as if God has left you and doesn't hear your prayers. He'll try to get you to go back to living in fear. He knows that if you keep living by faith and speaking the Word of God, he is defeated. So he tries to get you to stop believing in God's Word by telling you his lies.

This is what his roar may sound like: “You’re not good enough.” “God can’t help you.” “Your problems are too big.” “No one cares about you.” “God may help others, but He’s left you alone.” “You’ve made too many mistakes for God to take you back.” “Don’t believe what those preachers tell you. They’re just lying to get your money.” “God doesn’t exist, because if he did you wouldn’t be suffering.” “Give up and just quit now before you make an even bigger fool of yourself.”

When you hear those kinds of things in your heart, shout out loud, “The devil is a liar and I rebuke him in Jesus name!” You can be sure where they’re coming from – the pit of hell! You don’t have to receive them. You can send them back to hell where they came from. You can stand up and fight against the devil and all his lies. You can stand victorious no matter what weapon comes against you. God said in Isaiah 54:17, *“no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.”*

Certainly, not every negative and fearful thought comes from the devil. Oftentimes we can do a good job of discouraging ourselves with our own negative thoughts. Just as with temptation, there are two sources of fear and negative thoughts: the devil and our flesh (by way of the brain). We must be renewed in our minds and train our brains to think with the “mind of Christ.” Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:16, *“we have the mind of Christ,”* and in Colossians 3:2, *“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”* We should be quick to reject negative thoughts and think on the Word of God.

Paul also said in Ephesians 6:10-20, that by faith, we could wage spiritual warfare wearing the full armor of God and remain standing. The Lord has given all of us the following battle gear, (1) The Belt of Truth, (2) The Breastplate of Righteousness, (3) The Gospel of Peace for our Shoes, (4) The Shield of Faith, (5) The Helmet of Salvation, and (6) The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Remember, your battle is not against people, but the devil. Though he may use them to try to discourage you, don’t believe or listen to their voices. Stand your ground until you receive your miracle!

Now is the Time!

Use what you've learned in this lesson and begin to apply it to your life every day. Read the Word of God and let faith grow in your heart. Then speak to the mountains you have in your way and don't stop believing until those mountains are cast into the sea.

The time for God's miracle working power is now! People need to see true disciples in the church consumed with faith-filled words that have the power to change the communities where they live (like the heroes of the Bible). Our families need to see the power of God bring happiness and joy to them. Each day, our lives need to channel the power of God to every aspect of life. Today, take your place with the great men and women of God and walk by faith!

Review Questions

1. What made the great people in the Bible different from everyone else around them?
2. What is the "law of faith?"
3. What is the biblical definition of faith?
4. How can you get faith?
5. What are the two kinds of promises? Why is it important to know the differences?
6. How can you fight to keep your faith?
7. What are some promises you have faith to receive?
8. Write a prayer of faith, using the promises in this lesson, to ask God to cast your mountains into the sea!

Meditation and Memory Verse

Hebrews 11:6, *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

STEP FIVE

Being Baptized and Taking Communion

Getting Baptized

The Bible teaches that whoever believes in Jesus should be baptized in water in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The word, "baptize," means, "to be submersed in water." When you were born again you were submersed by the Holy Spirit into the life of God. Your old sinful life was put to death and you were given a new spiritual life (Romans 8:10).

This happened in your life because of what Jesus did through His death, burial, and resurrection. Water baptism is the outward sign of what God did inwardly to your heart through Jesus' sacrificial work. Paul wrote in Romans 6:4, *"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."*

Therefore, as the chart below shows, there are three main things that baptism represents in your life, (1) Your sinfulness, (2) Repentance, and (3) New life. These three parts also correspond to what Jesus did to save you. Take a few moments to see how baptism relates to both Jesus' work and your salvation.

Jesus	Baptism	Salvation
1. Death on the cross	1. Coming into the water dry	1. Understanding your sinfulness
2. Buried in a tomb	2. Being dipped into the water	2. Repenting of your sins
3. Raised from the dead	3. Coming up from the water wet	3. Receiving a new life

First, when you come, dry, into the water, it means you were once dead and empty in your soul because of sin. Second, after you tell your testimony and are dipped in the water, it is as if your old sinful life is buried. Third, when you come out of the water, soaking wet, you signify that you have been given a new life in God – a life that totally saturates every part of you.

Yes, You Can Be “Re-Baptized”

Many people were either baptized as a child, or at some point turned away from God for a time. In both situations it is appropriate and strongly recommended to be baptized again for the following reasons: First, if you were baptized as a child, you did not understand your sinfulness and need of a Savior, so chances are you weren't even aware of your need for Jesus. Therefore, everyone who was baptized as an infant should be baptized again, since they are now old enough to understand Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the need for a Savior (Acts 2:38). Also, there is not one example of children being baptized in the Bible, so it is best to consider the practice a “manmade tradition,” rather than a “divine command” (Matthew 15:9).

Second, if you turned away from God for a time after accepting Jesus into your heart, called “backsliding,” your past good works do not carry over into your new re-commitment. You must make your commitment to Christ, again, and you should also publicly display your faith by being baptized again. Consider what God said in Ezekiel 33:13, *“If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done.”*

Since backsliding is when someone walks away from the Lord after once being saved, according to Ezekiel, they cannot expect any of their previous good works to count on Judgment Day. Certainly, the Bible teaches us we can have assurance of our salvation, but it also teaches that a person can “fall away” or “shipwreck” their faith (1 Timothy 1:19). When this happens, they must do all of their righteous things again. They must

repent, be born again, receive the Holy Spirit and, as a result, be baptized again. Read the strong rebuke Jesus gave in Revelations 2:4-5, *“4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place.”*

Notice how Jesus commanded the lukewarm church in Laodicea to, *“do the things they did at first.”* Moving forward, don't let pride keep you from being obedient to God in all that you do. People in both situations can be sure that God will not be disappointed or upset to see them baptized again. All of heaven rejoices when a sinner comes to Jesus, whether it's for the 1st time or the 101st time.

Taking Communion

The first communion took place at the Last Supper when Jesus gave His disciples bread and wine and told them it represented His flesh and blood as given for the New Covenant (Luke 22:19-20). He then told the disciples to, *“do this in remembrance of me”* (1 Corinthians 11:24). For the last 2,000 years Christians have been taking time, on a regular basis, to partake of communion in thankfulness, as a symbol, and to represent Jesus' work on the cross.

The bread and the wine used in Jesus' day were common for the meal served at Passover. Passover is a Jewish holiday celebrated in memory of what God did for Moses and the Israelites when He delivered them from Egypt. The portions of the meal that Jesus chose were unleavened bread and wine.

Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast. It represents a life without sin and symbolizes the body of Jesus. The wine is a common drink to have with meals, which is used to symbolize Jesus' blood, poured out for our sins. Today, any type of bread can be used, but most churches use wafers or crackers. For wine, most serve grape juice.

The elements used are not the most important factor in communion. The heart of remembrance is. When a person takes

communion, either in church or elsewhere, the following principles should always be observed: First, we should always check our hearts to see if there is any sin that needs to be confessed, because we don't want to take communion in an "*unworthy manner*" (1 Corinthians 11:27-28).

Second, we should take the bread and wine with a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving. For someone to do it only out of religious habit would be disrespectful to God. Last, the individual taking communion should always have, in his heart, a sense of God's presence. Taking communion should be a time of drawing closer to God.

Go For it!

Take some time, right now, and set a reminder for yourself to talk to your church about being baptized. Begin to prepare your testimony. A testimony is a simple story about who you were before Jesus, how you came to be born again, and what God is doing now in your life. Testimonies should include the following three parts within a 2-3 minute length of time; (1) Who you were before you met Jesus, (2) How you met Jesus, and (3) What your life has been like since you met Jesus.

At most baptisms the pastor desires the new Christians to share their testimony publicly with others. In so doing, the new believers encourage the congregation to continue to pray for others to get saved. It also strengthens their own faith to be bold and declare what God has done for them!

Next, keep your heart open for the next time your church or small group takes communion. Join others in a time of remembering your Lord and Savior. Also, you don't have to wait to take communion at church. Feel free to take communion as often and wherever you like. Just remember to do it following the above guidelines to ensure you're honoring God. It is even believed that the first disciples took communion every time they met together for fellowship (Acts 2:42).

In closing, the traditional practices of the church were never meant to be observed in a lifeless religious fashion, but

rather with joy and excitement in a lively relationship with God. Jesus actually corrected the Jews for doing things for God with a wrong attitude (Matthew 15:8-9). Learn to develop a strong relationship with God that is based on your love and passion for Him. He will always draw close to you when you desire to be closer to Him (James 4:8)!

Review Questions

1. What does the word “baptize” mean?
2. How does baptism relate to Jesus and your salvation?
3. Explain why it’s good for some people to be “re-baptized.”
4. When was the first communion?
5. What are the two elements in communion and what do they represent?
6. Is communion only for church? Explain why or why not.
7. Set a day and time to be baptized.
8. Write down your testimony following the three-fold outline given in the lesson.
9. Describe your first communion since becoming a new Christian.

Meditation and Memory Verse

Matthew 28:19, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

STEP SIX

Being Baptized in the Holy Spirit

Pentecost

Luke records that before Jesus left to go back to heaven, He gave instructions for the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the “Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). Up until this point the disciples were still not sure if Jesus was going to stay on the earth and rule as a king on the throne of David (Acts 1:6).

Jesus was indeed going to rule as a King on the throne of David, but first He wanted to establish the church to bring the message of salvation to the whole world. He had taught the disciples that it was good for Him to go to heaven because then He could send the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity. Jesus described the Holy Spirit in many ways: the Spirit of Truth, the Advocate (or “Helper”), and the Promise of the Father (John 14:16-17 & Acts 1:4).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would bring the disciples the power they needed to work miracles, the wisdom they needed to preach the gospel, the comfort they needed to go through trials, and the guidance they would need to know the will of God for every situation. This is why Jesus said, in John 16:13, *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.”*

When Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples waited in the upper room for the Holy Spirit to come just like Jesus commanded. On the Jewish Festival Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came into the place where the disciples were waiting and praying. When the Holy Spirit arrived, He came with the sound of a mighty wind and placed fire upon all their heads and they began to speak in “other tongues” (unlearned languages). The disciples, both, in their lives and ministry, would never be the same again!

In Acts 2:1-4, Luke described the powerful event with these words,

“1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

After this great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples went out into the streets and began to testify about the power of God and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter, who just a few weeks earlier was afraid and embarrassed to admit to being a disciple, began to stand up and preach to the crowds (Acts 2:14-41). After he had finished preaching, the people listening were so convicted and in awe of God’s power that over 3,000 of them became followers of Jesus!

Baptism of Fire

The event that took place on the Day of Pentecost was precisely what John the Baptist foretold. John knew that he was sent by God to baptize with water, but that Jesus would come after him and baptize with fire. He said in Matthew 3:11, *“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

Jesus, in fact, did come into the world to die on the cross for man’s sins and restore him back to a right relationship with God, the Father. However, Jesus not only intended to rescue man from His sins, but to also empower him to live a life full of purpose and supernatural ability.

What happened on Pentecost was the fulfillment of John the Baptist’s prophecy and is now for every believer and disciple of Christ. Some misinformed scholars try to persuade

Christians to believe that the time of miracles and speaking in tongues is over. They couldn't be more wrong! They ignorantly try to promote the idea that the power of God and supernatural gifts were only for the early church. God forbid!

These foolish ideas are found nowhere in the Bible. Jesus clearly taught that the experience the disciples would have after He left would be the same for all Christians after them, even up unto the end of the world (Mark 16:15-20). Plus, Paul said that all Christians were to, "*eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy*" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Jesus intended every believer to be filled with power from on high. Jesus wanted, and still desires every disciple to be given the baptism of the Holy Spirit as described in the lives of the disciples and written about in the Book of Acts.

What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

The terms being "baptized" in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) and being "filled" with the Spirit (Acts 2:4) describe the same event. However, the phrase, "baptized in the Holy Spirit" is the phrase most often used by Jesus. Therefore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the born again spirit and soul of a person is submersed in the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (unlearned languages).

According to Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, man is a three-part being: body, soul, and spirit. As a result, when you first came to Jesus, you were renewed in your spirit/soul and made a new creation. The Holy Spirit was present with you by making you new and abiding in you; however, He was not yet fully released to give you all of God's available power.

He was waiting for you to ask the Father, in Jesus' name, to release Him within you to bring forth the rivers of God's presence and power in your life. Whenever you ask the Father to baptize (submerge) you in the Holy Spirit, His power will be released. After His power is released you will have the sign of speaking in languages you have never learned. These new languages could either be of heavenly origin or various earthly

dialects. Either way, you will be given the guidance of the Holy Spirit to glorify God in new sounds and syllables. This spontaneous event is called, being “baptized with Holy Spirit,” and is exactly what happened to the first disciples in the upper room. Jesus promised this would happen for all His disciples in Acts 1:5 when He said, *“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Plus, after Peter received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he boldly said to the crowd he was preaching to in Acts 2:17-18, *“17 In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”* Later, he said in Acts 2:38-39, *“38 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.”*

Therefore, there is no doubt. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is for everyone: sons and daughters, old and young, all who are far off, and whomever God will call!

Speaking in Unlearned Languages

The biblical term, “speak in other tongues,” simply means, “speaking in unlearned languages.” When you speak in other tongues you are speaking with your own mouth and ability, but only speaking words that come from the Holy Spirit. This happens because the Holy Spirit speaks to your spirit and gives you the sounds and words of a language you have never learned. Though, like at Pentecost, the languages can sometimes be understood, most of the time only God can understand the language. This is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:2, *“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit.”*

The purpose for speaking in other tongues is four-fold:

1. Speaking in tongues empowers you to be a living witness for Jesus Christ in preaching the gospel (Acts 1:8).
2. It opens the door to the other nine gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).
3. It will build your faith (Jude 1:20).
4. Speaking in tongues is used to intercede for the lost to be saved (Romans 8:26).

Now It's Your Turn!

The Bible is clear that Jesus wants every believer to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and to have the evidence of speaking in other tongues. Below are references to the other outpourings of the Holy Spirit which happened in the book of Acts after Pentecost:

- Cornelius' house: Acts 10:44-48.
- Paul and John's disciples: Acts 19:1-6.

Paul also wrote, in 1 Corinthians 14:5, that he desired everyone to speak in tongues. Therefore, all you have to do is desire to be filled by God's Spirit and you will be filled to overflowing right now! Here are some helpful steps to follow when seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

1. Believe and declare Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.
2. In prayer, repent and confess to Jesus any known sins, unbelief, and doubts about speaking in tongues.

3. Boldly profess, "I believe Jesus wants to baptize me with the Holy Spirit!"
4. Ask God to baptize you with the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name. "Father, I ask in the name of Jesus, that you would baptize me right now with the Holy Spirit and fire!"
5. After praying, wait on the Holy Spirit to baptize you and then begin to speak new languages as the Lord leads you!

What to Do Now?

Once a person has asked and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, they are to be open and ready for God to use them to preach the gospel with signs and wonders following. The main purpose Jesus gave for His disciples being baptized in the Holy Spirit was to be His witnesses. He said in Acts 1:8, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to baptize every believer to accomplish His mission upon the earth. Today let the Holy Spirit fill and submerge you in God's power so you can be His witness wherever you go. After you have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, put into practice the following effective habits. Each one corresponds to the four-fold purpose of speaking in tongues:

1. Make time to pray in tongues whenever you pray so you can continually be filled with the power of God (Acts 4:31).
2. Whether in church or in private, when you pray in tongues, be open for God to use you in the other nine spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1).
3. Pray in tongues when you need your faith strengthened (Jude 1:20).

4. Pray in tongues whenever you intercede for the lost so that God can pray, through you, His perfect will (Romans 8:26).

Don't just read about what the early church did. Go and follow in their footsteps. The Holy Spirit has an unlimited amount of power and resources to give to you. With Him on your side, there's nothing you can't do. Jesus said in John 7:38, *"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."* Get ready to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and for God's power and presence to flow through you!

Review Questions

1. What happened on Pentecost in the book of Acts?
2. What are some of the names Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
4. What is speaking in "other tongues?"
5. What are the four reasons why every disciple should speak in other tongues?
6. What are four practical ways to utilize the ability to pray in new spiritual languages?
7. Name and describe two times in the Bible when people spoke in tongues and explain why this should still happen today.
8. Take some time right now, if you haven't already, to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues and describe the experience.

Meditation and Memory Verse

Acts 2:4, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

STEP SEVEN

Preaching the Gospel

The Greatest Legacy

Almost everyone wants to do something great in life that will be his or her legacy. For example, great skyscrapers are built in people's names, like "Trump Tower," so that their name will live on after them. Actors also try to achieve a form of greatness, by having their names written on stars that are placed on sidewalks in Hollywood. Athletes can hope for greatness by having their jerseys retired and their names written in the Hall of Fame. Though the world may consider all these accomplishments great, they fail in comparison to what the Bible considers greatness.

Have you ever thought how you want to be remembered after you die? Some people say they want to have great wealth and to be remembered by their riches. Others want their books to be left behind so that everyone can appreciate their contributions to the world. Still some have more selfless ambitions and want to be known for the love they showed their family and the charities they supported.

Though some people's goals and dreams may seem more noble and honorable than others, the truth is, all of them fall short of God's desired legacy for mankind. In other words, when compared to eternity, the momentary achievements in this world fail to compare to God's greatest treasure, the souls of mankind. Jesus described the value of just one soul to be worth more than all the riches in the whole world (Mark 8:36-37).

All of mankind's achievements will one day be forgotten, but the soul of a man will live forever. When you and I preach the gospel (good news of Jesus Christ) to others, we are impacting their souls for all of eternity. When you get to heaven and see those you have helped meet Jesus you will have a

reward that will last forever. Truly, sharing the gospel with your family, friends, co-workers, community, and the world is the single greatest thing you can do on this earth. This is why Paul said in Romans 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”* There is no legacy that can compare to preaching the gospel so the souls of mankind can be saved.

What’s Really Important?

Most people don’t understand how special each person is to God. Jesus said in John 10:11, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* The death of Jesus was very intentional. He was willing to die, so that we might live. He also taught that if He had a hundred sheep and one went missing, He’d leave the other ninety-nine just to find the one. Why? Because He said, *“There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent”* (Luke 15:7). Jesus’ death on the cross showed humanity how important our salvation is to God.

Today, the media wants you to think your bank account, popularity, body, and power measure success. That’s why many people enter into politics, entertainment, humanitarian efforts, etc. However, the truth is that whatever man does here on this earth for selfish gain will stay on this earth and eventually be forgotten and destroyed (James 1:11). After Jesus returns, no one will care who built the biggest building or who had the most money or who loved their family the most or who gave the most to charities or who hit a golf ball the farthest. Only what was done for Jesus will be remembered for eternity.

Those who desire to preach the gospel will have heavenly rewards that will last forever. Though there are many good things to do here on earth, the best thing to do is to love God and teach others to do the same. The greatest gift a father or mother can give their children is the gospel (Proverbs 22:6). What would it benefit a child if their parents always loved

them, provided for their every need, but never taught them how to have eternal life? What would it benefit “Little Johnny” if his parents gave him the whole world, but never gave him Jesus? God wants you to place preaching the gospel and making disciples at the top of your priorities and at the center of all you do.

Heaven’s Bank Account

What will be Jesus’ words to you concerning your life here on earth? Will He reward you for your faithfulness to preach the gospel or will He rebuke you by burning up your selfish works? For example, what will Judgment Day be like for Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, if he has not been a disciple who made disciples? Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

First, according to Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:13, all his good works of charity and love for his family will be burned up in smoke. Next, because he has not been born again, he will be told by Jesus that He never knew him and will be cast into hell (Matthew 7:23). Last, the memory of his existence will be erased forever (Job 24:20).

Now consider if right before he was cast into hell he tried to negotiate with God. What if he said, “Jesus, it’s so nice to finally meet you. I’m sorry I didn’t believe in you while I was on earth and preach your gospel. Here is \$75 billion dollars and all my inventions. Please let me in!” Do you honestly think any of those things will matter on that day?

Please don’t misunderstand me. We don’t get to heaven because we preached the Word of God. Many people have preached the Word of God and have not gone to heaven, because their life was full of all kinds of evil (Matthew 7:22). Nor am I saying we can earn our salvation by preaching the gospel. All the thief on the cross next to Jesus had to do to be with Him in paradise was believe (Luke 23:43). We could

preach the gospel for a million years and still never be “good enough” for heaven. Salvation is a free gift given to us by God, through faith, because of Jesus’ death on the cross, period (Ephesians 2:8).

What I’m saying is that a true disciple will make disciples because eternity really matters to them. In other words, it’s not okay for the disciple to see people go to hell without them preaching the gospel. Jesus, Himself, said that if we were truly connected to Him, we would bear fruit (reproduce ourselves). Though we cannot earn our salvation, it’s fair to say that we will be judged as to how “genuine” our salvation is based on our fruitfulness and obedience to preach the gospel and make disciples.

Consider how Jesus, in John 15:1-9, compared bearing fruit to being a true disciple,

1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

Notice how Jesus said in verse 9, “*remain in my love.*” Love, for God and people, is our motivation, not earning salvation or rewards. We preach the gospel, despite persecution and rejection, because we love God’s love for humanity! As a result,

let us not waste our lives only trying to fill our earthly bank account. Make filling heaven's bank account with lost souls your main priority. Say out loud, "I will be a fruitful vine in God's vineyard!"

Who, Me? Yes, You!

You may think that you're not called to be a "preacher" or some kind of leader in the church. You may think that you can be just fine going to church and living your life as you see best. You might even think it's important that the message of Jesus be shared with the world, but that God will use someone else besides you to do it. You couldn't be more wrong!

Please read again the "Great Commission" Jesus gave in in Matthew 28:19-20,

"19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Can you see how Jesus intended His church to work? First, Jesus spent His time teaching and training His original twelve disciples. Second, He then sent them out to make new disciples. Last, He commanded them to teach the new disciples to do exactly what He had taught them to do, which is, "to make new disciples!" This is called the "Law of Multiplication."

Let's use the number twelve to demonstrate this Law. Consider if each of the twelve disciples made twelve new disciples. That would equal 144 total disciples. Then imagine if those new 144 disciples made another twelve disciples each. There would now be 1,728 disciples. If those 1,728 disciples each made twelve new disciples, there would be 20,736 disciples. Afterward, it would be 248,832 and then 2,985,984, until the whole world would be discipled. Literally, it would

only take around eight cycles of twelve disciples making twelve new disciples to mentor the whole world!

Think about it, the whole world could be discipled right now if every Christian was a disciple who makes twelve new disciples. Therefore, all we have to do to disciple the nations would be to make twelve reproducing disciples. Do you have enough faith, today, to believe God can use you to reach, preach, and teach twelve disciples for Jesus?

God made it very clear, in the Bible, who He wants to use to reach the lost, preach the gospel, and teach new disciples; you! Jesus taught that everyone who was listening to His messages was to go out into the world and be His witnesses. Jesus said that all of us, as His disciples, were to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-16).

God Wants You to Preach the Gospel

What if the entire world was infected with the HIV virus and you were the only one who had the cure. Would you keep the cure only for yourself or would you share it with others? What if you were in an apartment building which was on fire and you were the only one able to help others get out of the building alive. Would you only save yourself or would you warn the other tenants to escape?

Jesus boldly taught that there is a real place called “hell” for those who die in their sins. He said hell would be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:28), where the fire would never go out, and where the worms would eat the sinner’s flesh for all of eternity (Mark 9:47-48). In light of knowing about this horrific place, what are you going to do to help people not go there?

Jesus came to die on the cross and make salvation available for all mankind so that all sinners might be saved from hell’s torment. Peter said that God, “*is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). Likewise, Paul wrote that God, “*wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4).

Therefore, if God was willing to send Jesus, and Jesus was willing to leave heaven to come to earth, are you willing to leave your comfort zone to find and make new disciples?

First, Jesus commanded His first disciples, in Mark 16:15, to, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”* Second, He told them in Matthew 28:19-20 to, *“make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* Last, Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, *“this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*

Now it’s your turn, because if you don’t warn them, God says their blood will be on your hands! Ezekiel 3:18, *“When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.”*

How to Preach the Gospel

Below are eight basic principles to use when preaching the gospel. There is no “perfect formula” of how to preach, because only the Holy Spirit can regenerate a sinner. Below are just some of the foundational concepts to help make your preaching more effective.

Remember, preaching the gospel doesn’t just mean standing behind a pulpit with a microphone. Preaching simply means, “proclaiming God’s Word.” Always be open for God-appointed opportunities to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever you are and whenever you see an open door!

1. ***God loves the world and has a purpose for every person:*** Talk about God’s great love for the world and His desire to have a relationship with them for eternity (John 3:16).
2. ***Because of mankind’s sin, everyone is born separated from God:*** Help them realize that they have personally committed sins and deserve God’s righteous judgment (Romans 3:23).

3. *Jesus came to die on the cross to bring humanity back in relationship with God:* Share how, on the cross, Jesus took all their sins and the wrath of God (Colossians 2:13-14).
4. *When a person believes in Jesus and repents of their sins they are saved and born again:* Teach them that only by faith in Jesus, not by their good works, can they be saved and made a new creation (John 3:3;16 & Ephesians 2:8-9).
5. *God wants everyone to be Jesus' disciple:* Instruct them that being a true Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus. It's a lifestyle, not just a one-time decision (Matthew 16:24).
6. *Ask them personally if they want to repent of their sins and be born again:* Help them pray to God and declare, "Jesus is Lord." Then ask them to pray for forgiveness of their sins and to be baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-40).
7. *If they have prayed to accept Jesus, ask them if they have assurance of their salvation:* Advise them to be 100% sure of their salvation and, if they have doubts, continue to pray and seek God until they are comforted by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17).
8. *Encourage them to join you at church and get disciplined:* Teach them that God has a great plan for their life through obedience to His Word, and that this is done through discipleship in the church (Matthew 28:18-20).

Try to follow these steps as best as you can, but most importantly, be led by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel in the way that is best for each person to whom you are ministering to. God will surprise you by what He can do through you if you are willing and obedient.

In closing, let the following words of Charles Spurgeon move you to preach with passion, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their

knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.”

Review Questions

1. How do some people want to be remembered?
2. What is God’s greatest treasure?
3. What does the word, “gospel” mean?
4. Who does God want to use to preach the gospel?
5. Describe from Jesus’ teaching about the “vine” how it applies to making new disciples.
6. Name some of the principles you should use to preach the gospel?
7. Make a list of those you can preach the gospel to in your everyday life (friends, family, co-workers, etc.).
8. Set up dates and times to go street preaching with other disciples.

Meditation and Memory Verse

Mark 16:15, *“He said to them, ‘Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”*

APPENDIX A

What We Believe

1. The Scriptures are inspired by God and declare His design and plan for mankind from Genesis to Revelation (2 Timothy 3:15-17).
2. There is only one true God, revealed in three persons...Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, commonly known as the Trinity or God nature (Mathew 28:19).
3. The deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Jesus is both human and divine (John 1:1,14,18).
4. Though originally good, man willingly fell into sin, ushering evil and death, both physical and spiritual, into the world (Romans 5:12-19).
5. Every person can have restored fellowship with God through salvation (being born again), accepting Christ's offer of forgiveness for sin through repentance. Faith in Jesus is the only way to be saved (Romans 10:13-17).
6. The practice of two ordinances: (1) Water baptism by immersion after repenting of one's sins and receiving Christ's gift of salvation, and (2) Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation (Matthew 28:19 & 1 Corinthians 11:26).
7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special experience, following salvation, which empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times (Acts 1:4-8 & Acts 2:1-4).

8. The initial physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues, as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles (Acts 19:1-7).
9. Sanctification initially occurs at salvation and is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive lifelong process of separating from evil as believers continually draw closer to God and become more Christ-like (1 Corinthians 6:11 & 1 Peter 1:2).
10. The Church has a mission to seek and to save all who are lost in sin. We believe the Church is the Body of Christ and consists of the people who, throughout time, have accepted God's offer of redemption (regardless of religious denomination) through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:22).
11. A divinely called and scripturally ordained leadership ministry serves the Church. The Bible teaches that each of us, under leadership, must commit ourselves to reach others for Christ, to worship Him with other believers, and to build up or edify the body of believers, the Church (Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, & Ephesians 4:11-14).
12. Divine healing of the sick is a privilege for Christians today and is provided for in Christ's atonement, His sacrificial death on the cross for our sins (James 5:14-16).
13. The Blessed Hope when Jesus raptures His church prior to His return to earth (the second coming). At this future moment in time, all believers who have died will rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air, and Christians who are alive will be caught up with them, to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 & 1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

14. The Millennial Reign of Christ when Jesus returns with His saints at His second coming and begins His benevolent rule over earth for 1,000 years. At that time, many in the nation of Israel will recognize and accept Him as the Messiah, the Savior who died for them and all mankind (Revelation 20:1-4).
15. A final judgment will take place for those who have rejected Christ. They will be judged for their sin and consigned to eternal punishment in a literal lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15, 21:8).
16. We look forward to the perfect New Heavens and a New Earth which Christ is preparing for all people, of all time, who have accepted Him. We will live and dwell with Him there forever following His millennial reign on earth. "And so shall we forever be with the Lord" (2 Peter 3:13 & Revelation 21-22)!

APPENDIX B

Daily Devotions

Life Changing Devotions

Do you need encouragement to continue living the kind of life God created you for? Then *Life Changing Devotions* is for you! Life Changing Devotions is a free online daily devotional written to inspire and challenge you to be all that God called you to be.

Simply go to, www.LifeChangingDevotions.org and begin today. Each lesson contains a Scripture reading, a short informative lesson, a reflection, and practical steps to help you apply what you have learned.

If you want what you've never had, you have to do what you've never done. Start learning from the Word of God, today, and watch God change your life one day at a time!



MORE RESOURCES

Discipleship Books by the Same Author

- (1) *Disciples That Make Disciples, Twelve Lessons in Biblical Leadership*: “*Disciples That Make Disciples*” is a call to radical Spirit-filled disciples to advance upon the kingdom of darkness and turn the world “right-side-up” for Jesus Christ. This book gives twelve challenging, inspiring, and anointed lessons that are firmly grounded in the Word of God so that you can have all you need to be a generation shaker, world changer, and history maker for the Glory of God!
- (2) *Discipleship Based Churches, How to Create and Maintain a Church of Disciples*: “*Discipleship Based Churches*” is a practical guide for all pastors and church leaders to raise up disciples who make disciples. Filled with great illustrations and compelling points, the reader will be challenged and inspired to make a church of disciples.
- (3) *Life Changing Devotions, 365 Days of Faith Inspiring Lessons*: Do you want to live the kind of life God created you for? Then you need “*Life Changing Devotions!*” Simply choose from one of the 12 different series where you desire to see change and start today. Each lesson contains a Scripture reading, a short informative lesson, a reflection, and practical steps to help you implement what you have learned. If you want what you’ve never had, you have to do what you’ve never done. Start learning from the Word of God, today, and let God change your life one day at a time!
- (4) *Disciples of the First Disciples, Learning Powerful Lessons from the Past*: “*Disciples of the First Disciples*” takes the reader from the early days of the first disciples through the Great Reformation to the present outpouring of the Spirit around the world. This book is a perfect introduction to

church history and revival. A must for every lover of discipleship!

Other Books by the Same Author

(1) *Helping Muslims See Christ in Christianity, Understanding Islam in Light of the Bible: "Helping Muslims see Christ in Christianity"* is a very fresh, informative, and bold look at the differences between Islam and Christianity. Whether you are already a follower of Jesus or not, this book will challenge you and inform your beliefs in light of what God said to the prophets of the Bible. You will learn the difference between Islam and Christianity's view of Jesus, the Bible, and the Trinity. What you read in this book will change your life!

(2) *Date Like a Christian, Seven Steps to a Godly Marriage: "Date Like a Christian"* is a practical look at dating in the real world and guides you along a biblical path that will help you find true love and romance. In the midst of all the dating "drama" of the 21st century, this book answers important questions such as: When am I ready to date? How should I get to know someone I like as a Christian? And am I in love or is it just lust? Every "single person" should read this book before setting out to find "Mr. or Mrs. Right!" Make a move in the right direction and get this great book today!

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