Walking With God

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1. Walking With God

Our destiny is to walk with God. These studies will take us through the idea of walking with God. As we walk with God, His ways become our ways which leads to experiencing more of the fullness of His life and victory. It is also walking in the newness of life in Christ and not in our old life before Christ"...*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*" Matthew 4:4.

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and* to walk humbly with your God" Micah 6:8.

God's desire is that we might "walk with Him". Many times people think that to be a Christian means that "God walks with me" - in other words, wherever I go, God goes. But we are called to align our lives to His life, not the other way around. *Amo 3:3 MKJV Can two walk together unless they are agreed?*

**Three Examples**
The Bible provides many examples of those who walked with God (read 1 Cor.10:11; Heb.11). We study their lives, not just as history lessons, but to understand the secret of their walk with God (*Heb 6:12 NASB so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*). Three men in the Bible are actually identified as specifically having "walked with God": Enoch, Noah and Abraham.

**Enoch's Walk**

*"When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" Gen. 5:21-24.*

Something happened to Enoch when Methuselah was born. Up until that time, Enoch had probably believed in God, but had not walked with God. What happened to change all this? Methuselah became the oldest man to ever live (969 years) and the year he died God sent the Flood in judgment against a wicked world. It seems that God had revealed to Enoch that his son was the "time-clock" for God's judgment. In fact, Enoch saw beyond even the Flood to the Second Coming of Christ.

*"Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him" Jude 14-15.*

This revelation of judgment launched Enoch into a close walk with God. Enoch's fellowship with God was so close that God caught him straight up to heaven to be with Him, without Enoch having to taste of death first (Genesis 5:24). This is a picture of what it will be like for Christians alive when Jesus returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
"By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God" Hebrews 11:5.

**Noah's Walk**

Noah was one of a handful of men that impressed the heart of God (Ezekiel 14:12-20). Like Enoch, he is described as a man who "walked with God".  

"Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God" Genesis 6:9 (see also 7:1).

In the midst of this corrupt generation, Noah was special, because of his attitude (read Genesis 6:5-12, 22; 7:1). He was blameless in his generation.

**Noah saw things unseen**

"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family." Hebrews 11:7.

The Bible talks about two "worlds" - the seen world and the unseen world (2 Cor.4:18; Heb.11:1). Noah's eyes were fixed on the unseen world and this affected his walk on the earth.

**Noah condemned his generation**

"...By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith" Hebrews 11:7.

Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), but it wasn't his words that condemned the world, but his life. Through his life, Noah proved that it was possible not to walk a way of violence and depravity, thus leaving his generation with no excuse for their condition (Romans 1:18-20). As we walk with Jesus, our lives have a similar effect. On one hand we offer hope of a better life. On the other hand our lives testify that people don’t have to live lives of sin without God.

**Saved from a corrupt generation**

In Matt.24:37-39, Jesus said that the generation alive at the time of His return would be just like that of Noah's generation. Noah's generation was judged because of its violence and corruption, not because they were "eating and drinking.". Their daily lives numbed them to the reality of their evil condition. Our generation is no different.

"With many other words he warned them; and pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation'" Acts 2:40.

Our salvation does not just mean we avoid hell and go to heaven when we die. Our salvation extends into the here and now.
Abraham's Walk

"...the Lord appeared to [Abram] and said, 'I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless'" Genesis 17:1.

Like Enoch and Noah, Abraham walked with God (Genesis 24:40). But the New Testament describes the walk of Abraham in a way different from Enoch and Noah.

"...'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend " James 2:23.

Abraham's fellowship with the Lord was so great that he was called the "friend" of God (2 Chronicles 20:7). This did not just mean that God was Abraham's friend. Even more than that, Abraham was God's friend. God felt He could share the depths of His heart with Abraham, just as two friends might do. God is looking for the same kind of deep friendship with you (John 15:13-15; Proverbs 17:17).

Like Enoch, Noah and Abraham, each of us has a choice between two walks - between walking with the world or walking with God (Jas 4:4 NASB You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.; 1Jn 2:15-16 NASB Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.), between the seen world and the unseen world of God's promises (2Co 5:7 NASB for we walk by faith, not by sight). The choice we make will determine how we live - our outlook, our values, our lifestyle (Hebrews 11:32-12:2).
2. Walking as a Son

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are." 1 John 3:1.

The work of the Cross resulted not just in the forgiveness of our sins, but in the restoration of our relationship with God. God could have simply saved us and given us eternal life - and that would have been more than we deserved! But He did so much more. He brought us into the very inner circle of His family.

Our relationship with God is like that between a father and his son (Hebrews 12:5-11). This "sonship" belongs to every Christian, whether male or female. We are all called "sons" because of the special status sons had in Hebrew culture.

Made Sons

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" Romans 8:15-16.

The Spirit of Sonship

When we believed on Jesus, our hearts were sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). God's Spirit is also called "the Spirit of sonship." It is through God's Spirit that we were adopted into the family of God (Ephesians 1:5).

The Spirit of God's Son

Galatians 4:6 is almost identical to Romans 8:15, but the differences are very revealing: "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"

The Holy Spirit is not only called "the Spirit of sonship", but also "the Spirit of His Son". We are sons because the Spirit of the Son is indwelling us.

Abba, Father

"Abba" was the family word for "Father" used by the Jews of Jesus' day. It is the same as the word "daddy" in English. It was the word that Paul himself used for his own natural father, and it was the word that Jesus used for His Heavenly Father.

"Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will'" Mark 14:35-36.

The depth of the relationship that Jesus had with His Father has now been opened up to us through the Holy Spirit - the Spirit of God's Son (read Hebrews 2:10-15).

"For through him [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" Ephesians 2:18 (see also Matthew 10:20; John 20:17).

Through the Holy Spirit, our lives have been linked with the life of God's Son. The two verses - Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 - show this link:
Romans 8:15 -- By the Spirit we cry, 'Abba, Father'

Galatians 4:6 -- Through us, the Spirit of the Son (Jesus) cries, 'Abba, Father'

We have been included in the very relationship that Jesus has with His Father! Not only have we been linked with Christ's death and burial (Romans 6:3-6), we continue to be linked with Him now! (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1-4).

Made Heirs

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ"
Romans 8:17.

Not only are we sons, but we are also heirs of God (Gal.4:7). But more than that, we are heirs alongside Jesus - linked with God's Son even in His inheritance! (Colossians 3:1-4).

Christ's Inheritance

The inheritance of Jesus, because of who He is, includes:

- A name superior to every other (Heb.1:4; Phil.2:8-10).
- Everything in heaven and on earth (Colossians 1:15-20).
- The kingdom (Matthew 25:34; Luke 22:29; James 2:5).
- Us (1 Kings 8:51,53; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Titus 2:14; Eph.1:18).

Our Inheritance

Because we are co-heirs with Jesus, our inheritance involves:

- The name of Jesus (John 14:13-14; 16:24; Rev.3:12.)
- Everything in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:22).
- The kingdom (Matt.25:34; Luke 22:29; Col.1:12).
- The Lord Himself (Psalm 16:5; 73:26).

Two Misconceptions

Read Luke 15:11-32. This is not really the "parable of the prodigal son", but the "parable of two sons". The father divided his inheritance between both sons, with a double-portion for the elder (Deut.21:15-17). The way that both sons used their inheritance revealed each one's misconception of sonship. While the younger son took the inheritance for himself, the older son ignored his inheritance. Both left the presence of their father (even though the older brother never left home), for while the younger brother joined himself to foreigners (the world), the older brother joined himself to the slaves. Both saw their inheritance as separate from relationship. Both sons were equally wrong. Both were self-centered and missed out on a true father-son relationship. But whereas the younger son repented, the older son failed to see his fault. In the parable, the father's response to his older brother shows the true meaning of sonship:

- "You are always with me" - Relationship
- "Everything I have is yours" - Heirship

As Christians, we have been "born again into a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). God has a goal for His children, that we will grow up to become mature sons - like Jesus, the Son (Rom.8:29,21).

"Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when [Jesus] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" 1 John 3:2 (read also verse 3).
3. Walking as a Servant

"...whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"

God's grace is the key to the whole Christian life. Without an understanding of the grace of God, people will serve God from a wrong motivation:

- Out of a sense of duty
- Out of a desire to gain acceptance
- Out of a need to prove something to others

Before we can serve God out of a right motivation, we must see what God has already done for us.

**Taken to the Throne**

The grace of God has brought us into the position of sonship. There is nothing we can do to earn that position - no service, no sacrifice, nothing! This revelation of God's grace releases us from any hint of self-effort and self-attainment. We do not need to earn anything from God. In Christ, we have all things!

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" Eph.2:6-7 (read verses 4-9).

When we received the Lord Jesus, we received everything (2 Peter 1:3). We became complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). There is nothing to work for, nothing to earn from God. Everything has been given freely as a gift (Ephesians 1:3).

Only now - when we understand that we don't have to do anything in order to get anything from God - can we begin to serve God, not out of "selfish ambition or vain conceit" (Philippians 2:3), but out of love for God and for others.

**The Attitude of Christ**

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant." Philippians 2:5-7.

Jesus did not become a servant to get anything for Himself. He was not "grasping" after any position or favor. His sole motivation was love for His Father and love for a lost world. God now wants you to have the same attitude. Like Jesus, you have nothing to grasp after. You have eternal life, you are a son, you are seated with Christ. But now, because of the same attitude of love, you can voluntarily step down from your position of comfort and "take the very nature of a servant". Like Jesus, we are not servants striving to become sons, but we are sons who have chosen to become servants (1 Peter 2:16).

"Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses...poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" 2 Corinthians 6:4,10.
A Choice of Masters

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" Matthew 6:24.

The Bible tells us that a person is a "slave to whatever has mastered him" (2 Peter 2:19; John 8:34). As Christians, we are given the choice of either serving the world or serving the Lord. There is no other choice.

"...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" Joshua 24:15.

Mary and Martha

"[Martha] had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her"' Luke.10:39-42.

Jesus used this occasion to teach an important lesson about serving. Even though Martha loved to serve (see John 12:2), she had allowed herself to become "distracted" by her serving. If we become "worried and upset" in serving the Lord, this is a signal that our focus has moved from the Lord to our service. True servanthood is "serving the Lord", not just "doing things for the Lord". We should be like Martha - wholeheartedly serving the Lord - but have the heart of Mary who counted relationship with Jesus as the most important thing.

Servanthood in Grace

"...we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" Rom.7:6.

Servanthood out of a sense of obligation or duty brings no joy to the heart of God (1 Cor.9:17). Servanthood must come from a heart of joy (Psalm 100:2) and enthusiasm (Romans 12:11). In order for our service to be pleasing to God, it must be:

- Because of all God has done for us (Romans 12:1).
- Because in serving we find fulfilment (Psalm 40:8).
- Because of love (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

Our service is firstly to the Lord. God takes everything that we do for others as if it were done for Him (Matthew 25:35-40; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Ephesians 6:6-8).

Waiting on the Master

"As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God." Psalm 123:2 (see also Luke 12:35-36).
The Bible describes true servanthood as "waiting on the Lord." Service to God is not just doing things for Him, but is being with Him, watching His hand, listening for His voice, ready to obey the moment He commands.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" Colossians 3:23-24.
4. Walking as a Disciple

Matthew 28:19"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations."
John 8:31-32 NASB  So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

To be a disciple of Jesus means to "follow" Jesus (Mark 1:17-18; Luke 5:27-28). A disciple is one who is willing to be instructed, trained and disciplined by the Lord in order to become like Him in thought, attitude and action. Jesus said: "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15).

Our Calling is to Follow the Lord Jesus as a Disciple

In considering our calling to Jesus we must realize that it is more than just the contemporary Evangelical version of "only believe." If we look at the Biblical statistics we see that the emphasis is following Jesus as a disciple.

Follow Me/Come after Me – 25 times
Believe in Me – 4 times
Disciple NT - 269 times
Christian in NT - 3 times Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet 4:16

Acts 11:26 NASB  and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

It is clear that Biblical Salvation entailed following Jesus as disciples.

Counting the Cost

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" Luke 14:28-33.

There is no personal cost in becoming a Christian - everything is a free gift from God. But there is a cost to becoming a disciple - it costs your whole life. But Jesus encouraged us to count the cost - in other words, to weigh up the relative values and see whether giving up everything is worth what God gives us in return. Like the pearl merchant of Matthew 13:45-46, when we find something that is worth far more than all we have put together, there is no sacrifice to give up everything we have. If you want to be a disciple of the Lord, you must be willing to meet certain conditions:

- Give the Lord total priority (Matt.10:37).
- Follow the Lord (Matt.10:38-39).
- Do without life's comforts (Matt.8:19-20).

Being a disciple means that all that we are and all that we have now belongs to Jesus! In the parable Jesus told in Luke 14:16-24, note the excuses people gave for not obeying the call:
• Possessions (verse 18)
• Work (verse 19)
• Family (verse 20)

All that God asks from us is to be willing to put Him first in everything. God then responds to
our willingness with His grace, and we soon find that we are not only willing to do God's will,
but also want to. God's grace then anoints our desire and helps us to actually do what God calls
us to do!

**Marks of a Disciple**

The marks of a disciple of the Lord Jesus are very distinctive, because a disciple takes on the
character of his Master:

• Submission (John 8:28-31).
• Obedience (John 14:21; Heb.5:7-8).
• Faithfulness (Hebrews 3:1-2).
• Fruitfulness (John 15:8).
• A servant-heart (Matthew 20:20-28).
• Humility (John 13:1-16).
• Love for one another (John 13:34-35).

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the
student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master." Matthew 10:24-25.

**The Act of Consecration**

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." 1 Peter 3:15 (see also Joshua 3:5).

The word "consecration" means to be "set apart, or separated, for use by the Lord." Consecration
is a definite act of our will before God. It is the total giving of our life to the Lord. A beautiful
picture of what consecration means is found in the Old Testament ceremony consecrating Aaron
and his sons into the priesthood (read Leviticus 8:18-28). Three parts of Aaron's body were
touched by the blood of the sacrifice. They represent the consecration of our total being:

• The ear:
  • Listening to the word of the Lord.
• The thumb:
  • Doing the will of the Lord.
• The toe:
  • Walking in the paths of the Lord.

**The Burnt Offering**

"If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock. He is to offer a male without defect,
and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides, and the
priest is to bring all of it and burn it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made
by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord" Leviticus 1:10-13 (read also 8:18-21).

The Old Testament burnt offering is a picture of our act of consecration to the Lord (see
Hebrews 10:1). It was the highest of all offerings. The entire animal (representing the offerer)
was placed on the altar. The fire under this particular offering was kept burning continually - day and night. It was not an offering for sin, but spoke of the entire surrender and dedication of the worshipper to God. Unlike the sin offering and the guilt offering, the burnt offering was a free will offering and "an aroma pleasing to the Lord" (Lev.1:9). As disciples of the Lord, we too now offer our lives as a "living sacrifice".

"With eyes wide open to the mercy of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him" Romans 12:1 (Phillips).

This verse describes our consecration to the Lord as a "living sacrifice", and says it is holy to the Lord and "acceptable by him". This can only refer to the new creation that God has made us. We could not consecrate our sinful lives to God - there is nothing acceptable to God about our old lives. But Jesus has made us a new creation in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10). And it is this new life which we now offer up to God as a living sacrifice.

**In His Footsteps**

*Matt.16:24* "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'"

The key to being a disciple is following the Master. But you cannot follow anyone who is standing still. Jesus is moving, and we must move with Him. We are not to stand still, expecting God to bless us where we are. We must follow Him.
5. Walking the Way of the Cross

"Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" Luke 9:23.

The Cross is the focus of God's entire plan of redemption. It is not just the way of salvation. It is also a way of life. But before we can take up our cross and follow the Lord, we first need to understand what we are taking up. There are in fact three aspects to the Cross:

- The heart of the Cross
- The work of the Cross
- The way of the Cross

Each of the Persons of the Godhead are actively involved in the work of redemption, and the three aspects of the Cross reflect their involvement.

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" Colossians 1:19-20.

**The Heart of the Cross**

"All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast - all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world " Revelation 13:8 (see also 2 Timothy 1:9-10).

The Cross was not something God thought up at the last moment. From the moment of Adam's fall, the plan of the Cross was put in motion. The "heart of the Cross", the sacrificial love which resulted in the sending of Jesus to die, has always been in the heart of the Father. His love is absolute. The Cross was simply its greatest expression.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall have eternal life" John 3:16.

**The Work of the Cross**

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" 1 Peter 2:24 (see also Galatians 4:4-5).

Two thousand years ago, the heart of the Cross was enacted upon the Cross of Calvary. This was the historic sacrifice of Jesus upon the Cross which we look back to (1 Corinthians 15:3). This work of the Cross has two important parts:

**Christ died for you**

When Jesus died, He took the judgment which you should have received. Christ was your substitute. Because He died for you, you have eternal life.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:8 (see also Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 3:4-7).
Christ died as you

Not only did Jesus die for you, He died as you. When Christ died on the Cross, God saw you dying on the Cross in Christ. Your old Adamic nature was crucified in Christ. Christ was your representative. Because He died as you, you are now a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" Galatians 2:20 (see also 6:14).

The work of the Cross was a finished work. The Cross of Christ dealt with both the judgment of sin and the power of sin. This was the work of the Son on your behalf.

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" Romans 6:6-7.

Many Christians understand the first part of the work of the Cross (the receiving of eternal life), but don't understand the second part (living as a new creation). Many believe they are now supposed to "die out to themselves" and "crucify the old man." But the Bible tells us that you have already been crucified with Christ. This was the work of the Cross for you. You do not have to try to struggle to "die" to sin. You are already dead to sin in Christ (Galatians 5:24).

"The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" Romans 6:10-11 (read also verses 3-14).

Just as Jesus died to sin once for all time, so you are now to count yourself dead to sin once for all time! And just as Jesus is now alive to God, so you too are alive to God in Christ!

Romans 6:11 NASB Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The Way of the Cross

"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" Luke 14:27 (see also Matthew 10:38).

When Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him, He did not mean for us to crucify ourselves. We cannot kill off the old nature. That was the work of the Cross. It is the new creation that takes up its cross and lays down its life for others. It means:

Having the Heart of the Cross

We are called to have the heart of the Cross like the Father. God has designed for this heart of sacrificial love to motivate the new creation life (John 15:12-13).

Bearing the Shame of the Cross

When we take up our cross we are bearing the shame of the Cross like the Son (Hebrews 12:2; Romans 15:3; 1 Peter 2:19-23). Note that Jesus told us to take up our cross, not to actually...
crucify ourselves. Before a prisoner was crucified, they were required to carry their own cross to the execution site. This involved great shame (read 1 Cor. 4:9-13). When we take up our cross, we bear the shame of the Lord for the sake of others.

**Denying Ourselves**

We deny our own interests and comfort by the Holy Spirit (John 12:24; 1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 5:15; Revelation 12:11). We do not do this because we are trying to complete our own salvation. We do this because of love for God (Romans 12:1) and love for others (2 Corinthians 5:14).
6. Walking Yoked with Jesus

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" Matthew 11:29-30.

Jesus used the picture of yoked oxen plowing a field. When you join two oxen in one yoke, the plowing becomes easier. Christ wants us to be yoked with Him so that we can learn from Him what it means to walk with God.

The Wrong Yoke

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" Gal.5:1.

This yoke of slavery is the yoke of self-effort. This is a heavy yoke because we try to do it all in our own strength. This is not the yoke that Jesus was talking about. There are three yokes mentioned in the Bible which are the wrong yokes:

- The yoke of the law (Acts 15:10; Galatians 5:4).
- The yoke of the world (Jam.4:4; 1 Pet.2:11,20; 2 Pet.1:4).
- Yoke of the flesh (Lamentations 1:14; John 8:34; Romans 8:8).

Each of these yokes are heavy and oppressive, not only because we have to carry the yoke ourselves, but also because we are yoked to the judgment of God.

Breaking the Old Yoke

"For when we were controlled by the [flesh], the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" Romans 7:5-6.

Jesus refuses to be yoked with our old self (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). That means if He wants us to be yoked with Him, He must first destroy the old yoke. And that is exactly what Jesus did at the Cross.

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" Romans 6:6.

Yoked to Jesus

God wants us to be yoked with Christ. This means that Jesus carries the heaviest load. This is why His "yoke is easy" and His "burden is light." His strength, righteousness and life are transferred to us. His footsteps become our footsteps. This is how the Christian life has been designed to work.

"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" Luke 14:27.

Spending Time with Jesus

Isa 50:4-5  The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen
as a disciple. (5) The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back.

Jesus didn't just tell us to take His yoke upon us. He also told us to learn from Him. This kind of learning does not come from being in a classroom. It only comes from a daily walk with Jesus. We do not just learn about Him. We learn from Him.

Psalms 32:8-9  I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. (9) Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you. (see 25:4-5; 51:6; 86:11).

The time we spend with the Lord can be of two types:

**Waiting on God**

Psalms 131:2  Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me.

To wait on the Lord means to spend unhurried time in His presence. We have quieted our soul. This means that we are not trying to get anything out of God. We are content just to spend time with Him. As we wait on God, we gain strength (Isa.40:31) and hear the quiet voice of God (1 Kings 19:11-13; Isa.30:21).

Psalms 130:5-6  I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope. (6) My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.

**Seeking God**

"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple" Psalm 27:4 (see also 34:10; 1 Chronicles 16:11).

To seek God means to actively pursue Him. Seeking is the result of a heart burning with love for God (Psalm 63:1-8). When we seek God, we are desiring to know Him better. God promises to answer those who seek Him (Jer.29:13; Matt.7:7).

Psalms 27:8  When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek." (see also 105:4; Hosea 10:12).

**Becoming a Daily Christian**

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" Psalm 118:24.

God wants us to be daily Christians, not weekly ones. Being a Christian is not just about going to church once a week. It is not even about how many meetings we go to in the week. It is about living in a daily walk with Jesus. This means that every day we:

- Pray (Luke 11:3).
- Spend time in God's word (Matt.4:4; Heb.3:7; 4:7).
• Experience God's grace (2 Corinthians 4:16; 6:1-2).
• Work with God (John 5:17).
• Take up our cross and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23).

When we start off the day with Jesus, we continue through the day yoked to Him. When distractions come, the gentle yoke of Jesus will pull us back on track. As Jesus walks the straight line in His Father's will, so we also, when we are yoked with Jesus, walk the straight line God has set for our lives. The direction Jesus takes becomes our direction.

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, O God'" Hebrews 10:5,7.
7. Walking in the Spirit

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son...that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" Romans 8:3-4 (KJV).

The Bible refers to two ways a Christian can walk - in the Spirit or in the flesh. These two walks are opposed to each other (Galatians 5:17-18). These two walks cannot be mixed. You are either walking in the Spirit or you are walking in the flesh.

Walking in the Flesh

The word "flesh" has the meaning of "self." To be living "in the flesh" involves three areas:

* Carnal mind - the thoughts/motives of the flesh
* Appetites - the cravings/acts of the flesh
* Self-effort - the method of the flesh

The Carnal Mind

"Those who live according to the [flesh] have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires...the [flesh] is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" Rom.8:5,7.

The carnal mind - which is the stronghold of the flesh - is a mind governed by the five senses (what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell). The spiritual mind, however, is governed by what God says about a situation. One example of this is the story of the 12 spies in Numbers 13:17-14:11.

The ten spies were governed by a carnal mind. They believed what they saw. They fed their minds with it, and the result was unbelief. They fed their emotions with it, and the result was fear. They fed their wills with it, and the result was rebellion.

Joshua and Caleb saw exactly the same things as the others, but had different reactions because they had a different kind of mind. They believed in God's word. They fed their minds with it, and the result was faith. They fed their emotions with it, and the result was courage. They fed their wills with it, and the result was obedience. This is why the "renewing of our minds" (Rom.12:2) is such a high priority in God's plan for our lives.

Appetites of the Flesh

God created within the human body certain basic appetites or "hungers" for food, sex (including romance and intimacy), power (rulership and control), leisure (rest, relaxation & entertainment) and excitement (the adrenaline surge). There is nothing intrinsically wrong with these appetites. God created them in us and called them "good" (Gen.1:31). But when these appetites become our masters (2 Peter 2:19), they become "the corrupt desires of the flesh" (2 Peter 2:10,18-22; Gal.5:19-21).
The Arm of Flesh

"This is what the Lord says: 'Cursed is the one who depends on man, who depends on flesh for his strength..."" Jer. 17:5 (read verses 6-8).

The walk of the flesh is not just having a carnal mind and giving in to the appetites of the flesh. It is also depending on flesh (your own strength) to change yourself and try to please God. But there are two basic problems with fleshly self-effort:

* Flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8; Hebrews 11:6).
* Flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41; John 6:63; Rom.8:3-4).

The Normal Christian Life

What is the normal Christian life? Many Christians think that Romans 7:15-23 describes God's plan for our lives, but this is not so! The context of these verses reveal that, rather than being the normal Christian life, this is a description of the normal fleshly life - the life of someone living under the law, struggling to please God through self-effort.

"For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" Romans 7:5-6.

The Holy Spirit is the new factor in the Christian life! Romans 8:1-2 calls this new factor "the law of the Spirit of life [which has] set me free from the law of sin and death". The Bible is absolutely clear about this new life we have in Christ. Read the following verses:

* Romans 8:9
* Romans 6:6
* Galatians 2:20
* Galatians 5:24
* Romans 13:11-14
* Galatians 6:14

Born of the Spirit

"Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" John 3:6.

Everything in the Christian life comes through the Holy Spirit. We were "born again," not through our own self-effort, but through the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:8-9). The problem is that many Christians, having been born into God's family through the Holy Spirit, think that now they have to live the rest of their Christian lives through self-effort (read Gal.3:1-3).

Walking in the Spirit

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the [flesh]" Galatians 5:16.
We are not to try to overcome the desires of the flesh in order to walk in the Spirit. No! We are called to walk in the Spirit so that we will not gratify the desires of the flesh! It is the indwelling Holy Spirit who enables us to walk daily with God (2 Cor.3:17-18). Walking in the Spirit involves three steps:

* Recognize the voice of the Spirit (John 10:27).
* Obey the promptings of the Spirit (Acts 13:2-3).
* Receive the enabling of the Spirit (Jude 24).

Walking in the Spirit only happens when God changes your focus from yourself (the flesh) to Himself (the Spirit) (read Rom.8:5-9). As you keep your focus on the Lord each and every day, walking in the Spirit becomes a daily experience.

**Baptism in the Spirit (Spirit filled walk)**

**Biblical accounts of initial fillings**

The Biblical accounts of initial fillings of the Spirit contain the Biblical ways the early church were filled with the Spirit. They contained means of filling, experiences, and manifestations we need to expect today with initial fillings.

**Acts 2:1-11** The Spirit fell on them while waiting in prayer before God Vs 1-4. The initial result was speaking in tongues about the mighty deeds of God vs 4,11

**Acts 8:12-24** A period of days elapsed between the time they received the word and were later filled with the Spirit vs 12-17. They were filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on them vs 17. Something observable happened as a result of them being filled with the Spirit vs 18.

**Acts 9:1-17** A period of 3 days elapsed between Paul’s Damascus road experience and being filled with the Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on him vs 17-18. We do not know what the initial manifestation of the Spirit was in Paul’s life but we do know that he later operated in gifts of the Spirit, especially speaking in tongues 1 Cor 14:1-40, 18.

**Acts 10:43-48** The Holy Spirit fell on them while Peter was speaking. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and exalting God vs 45-46. This event occurred before they were baptized in water vs 47.

**Acts 19:1-6** Something in their experience gave Paul the indication that they hadn’t received the Spirit when they initially believed vs 2. They were filled with the Spirit as Paul laid his hands on them vs 6. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and prophesying.

**Observations we can make from the facts/examples from the Biblical accounts of initial fillings**

1. There is no automatic assumption that one is filled at salvation.

2. There is very clear accompanying manifestations when one is filled such as tongues, prophecy, exalting God, and boldness. The most common manifestation is speaking in tongues. We should expect accompanying manifestation when filled.
3. People were filled at times when hands were laid on them, when praying, and when listening to the word being preached.

4. It is obvious that being filled with the Spirit is not a one time only thing. These accounts along with the exhortation in Eph 5:18 to be continually filled with the Spirit shows us that it is to be continual experience.

**Biblical accounts of continual fillings**

From the Biblical accounts of the continual fillings of the Spirit and the river flowing we see that it is not just a one time things but something continual.

*Act 4:8*  Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,  
*Act 4:31*  And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.  
*Act 7:54-56*  Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. (55) But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; (56) and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."  
*Act 13:9-10*  But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, (10) and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

It is clear that to be channels of God's Spirit we need to be filled and continually filled with the Holy Spirit.  

*Act 13:52*  And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.  

*Ephesians 5:18* NASB  And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be (continually) filled with the Spirit,(read Luke 11:9-13; Acts 5:3)  
Matthew Henry accurately comments on being continually filled in Eph 5:18 “The meaning of the exhortation is that men should labor for a plentiful measure of the Spirit, that would fill their souls with great joy, strength, and courage, which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any excess in our endeavours after these: nay, we ought not to be satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but aspiring after greater measures, so as to be filled with the Spirit.”
8. Walking in His Presence

Hebrews 13:5...for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," (see also Matt.28:20).

God has promised never to leave us. His presence is always with us (Psalm 139:1-12; Isaiah 43:2; Deut.20:1). The question, however, is not whether God is in our presence, but whether we are walking in His presence.

Psalms 89:15  How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance..

The Heart of Moses

"The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' Then Moses said to him, 'If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?'" Exodus 33:14-16.

Moses' heart was after more than just the power of God. He desired to know the ways of God (Ex.33:13; Ps.103:7). He didn't want to have just an angel - a representative of God - to go before the people of Israel, even though this would have fulfilled all the promises God had given Israel concerning the promised land. Moses wanted God's own Presence to go with them, because he knew it was the Presence of God that would distinguish them from all the other peoples of the earth.

As Christians, this is also what distinguishes us from the rest of the world. We are different - not because of something we believe in, but because we walk in the Presence of God.

A Friend of God

"The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend." Exodus 33:11.

Because Moses walked in the presence of God, he had a face-to-face relationship with the Lord. God spoke to him just like you would speak with your closest friend. Many of us have come to know God as our friend (we can pour out our hearts to God at any time), but does God know us as His friend (where He can share His heart with us)?

The Heart of David

"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" Psalm 27:4 (NKJB) (see also 23:6; 26:8).

David was called a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). God, who does not look on the outward appearance but upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:6-12), is still searching out
"heart-people" - people who, like David, have one driving desire - to be in the presence of the Lord.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord..." Psalm 84:1-2.

The Secret Place

"For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock" Psalm 27:5 (NKJB) (see also 31:20; 32:7).

There is a secret place in the presence of God where we can hide in the time of trouble. As you walk in the presence of God, you can find yourself "hidden" from the world (Col.3:1-4). In this "hiding place" you will discover rest (Exodus 33:14-15; Psalm 91:1-16), peace (2 Thess.3:16) and joy (Psalm 16:11; 21:6).

Secrets of the Heart

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?...Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls" Psalm 2:2,7.

True friendship means sharing the deep things of the heart (Proverbs 18:24; 20:5). As we walk in the Presence of God, the Bible describes two "searchings" of the heart that take place simultaneously:

God searches our heart

"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit..." Romans 8:27 (see also Psalm 139:1,23-24).

The Holy Spirit searches our heart, sifting through our desires and priorities, drawing from us a heart after Himself.

We search the heart of God

"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" 1 Cor.2:10-11 (see also verses 12-16).

Through the Holy Spirit, we have a link to the heart of God. And through the Spirit, we search the "deep things of God". God desires to disclose the depths of His heart, but He will only do this with heart-people - those who come close to Him (1 Cor.4:1). And it is in the depths of our experience that we begin to understand the depths of God's own heart (Phil.3:10). As we search out God's heart, we will touch three things:

* **Wisdom** God's way (Romans 11:33)
* **Purpose** God's Plans (Ephesians 3:8-11)
* **Desires** God's Love (Ephesians 3:16-10)

A Dwelling Place

Walking With God
"And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" Ephesians 2:22.

God has always desired to have us live in His presence without it destroying us (Exodus 33:3,20). In times past, God did this by commanding His people to build special structures that would contain His presence. These included the tabernacles of Moses and David, and the temple of Solomon. But God's desire has always been to indwell people's lives (Acts 7:48-50; Revelation 21:3). As Christians, we have become temples of God's Spirit. Our lives are now the container of His presence.

"...For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people'" 2 Corinthians 6:16.
9. Walking in Blamelessness

"...the Lord appeared to (Abram) and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless" Genesis 17:1.

God has a simple requirement for all who would want to walk with Him: blamelessness.

"Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken" Psalm 15 (read also 24:3-4; Micah 6:8).

Blamelessness is a condition of our heart. Blamelessness is not the same as faultlessness. If a young child wants to help his parents clean up the house, but drops a bowl and breaks it, the child is not faultless, but he is blameless. His heart had the desire to help his parents. In the same way, God is looking at our heart's attitude. Holiness begins in the heart.

Called to be Holy

"Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy"' 1 Peter 1:15-16 (see also Matthew 5:48; Exodus 15:13; Psalm 29:2).

If we are to walk with the Lord on a daily basis, we must be like Him in heart and action (Amos 3:3).

"Make every effort to live in peace with all and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God..." Hebrews 12:14-15.

The grace of God enables us not just to live a holy life, but to be holy as God is holy! (read 2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 4:17-32; Titus 2:11-14).

Three Parts to Holiness

To be launched into a holy life, we must understand three separate parts to holiness:

* Righteousness The gift
* Blamelessness The walk
* Faultlessness The goal

Righteousness is the starting point of the Christian life - it is a gift from God (Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Blamelessness is where we walk in that righteousness - it is the expression of holiness in our daily lives (2 Peter 3:11,14). Faultlessness is the goal of God's work, as He conforms us to the likeness of His Son (Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:6).

"Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression" Psalm 19:12-13.

God continues to work on our "hidden faults", but His major focus is our "willful sins".

Blamelessness is a condition of the heart (Isa.51:6; Psa.51:10; 86:11) - a desire to walk in purity.
before God (see Rom.6:19; 1 Cor.1:4-8; Phil.2:15; 1 Thess.5:23). Holiness, however, is the dynamic outworking of that pure heart in godly behavior. Both come only by God's grace.

"...by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" 2 Timothy 1:8-9 (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Motives and Attitudes

"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom" Song of Songs 2:15.

God is seeking to produce the fruit of His presence in our lives (John 15:5,8; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:8-10). But there are "little foxes" - impure motives and attitudes - which will spoil that fruit. 1 Peter 2:1 lists five of these little foxes:

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

Malice: A desire to inflict injury or suffering on another; vicious purposes or intent.
Deceit: Guile (KJV); baiting and crafty; the setting of traps for people.
Hypocrisy: Pretending to be something you aren't in order to get something for yourself.
Envy: Discontentment at another's success; a coveting of what belongs to others; a desire to be elevated above others.
Slander: Evil speakings (KJV); ill will expressed in backstabbing; speaking down of someone to others.

"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" 2 Timothy 2:22.

In order for us to walk in blamelessness, God must deal with these five little foxes. God did this by crucifying our old self in Christ on the Cross (Romans 6:6-7). As we count ourselves dead to sin and the world and alive to God and His righteousness (Romans 6:11), we are told to offer ourselves to God (Romans 6:13). God then releases His grace in our lives.

"For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace" Romans 6:14 (read also Galatians 5:13-26).

The Way of Holiness

"And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way..." Isaiah 8.

Holiness literally means "to be set apart" (read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). This does not just mean being "separated from the world", but also being "separated unto God for His holy use" (2 Timothy 2:20-21). Holiness is not a condition of "distance from evil things," but rather of "closeness to the heart of God." As we walk before God in blamelessness, His grace is released in our lives to produce the same kind of holiness that God Himself has (Ephesians 4:22-24). "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" Jude 24.
10. Walking as an Overcomer

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" Ephesians 2:6 (see also 1:19-22).

As Christians, we have a position of victory. This victory is not something we earn, or even grow into. It is our inheritance, simply because we have aligned our lives with the source of victory: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ cannot be defeated

"They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings..." Revelation 17:14 (see also John 16:33; Colossians 2:5; Romans 8:31; 16:20).

We are in Christ

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ..." 2 Corinthians 2:14 (see also 2 Samuel 22:29-36).

These two facts establish us in a position from which we can operate as overcomers in life.

"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" 1 John 4:4.

Victory of the Cross

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" Col.2:15.

When Jesus died on the Cross, He declared: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). The victory of the Cross on our behalf was absolute. It is this victory, not our own, which is the starting point of our lives as overcomers. We are not working toward victory, but from victory! (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 1:23-24).

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne" Revelation 3:21.

The Bible says that when Jesus ascended, He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Heb.1:3; Acts 2:34; Rom.8:34). The Bible says that we too were raised in Christ (Eph.2:6). We are now seated in Christ at the right hand of God.

In Scripture, God's right hand represents His power and salvation (Psalm 20:6; 44:3; 60:5; 98:1; 118:15-16). We are now seated at God's right hand. This means that we no longer have to struggle with our problems on our own. We must now learn to handle our problems and difficulties from the perspective of God's Throne.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" Colossians 3:1 (read verses 2-4).
Two Vital Ingredients

"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" Heb.6:12.

The secret to being an overcomer lies in two words: faith and perseverance. They are not opposites, but are in fact complimentary. Only when both faith and perseverance are at work in our lives will we experience the full victory God has for us.

"Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring" 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

Faith

"...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4.

Many people think that they only have victory when their difficulty is over - that when their problem is solved, only then they are overcomers. But John tells us that our faith itself is the victory! That means our victory is operating...

* In the midst of trouble (John 16:33).
* In the midst of trials (1 Peter 1:6-7).
* In the midst of persecution (2 Cor.12:9-10; 2 Thess.1:4).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" Romans 8:35-37 (see also Acts 16:16-34)

Perseverance

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete..." James 1:2-4.

Perseverance in the midst of difficulty is the other side of the coin. All the great heroes of faith displayed great perseverance. Theirs was an enduring faith (see Rom.4:18-21; Heb.11). This endurance does a three-part work in our lives:

* Perseverance strengthens character (Romans 5:1-4; Psalm 105:16-19; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 3:5).
* Perseverance brings maturity (James 1:2-8).
* Perseverance produces glory (James 1:12; 5:7-11; Hebrews 10:35-36).

Victory Outworked

"I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me - I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me, [that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency]" Philippians 4:13 (Amp).

No matter how great the problem we face, God's victory is even greater (2 Cor.12:9-10; Luke 1:37; Jeremiah 32:17,27). Even when we experience failure in our life, God is greater than our failure. When we accept responsibility for our failure and repent before God, the Lord defends
our cause (Rom.8:31-34; 1 John 3:19-20). Even our worst failure does not ultimately hinder God's plan (Hebrews 6:16-19; Philippians 1:6; 2:13).

* God works in all things for our good (Rom.8:28-29).
* God reveals His glory in our weakness (2 Cor.12:7-10)
* God uses our failure to minister to others (2 Cor.1:3-4).

Through Christ we are "more than conquerors" because even seeming defeat can be turned around by God into victory!

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" Romans 8:37 (see also Revelation 12:11; 1 John 5:4).
11. Walking in the Ways of God

"...what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" Deuteronomy 10:12.

To walk with God means to walk in His ways - to walk as God would walk. The ways of God are beyond the ways of man (Isaiah 55:8; Romans 11:33). But God has given us His Holy Spirit to reveal His ways to us (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). God wants to teach us not just His acts, but His ways (Psalm 103:7).

"Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths..."' Isaiah 2:3 (see also Psalm 25:4).

Two Ways of Living

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" Matthew 7:13-14.

The Broad Way

"Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways" Proverbs 2:12-15 (see also 3:31; 14:12; Isaiah 59:8).

From the time of the original temptation, mankind has chosen a way separate from God. This is a broad way because, in all its different forms of philosophy and religion, it is the one that much of mankind chooses. It is an easy route, because it caters to self-interest in all its many forms.

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" Isaiah 55:7 (see also 53:6; Luke 1:78-79).

The Narrow Way

"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" Deuteronomy 32:4 (see also Psalm 18:30; 77:13; 145:17).

Jesus called the other way a narrow way because it is the way the Lord walks. In order for us to walk in the ways of the Lord, He must be the total focus of our lives (Hebrews 12:2). By focusing on Jesus, we avoid the distractions of the world which will cause us to wander off the path of God's righteousness.

"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" Psalm 86:11.
Running in God's Paths

"I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free" Psalm 119:32.

Christian growth is pictured as a race (1 Corinthians 9:24). The prize is the full likeness of Christ. In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus told a parable about two sons. This parable shows the two snares that can disqualify a Christian from the race.

The Snare of Sin

The younger son left his father, fell into sin, but later returned to his father. This is a picture of a person repenting and turning back to the Lord.

"...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" Hebrews 12:1.

The Snare of the Law

The older brother never left his father, but he was never with his father. He was always trying to get his father's approval by working in the fields like one of the servants. This is a picture of many Christians who have fallen into the trap of the Law.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" Gal.5:1.

A few verses later, Paul asked the Galatian Christians

"You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?" Galatians 5:7.

Both these snares will stop a Christian from "running the race" that God has planned for his life. If Satan cannot ensnare a Christian in deliberate sin, he will try to ensnare him in the law. A person who has fallen into law needs to repent just as much as a person who has fallen into sin. Only when our feet have been loosed from everything that hinders are we truly free to run in the path of God's commands. We suspect in others what we have in ourselves.

"You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn" Psalm 18:36 (see also 23:3; Isaiah 26:7; Hebrews 12:13).

Standing at the Crossroads

"This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...'"

Jeremiah 6:16.

Time and again, Israel wandered off the ancient paths of God by following after other gods (Jeremiah 18:15). But when Jesus came into the world, He said:

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" Matthew 11:29.

The people of Israel had been told to "ask where the good way is." Jesus declared Himself to be the answer to that question. Jesus told them that He was the Way they had been asking for.
"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" John 14:6 (read verses 4-5).

The Footsteps of Jesus

"My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside" Job 23:11.

God has simplified the Christian life so that even a child can believe and obey. God's ways are beyond our comprehension, but we don't need to try to fathom them with our mind. We learn the ways of God by following Jesus, the Way. As we follow Him, the path we take leads us in one clear direction - the full likeness of the Lord Jesus Himself.

"The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" Proverbs 4:18.
12. Walking as a Family

God designed marriage and the family (natural marriage and family as well as spiritual family, the church) to work. Family life is a picture of the quality of relationship God desires with each of us (2Co 6:18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. Gal 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!").

Beginning in the Garden of Eden, God established a family, then gave them a mission “be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue the earth, and rule over it.” The purpose of God seen throughout the Bible can be expressed in the phrase “A Family on a Mission.” This theme of family on a mission runs throughout the Bible. The Bible ends with the culmination of God’s great family purpose at the great family event, the Marriage supper of the Lamb.

Rev 19:6-8 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. (7) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." (8) It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Marriage and Family have implications for both natural family and God’s Spiritual family, the church.

Eph 5:31-32 NASB FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. (32) This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Luk 18:29-31 NASB And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, (30) who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life." (He is speaking of the church)

God created the family to be the place where people would grow to understand God as their loving Father. He desires "godly offspring" - children who will be like Him (Mal.2:15).

The Model of Family Life – The Trinity

"...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us..." John 17:21.

The biblical model of family life is exactly the same as the model of church life (Phil.2:1-8; Col.3:12-16; 1 Pet. 3:8-9). It is based on the depth of love found in God Himself. The selfless unity of the triune God is given as a picture of the quality of relationship that God has planned within family life. The life of the family flows from God the Father (Ephesians 3:14-15).
When Adam sinned, however, God's plan for marriage was marred. Instead of family life being an expression of selfless love, family life became an expression of self-centeredness.

**The Cycle of Selfishness**

After their fall, God told Adam and Eve the consequences of their sin. For Eve it would be:

"...your husband...will rule over you" Genesis 3:16.

Through the fall of Adam, mankind brought upon itself a vicious circle. Love was replaced by self-centeredness.

* The husband "rules" his wife in a spirit of tyranny
* The wife responds with a spirit of independence
* The children react with rebellion

This cycle of selfishness feeds on itself. The more the wife reacts with independence and the children with rebellion, the more the husband responds with tyranny. This cycle of self-destruction is part of the curse of sin (read Genesis 3:16-19). The end result of this selfish lifestyle is every kind of family problem and broken relationship (2 Timothy 3:2-5).

The wonderful good news of the Gospel, however, is that this curse upon the family has been broken at the Cross!

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’" Galatians 3:13 (see also verse 10; Proverbs 3:33).

**The Cycle of Love**

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" Ephesians 5:22,25; 6:1 (read also 5:22-6:4; Col.3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:7).

The foundation of family life is love. This love is expressed in different ways by different members of the family.

* The husband's expression of love is laying down his life.
* The wife's expression of love is submitting.
* The children's expression of love is obeying.

The cycle of selfishness is based upon my demands and my needs. The cycle of love, however, is based upon selfless giving to others in the family. When a family is expressing God's kind of love, everyone's needs will be met.

**God's Kind of Love**

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" 1 John 3:16.

For family life to work, it needs the life of God Himself flowing into it. Love - God's kind of love - is the all-important key to a family's success. If Jesus commanded His disciples to love each other with the same kind of love He Himself had (John 13: 3 4; 15:13), how much more does this apply to families!
"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another...if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" 1 John 4:11-12.

If we want to understand the nature of God's love, then 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 lists the characteristics for us:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails..." (see also 1 John 3:1; 4:7-16).

**Grace in the Family**

Grace is not just something God extends toward us (Eph.1:7). We can also extend grace to one another (Eph.4:32). God's love does not wait for a person to be deserving (Rom.5:8-9). Like our heavenly Father, we too can extend grace to others in our family (Col.4:6) - even when they don't deserve it!

**Guarding the Garden**

Adam and Eve were responsible for tending and guarding the garden of Eden (Gen.2:15), where God would meet with them in the cool of the day (Gen.3:8). The family is like that garden. In the midst of that garden there were two trees (Gen.2:9).

**Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**

The knowledge of rights and wrongs can be the most destructive force in family life. This knowledge is behind every argument - "I'm right! You're wrong!" The fruit of this tree is self-justification, unforgiveness and broken relationships.

**Tree of Life**

This tree represents God's own life. Apart from the knowledge of good and evil, this tree includes two more vital ingredients - the love and wisdom to know how to use that knowledge (Prov.3:13,18; 15:4). The fruit of the Tree of Life is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22). The responsibility of parents is to guard the garden and make sure that the family eats of the Tree of Life - God's presence - every day (Psa.34:8). As God's life flows through each member, family life works as God intends.
13. Walking in Guidance

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" Psalm 32:8 (see 25:4-5; 48:14).

Part of our daily walk with God involves His guidance (Psalm 73:23-24). God desires to guide us (Isaiah 42:16; 58:11). His guidance is a proof that we are growing in maturity as His sons.

"... because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" Romans 8:14 (see also John 16:13; Galatians 5:18; Psalm 143:10).

The Voice of the Shepherd

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" John 10:27 (see also verses 14-16).

Jesus is called the "good shepherd." An important characteristic of sheep is that they follow the shepherd (read Psa.23:1-4). A shepherd guides his sheep with his voice, but his guidance is expressed in two other ways:
* The staff - submitting to the shepherd's authority (John 15:10; Job 22:21).
* The rod - submitting to the shepherd's discipline (Hebrews 12:7-11; Proverbs 13:11-12).

"He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young" Isaiah 40:11.

Discovering God's Will

"For this reason...we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" Colossians 1:9 (see Philippians 1:9-10).

God wants you to do His will. For this reason, it is His plan for every believer to know His will on two levels:

The general will of God – Seen in the Bible, God’s Unchanging Word

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality" 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (read verses 1-12).

God's word, the Bible, reveals the general will of God for every believer (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19). We do not need to ask God whether He wants us to avoid sexual immorality. The will of God in these and other matters has been clearly spelled out in Scripture. God's will is revealed through two expressions:
* Commands (John 14:15,21,23-24).
* Promises (2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Peter 1:3-4).

The specific will of God

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" Isaiah 30:21.
There are times when we need to know God's will for a specific situation. At these times God has promised to guide us. There are ways specific attitudes in approaching God that we must embrace if we are going to discover His specific will in any area.

- You must desire God's will (Psalm 25:4-5).
- You must let go of your own reasoning (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- You must trust God (Psalm 37:3-5).

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does" James 1:5-8.

Methods of Guidance

There are many ways God can bring guidance into our lives:

- Through His word (Psalm 119:105).
- Through other Christians (Eph.5:19; Col.3:16).
- Through prophetic gifts (1 Thess.5:19-20; 1 Tim.1:18; 4:14; 1 Corinthians 14:31).
- Through dreams (Matthew 1:20; Acts 2:17).
- Through an audible voice (Acts 9:10-17; 1 Sam.3:1-18).
- Through an inner conviction, as the Holy Spirit "testifies" with our spirit (Romans 8:16, Phil.1:23-25; 2 Tim.1:12).

Although God speaks in many ways, He always confirms His guidance through "the testimony of two or three witnesses" (2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.). That means that if God is speaking to you, he will confirm it. The more important the guidance, the more confirmations God will give.

The inner conviction that we have by the Holy Spirit is a very important issue. There is a peace that comes, even in the midst of a challenging direction, from the “Prince of Peace,” Jesus. It is an inner peace that God gives to our spirit.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..." Colossians 3:15.

The word "rule" literally means to be the referee, or an umpire. A referee is one who judges whether something is true or not. In baseball when someone is stealing a base the umpire judges whether he is out or safe. When we are seeking God for guidance, His peace will confirm that the words we are receiving are indeed from Him. There will be an innate sense, through peace, whether something is or is not God’s will.

Hearing God's Voice

"Be still, and know that I am God..." Psalm 46:10.

Inner stillness or quietness is an important ingredient in hearing God's voice (Isaiah 30:15..."In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength."). This is because life can be
very "noisy" - our problems shout at us and the distractions of the world can drown out the still, quiet voice of God (read 1 Kings 19:11-13). We need to find special times where we can "quiet our soul" (Psalm 131:2) and spend unhurried time with God in worship and in His word. Out of these quiet times, the "gentle whisper" of God's voice will speak to our spirits.

The Mind of Christ

"...But we have the mind of Christ" 1 Corinthians 2:16.

We have the mind of Christ when we are one in heart and mind with Christ. The Holy Spirit doesn't just reveal the mind of Christ to us. He conforms us to Christ's thinking (Rom.12:2).

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." John 15:7 (see also Romans 10:8).

As we spend quality time with Jesus and receive His word planted in our hearts (James 1:21-22), we learn the will of God. The purpose of God centers in Christ (Ephesians 1:9) and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him (Colossians 2:2-3). Therefore our relationship with Jesus is the foundation upon which God brings His guidance.
14. Walking in Grace

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Grace is God's "indescribable gift" to the believer (2 Cor.9:14-15). As Christians, we are:

* Saved by grace (Ephesians 2:1-9; 1:4-8).
* Standing in grace (Romans 5:1-2; Acts 13:43).
* Strengthened in grace (2 Tim.2:1; 2 Cor.12:9; Heb.13:9).
* Taught by grace (Titus 2:11-12).
* Energized by grace (1 Corinthians 15:10; Acts 4:33; 6:8).
* Growing in grace (2 Peter 3:18).

The Danger of Self-Effort

"You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" Gal.5:4 (see Heb.12:15).

The Bible says it is possible for a Christian to "fall away from grace". This can mean a falling away from real Salvation but it can also mean that he has separated himself from the effect of God's grace in his life. Paul says that those "who are trying to be justified by law...have fallen from grace."

"What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law" Galatians 3:19, 24-25 (read also v.20-23).

The Law of Moses was given to reveal sin. Its purpose was to act like a mirror. When we look into a mirror and see that our face is dirty, we do not pick up the mirror and rub our face with it to try to get clean. Its purpose is simply to show us that we need cleaning, but we go to another source - the water - to be made clean. In the same way, the Law was added for a short period of time to show mankind their need of salvation, and to point to the One who would make us clean (Rev.1:5; Titus 3:5).

"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin" Romans 3:20.

The covenant of the Law that God gave to Moses has nothing to do with us (read Galatians 3:15-17). It was simply added to preserve Israel until the coming of the Messiah. We are part of the covenant that God made with Abraham and with Christ (Galatians 3:7,29; Romans 4:1-5,16,22-24). If we get caught up again in self-effort and legalism, we are walking in the wrong covenant! (read 2 Corinthians 3:6-18).

"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" Galatians 2:21.

The Curse of the Law

All who try to live by the Law through self-effort are under an automatic curse (Galatians 3:10-14; James 2:10), for under the light of the Law two things are revealed:
God's righteous standard and judgment (Matt.5:21-48).

Our inability to reach that standard (Rom.3:23; 7:14-25).

God knew that we could never keep His standard of righteousness, so He sent Jesus to take that curse upon Himself and set us free from the Law's demand of judgment.

"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us." Romans 8:3-4 (see also Philippians 3:3).

Christians Under Law

"You foolish Galatians!...After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" Galatians 3:1-3 (read also 1:6-7).

We are born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:3,6). But many Christians then try to live the rest of their lives under law. In other words, they try to live up to God's standard by self-effort. But it doesn't work! When a Christian lives in legalism, his life becomes characterized by constant struggle (Romans 7:1-25), self-condemnation (James 2:10), a lack of joy (Galatians 4:15), alienation from God (Galatians 5:4) and condemnation toward others (Romans 2:1-3). So terrible is this life under law that God actually took the law and crucified it to the Cross!

"...having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross" Colossians 2:14.

The Christian life was designed to work by God's grace. It is the Holy Spirit who causes us to grow and become more like Christ (2 Cor.3:17-18). The Bible says we are now dead to the Law (Galatians 2:19) and living under grace (Romans 6:14).

"But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" Romans 7:6 (read also verse 1-5).

The New Way of the Spirit

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature"

Galatians 5:16 (see also Philippians 3:8-9; Romans 8:1-2; Hebrews 10:29).

The Holy Spirit has been given to empower you to keep God's holy standard. He writes God's law, not on tablets of stone for us to try to keep, but on our hearts.

"You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" 2 Cor.3:3 (see Heb.10:16).

The "new way of the Spirit" is a life of inner empowerment, not of outward law. Our own disciplined attempt to keep away sin, apart from the empowerment and leadership of the Spirit results in futility The only way we can truly overcome the “flesh” is by the Spirit. . Romans 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body (flesh), you will live.
If we walk sensitive to the Spirit’s leading we will get warning signals about behavior and attitudes that will take us down a wrong path. Everyone has unique areas of vulnerability. Only the Holy Spirit, as He lives inside of us, will deal with each in a unique way that we need.

Walking by love (loving God and others) really meets all the requirements of the Law. God's grace releases the law of love in our hearts (Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:8-10; John 13:34-35). This inner love fulfils everything required by the written code. But like everything else with God's grace, this love comes from God not from us.

2 Corinthians 9:8 "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (see also Heb.4:16; 1 Peter 5:10; James 4:6).
15. Walking in Humility

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" Colossians 3:12 (see also 1 Peter 3:8; 5:5). Humility is one of the products of the Christian life (James 3:13). We are not just solitary Christians. God has placed us in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12,27). For the Body of Christ to function as God intended, each member of the Body needs to express humility (1Cor.12:14-26; Rom.12:3-5).

The Humility of the Cross

"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" Philippians 2:8.

In the days of the early Church, to believe in the Cross meant embracing great humility (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24). The Cross was a symbol of great shame (Galatians 3:13; 5:11; Hebrews 12:2). But God has chosen this horrible death as a means to deal with mankind's greatest problem: self.

"For you know that...you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers" 1 Peter 1:18.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they chose the way of self (Genesis 3:5-6). Ever since, self has been the root of every sin. When Jesus died on the Cross, God dealt with two things:

Sins

"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" 1 John 2:2 (see 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

The Cross dealt with our sins so that we could receive the forgiveness of God (Col.2:13-14) and eternal life (1 John 5:11). But that was not the end of the work of the Cross. There was one more thing that had to be dealt with once and for all.

Self

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him..." Rom.6:6.

Many Christians receive God's forgiveness, but then bring an unresolved self over into the Christian life. This is what causes all the dissensions, competition and problems in the Church (1 Cor.3:1-3; James 3:14-16; 4:1-4). But once we realise that we have been crucified with Christ (Gal.2:20; 6:14) - that our self was dealt with once and for all on the Cross (Rom.6:10-11) - the grace of God is released in our lives to bring true humility.

"And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" 2 Corinthians 5:15 (read also verses 14-17).

Understanding Humility

"Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar" Psalm 138:6 (see Isaiah 57:15; Proverbs 16:5).
The pride of self-effort and self-righteousness is fiercely opposed by God (Proverbs 8:13). In fact, pride is sin (Proverbs 21:4). We need to understand the nature of pride before we can understand the nature of humility (read 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

**False humility**

"Do not let anyone who delights in false humility...disqualify you for the prize..." *Colossians 2:18* (see also verse 23).

False humility is an outward humility only (Matthew 6:16). This false humility is designed for other people to see. Its focus is self. It is just a subtle form of pride.

**True humility**

"Humble yourselves before the Lord..." *James 4:10.*

True humility is a recognition that I can't do it by myself. I need the grace of God and I need other Christians. The focus of true humility is God, not self. True humility has no hint of self-effort, but admits a total dependence on God. It is the one condition that God requires for grace to continue in our lives.

"...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" *James 4:6* (read also Psalm 25:9).

**Walking Relationally in the Local Church Challenges False Humility**

God’s joins people into His family. There are many reasons for this but a pronounced one is that walking together as a family will challenge false humility.

1 Peter 5:5 MKJV  Likewise, younger ones, be subject to older ones, and all being subject to one another. Put on humility. For God resists proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble.

Ephesians 5:4-54  For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Romans 12:4-5  For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (CEV A body is made up of many parts, and each of them has its own use. (5) That's how it is with us. There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another.)

God requires us to submit our lives to one another which works against self centered pride and false humility. When God’s people walk alone (independently) they develop an “only child syndrome.” In this state messages about the Fatherhood of God and His special love for them will reinforce pride and self centeredness. This is the opposite of humility.

Ephesians 5:21  and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Hebrews 13:17  Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would
be unprofitable for you.

This is why God calls us to walk in fellowship, transparency, and confessing our sins to one another. Confessing them to God requires little humility but when we have to confess them to one another it will work against pride that wants to look good in the eyes of men.

_ James 5:16 _ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much._

_ 1 John 1:7-9 _ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness._

God often sends truth through others because it challenges our pride. If it is just “me and Jesus” the subtle deception of self centered pride can be there and will be undetected.

_ Ephesians 4:15-16 _ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love._

Paul rebuked the great Peter in front of others which required Peter to humble himself.

_ Galatians 2:11-14 _ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (12) For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the …(14) But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all…

God rebuked David’s sin through Nathan even though David was known for his interaction with God.

_ 2 Samuel 12:7-13 _ Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!...(13) Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die._

Receiving truth through others requires us to admit we were wrong which takes true humility.

**Learning from Jesus**

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" Matthew 11:29.

Jesus is the great example of humility. If we want to express the kind of humility that pleases God, we must learn from Jesus (Phil.2:5-8). Jesus showed that true humility is not just speaking humble words. It is acting in humility by serving others - taking up our cross on behalf of others
Walking With God

(Luke 9:23; Eph.5:1-2). It is not speaking "humbly" about oneself, but it is esteeming others (Phil.2:3). It is not long prayers about our unworthiness. It is a continuing sense of awe at the goodness of God to us.

The Fear of God

"The Lord...will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure" Isaiah 33:5-6 (see Psalm 128:1; 147:10-11; Prov.22:4).

The fear of the Lord is called "the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). It is also the starting place for humility. This is not a fear that causes us to hide from God, but an awe of His power and holiness which causes us to see our lives in the right perspective (Hebrews 12:28-29). A fear of God produces a genuine humility that actually draws us closer to Him (James 4:6-8; 1 Peter 3:8; Colossians 3:10).

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" 1 Corinthians 7:1 (see also Acts 9:31).

The fear of the Lord is the key to walking in holiness. The fear of the Lord involves five important things:

* A knowledge of God (Proverbs 9:10; 1 Peter 1:15-17).
* A hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13; 16:6).
* A desire not to grieve God (Ephesians 4:30).
* A gratitude for grace (Psalm 130:3-4; Philippians 2:12).
* A turning to God (Hosea 12:6; Psalm 25:12-14).

Jesus had a "Spirit ...of the fear of the Lord" upon Him (Isaiah 11:2-5,9). Through the same Spirit, we walk in the same humility before the Lord.

"...This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" Isaiah 66:2 (see also Jeremiah 5:22).
16. Walking in Forgiveness

"As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man" Proverbs 27:19.

It can be said that God is a “heart God.” External religion isn’t what God is after. Our inward (heart) and outward need to mesh. The condition of our heart is the key to our life in Christ (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 6:21). God searches our hearts, revealing areas that will block our relationship with Him (1 Samuel 16:7; Romans 8:27).

Three Gifts of Forgiveness

"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more" Isaiah 43:25 (see also Psalm 103:1-3; Micah 7:19).

Biblical forgiveness works in three areas.
- God forgiving us (1 John 1:9; Luke 7:47).
- Getting over our past failures (Phil.3:13-14).
- The forgiveness we give to others (Luke 17:3-4).

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" Colossians 3:13 (see also Ephesians 4:32).

These three areas of forgiveness are important in our lives. We must understand God's gift of forgiveness to us, through the shed blood of Jesus (Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2). But we must also learn to get over our past failures - which simply means receiving and agreeing with God's gift of forgiveness. Now we are obliged to forgive others. If we refuse to forgive others, then unforgiveness will block the daily expression of God's forgiveness in our lives.

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" Matthew 6:14-15 (read also 18:21-35).

Stages of Unforgiveness

* Initial hurt - someone says or does something that wounds our hearts (Psalm 109:22).
* Resentment - if we don't deal with it straight away, we begin to harbor resentment. Our hearts dwell on the hurt. We are filled with self-pity and a continuing anger against the person who hurt us (Colossians 3:8-10,12-14).
* Retaliation - we get back at that person, usually either by not speaking to them, or by slandering them to others (Romans 12:17-20).
* Bitterness - this is where we allow unforgiveness to defile our hearts (Hebrews 12:15; Ephesians 4:29-32).

Living One Day at a Time

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" Matthew 6:34.

Many Christians are either a prisoner of the future (through worry) or a prisoner of the past (through guilt and unforgiveness). God wants to set us free so that we can live each day with Him - a day at a time.
"In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" Ephesians 4:26-27.

One simple principle in forgiveness is not to allow feelings of hurt and unforgiveness to enter a second day. Each evening we can get things right with God and with others. One other provision God has made is the communion table. Whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper together, we are instructed to make sure we are not holding anything against a brother or sister (1 Corinthians 11:27-31).

A Continuing Debt

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another..." Romans 13:8.

When Jesus died for you, he took the judgment you deserved. Because He so loved us, out of gratitude and obligation we owe a debt to love others the way He loved us. 1 John 4:11  Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. We now express our love to God by loving others. We cannot be close to God while harboring hatred and unforgiveness.

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" 1 John 4:20.

When we forgive others, we acknowledge several things:
* Our trust in God's justice (2 Thessalonians 1:3-7).
* Our faith in God's plan for us (Romans 8:28).
* Our readiness to suffer abuse (Matt.5:11-12).
* Our enemy is not people (Ephesians 6:12).
* Our secure position in Christ (Col.1:1-4).

If I forgive, will the hurt I feel go away? Probably not immediately. But forgiveness has nothing to do with feelings. Forgiveness is a decision. Forgetting is a process. Another way to say it is that if we remember we remember with forgiveness. If we decide not to forgive, the hurt is like an open, festering wound, which is very difficult to heal. When we make the decision to forgive, the hurt is cleaned up, and the healing process is then quick.

Healing the Heart

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" Psa.147:3.

God is able to heal every heart. In fact, this is part of the Gospel message (Isaiah 61:1). But more than that, God wants to use us to minister that healing to others. Only when we have experienced both the personal forgiveness of God and the grace to forgive others can we be used to minister healing to others.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
17. Walking in Joy

"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" Psalm 16:11 (see also118:24).

Joy is part of the inheritance of the Christian, the evidence of the work of God's Spirit in his life. Nehemiah said that "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). This joy is part of the abundant life that Jesus came to give us.

Abundant Life

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" John 10:10.

Jesus came to give us a new life that was both eternal (in duration) and abundant (in experience and expression). Satan, however, is a thief of that abundant life. He tries to steal our joy through three snares: legalism (Gal.4:15; 5:1), license (Gal.6:7-8), or deception (2 Corin 11:3). But true joy comes from the righteous freedom we have in God's Spirit.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" Romans 15:13.

Joy and Sorrow

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" Proverbs 17:22.

Joy has a healing effect. Laughter, gladness, and thankfulness have been linked to physical and emotional health by researchers, psychologist, and doctors. This does not mean, however, that we are to try and cheer people who are grieving. Romans 12:15 tells us to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (see also 1 Cor.12:26). Although joy is the hallmark of the Christian life, grieving also plays a part.

"There is a time for everything ...a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" Ecclesiastes 3:1,4.

Christian joy is not a surface joy. It is not a mask that we put on for others. It is not just a shallow emotion. It is something deeper that comes from God's Spirit. But this joy often has a backdrop of repentance and weeping (James 4:8). Even the apostle Paul said that he was "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor.6:10). God's desire is to turn our sorrow into rejoicing.

"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him" Psa.126,5-6 (read whole Psalm; see also 30:5).

Rejoicing Plays an Important part in Joy

Many mistakenly think that rejoicing and joy are involuntary reactions to positive circumstances. Habakkuk tells Judah (the people of God) to rejoice even when things aren’t going well.
Habakkuk 3:15-19 ... 17 Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord GOD is my strength,

The word exult/boast means “to shine, praise, be boastful, to brag, praise highly, be proud of.” The word rejoice means to “be glad, to rejoice in exceedingly.” Our biggest problem is that we tend to exult/boast in the negative circumstances rather than boasting in the Lord. Rejoicing and boasting is a deliberate act of our will.

Paul uses the word “rejoice” sixteen times in the book of Philippians. It wasn’t an involuntary reaction to positive circumstances. Paul was in jail but in that condition he knew to rejoice in the Lord would keep the river of joy flowing in his life.

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.
Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (see also Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:16).

When we boast and rejoice in God, not our circumstances, joy has a way of bubbling up in our lives. The Christian has every reason to rejoice. We rejoice because God is on the Throne (1 Chron.16:31), because we have peace with God (Rom.5:1-2,11), because we have a share in Christ's inheritance (Col.1:11-12), because our names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20), because we have been released from Satan's bondage (Acts 8:5-8) and because we have received such a great salvation (Psalm 13:5; 105:43; Isa.51:3,11; 55:12). But most of all, we rejoice not just for what God has done, but in God Himself (Luke 1:47; Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Joy is a Fruit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is...joy..." Gal. 5:22.

Joy is one of the fruit of the Spirit. This means it is not something that you try to manufacture, but something that comes out of the life of the Spirit. As long as we are walking in the Spirit, one of the effects in our lives will be joy.

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" Romans 14:17.

The Oil of Joy

"You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy" Hebrews 1:9.

Joy was part of the anointing on Jesus, and is also the anointing that God pours on the believer.

"...to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair..." Isaiah 61:3 (see also Psalm 104:15).
The Secret to Joy

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" John 15:11.

The verse before tells us what Jesus told His disciples in order that they may experience true joy: "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love..." Obedience is the key to joy! Joy is the experience of every person when they first obey God by receiving Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:6). But many Christians wonder where that first joy goes. In fact, it didn't go anywhere. What is needed is a continuing walk of obedience. You can't live off the joy of old obedience; it is a daily walk with the Lord and a daily experience of joy.

"...I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them" John 17:13.

God has joy (Zephaniah 3:17). Jesus said that when we obey His commands - not out of duty, but because we love Him - then not only will our joy be complete, but His joy will also fill us. We get double joy - our joy in obeying the Lord and His joy on top of that!

Unconquerable Joy

"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven" Luke 6:22-23 (see also James 1:2).

Because our joy comes from the Holy Spirit and not from the circumstances, Christians have a joy which is unconquerable.

"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" 1 Peter 1:8 (see also Jude 24).
18. Walking in Persecution, Tribulation, and Suffering

When Jesus prepared His disciples for their mission in the earth He was very up front about the difficulties they would face. He didn’t want them to be surprised or shaken by the trouble they would inevitably face.

Luke 10:2-3  And He was saying to them...therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.  (3)  "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Luke 21:12-17  "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.  (13)  "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.  (14)  "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;  (15)  for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.  (16)  "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,  (17)  and you will be hated by all because of My name.

John 16:33  "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

These types of thoughts are not very popular in our culture that has an aversion to difficulty and suffering. As a matter of fact many Christians and leaders proclaim lines of thinking that lead the church to believe that suffering, difficulty, persecution, and tribulation is somehow connected to a lack of faith. In contrast to this the word says that faith often leads us to those types of things and the heroes of Hebrews 11 were commended because of their faith in enduring difficulty. Jesus actually indicated that persecution is a blessed state.

Matthew 5:10-12  "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (see also Mark 10:29-30).

Persecution and tribulation is part of the heritage of the believer (2 Timothy 3:12; 1:8; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thess.3:2-4). Down through the ages, in every generation, Christians have experienced persecution and tribulation (Hebrews 11:35-38). This is because of the opposition between God and the system of this world. The Cross of Christ is an offense to many people (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). This is why Christians are persecuted (Galatians 5:11; 6:12).

1 Peter 4:15  "If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (see also 2:19-20; Acts 5:41; John 15:20).
The early Church experienced much persecution (Acts 14:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5), but it only served to spread the word of the Gospel (Acts 8:1-8; 11:19-21; Philippians 1:12-14).

"Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions" Hebrews 10:33-34 (see also verse 35; 1 Corinthians 4:11-13).

Rewards Promised for Persecution

Scriptures speaks of great rewards in enduring persecution and trouble for His name sake.

* A crown of life (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:8
* A better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35).
* The strength of God (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
* The comfort of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:5-9).
* Great reward in heaven (Matthew 5:10-12).
* Judgment against our persecutors (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7; Romans 12:19).

Persecution Enables us to Participate in the Fellowship of His Sufferings

Philippians 3:10 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (see also 1 Peter 4:12-14; Romans 8:17).

People are not just persecuting us but actually persecuting Jesus (Acts 22:4-8; Matt.24:9; John 15:20). We must always realize that for those who are perishing there is something inside of them that hates Jesus. He is light and people are in darkness. Just like a flashlight shined in the eyes of someone in darkness causes an adversion Jesus said His light testifies of people’s darkness. This is the source of hatred and persecution. John 7:6-7 So Jesus *said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. (7) "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

Jesus said When we are persecuted for the name of Jesus, we participate in the sufferings of Jesus Himself (2 Cor.1:5). Paul knew what it was to enter into the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor.11:23-28) and he called these sufferings the "marks" or "branding" of Jesus (Gal.6:17). The experience of suffering for Jesus' sake produces endurance (Rom.5:3; 2 Cor.1:6), obedience (Heb.5:8-9), joy (1 Peter 4:13; James 1:2), fellowship (1 Cor.12:26), power (2 Cor.4:7-9; Rom. 8:11), victory over sin (1 Peter 4:1), and ultimately glory (Rom.8:17-18).

There is Victory in Persecution

There is two types of victory we have in persecution.

1. Delivered from persecution

"Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a
deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us" 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 (see also 2 Timothy 3:10-11; 4:16-18).

God is more than able to deliver His children from trouble. But even when He doesn't, there is another kind of victory at work.

2. Victory within persecution

"...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4.

We need never fear persecution, because the One living in us is greater than any persecution the world can bring.

"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" 1 John 4:4.

Dead to the World

"...the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world" John 17:14 (see also verse 15; 1 John 3:13).

The world persecutes us because we do not belong to the world. It is because we are already dead to the world that we can stand up under persecution.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" Galatians 6:14.

Being a Witness

"But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.' But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" 1 Peter 3:14-15.

Persecution is not just a matter between us and God. The world is watching to see how we will respond. If we curse back, we are no different from anyone who faces suffering. Instead, Jesus tells us: "Bless those who persecute you" (Romans 12:14; Matthew 5:44-48; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9). When we bless those who persecute us, God can use our witness to bring even our persecutors to salvation (read Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-3; 9:1-20). We are able to bless our persecutors because we recognize that they are not our real enemy. Behind every persecution of Jesus is Satan himself (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-10). Indeed, even in persecution we are "more than conquerors."

Romans 8:35,37 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (read also verses 31-39).
19. Walking in Balance

_Ephesians 4:13-14_"...until we all...become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming".

God's plan is for each believer to grow into a balanced, mature son/daughter of God (see Romans 8:14,28-30). But maturity needs a standard. We are not called to "measure ourselves by ourselves" (2 Corinthians 10:12). No, the measure of our growth is "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

"...And I pray that you...may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" _Ephesians 3:17,19_ (see also Colossians 2:9-10).

The Nature of God

_Exodus 34:6-7_"And [God] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.'"

God is not only perfect in His nature and character, He is also perfectly balanced. He is a holy God (1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 6:1-3), yet also a God of love (Psalm 145:17; 1 John 4:8). He is a God of patience (Romans 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Peter 3:9), yet is also a God of justice (Isaiah 5:16) and a God of faithfulness (1 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 10:23). He is a God who demonstrates His righteous anger (Psalm 7:11), yet is also a God full of mercy and compassion (Isaiah 55:7; Lamentations 3:22-23). God's nature remains unchangeable (Malachi 3:6) but every part of it is in perfect balance with every other part.

_Psalm 89:14_ "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you" (see also 85:10-11; Jeremiah 9:23-24).

The nature of God is the measuring line of our maturity. We are told to be:

* Loving like God (1 John 4:11-12; 2 Thess.3:5).
* Holy like God (1 Peter 1:15-16).
* Faithful like God (Psalm 18:25).
* Patient like God (Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12).
* Forgiving like God (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).
* Balanced like God (Matthew 5:48).

The Bible uses the word "godliness" to describe being balanced like God. Godliness means being like God in thought, word and behavior. It means showing His love as well as His holiness, His justice as well as His mercy.
"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" 2 Peter 1:3 (see also verses 5-8; Titus 1:1; 2:12; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 6:11).

What Balance is Not

Balance is not compromise. **Compromise is based not on a desire to please God, but to please and accommodate man.** In contrast to compromise, God's principles always stand firm (1 Peter 1:24-25). For this reason God hates:

**Lukewarmness**

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth" Rev.3:15-16.

Lukewarmness is one of the worst forms of compromise, for it affects our relationship with God. It is a rejection of God's love that brings more hurt to His heart than even fully turning one's back on Him. John states uncompromisingly:

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" 1 John 2:15 (see also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

**Double-mindedness**

James 1:6-8"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does."

Double-mindedness is a hindrance to spiritual growth. God does not want us to constantly swing from one direction to another. He wants our eyes to be fixed firmly upon Himself.

*Hebrews 12:2*"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."

Jesus declared, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). Just as our physical body needs a focal point to keep its balance, so Jesus is the focal point for our spiritual balance. He is the focus of all truth in God's word (John 5:39). We are walking in balance only when we have the Lord Jesus as our focal point.

**The Key to Balance**

*Colossians 3:12-14*"...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

The key to the balance of God's nature is found in love. True love takes the attention off ourselves and puts it onto God and other people. This kind of love acts like a balancing wheel for all other aspects of God's nature:

* Knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).
* Power (Nahum 1:2-7; 1 Cor.13:1-2; 2 Tim.1:7).
* Holiness (Nehemiah 9:17-21).
* Faith (Galatians 5:6).
"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" Eph.4:15 (see also verse 24).

Christian growth means growing in the likeness of God's nature. As we grow in our understanding of God's nature, the Holy Spirit works to conform us to that nature (Romans 8:29). "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" Col.1:10 (see also 1:25-28).
20. Walking in God’s Perspective of Hope

Ephesians 1:18 “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you...” (see also Colossians 1:5; 1 Peter 3:15). God has called us to a hope (Ephesians 4:4; Hebrews 7:18-19). This hope is not just wishful thinking, “I hope so” that isn’t really rooted in genuine expectation. It is a certain hope, a sure expectation - a "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). This hope is one of the three essential ingredients to the Christian life, faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Hope provides the perspective for our walk with God (Psalm 31:24; Romans 15:4).

Hope

Romans 5:5 "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit..."

Jesus had brought a wonderful hope for the believer (Proverbs 23:18; Jeremiah 29:11; 1 John 3:2-3). The Bible lists a number of things which make up our hope. These include:

* The return of Jesus (Titus 2:13).
* The resurrection of our bodies (1 Corinthians 15:19-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Phil.3:20-21).
* A new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13).
* Eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:4-7).
* The full glory of God (Colossians 1:27).

This hope produces in us the richness of all that God intends for the Christian life (read Romans 5:1-5):

* Faith and love (Colossians 1:5; Galatians 5:5).
* Joy and peace (Romans 15:13).
* Boldness (2 Corinthians 3:12).
* Strength (Isaiah 40:31).
* Encouragement (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).
* Patience and endurance (Rom.8:24-25; 1 Thess.1:3).
* Self-control (Titus 2:12-13).
* Godliness and holiness (2 Peter 3:10-12).
* Purity (2 Peter 3:14; 1 John 3:2-3).
Hebrews 6:19 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure..."  
(read also verse 18; 10:23).

Future Joy

Hebrews 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame..."

Jesus is the example of hope in action. He was able to endure the Cross because of "the joy set before him." Hope not only results in joy (Proverbs 10:28) but also is the sure knowledge of future joy (Rom.12:12). But hope is not just about the future. There is another ingredient that works with hope - faith (Gal.5:5; Heb.11:1). The difficulties we face are called "trials of our faith." Many times problems seem so big that we cannot see anything beyond them. But when we see our hope clearly, we can have faith in the midst of our trials. And this faith produces the hope we long for (James 1:2-4).

1 Peter 1:6-7 "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith...may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (read also verses 3-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; James 1:12).

The Focus of our Hope

As Christians we have a long term perspective on hope. We are told to live one day at a time and not to worry about the future (James 4:13-14, Mt 6:33-34). Yet we are also told that we have a great hope and assurance of the future Col 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel. We can have two perspectives on the future.

Wrong perspective

Philippians 3:18-19 "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things."

Unfortunately some have the same perspective as the rest of the world. Their mind is on worldly, temporal things like riches and comfort.

1 Timothy 6:17. "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God..."

Right perspective

Philippians 3:20-21 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to
bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

Martin Luther was reported to have said, “It ought to be the business of everyday to prepare for that day (when we pass from this life). This is the perspective God wants us to have. This world is temporary (Psalm 37:1-2; Isaiah 40:6-8). We are to see beyond the immediate problems to God’s overall plan for our lives (read 2 Cor.4:18; Col.3:1-4). This is a heavenly perspective (Prov.4:25-27). The heavenly perspective “fixes our eyes on Jesus” as we walk through this life. Hebrews 12:2."Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."

Strangers on the Earth

Hebrews 11 contains many examples of those who lived in hope - Noah (verse 7), Abraham (verses 8-10; Romans 4:18-21) and Moses (verses 24-26). One verse summarizes the whole of their perspective:

Hebrews 11:13. "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth."

God wants us to show the same diligence of faith they had. Hebrews 6:11-12We "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end. We are to always remember that the earth in its present form is temporal. We are strangers to the present world’s system (1 Peter 2:11). In Christ, we are no longer strangers to God (Eph.2:19), but now we are strangers to the world. The heroes of faith are watching on as we now live in hope (Heb.12:1). Like them, we are looking forward to the city that is to come (Heb.13:14; 11:10,14-16; 12:22-23). Their future is tied to our future. This is our glorious hope!

Romans 15:13"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit".
21. Walking in God's Eternal Purpose

Ephesians 1:11-12 "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we...might be for the praise of his glory" (see Romans 9:23; Job 36:5; Isaiah 46:10).

As Christians, we have been "called according to his purpose" (Rom.8:28). The plan He has for our lives was conceived even before the creation of the world (Eph.1:4; 1 Cor.2:7). That plan includes many things, but the bottom line of God's purpose is to reveal His glory in and through the church.

Eph 1:22-23 MSG  He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. (23) The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

Eph 3:10-11 NASB  so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (11) This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Revelation of God's Glory

"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God...And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken"' Isaiah 40:3,5.

The earth is already full of God's glory (Isa.6:3) - the creation itself reveals one level of God's glory (Psa.19:1-3; Rom.1:18-20). But God desires to reveal His glory in a much deeper way.

Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea".

God's glorious plan hings on the Church becoming everything that God intended for her (Eph.3:10-11). God has always planned to reveal Himself through His people (the church) who are made in His image, who are full of His Spirit, and built and moving together.

Isaiah 60:1-2 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you" (see also 58:8).

The church is the means through which God fills the earth with His presence.

Ephesians 1:22-23 NASB  And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
he World Sets in Darkness

_Romans 3:23"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"._

When Adam rebelled against God, sin entered the world. The Greek word for sin means "to miss the mark." It means to fall short of God's glory. When he sinned, Adam exchanged the glory of God for his own glory (Romans 1:21-23). This caused the corruptive element of sin to bring a "curse" into the world among His creation.

_Gen 3:16-17 NASB_ (16) To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." (17) Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.

Throughout the Old Testament God consistently caused His light (manifest presence) to come into the earth through His people in a limited fashion (Tabernacle of Moses, David’s Tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple). At the appropriate time He brought the "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" has shone (2 Cor.4:4,6). This Gospel promises two kinds of glory:

* A present glory (2 Corinthians 3:10-11,18).
* A future glory (Romans 8:17-18; 2 Corinthians 4:17)

_Colossians 1:27 "To [us] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (see also 2 Thessalonians 2 :14)._ 

The Radiance of God's Glory

God has chosen to reveal His glory to the world through:

The Son of God

_"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word..."_ Heb.1:3.

The glory of God was revealed in the person of Jesus (John 1:14,18). He is "the radiance of God's glory." We cannot look directly into the glory of God (Ex.33:20). But when we look at Jesus, we see the brightness of God's glory through Him.

_"For God...made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"_ 2 Cor.4:6.

The Church of God

_"...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... to present her to himself as a radiant church..."_ Ephesians 5:25-27.

The Church holds the central place in God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11). The purpose of God is that the Church will reveal the full majesty of God's glory (John 17:22).
Revelation 21:10-11 "And he...showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal" (read also Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:22-23; 13:14).

The redeemed people of God are described as a city, shining with the glory of God. This is what Jesus meant on the Sermon on the Mount when He said Mat 5:14 NASB "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

Whereas Jesus is the actual radiance of God's glory - "the exact representation of his being" - the Church is likened to a precious jewel (living stones 1 Peter 2:5), reflecting the glory of God who walks in and among us. When you hold a diamond up to the sun, it splinters the light into many colors. This is how we reveal the glory of God.

Ephesians 3:10-11"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord".

The word "manifold" literally means "multicolored and magnificently variegated." Each of our lives reflects the glory of God in a unique and complimentary way.

**Walking in God's Glory**

Experiencing God's glory was the whole ambition of Moses (Exodus 33:18) and of David (Psalm 17:15; 27:4). But under the Old Covenant, the glory of God was limited.

2 Corinthians 3:7-8 "Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?" (read the whole chapter).

But under the New Covenant in Jesus those limitations are taken away as we are led by the Spirit, loved by the Father, and walking face to face with Jesus

2Co 4:6  For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The Cross changed forever the way God's glory interacts with people. The New Covenant in Christ has opened the way for every believer to walk in God's glory.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" 2 Corinthians 3:18.

With Moses, God's glory was a fading glory that had to be veiled (2 Corinthians 3:13). Now, through the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Romans 8:1-11), God's glory is unveiled and ever-increasing! As we walk closely with the Lord, two things happen - we reflect the glory of God like a mirror and we are transformed into His glorious likeness. This is the purpose of God for our lives. As we walk in His purpose, the glory of God is revealed through us to the world.
"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" Ephesians 3:20-21.

**Walking in His purpose has Local Church Implications**

Many people think we can walk in and fulfill our calling by simply acknowledging membership in the universal (everywhere past present and future) church without practically walking in a local church. This is a grievous error. The NT uses the Greek word “Ecclesia” translated “church,” “congregation,” or “assembly” 114 times, 96 are in direct reference to an identifiable local church.

What is a local church? It is a manifestation of Christ Body in a geographic location. It is a group of His people who have been joined together (built together) by Him (Mt 16:18, 1Cor 12:18); under the oversight of God given leaders (Acts 20:28, Heb 13:17, 1 Pet 5:1-2, 1 Thes 5:12-13 etc); who walk and labor together (Jesus pattern of labor is sending 2 by 2); to manifest His glory through the way we live our lives together (Jn 13:34-35); and manifest His Kingdom through good works and works of power.

2Th 1:11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of Your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.

Jesus building Local churches is essential to the plan of God in the earth. We see it in the book of Revelation. In the first three chapters, before Jesus goes on and explains anything about what is coming on the future, He spends the first three chapters walking among and speaking to seven local churches. He affirmed them in some areas and corrected them in others. Why, the church is the primary vehicle through which He manifests His glory in the earth. As Eph 3:11 states, “this was in accordance with His eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ.”

Every Christian is to be joined, planted in a real way among a group of people called His Church. It is the only way we will flourish individually, and the purpose of God will go forth. *Psa 92:13 Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God.*

**Local Churches Work to Fulfill the Creation Mandate – Family on a Mission**

In the Garden God created a family and gave them a mission.

*Gen 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

He created a family first, and then gave them a mission. Why did He do this? Because the Godhead was the eternal family that existed before this world began. In order to make man in His image they had to be family like the Godhead was family.
Gen 1:26 NASB  Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

This joined together family of God (local churches) is on a mission together to fill the earth with His glory. He is the Father of that Family and sends that family on mission.

Eph 3:14-21 MKJV  For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named,... 21 MKJV  to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever. Amen.

When Christians live fully in God’s purpose then there is a manifestation of what God promised long ago that His dwelling place would be to the earth, “the joy of the whole earth.”

Psa 48:1-3 NASB  Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, In the city of our God, His holy mountain.  (2) Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion in the far north, The city of the great King.  (3) God, in her palaces, Has made Himself known as a stronghold.

I like Matthew Henry’s Commentary on this passage as he highlights the church’s part in God’s great plan.

Matthew Henry Commentary “This is the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is a holy mountain, a peculiar people...This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, & therefore justly might that spot of ground which was thus beautified with holiness be called the joy of the whole earth, that is, what the whole earth has reason to rejoice in.”