

# BEYOND THE ELEMENTARY



**"THEREFORE, LET US LEAVE  
THE ELEMENTARY  
TEACHINGS ABOUT CHRIST  
AND GO ON TO MATURITY..."**

# **BEYOND THE ELEMENTARY**

## **A Workbook**

based upon

the book

**"13 STEPS"**

by

**LOUIS F. CAREY**

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† Hebrews 6:1, 2 (Ampl) *“Therefore, let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ, the Messiah, advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belongs to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead works (dead formalism), and of the faith (by which you turned) to God, with teachings about purifying, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment and punishment. (These are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long ago)”*

**BEYOND  
THE  
ELEMENTARY**

**THIS WORKBOOK IS DESIGNED TO TAKE THE READER BEYOND THE ELEMENTARY STAGE OF TEACHING AND ENCOURAGE A STEADY ADVANCE TOWARD SPIRITUAL MATURITY.**

**IT CAN BE USED INDIVIDUALLY OR IN A GROUP SETTING. THE POINTS FOR DISCUSSION. IN THE BACK OF THE WORKBOOK, ARE INTENDED TO PROVOKE THOUGHT AND TO PROVIDE AVENUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION.**

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORKBOOK IS NOT DOCTRINAL NOR APOLOGETIC BUT PRACTICAL. IT WILL CHALLENGE YOU TO EXAMINE THE QUALITY OF YOUR DAILY LIFE IN TERMS OF BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, AND ACTIONS.**

**IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO PRODUCE REAL CHANGES IN CONDUCT AND CHARACTER. IT IS DESIGNED TO DEVELOP MATURE SPIRITUAL ENDURANCE AND A SENSE OF DEPENDENCE UPON GOD.**

**... ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ...**

There are probably only a few jots and tittles which are completely original in this work. Most of the material was gleaned from a myriad of teachings from many people of God, some of whom are still earth-bound. The intent was not to plagerize, but rather to extract a truth and continue it along Its way to further edify the body.

Louis F. Carey

**. . . WITH GRATITUDE . . .**

To Lillian, my precious wife, for her constant encouragement and support. Also. for the many hours we have spent together on our computers to prepare this book for publication.

To Ed Khouri who utilized his creative talent to come up with a cover design which illustrates the purpose of this book...to help the reader touch the reality of God in a deeper way.

Louis F. Carey

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## Lesson One

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### Religion

Christianity is not religious. It is not a great movement or evangelization for the betterment of the world. It is not reacting to a need simply because the need is there (*Matthew 26:6-13*).

In many ways, religion is a deception. It is an activity carried out by men in the name of God. Often, the activity substitutes for the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Religion always has doctrinal biases. That is one way it can be recognized. Also, religionists are busy doing instead of being. There is a kind of romance in religious work. Much enthusiasm can be generated in organized activities.

But it is not what we do before men that matters. It is what we are in the eyes of God, in our secret place with Him. Where are we in our personal communication with Him? Where are we in relation to what He wants to accomplish in our personal lives? Those are the questions, which separate Christianity from religion.

Religion is the birthplace for denominational divisions. The tendency of denominational behavior is to observe one another, compare activities, and count heads. There is a competitive spirit to outdo the church down the street. Each denomination declares, "We're right, we've got it all together." Although unsaid, the implication is that the others are wrong.

Christianity is not dependent upon the acceptance of a creed nor upon a statement of doctrine. It has nothing to do with the observance of rites and ordinances. It does not require attendance at certain services or functions, nor demand conformity to a set of rules for behavior.

These things are all good works and can be very deceptive. Those who perform them may assume they are earning favor with God. Unfortunately, this is an illusion, which could lead to a bitter day of confrontation with the Lord (*Matthew 7:21-23*).

Christians become Christians by discipling themselves to Jesus Christ. In this manner, they join with other born-again believers and become one in Christ. This body is the true body of Christ, the real church.

It is possible to attend church and never meet Christ, yet become very religious. Historically, every time man has received a revelation from God, he has built a denomination around it. He has imposed rules, which have made him comfortable. But he has so distorted the original revelation that the Spirit of God has been forced to leave. Luther, Calvin, and Wesley all received revelations, which have been turned into denominations. This has fragmented further the body of Christ.

In *Matthew 23:37,38*, Jesus told the religionists. "*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*" It was no longer the house of God, for man had claimed it for himself. Then, in *Matthew 24:1*, it is recorded that Jesus left the temple. He walked away from the institutional church and took His real church, His believing disciples, with Him.

Religion has never made this world happier or better. Religionists tend to occupy themselves with the bad state of things; how the world has deteriorated into a terrible condition, and how mankind is headed for hellfire and damnation.

But the Lord is more interested in the solution than in the problem. He would have His people align themselves with Him to bring about His purpose. Through them, He could then alter the state of things.

Religionists try to change the world, but it is the church that needs to change. When the church changes, the world will change.

There is nothing supernatural about religion and its ritualism. The world fears supernatural powers. But there is nothing offered by religion for the world to fear, or even to respect; therefore, the world treats religion with contempt.

John the Baptist called himself a friend of the Bridegroom (*John 3:28-30*). He understood the principle of decrease in order to draw the bride (the church, the body of Christ) to Christ, the Bridegroom. Today's preachers are in the same position, that of friends of the Bridegroom. But instead of decreasing in order to draw the bride to the Bridegroom, many are flirting with the bride. They are exalting themselves, and drawing the bride in their own direction.

Such activity deceives the sheep, and they go astray from the real Shepherd. They follow substitute shepherds, intermediaries placed between themselves and God. Those sheep suffer from stunted growth, for they are unable to grow beyond their man-shepherd.

*Jeremiah 23:1* proclaims, "*Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! saith the Lord.*" Paul says in *1 Corinthians 3:4*, that following after one man's doctrine is carnal. When we are interested only in a form of religion, we do just that. We select a leader because of his popularity and his image, and we allow our eyes to focus upon him rather than upon God.

God's purpose is to make His believers one body (*Ephesians 2:14*), and He is doing just that. He can reach through the veil of religion and touch those who truly seek Him. When they respond to His touch, He introduces them to salvation, the first segment of His truth.

## Lesson One . . . Religion

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 109)

1. What is the major problem caused by doctrinal differences?

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2. What is the true body of Christ?

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3. How is it possible to be very religious, yet never meet Christ?

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**4. Why does the world treat religion with contempt?**

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**5. What is involved in being a friend of the Bridegroom?**

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**6. What is the danger in following after one man's doctrine?**

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## Lesson Two

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### Salvation

Millions of people have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and have not taken a single step beyond that point. Salvation is an extraordinary revelation, but working out a personal salvation involves a great deal more than being saved (*Philippians 2:12,13*).

There are many hills to climb and much opposition to overcome as we work out our salvation. The rewards, however, far offset the obstacles. Those who venture beyond salvation and dare to explore and to apply the Word of God in their lives, discover bountiful harvests.

If we want to live a Spirit-governed life, we can never allow ourselves to become fixed. We must remain adjustable and open to enlargement and expansion in our walk. Religious methods must give way to the government of the Spirit. This can occur only as we become more conscious of His presence.

Simply accepting the Word of God as true is the first step toward salvation; the second step in this two-step process is to declare openly that it is accepted (*Romans 10:9,10*). It doesn't take a lot of faith to accomplish the process, it takes only a decision of the will.

Once this is done, faith begins to take root. The revelation of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the root system of a Christian life and the beginning of faith.

God initiated the blood of a lamb as the means of redemption when He provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac, the promised son of Abraham (*Genesis 22:1-19*). This was one lamb sacrificed for one man.

Next, He utilized the blood of lambs to redeem the nation of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt (*Exodus 12:1-14*). This was One lamb sacrificed for one family.

He next required the blood of a young goat to be sprinkled on the altar of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. This occurred once every year on the Day of Atonement. The purpose was to

redeem the Israelites from their sins. It placed them in right relationship with Him for another year (*Leviticus 16:15-19*). This was one lamb sacrificed for one nation.

Finally, He sent His Son to redeem all mankind for all time (*John 1:29-34*). This was one Lamb sacrificed, once and for all, for every person who ever has or ever will exist.

God gave us freedom of choice. We become as we choose. Unfortunately, our choices don't always lead us in the best direction. *Ezekiel 18:27,28*, gives us a capsulated version of salvation as it speaks of a wicked man turning away from his wickedness. Very often, however, a sinner will not look up until he has been brought to the lowest level. When he is in that position, it is easier for him to recognize his true situation, the extent of his hunger for something of eternal value, and his need to change direction.

*Ephesians 2:12* states to be without Christ is to be in the world, and to have no hope. Usually, our minds are so clouded and our vision so obstructed by the attractions of the world that we are unaware there is something infinitely more valuable available to us. But that something is only available to us through a living person, Jesus Christ.

The first step a Christian must make is to recognize Jesus as a living reality. It is an inward event, a heart realization. Christianity cannot be birthed in the heart simply on the basis of an historical Christ. Intellectual acceptance of a man named Jesus, who lived and died 2,000 years ago, does not provide sufficient foundation.

The true Jesus, the One who lives, can be reached only by reaching out. With no inward proof, with no certainty of the result, everyone must step forward, blindly. He must extend himself and speak, foolish as it may seem at the time, to a Person he can only hope is actually there.

The revelation of Jesus is available to everyone with the courage to reach out. Jesus has a personal concern for each of us. He sees through our pretensions and self-deceptions. He would have us put these aside and come into a personal relationship with Him. He wants us to know Him, intimately.

It is God's desire to forgive. "I would," said Jesus, "But ye would not." (*Luke 13:34*). God waits for the will of a man to surrender itself to His will. He opens the door over and over, but He leaves the decision to man, himself. A man's blood rests in his own hands. His life, whether temporal or eternal, is the result of his own decisions.

Even after he accepts salvation, his steps are the result of his own decisions. Those decisions are not always easy. This is especially true after he discovers he has been redeemed, not only from the grasp of Satan, but also from himself and a lifetime of self-imposed bondage.

God has a divine purpose for our lives, yet He allows us to decide at every turn of the road. If we are serious in our walk, we eventually come to the realization that we are incapable of making a proper decision on our own. We then turn to God for guidance. When we achieve the ability to leave the decision making to Him, He can begin to reveal His total provision for us. That is when we see there is a whole lot more to salvation than just being saved.

## Lesson Two . . . Salvation

**Personal And Group Exercise** (see page 110)

1. What is the two-step process for salvation?

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2. Why do we have to be brought to the lowest level before we are willing to look up?

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3. Why do we need heart realization rather than intellectual acceptance, to have enough foundation for our walk of salvation?

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4. Why is it important for us to reach out to Jesus, with no certainty of the result?

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5. In what way are our lives, whether temporal or eternal, the result of our own decisions?

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**6. Why is it important for us to leave our life decisions in God's hands?**

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## Lesson Three

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### JOY

Joy is the first natural reaction after recognizing and accepting salvation. The realization of what Jesus did for us and the freedom it has produced in us brings on a heady mixture of relief and astonishment. It is hard to believe something which seems so unlikely and strange to the worldly mentality.

But, as we begin to grasp the extent of the Father's love and forgiveness, it is difficult for us to bridle the joy which springs from a grateful heart. We are like the baby John (*Luke 1:44*). It is proper that our first reaction to the living presence of Jesus should be joy.

Although we are unaware of it at the moment, there is a much greater expression of joy taking place at another location. If we were to be given a glimpse into heaven, we would be astonished! Our positive response to the offer of salvation has caused more than a little stir amongst the angels (*Luke 15:10*). The heavenly host applaud our decision and rejoice with God that another sinner has been snatched out of the grasp of Satan. This is more than we could contain!

*Acts 8:5-8* describes the accomplishments of the Lord as He moved through Philip in Samaria. Verse 8 states there was great joy in that city. When Jesus' power is made manifest, there is always joy because there is always freedom from some sort of bondage.

The world's joy is perverted and superficial. Those subject to worldly influences grasp for fleeting moments of joy, but those moments are connected to illusions, like Hollywood sets. Beneath the small visible tip of joy, there looms an iceberg of sorrow blocking the way.

We must be careful now of what happens next. In *Luke Chapter 8*, Jesus speaks of seed, and the ground upon which it is sown. In verse 6 He states, "*And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.*" Then, in verse 13, He explained that portion of the parable: "*They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*"

We can have joy, but neglect to take the time and make the effort to establish a strong root system in the Word. Unless we are well grounded in God's Word, we can be easily deceived and tempted to change direction. Before we realize it, we can find ourselves back under the influence of the world.

We still have a lot of the world in us at this stage of our salvation. This means we continue to be self-motivated. We are pleased with our new-found ability to communicate with God. But we are taken up with wants, needs and desires as we come before Him in prayer. He wants us to trust Him with the trust of little children, however, He does not want us to be selfish little children.

With exuberant joy we ask Him to do this for us, to give us that, to make us well, to make us happy, to give us money. The list is endless as we never stop begging. It is like Christmas every day, and we react like the spoiled child when our prayers are not answered promptly according to our demands.

If we continue to stay in the Word, we eventually outgrow this stage, and our joy takes on a deeper dimension. Christianity is basically an optimistic walk, although that may be difficult to discern from the appearance and attitude of some Christians.

Our faith is the substance of things hoped for (*Hebrews 11:1*). Every Christian should live with expectation in his heart concerning his eternal life. In addition, he should be eager to discover what each day holds in store for him. A true disciple seeks the presence of God in every situation and circumstance.

*Romans 8:28* states that all things work together for good to them that love God. We establish and prove our love by keeping His commandments (*John 14:21*). We walk on His promises. We depend upon His assurances. We have security and confidence that we can trust and rely upon His Word. There is real joy in that type of walk.

*Psalms 34:1-5* tells us praise brings joy. The Lord inhabits our praises, and anything the Lord inhabits, He blesses. When we are in the presence of the Lord, our countenance is changed. We are enlightened by His Spirit, we receive His wisdom, and we become radiant in the exchange (*Ecclesiastes 8:1*).

He turns sorrow into joy, and it is not the short-lived, superficial type. His joy is eternal, for no man can take it from us if it is truly from Him (*John 16:22*). It is the desire of our Lord's heart that our joy be a complete dose. He does not want a people who have been watered down with half-truths and unrealistic concepts. He wants us full to the brim with the realization of who He really is and what kingdom living should really be (*John 16:24*).

In *Luke 2:10*, the angel told the shepherds that Christ would be a joy to all people. This was not a prophetic word about the infant Christ. It was about the crucified and resurrected Christ. And only those who would demonstrate a willingness to accept Him as Savior and allow Him to become Lord of their lives. would understand and accept that prophecy.

Paul tells us, in *Philippians 4:4*, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice.*" There are countless reasons to rejoice, not the least of which is to express gratitude for our triumph over the enemy. The seventy disciples (*Luke 10:17*), were ecstatic when they discovered the power they had over demons when they employed the name of Jesus. Yet, Jesus told them their real joy should be in their awareness that their names were written in heaven (*verse 20*).

The more we study the Scriptures, the more we realize we should maintain a close relationship with Jesus. In *John 15:1-11*, Jesus discusses abiding. To abide is, "to remain or continue with, to be in the presence of, always." Jesus tells us to do this. If we dwell with Him as closely as branches on a vine, and consider Him to be the Source of our life and sustenance., then His joy will become our joy, and our joy will be full.

True joy, everlasting joy, is from Christ. It is fulfilled in us as we appropriate His Word in our lives (*John 17:13*). As we abide in Jesus, we become led by His Spirit, and we discover that one of the fruit which results is Joy (*Galatians 5:22*). As the bride of Christ, we should rejoice in Him (*Revelation 19:7*).

This step has given us a delightful time. However, we should have a sense of being only on the outer fringe of salvation and all it has to offer. We now face a choice as did Joshua and the Israelites (*Joshua 24:14-28*).

An inheritance awaits us, but it requires a commitment. To go on will require a heart-decision and a willingness to take the consequences. We will be vulnerable to criticism and ridicule if we decide to take the next step.

There will be a cost, but the question is, what are we here for? Is it for the Lord, or for ourselves? It is certainly not God's eternal purpose to set us on some sort of theological mantlepiece. He did not extract us from the world and set us aside for display purposes only.

If we have decided to make His will our will, we are ready for the next step.

## Lesson Three . . . Joy

Personal And Group Exercise (see page 111)

1. Why is it normal for joy to be our initial reaction to salvation?

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2. Why is the world's joy perverted and superficial and temporal?

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**3. Why is it important for us to establish a strong root system at this point?**

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**4. In what way is Christianity an optimistic walk?**

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**5. Why is it true that anything the Lord inhabits, He blesses?**

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**6. In what way is Christ a joy to all people?**

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## Lesson Four

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### Healing

We have stepped into the revelation that Jesus Christ is alive right now. We understand that He is ready to involve Himself in our lives to the degree that we let Him. But first, we need to deal with our attitude. If healing has not been part of our creed, we must break through that barrier.

In *Acts 4:13-18*, we can see the stifling attitude of the unbelieving religionists. Healing was not in their doctrine. Even though they saw it with their own eyes, they refused to accept it. They actually took steps to prevent any further miracles among the people.

Our own individual vision of Christ must begin to broaden. He is something far more than we realized. He is waiting to take us by the hand and show us the next dimension beyond our initial salvation.

When we begin to get things into proper perspective, we see that we have imposed our own limitations upon God. There is a fullness in salvation, which includes conditions we can only sense in our spirits. We can't see them clearly, but we know they are there.

We begin to read phrases such as, "*according to thy faith*," and "*because of their unbelief*," and we slowly become aware that we have a responsibility in this process. We know if God is God, He is unlimited. Yet we are able to limit the Unlimited One by our attitude toward His Word.

As we delve more deeply into Scripture, we find that healing is a definite part of salvation. In *Luke 18:42,43*, Jesus said to the blind man, "*Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee.*" Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, glorifying God. The man's faith in Jesus brought him salvation, along with the incidental by-product of sight.

In *James 5:15*, we find that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. This too has a secondary effect, for healing follows directly after salvation, according to James.

The third epistle of *John*, verse 2, links the condition of our health with the condition of our soul. This leads us to believe salvation carries with it the opportunity to experience divine health. If all this is true, we find ourselves faced with a decision.

We can choose eternal life with God. We can choose His blessings and express our love toward Him by obeying His Word. And we can live a long and healthy life by turning to Him as our Source of health and longevity.

It probably never occurred to us that we may entertain sickness because we have not made the right decision. We have chosen our own way simply because we have not understood that God has a purpose and a direction for our lives.

We have been living apart from Him; therefore, we have been subject to the infirmities of the world. In *Hosea 4:6*, God says, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*” Many of His people still suffer under the deception that the miracle of healing was for a time past. Their ignorance of the truth keeps them in a state of bondage.

Every Christian accepts salvation, but not every Christian accepts healing. Yet, they are part of the same package; they are part of Jesus' ministry. Who has decided that a specific part of Jesus' ministry was just for that day? Jesus said greater works than these shall we do (*John 14:12*). If we are to do greater works, and if those works are not being performed, what is the problem?

Is it possible we are like the people of His home town? He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief (*Matthew 13:58*). In *Matthew 13:38,39*, Jesus said an enemy had planted tares among the wheat. In like manner, the enemy has planted tares, which choke out the full truth of the Gospel in the area of healing.

Is the power of Jesus weaker today than it was in the days following Pentecost? Any Christian who believes Jesus is weaker now than He was then, must believe also that Satan is stronger now. If this is the case, there is no reason to remain a Christian.

Do we believe there is power in the name of Jesus for salvation? If so, we have no choice but to believe the name still has the same power to heal. What we believe, follows us (*Mark 16:17*). If we believe God's Word about healing, divine health will certainly follow. If we doubt God's Word, we believe the opposite.

Unbelief is not nonbelief. We must believe in something. If we don't believe in healing, we must believe in sickness. If that is the case, it will surely follow us all the days of our lives.

As stated earlier, attitude is the place to start. Our intellect tells us to demand proof in some tangible form before going to God for a healing. We don't want to be classified as ignorant fanatics who haven't the good sense to know better. There is no logic to healing; therefore, it doesn't fit as an acceptable practice. Unless, of course, there is some proof beforehand.

But Jesus condemns this line of thought. In *Matthew 12:38,39*, those who requested a sign from Him as proof of His lordship, He called an evil and adulterous generation. If there was intellectual understanding before a healing, faith would not be necessary. The whole thing would be reduced to a logical procedure. Signs shall follow them that believe. There is no other way.

We are subject to so many preconceived opinions, it is a wonder God can get through to us at all. We are told, In *2 Corinthians 10:5*, to cast down our imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. We are to bring every thought into captivity, obedient to Christ. We are to throw our opinions aside, no matter where they came from, and look at Christ's words as absolute truth.

Our imaginations are happy hunting grounds for Satan. When we allow a thought to exalt itself to a position of doubt, we open the door to the archenemy of Christ. Jesus addressed this subject in *John 8:44,45*. He said the devil is the father of lies.

If we doubt the truth of the Word, we obviously believe the opposite. The opposite of a truth is a lie and, according to Jesus, a lie is a child of the devil. Every father has a legal right to his children. Therefore, if we harbor a lie, we are vulnerable to the infiltration of Satan, and he will be quick to steal healing from us. He came only to steal and to kill and to destroy (*John 10:10*).

If we need to be healed, or if we have a loved one who needs to be healed, we can't afford to sit around and toy with our intellect. It will do us no good to try to rationalize if there may be some logic to healing, or any other occasional miracle. If we are in need, we are in need! The sooner we get honest about it, the better!

Usually, we wait until we have exhausted all other avenues before we turn to God. Even then we get it all wrong. When we pray, we are more apt to concentrate upon the healing than the Healer. Jesus used healing to draw people to the Father. Our goal needs to be God.

When we accept God as God, omnipotent, the creator of all things, and accept His wisdom as perfect, we open ourselves to receive His divine touch. The blessing will be the revelation of Himself in all His glory. At that point, the healing process will be free to move in without opposition.

In *Matthew 8:2,3*, we see that the leper took his eyes off his problem and put them on Jesus. As a result, he was healed. Some healings are progressive, as we see in *Mark 8:23-25*, but all we have to do is keep our eyes upon Jesus. He will bring the healing to completion so He can again glorify the Father (*John 14:13*).

Healing always works from the heart outward. Very often, it begins with a root problem much deeper and more profound than the infirmity which has surfaced for treatment. In *Luke 4:18*, Jesus stated He came to heal the brokenhearted, and to release the captives.

Those who are bound to their past by deep hurts, wounds of rejection, or mistreatment as a child, and those who are under condemnation for misbehavior, need to feel the love and forgiveness of God to receive His healing.

Overburdened consciences often manifest themselves in psychosomatic ailments as a sort of self-inflicted punishment. Very often, after those psychosomatic ailments have been nourished for a time, they become real. Such an ailment must be dealt with from the root in order for its captive to be set free.

Healing is to include our minds, as well as our bodies (*1 Thessalonians 5:23*). It begins with confession (*James 5:13-16*). This acts as a purgative of the toxic guilt, which has been eating away its victim. Harbored resentment is just as deadly, for its root is bitterness (*Hebrews 12:15*). Our minds need to be renewed before our bodies can respond properly to God's healing power (*Romans 12:2*).

Of course, all this is still dependent upon our attitude. Jesus gave us a very simple instruction: be converted and become like little children (*Matthew 18:3*). Little children have no hesitation in coming before their father to ask for something. Obviously, they know their father intimately, and they trust him implicitly.

Jesus expects us to be specific (*John 16:24*). He really places the responsibility upon us to be precise, even though our need may be very clear (*Matthew 20:30-34*). He assures us our Father stands ready to respond to our needs (*Matthew 7:11*).

The criterion is simple, but not easy: believe on Jesus. If we have been able to, shove aside our intellect to accept the fullness of Jesus, we are ready for the next step.

## Lesson Four . . . Healing

Personal and Group Exercise (see page 112)

1. How is it possible for us to limit God because of our unbelief?

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2. How has our ignorance exposed us to the infirmities of the world?

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3. If we don't believe God heals, what do we actually believe?

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4. Why will God never allow us to have intellectual understanding concerning healing?

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**5. Why is it important for us not to doubt the truth of the Word?**

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**6. Instead of simply praying for a healing, why should our goal be to touch God?**

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## Lesson Five

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### Prosperity

There are several facets in prosperity. In the United States we tend to link prosperity to material gain, and we accept certain procedures for obtaining wealth. We associate higher education with prosperity, but that is not accurate. The truth is, what we have been dealing with at each step, our attitude, determines our degree of prosperity.

A college graduate does not have an advantage over a grade school dropout because of what he knows. It is because of what he knows he knows. An engineering graduate doesn't know everything about engineering. But he knows he knows where to go to get information he may need; therefore, he proceeds confidently in the field of engineering.

The grade school dropout knows that he knows very little about anything in particular and he conducts himself accordingly. However, the grade school dropout may know that he knows how to make a lot of money. If so, he will proceed confidently, and probably amass a fortune far beyond anything the college graduate can conceive in his mind. It is what a person knows that he knows which determines his course in life.

In order to achieve true prosperity, complete in all its facets, there is one thing we must know that we know. Here again, our attitude comes into play. As we look at God's Word, we see that He owns everything. He owns heaven and earth, and all that is therein (*Deuteronomy 10:14*). We must accept this as true before we can place both feet on the step of prosperity. All that is therein includes you and me, for God owns us also (*Psalms 24:1*).

God owns everything by three methods:

- (1) **BY CREATION.** He alone created everything; therefore, everything is His.
- (2) **BY REDEMPTION.** Through the sacrifice of His Son, He redeemed those of the world from the grasp of Satan.
- (3) **BY PRESERVATION.** He constantly replaces trees and animals, and replenishes the earth.

He is the Owner, and we are only sojourners passing through His land (*Leviticus 25:23*). If we can honestly say we know that we know all things belong to God, we can proceed.

Next, we must consider that man, by himself, is a failure. Nearly 4,000 years have passed since the Lord, while on His way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness and depravity, stopped by to see Abraham. Our social behavior has not progressed one iota since that time.

It is true we have progressed materially. A portion of the free world lives more comfortably than Abraham did, but most of the population does not. And even those who covet huge fortunes don't really own them, for on the day they die they will leave every penny behind.

We have progressed in our ability to destroy ourselves, but that cannot be called prosperity. This all appears to be very bleak, and it is if we continue to try to work things out by ourselves.

But we have an alternative. Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). Jesus came to deliver the human race from failure. Again, we have to work from the inside out. We have to grasp a heart revelation of the power of Jesus, and His willingness to impart it.

We are like Gideon when the angel of the Lord first visited him (*Judges 6*). Gideon was at the bottom of the threshing floor, subject to the circumstances. He was unaware that God wanted to move through him. He was actually hiding from his worldly tormentors, but the angel called him a mighty man of valor. Gideon viewed himself as a lost cause, but God saw him as victorious. And Gideon became victorious because he believed God and obeyed His Word. This gave God the freedom to work through Gideon, and he prospered mightily.

When we finally decide God owns everything, it is only proper that we turn to Him when we want something. But, before we can expect to prosper, we must learn His principle concerning talents. Each of us is a potential investment for the glory of God. But we can hardly glorify God if we don't prosper in some portion of our lives.

Losers do not attract people. If Jesus had not healed people when they were brought to Him, they would very likely have quit coming. Jesus was the greatest winner in history. If we are to be His disciples, and glorify God as He did, we need to be aware of His principles for winning. The key principle is stated in 3 John 2, *"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."* Prosperity is a definite part of the Christian life, not just for the individual, but for the corporate body as well.

In the parable of the talents (*Matthew 25:14-30*), the servants were expected to do something constructive with the talents with which they had been entrusted. In the parable of the sower (*Matthew 13:8,23*), Jesus specifically relates the fertile ground to the condition of our hearts and our willingness to appropriate the Word in our lives.

The fruit we produce will depend upon how we accept and act upon the Word. According to Jesus, some will bring forth a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. The yield depends upon the individual and his understanding that God is his Father and He owns everything. He has set up certain principles for receiving His blessings. Heart-obedience to those principles will bring prosperity. Our old friend, attitude, is a most important participant in the process.

We must first pray for a revelation of God's truth. We need a life-changing, spiritual revelation, not simply an intellectual understanding. We need the logos, the printed Word, to become the rhema, the proceeding Word. This Word must come inside and perform a work, a type of surgery

to divide flesh from spirit. A lot of things must be cut away and discarded so we can go on with God.

*Deuteronomy 29:29* states that the secret things belong to the lord. But that which He reveals to us belongs to us and to our children forever. His revelations belong to us; they are part of our inheritance as His children. Therefore, we must pray for more revelation about prosperity, and for more and more revelation as we take each step in our walk.

Our judgment is different from God's judgment. God's judgment is perfect, for He knows the end from the beginning. This is reason enough to seek His guidance in all things. It is a waste of time and effort to attempt anything on our own. Abraham and Sarah tried to help God their way, but their efforts created Ishmael. Ishmael became the father of the Arab nations, and is still a "wild ass among men" today (*Genesis 16:12*).

It is God's desire to freely give us all things (*Romans 8:32*). It is deception from the enemy to believe otherwise. We must perform our part of the function, then God will give the increase (*1 Corinthians 3:6*). This is not to infer there is a formula, such as: X (our actions, certain words, specific prayers or deeds, etc.), plus Y (God's response because of His pleasure), equals Z (prosperity). There is no formula, there is only a result.

God owns everything and He has made everything available. Nothing is held back, but we must pay the price. It is as if we are looking through the big plate glass window of an exclusive department store. We can see the treasures inside. We have just the right amount of money in our pockets to buyout the store. Now we must go in and pay the price, the full price, according to the terms established by the owner. Until we do we cannot have any of the treasure.

What is the price? It is an inner change of heart, brought about by the acceptance of God's Word as truth. The surgery of the Word has to cut away heavy concentrations of selfishness. Prosperity and selfishness do not share habitation in the kingdom of God.

Jesus, himself, established the priority, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" (*Matthew 6:33*) "Things" are to be added, not sought after. God's kingdom is to be sought after. We should strive to submit ourselves to His kingship, to the authority of His Word.

The Word of God should take the same form as the command of a king. As this becomes a fact in our lives, righteousness results, for righteousness simply means right standing with Him. As we learn God's principles for prosperity and continually apply them, prosperity will follow. So will peace and happiness.

We really should familiarize ourselves with *Deuteronomy, Chapters 28 and 29*. Seeking first the kingdom includes being willing to do what God expects of us. It is what He wants to do in our lives, not what we would prefer to do. The Word spells things out quite clearly, but the decision always rests with us.

God did not create showpieces; He created vessels with a purpose. Our decision must be to fulfill His purpose. As we do, we are joined by prosperity. So now we are brought to a point of decision. How are we doing with our change in attitude? We don't know where we will be going from here, but are we willing to commit anyway?

Are we ready to step out in faith and trust Him with the rest of our lives? If so, *Proverbs 16:3* can begin its work in us. As we commit to Him, He begins to establish new thought patterns in us. *Proverbs 16:9* declares. "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." This is where we are. We have made a heart decision to commit ourselves to be obedient to His Word. We are now ready for Him to direct our steps.

There is always a period between sowing and reaping, so we must develop a farmer mentality. In the meantime, we can study the man of God described in the first three verses of *Psalms 1*.

It is vital that we understand the proper attitude. Note that because of his righteousness, whatever he does prospers. His goal is not prosperity; his goal is the will of God. The secret of prosperity is to seek the will of God. To seek prosperity for the sake of prosperity is to miss the will of God.

The man in *Psalms 1* does not take advice from an ungodly man; he does not expose himself to the influence of sinful people; he doesn't associate with haughty, arrogant, mocking rebels. Instead, he turns to the Word of God as his sphere of influence. He ponders the Word in his heart until it becomes fact, just as Mary did (*Luke 2:19*).

The result of his submission to the Word is prosperity in many ways. His life shall be fruitful, he shall not be plagued by withering infirmities, and everything he attempts will be successful. He believes the Word, he conforms himself to it, and God does the rest.

Even the world knows that what we believe to be true determines how we act and react in life. *Proverbs 29:18* tells us we need a vision. "Where there is no vision the people perish." Then it goes on, *but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*" A vision is born out of faith in something, and what is better than to have faith in the Word of God?

*Hebrews 11:1* tells us that faith has substance. If we take substance apart, we find "sub" to mean underlying, and "stance" to mean support. Faith is a vital element, a keystone for our vision. It begins by believing the Word to be true.

In *Mark 9:23*, Jesus stated that all things are possible to him who believes. But the belief must be according to God's will, and this is determined by His Word. All faith, all belief, and all hope must have as its basis the Word of God. Maverick faith, that is, faith conjured up by the flesh to satisfy selfish desires, is not in right standing to receive God's prosperity.

We have all received something from God, and that is the place from which we must start. When we respond positively to what we already have, we will receive more. We need to look carefully at the talent we have, no matter how small and insignificant it may seem to be. Insignificant as it may appear to us, it is a gift from God, and we are its stewards. The first move we should make is to offer it to God and yield it to His lordship. Then we should start giving it away. In *Luke 6:38*, Jesus said we are to give, and as we do, we will receive the same measure in return.

We must learn the principle of the open palm. We must hold everything loosely, our talents, our material assets, our abundance in whatever form it may take. God is then free to take from us what He can use and give to us what He wants us to have. But as soon as we clench our fist to hold onto what we have, we no longer offer Him an open palm. We are therefore no longer able to receive. In our effort to keep what we have, we cut off the flow. In *Isaiah 58*, God addresses this very subject.

The kingdom principle for abundance is spelled out clearly several places in the Bible, but *Proverbs 3:5-10* brings it into focus with just a few words: “*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all, thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*”

The increase is from God; therefore, we must submit everything to His government. Economic conditions do not control a believer's prosperity. God's Word is not subject to economic conditions. His promises are born in heaven, they are eternal and they do not return void. Because of this, we must apply God's Word, regardless of the appearance of things, whether we feel like it or not. It will not be our works which produce prosperity, but rather His works, working through our works.

Recognizing God as our Source is most important for us to assimilate. We must get this deeply rooted in our hearts so prosperity, when it comes, will not cause us to take our eyes off God to concentrate upon keeping what He has given us.

There are two elements most responsible for choking off prosperity from Christians.

- The first is our own relationship, our personal inward life with the Lord. This is what gives us self-sufficiency and enables us to have something to give others. Unless we have something of our own, we have nothing to give; therefore, the flow of prosperity is cut off.
- The second element is our attitude. *Psalm 78* deals with the improper attitude of the Israelites. Verse 36 states, “*Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongues.*” They gave the Lord mouth-praise to try to get what they wanted, but they didn't worship Him with their hearts.

Verse 18 speaks of their lusts. They demanded that their appetites be satisfied according to their own desires rather than according to God's will. The sad result is that they all died in the wilderness. Because of their attitude, they missed the prosperity of the promised land.

*James 4:3* states, “*Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” Lust demands satisfaction now. Its terms are self-centered and self motivated. It is not compatible with kingdom life. If we try to coax God into helping us prosper, we place ourselves in the same position as the Israelites.

We are always brought back to attitude. However right our position may be about the Word, the Lord has to wait until our attitude is right. Every bit of personal interest has to be eliminated. We must come to the place where we have only the Lord's good pleasure in mind. He can then open the windows of heaven and pour out His abundance.

We must be able to say with our hearts that He can do whatever He wills, that all we desire is for His will be done in our lives. We are then in a position to receive His prosperity. We are also ready to move on.

## **Lesson Five . . . Prosperity**

### **Personal And Group Exercise (See page 113)**

- 1. To obtain true prosperity, complete in all its facets, what must we know that we know?**

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- 2. In what way was Jesus the greatest winner in history?**

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- 3. What is the price we have to pay In order to achieve true prosperity?**

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- 4. What should be the basis for all faith. all belief, and all hope?**

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- 5. Explain the principle of the open palm.**

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**6. What are the two things most responsible for choking off God's prosperity?**

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## Lesson Six

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### Commitment

We should now have a true heart acceptance that everything belongs to God. We should understand that everything is in His hands, and that anything of value must flow from Him. It should therefore be a natural result for us to submit our lives to Him. Not to do so would be absolutely foolish. But it is still our decision to make, it will not be imposed upon us.

Up to this point, we have experienced what Jesus did for us and what He can do for us. A lot of our experience has been intellectual in that we have received useful information from Jesus. We are now ready to step up from information to formation. This is a big step because we begin to see we can do something for Him. *Philippians 2:12* tells us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. *Verse 13* states it is God who works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. We have to allow Him the freedom to perform that work.

*James 2:17* tells us faith without works is dead. It is time to put our faith to work in every aspect of our lives. We have performed our warm-up exercises on the steps of Salvation, Healing and Prosperity. Now it is time to discover what we have accomplished. Have we made the attitude change which will enable us to run the race that has been set before us (*Hebrews 12:1*)?

It is time to commit. It helps if we look at ourselves from God's viewpoint. He was the One who decided to bring us into this world. It was He who breathed life into us at birth. He bestowed this privilege, this honor upon us. God's purpose is to have a world filled with people conformed to the image of His Son. He selected us as potentially eligible.

That is a special privilege, a Divine purpose for our birth. When we understand this, we must get to work immediately to free ourselves from anything contrary.

We should take an inventory of our talents now, and objectively see how they are being used. Talents are rarely wasted. They are either submitted to God or to Satan. Jesus said we cannot serve two masters; we will either serve God or serve the world (*Luke 16:13*). In effect, not to serve God in some way with our talent is to serve the world.

If we are not using our talent at all, it is the same as burying it, and Jesus makes it very clear how the Master feels about that (*Matthew 25:24-30*). So, no matter what our talent happens to be, and no matter how insignificant it may seem to us, it is time to commit it to Jesus. We should give Him control over it, allow Him to sanctify it, then use it to His glory.

If we are uncertain about our talent, we need only to ask a few friends. We should pray about their answers, and go on from there. It doesn't matter what our talent is, what matters is our willingness to let go of it. Are we willing to give it to the Lord?

As we begin our commitment, there is something of which we should be aware. Busying ourselves in Christian service, that is, getting caught up in the attraction of church activity and its self-gratification, is different from a deep personal commitment to the Lord.

It is enjoyable to be recognized and appreciated for our service to the Lord's work. But we can measure the degree of our commitment when we are willing to forego all that. We are gaining ground in the area of commitment when we don't mind being unnoticed, passed over, perhaps not even appreciated, if that will help the promotion of Jesus.

There will be opposition from the enemy. His only purpose is to steal, to kill and to destroy. But we defeat the enemy, not by doing battle with him directly, but by submitting ourselves to God. When we submit ourselves to God's Word and commit our lives to His truths, we resist the temptation and deceptions thrown in our paths. The devil then has no alternative but to leave (*James 4:7*).

There are two Biblical examples for us to observe as patterns for our own behavior. Noah and Nehemiah were both builders; one built an ark and the other built a wall. We are likewise builders, for we are committing to build our portion of the body of Christ. Both Noah and Nehemiah met opposition from the world, but they kept their eyes upon God.

Noah continued to build the ark according to God's plan, and Nehemiah continued to build the wall according to God's purpose. Regardless of the intensity of the distractions and dangers, they were determined not to be drawn away from their commitment. That is the attitude we will need from this point onward.

We should probably include Daniel as a role model also. In *Daniel, Chapter 10*, we can observe some specific characteristics:

- **First**, we see that he was deliberate. The angel of the Lord said, "*From the first day that thou didst set thine heart.*" Daniel's heart was set; his commitment was total.
- **Second**, we see that he was persistent. "*From the first day...*," said the angel, and it was now 21 days later. Although it took 21 days for his prayer to be answered, Daniel's commitment enabled him to persist until the answer came.
- **Third**, we see that he put aside his personal desires. He "chastened" himself by fasting. He refused to allow any indulgences or distractions or other interests to interfere with his committed task.
- **Fourth**, he was determined to accept nothing less than the absolute truth of the matter. "*I am come for thy words,*" said the angel. Daniel had received revelation through the Word of God.

He then set himself to pray with conviction and assurance for the knowledge of what God wanted to do.

Daniel was serious with God and we need to be too. And we must be familiar with His Word. If we do not know what He wants, we do not know how to pray effectually.

In the world we have a tendency to look for a time when there will be no disturbance. What we really need to do is to fortify ourselves to handle whatever comes. When a believer commits himself, not only has he selected whom he will serve, he has also selected his enemy. Fortunately, the wisdom of selecting the proper Ally has moved him into a conquering position.

When Daniel prayed, all the heavenlies were affected, both good and bad, but the good prevailed. It is the same with the committed believer. There will be opposition. But deliberate perseverance, based upon the truth of the Word, will assure the believer of the outcome.

*Proverbs 10:25* states, "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." The whirlwind will always pass and the committed will always remain, because their foundation is Jesus Christ.

Jesus described the committed believer's position very clearly in *Luke 6:47-49*. In spite of a flood of opposition and a vehement stream of challenges, he will stand firm because his foundation is bunt upon the Rock.

Conversely, the uncommitted is the one who hears the Word of God but does not accept it as truth and doesn't apply it in his life. He will collapse under the onslaught of the enemy, and his ruin will be great.

## Lesson Six . . . Commitment

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 114)

1. Why does working out our salvation cause fear and trembling in us?

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2. What is God's purpose for the life of each Christian?

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3. What is one way we can be certain of our victory over the enemy?

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4. What are the four things which proved the extent of Daniel's commitment?

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5. Why is it foolish for a committed believer to expect no turbulence in his life?

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6. Why is the committed believer in a better position than the uncommitted believer?

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## Lesson Seven

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### Commitment

In order for our commitment to take hold and for the foundation to be laid properly in Jesus Christ, we should study *Romans 6:3-14*. In the act of baptism, we are sacramentally conformed to Jesus. The design and intention of baptism is that we have died and been buried to our previous lives and all the sin embodied therein. God has wiped the slate clean, and we should also.

Our old man, our old spirit being, who has been feeding our sinful nature all our lives, has been put to death. This was a supernatural intervention of God, the Father, as soon as we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Emergence from our baptism is a form of resurrection. We rise from our watery grave to live with Jesus in newness of life. When we accepted Jesus, God implanted within us a new spirit being, melded with the Spirit of Christ. In this new condition, with Jesus as Lord, sin no longer has dominion over us; therefore, we should not submit to its temptations.

We must grasp the reality that our old selves are dead and buried. We need to have this firmly entrenched in our understanding. That will free us to concentrate upon the Lord and the work He has set before us.

In *Romans 1:1*, Paul calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ. In *James 1:1*, James also identifies himself as a servant of God and of Jesus. In *2 Peter 1:1*, Peter says he is a servant and apostle of Jesus. Jude declares himself to be a servant of Jesus in *Jude 1*. Commitment brings us to a position of servanthood.

It is stated in *1 Corinthians 7:22*, "*For he who was called in the Lord while a slave; is the Lord's freedman; likewise, he who was called while free is Christ's slave.*" This is an important Scripture.

First, we should look at *John 6:44*. Jesus states no one can come to Him unless drawn to Him by God. This means, as believers, we have been called by God, whether we realize it or not.

In *Matthew 22:14*, Jesus stated that many are called but few are chosen. In the previous 13 verses, we see the explanation for that statement. The call was universal, everyone was invited, but only a few accepted the invitation. Those who accepted became the chosen few.

We are in a similar situation. We have responded to the universal call. We have been called out of the slavery of sin. We are now free from that bondage. We are in the process of placing ourselves into the position of servant of Jesus Christ. This is a commitment, which will drastically alter our lives. As we walk out this commitment, we will come under a sovereign transformation. We will begin to become one with Christ. It is a work of the lord, just as He performed in *Ezekiel 37:15-20*.

As servants, what are we called to do? In *Ezra 7:10*, we see a concise example.

- First, we are to prepare our hearts. This we are in the process of doing as our attitudes continue to be reshaped.
- Second, we are to seek the Lord's will according to His written Word.
- Third, we are to act upon the Word, to conform ourselves to its directives, and to step out in obedience.
- Fourth, we are to teach others. The great commission from Jesus is to disciple all nations. We teach first by example, then by sharing the reality of Jesus in our own lives. Then we guide others through the truth of the Word. Our desire now is to please God. This act of obedience is the first stage.

We are starting a very interesting walk at this step of commitment. It would help us to look at a committed group of Israelites in the Old Testament to see how God honored their commitment.

In *2 Chronicles 20: 1-30*, the people of Judah, under the leadership of Jehoshaphat, were threatened by the Moabites and the Ammonites. In *verse 3*, they immediately sought the Lord. In *verse 15*, they received the reassurance that the battle was not theirs, it was God's battle. They were committed to God's leading and, as a result, He brought them victory.

This is the type reaction we are to develop in our lives, to turn first to God before confronting any opposition. *Psalms 37:1-7* tells us to commit our way to the Lord, to trust Him, then to wait patiently. We are to rest, confident in the knowledge that He is working out the victory.

Our faith will be tested many times, but out of the testing comes strength. In *1 Timothy 6:20*, Paul instructs Timothy to, "*Keep that which is committed to thy trust.*" In *Romans 12:3*, we discover that every man has been given a measure of faith. This is something we have all been given, and God would have us use it to His glory.

One of our goals should be to be able at the end of our lives to say as Paul said, "*I have kept the faith,*" (*2 Timothy 4:7*). Paul certainly used his faith lavishly, yet he could not use it up. The more he utilized it and poured it out on others, the greater the measure he received in return. Employing this method, not only was he able to keep his faith, he was also able to return it to his Master, increased in measure.

We are entering a life, which contains a different kind of excitement. We are transferring our dependence away from creeds and rituals and placing it upon God. This will enable us to make discoveries which are a constant wonder to us.

As we begin to allow the Word to penetrate our facades and invade our hearts, we discern our own true natures. This is sometimes painful, but it is necessary if we want to maintain stability in unstable times. As our weaknesses are revealed to us we see the value of total reliance upon God, and this strengthens our commitment.

We know our commitment is bearing fruit when we see Jesus become more and more sovereign in our lives, in our heart-thoughts, and in all our affairs and relationships.

## Lesson Seven . . . Commitment

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 113)

1. What does the ordinance of water baptism symbolize?

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2. Why is it important for us to take the position of servant in our relationship with Jesus?

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3. As servants, what are we called to do?

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4. Why should we always turn first to God before confronting any opposition?

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5. Why is it that many are called, but few are chosen?

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6. What should we do with the measure of faith we have been given?

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## Lesson Eight

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### God

Some of us have a poor concept of God. We continually tend to bring Him down to our level. We plead with Him, we try to bribe Him, we become angry with Him, we question His wisdom, we accuse Him of cruelty.

Worst of all, we doubt Him. We simply don't see Him as He really is. He is the self-existent, eternal Creator and Sustainer of life. By His grace, He loves and forbears every human being regardless of his imperfections.

There is much said in the Scriptures about the power of God. In *Genesis 1*, we find He had only to speak the Word in order for the earth and all living things to materialize, *Ezekiel 38:14-23* contains a prophecy of God's power which many Bible scholars believe is soon to be manifested.

*Psalm 114:7* states, "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." The earth trembles in the presence of God. Yet we fragile human beings are so bold as to pout when we don't get our prayers answered immediately and according to our own terms.

In *Jeremiah 5:11-31*, God speaks through His prophet to proclaim His judgment upon those who reject Him. "Fear ye not Me? Will ye not tremble in My presence?" When we lose our perspective of the formidable potency of God, we place ourselves in a precarious position.

The prophet, Isaiah, caught a glimpse of God in a vision (*Isaiah 6:1-5*), and he immediately recognized the tremendous gap between man and God. "Woe is me!" cried Isaiah, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. "

When Daniel was delivered from certain death in the lion's den, the heathen king Darius decided to play it safe. He issued a decree to all his kingdom, "That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end" (*Daniel 6:25,26*).

This was a good move by Darius. But his heart was not changed, for he used the term, "the God of Daniel." In spite of the miracle, he had not accepted God as his own. But Daniel had indeed accepted God as God. When he received a divine visitation, he said. "And there remained no

strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. " (Daniel 10:7-9).

We are told by some ministers to stand boldly before God, to quote scriptures to Him and to claim our rights according to His Word. But His Word says, "*Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?*" (*Malachi 3:1-5*). In *Revelation 6:12-17*, the question is again asked, "*Who shall be able to stand?*"

In all of these Scriptures, we find the presence of God so incredibly powerful that no human being can remain on his feet. All the power in the universe has God as its Source. We must see this clearly to establish ourselves at this level in our walk.

Next, we have to get into proper perspective our concept of the reality of Jesus Christ.

One very large religious denomination, which calls itself Christian (Mormon), teaches that Jesus is not the unique Son of God. They claim His humanity was as real and ordinary as any other human being. They say that all of us can achieve what He achieved. They believe the same about God, the Father: As man is, God was; as God is, man may become.

Another so-called Christian denomination (Unity), teaches that within each of us is an inner Christ. They say that Jesus Christ was not the Second Person of the Trinity. Instead, he was a simple human being who brought forth His Christ-nature and perfected it. This denomination also teaches that we can become as Christ by releasing our inner Christ and allowing it to surface.

The fallacy of both these faiths becomes obvious when we refer to the Word. In *Genesis 3:5*, we discover who is responsible for the deception in the proposal that we can become as gods.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is different from us because He is God. *John 1:1* states, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" It says that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (*verse 14*). Jesus declared emphatically that He is the Son of God, sent by His Father (*John 5:18-23*).

God, Himself, called Jesus "God," and gave Him control of the kingdom of heaven (*Hebrews 1:18*). Jesus said He is not of this world (*John 8:23*). He said, "*Before Abraham was, I am*" (*John 8:58*). And in *Matthew 28:20*, He said, "*I am with you always.*"

Jesus is eternal, One with God. He stripped Himself of all His divine privileges and became a servant, a human being. He then humbled Himself further by carrying His obedience to the extreme of death on the cross (*Philippians 2:6-8*).

We now have these two perspectives in proper order, the supreme Divinity of God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son. This means we are ready to add the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "*God is a Spirit,*" (*John 4:24*), and He said, "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things,*" (*John 14:26*).

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is as much God as is Jesus. It is through His spiritual presence that we are enlightened in the Word, and guided in our daily activities. The Holy Spirit is a very necessary part of the New Covenant.

As we read in *Jeremiah 31:31-34*, we see that the Old Covenant was based upon written laws which had to be obeyed. But *Ezekiel 36:26,27* prophetically announced the forthcoming Spirit of God, and in *2 Corinthians 3:3-6*, we see the Holy Spirit is one to be followed. Jesus was obedient to that call and followed the Spirit into the wilderness (*Matthew 4:1*).

Unfortunately, we have tried to take the triune God of the Bible and bring Him into our churches on our own terms. The result is a diluted God, One whose only purpose is to serve us.

Also, God has instituted one body of Christ, one church. Man, however, has broken Jesus into hundreds of pieces, a new piece for every denomination. This division is not inspired by God, and He refuses to live in any temple which is not Christ-centered (*Matthew 23:37,38*).

God is God and we are but human. His thoughts and ways are altogether different and beyond ours (*Isaiah 55:8,9*). What then is our responsibility? Are we to make ourselves available to Him only at our convenience, or should we be available always? If He is sovereign, what is our position?

Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life,*" (*John 14:6*). He didn't say He is the life just so we can believe He is the life. His way provides us with a type of life to live, which is beyond our limited capabilities.

Sovereignty and responsibility are not a contradiction. As we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus, responsibility expands with our capability. In submitting to God as God, we begin to break out of our self-imposed prison. We have been confined by our unbelief, our horizons limited by our lack of vision. But in submission, we become usable and responsible.

God can do anything with a man who believes. There is no limit to God, but we can limit the unlimited One by our unbelief (*Psalms 78:41*).

*Ephesians 4:13* states that our responsibility is to come into the stature of the fullness of Christ. Fullness is a big word, especially when we apply it to all that Jesus is. It is popular to be told this means that everything Jesus has becomes ours. But it also means that everything we have must become His, otherwise there can be no Lordship.

Jesus is King of the kingdom. The word of a king has power (*Ecclesiastes 8:4*). As we research His Word, we must give that power jurisdiction in our lives. While He was on this earth, Jesus said, "*I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge,*" (*John 5:30*). The Apostle Paul was told by the lord, "*My strength is made perfect in weakness,*" (*2 Corinthians 12:9*).

Both confessed the weakness of human ability. Jesus stilled the storm, but He gave the credit to His Father. The important thing to note is that both Jesus and Paul experienced heavenly communication.

## Lesson Eight . . . God

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 116)

1. Why is it foolish for us to become upset when our prayers are not answered immediately, or according to our own terms?

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2. Even though we have seen God move sovereignly in our lives and the lives of others, like King Darius, why have we not made Him God over our lives?

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3. Why is it that even though we have the Spirit of Christ within us we cannot become as God?

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4. Why is it important for us to understand that Jesus is eternal, One with God?

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5. Why is the Holy Spirit a necessary part of the New Covenant?

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6. In what way does our capability expand as we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus?

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## Lesson Nine

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### God

Now that we know God is truly God, we must begin to develop our ability to hear Him. God no longer speaks to us as He did in the days of Moses. At that time, the earth trembled and the trumpet sounded loud and long (*Exodus 19:16-19*). Even then He would not show His face, for no man could look at Him and live (*Exodus 33:20*).

Since that day He began to reveal Himself differently, through His Spirit. Men who really sought His direction trained themselves to become accustomed to know His voice.

The prophet, Samuel, failed to recognize the Lord's voice when He first called him. He was but a child, an apprentice to Eli, the priest. But when Eli assured him it was the Lord speaking, Samuel learned to listen to the Lord. As a result, he was used mightily as God's obedient servant (*1 Samuel 3*).

By His Spirit, God dwells in every believer (*1 John 4:4*). It is important that we do not run off half-cocked when He speaks to us. We can be excited about hearing, and eager to comply, but no longer listening.

Consider what would have happened on Mount Moriah had Abraham not continued to listen for God's direction. In *Genesis 22:2*, God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and Abraham moved in obedience toward compliance to God's Word. But as Abraham stretched forth his hand to kill his son, God spoke a second time (*Genesis 22:10-14*). The result was that Isaac, the promised seed, was spared. Had Abraham not been accustomed to God's voice, it would have been a different story.

Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus, was also a man who recognized the voice of God. In *Matthew 2:20*, God told Joseph to take the young child and His mother and go into the land of Israel. Joseph immediately moved in obedience to the Divine directions. But he continued to listen and was sensitive when God spoke a second time. As a result, he went to Nazareth, in Galilee, thus saving the lives of his family and fulfilling prophecy (*Matthew 2:21-23*). Of course, Jesus, during His ministry, was constantly attuned to the Father. He did nothing without Divine direction (*John 5:30*).

So it is a time to begin listening, a time to become quiet. A man of God is not a sounding gong or a clashing cymbal. He has his perspectives in order, he knows that God is God, and he listens intently to receive His proceeding Word.

God has a purpose for our lives. He did not breathe life into us just to save us. His purpose is much greater than that, but our obedience figures in the outcome. It is as if we are part of a pattern being formed, like a quilt on a quilting frame. If we look at the pattern from below the frame, it appears to be nothing but unrelated, loosely hanging threads. But viewed from above, it becomes a logical pattern. The vision changes with the perspective.

Similarly, the events in our lives appear to be unrelated, but actually, every incident gives us an opportunity to respond in obedience to God's way. When we do, another thread is added to our personal pattern.

We need to understand that even though God is God, it is His will that man should have freedom of choice. He will not superimpose His will upon ours so we will choose Him. If that was so, all men would choose God because they would be powerless to do otherwise. But it is simply the will of God that man should choose. It is also true that if we miss God's plan for our lives, we will never be happy.

Sometimes we miss God because we go out of our way to avoid a storm. A man of God eventually discovers that all storms are not from Satan. God has a way of working His purposes through storms. God is always on the other side of a crisis. The crisis is used to reveal our stability. As we emerge from it, we pick up the thread and discover that God's plan goes beyond the crisis.

In the storm, we have the opportunity to see God's strength. How we deal with our, personal storm is very important. Peter's dark, stormy hour was at the priest's house. Relying upon his flesh, he failed (*Luke 22:54-62*). Jesus' dark hour was at Gethsemane. Relying upon the Father, He was victorious (*Matthew 26:36-46*). Paul and Silas chose to glorify God in their dark hour, and they saw a mighty miracle (*Acts 16 19-34*).

When we are submitted to God, it is sometimes unwise to forcefully take ourselves out of a hard situation. We may find it impossible to avoid returning to the same situation, or perhaps another one just as bad. But when we let God lead us out, we stay out.

*Psalm 23* states that we walk through the valley when we allow the Lord to lead us. If we rely only upon ourselves, we are likely to remain in the valley longer than necessary, but if we keep our eyes upon Him, He will lead us through. He knows the way out, for He sees things from His eternal vantage point.

It is the Lord's desire to bless His people. He does not inflict punishment upon believers just to whip them into line. But He can bless us only in the areas of our lives, which we have submitted to Him. He leaves us to our own devices in the areas of our lives, which we have not submitted to Him.

In *Deuteronomy 30:19-20*, He makes it clear that the choice is ours, and He will not interfere. He has no desire to fellowship with robots. His desire is to walk in the garden of the hearts of those who have, of their own free will, chosen Him. Once we have made the choice, He is at liberty to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (*Philippians 2:13*).

It may take a little extra work on His part if there are areas in our lives of which we are unwilling to let go. We may want to maintain jurisdiction over certain habits or characteristics. What we need to realize is that those characteristics, if not submitted to God, are submitted to someone else. We serve either God or Satan; there is no middle ground.

When we think we are in charge, we can be assured it is not we who are in charge. But when we allow God to work, His good pleasure becomes our good pleasure, because our will is submitted to His will.

God cannot use half-committed Christians. He calls them lukewarm, worthy only to be vomited out of His mouth. It is not that He can't digest them, it is that they refuse to be digested. To be digested by God means to lose identity. A morsel of food, when digested, ceases to be. It loses form and substance. It is overpowered by the digestive process and is assimilated for the use of the one who has digested it.

Our commitment to God should include our willingness to be digested by Him, to lose our identity. It is a time to lay down our lives, to be unquestionably associated with Him, to be assimilated by Him, to be transformed into His likeness.

It is a time for emptying, as we are filled with His Spirit. Our personal evacuation is in direct proportion to His entry. As we allow His fullness to come in, our fullness leaves.

But none of this can happen until we acknowledge God as God. *Proverbs 2* speaks of the fear of God, the reverential awe in which we must hold Him. And it tells beautifully of the results of that proper attitude. We can be trusted with a measure of Divine wisdom when we have finally established the proper perspective between God and ourselves.

The next step appears to be difficult and perhaps painful, but there is no turning back. Our commitment is real, our perspective is sound, and our attitude now contains a substantial amount of determination. We are about to have a confrontation with Jesus Christ.

## **Lesson Nine . . . God**

### **Personal And Group Exercise** (see page 117)

1. Why is it important that we train ourselves to recognize God's voice?

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2. Why should we understand that God has a pattern for our lives, even though we cannot see it clearly?

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3. Why doesn't God superimpose His will upon our will?

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4. Why should we always rely upon and trust God when we are experiencing a storm in our lives?

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5. What happens when we try to maintain jurisdiction over certain habits or characteristics in our lives?

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6. How do we go about losing our identity?

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## Lesson Ten

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### Crucifixion

Every step is a little more consequential, a little more difficult, and a little more demanding than the previous one. But the results are greater also.

The cross was extremely important to Jesus. He obviously wanted us to be very aware of its significance because His mention of it is recorded five times in the Gospels: *Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27*.

It is a necessary aspect of discipleship. Jesus stated we cannot be His disciple unless we take up our cross (*Luke 14:27*). But what is involved in the act of taking up our cross?

So often this is misconstrued to indicate that we should bear the burden of an infirmity or a negative situation in which we find ourselves. We should consider it a cross God has laid on us in His infinite wisdom. This causes us to walk through life staggering under the weight of the misfortune because we believe it is God's will. This frame of mind often breeds self-martyrdom.

We really need to take a close look at a cross to determine what our relationship to it should be. What purpose does a cross fulfill? What is its function? It obviously was not designed to be carried around. If every Christian was required to drag a cross with him everywhere he went, there would be mass confusion.

Let's face it, the only thing a cross is designed to accomplish is crucifixion. If that is the case, what is Christ saying to those who truly desire to be His disciples? At another time He said His yoke was easy, and His burden light (*Matthew 11:30*). Is this a contradiction, or is there revelation available to those who seek to go on with Him?

There is only one reason for Jesus to levy such a requirement. In three of the referenced scriptures He included the act of denying oneself with taking up the cross (*Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23*). It is the flesh, with all its demands, which must be put to death. In *2 Corinthians 4:11*, we find that we who live are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. The purpose is that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our body.

In *1 Corinthians 9:27*, Paul indicates the body is the problem. He refers to the body as "it," and infers that "I" is the real person. "I" keep "it" under subjection. When the body with its selfish demands, and the mind with its selfish thoughts rule over the spirit, we are carnal (*1 Corinthians 3:3*). Every time the spirit yields to the body, sin is the result. If the mind is not renewed (*Romans 12:1,2*), it will cooperate with the flesh and overthrow the Spirit.

## Lesson Ten . . . Crucifixion

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 118)

1. Why does Jesus want us to take up our cross?

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2. Why is crucifixion the only solution to our problem?

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3. What is involved in denying oneself?

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4. How should we properly define "I" and "it?"

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5. When "it" is in charge, what is the inevitable result?

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6. What is the result when "I" is in charge?

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## Lesson Eleven

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### Crucifixion

Paul says, in *Colossians 3:5*, we are to mortify the flesh. We are to crucify it so it will no longer have dominion over us. Only that which still needs to be crucified hangs upon our cross, and it will hang there until it has been crucified. If our cross is heavy, it is because we have too much of ourselves hanging upon it.

Perhaps we are burdened by indulgent demands of our flesh. If so, we must carry that burden on our cross until it yields to crucifixion. For example, our pride may refuse to die. It insists upon hanging there kicking and screaming for recognition. That leaves us no choice but to carry it around as a heavy burden nailed to our cross.

How do we put the flesh to death? The formula is really quite simple. Our physical bodies are strengthened two ways, diet and exercise. If we want to crucify the undesirable characteristics of our flesh, we need only to stop feeding them nourishing substance, and refuse them the opportunity to exercise. When we decide to control our thoughts and practices rather than feed and exercise our passions, the undesirable characteristics will wither and die.

Unfortunately, our will is weak in this respect. It is a rare individual who merely decides to change his habit pattern and does it. But this gives us an opportunity to meet the living Christ, and to watch Him bring about the necessary change. Jesus told Paul, "*My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" (*2 Corinthians 12:9*).

Dying to the flesh is accomplished simply by releasing the desires of the flesh to Jesus. Every time an undesirable characteristic or thought surfaces, we should say, "Jesus, there it is again. Please take it from me. Picture yourself handing it to Him and Him taking it. Before too long, that characteristic or thought will diminish and finally disappear. It does no good to strain our wills against the desires. He said, "*My yoke is easy.*" Why should we make it difficult?

This is a process which we should undergo one step at a time. The Word, acting as a mirror, enables us to see ourselves as we really are. It demands that we change the reflected image (*2 Corinthians 3:18*).

If we refuse to submit a certain area of our lives to Jesus, that particular area is open to attack by Satan. When he strikes, we are inclined to walk around saying, "I rebuke you, Satan!" But what we really need to do is submit that area of our lives to Jesus. Then we can say, as Michael the archangel said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (*Jude 9*).

To understand this more clearly, it may help to observe two disciples, Judas and Peter. Satan did not enter Jesus in order to kill Him; he entered Judas (*Luke 22:3*). He could enter Judas because he had a legal right.

Notice, in *Matthew 26:22*, when all the disciples began to question Jesus, they called Him Lord. But, in *verse 25*, when the time came for Judas to ask the question, he called Jesus, Master, or Teacher. Judas did not make Jesus Lord of his life. He never submitted his love for money to Jesus, and it was through that love for money, just thirty pieces of silver, that Satan obtained right of entry.

Judas did not have to betray Jesus. Jesus said, "*Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!*" Judas was not predestined for betrayal. We must be careful about predestination. We are all predestined (*Ephesians 1:11*), but we do not all fulfill our destiny because we have a free will. Judas also had a free will. If he hadn't betrayed Jesus, Satan would have found another way. Satan was already in the Pharisees; he could have continued to move through them without utilizing Judas.

## Lesson Eleven . . . Crucifixion

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 119)

1. What is our problem if our cross is too heavy?

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2. What is an example of how we can feed our flesh?

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3. How do we put the flesh to death?

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4. What should we do if we have taken an undesirable characteristic to Jesus, but it keeps coming back?

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5. Why aren't we able to accomplish crucifixion on our own, without Jesus?

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6. What is a sure way in which we can expose ourselves to an attack from Satan?

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## Lesson Twelve

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### Crucifixion

Satan has no legal right to anything we have turned over to Jesus. He does, however, have a legal right to everything we have not turned over to Jesus. We serve one or the other; we have no choice about that. Everything we allow Satan to control leads to death: excess food, excess drink, excess smoking, excess drugs, lack of discipline in areas such as exercise, and unrestrained anger. There is even death in relationships through gossip, criticism and judging. The list is endless if Satan gets a toehold.

In the previous lesson, we discovered that Judas never made Jesus Lord over his life. Peter was different from Judas. Jesus told Peter, "*Satan hath desired you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.*" (Luke 22:31,32). Satan wanted Peter, and he wants us, only to use to discredit Jesus. He wants to kill us before we have fulfilled God's will in our lives.

Satan had to ask permission for Peter because Peter had made Jesus Lord of his life (Matthew 16:16). However, Satan had a legal right to those areas of Peter's life, which were not crucified, not submitted to Jesus. Satan used Peter's pride to attack him. "I'll die for you," declared Peter (Luke 22:33). Peter was sure of himself because he was still filled with himself. This made him vulnerable to Satan.

It was a moment when Satan could have killed Peter if Jesus had allowed it. He could have made Peter lose his faith and fall away in desperation. But Jesus interceded. He prayed that Peter would not lose his faith. It was the perfect prayer, for faith is the shield which protects us from the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16).

The cross provides us with protection from all hostile forces. In Ezra 3:3, we see the Israelites, before restoring the house of the Lord, set the altar in place. "*for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries.*" Their fear of attack led them to the altar.

The altar typifies the cross, and the cross is basic to deliverance. Opposition will not go away, but our security lies in the cross, because all opposition loses its power there. Colossians 2:15 states that Jesus spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross. He is our example, and we are to follow suit.

So, we must choose death In order to have life. Fortunately, Jesus never spoke of His forthcoming crucifixion without including His resurrection. When we allow ourselves to be crucified with Christ (*Galatians 2:20*), the attitude of Jesus begins to express itself through us.

Our relationship with others changes. We become capable of loving the spirit of a person no matter how carnal his actions. Even rejection by another is no longer important. We see all mankind redeemed to God, bought by the blood of Jesus. Those who are unaware of that truth, simply walk in deception.

Through crucifixion we obtain victory over sinful habits (*Romans 6:6*). As we yield all our rights to Jesus, we receive freedom from bondage, and peace in our hearts. But the responsibility is ours; Jesus will not crucify us. We must exercise our will to mortify the flesh by taking it to Jesus. We are not talking about self improvement; nothing less than crucifixion is required!

## Lesson Twelve . . . Crucifixion

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 120)

1. Why does Satan deal in excesses?

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2. Peter was a faithful follower of Jesus, yet he was vulnerable to Satanic attack. Why?

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3. Why is the cross basic to deliverance?

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4. What does it mean when we say we have to choose death in order to have life?

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5. How can we become capable of loving the spirit of a person no matter how carnal his actions?

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6. What is the only way we can receive freedom from the bondage of Satan, and peace in our hearts?

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## Lesson Thirteen

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### Crucifixion

Speaking of Jesus, *Isaiah 53* says He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities (*verse 5*). He bore the sins of many and poured out His soul unto death (*verse 12*).

It is the sin of disobedience to the Word of God, which brings on all our problems. Our rebellion, our contradictory nature, brings about error and failure, which in turn exposes us to sickness and grief. All this is brought about because of the selfish demands of the flesh. The cross is the only place to deal with it and receive freedom.

In *Isaiah 52:13*, we see that because Jesus remained steadfast in His goal to accomplish God's purpose, even to the cross, He was exalted. It is the same with us at our Calvary, our cross. As we clear up the transgressions, we shall be lifted up.

But our motivation should not be self-exaltation. We need to ask ourselves, "How much am I, personally, really concerned for the exaltation of Jesus Christ in my life?" The proof is in our willingness to accept the cross. There is no way to the exaltation of Jesus other than the cross applied to each particular aspect of our lives. We must appropriate *Philippians 2:8,9*. In *verse 8*, we see the necessity to humble ourselves, even to the death of the cross. This permits *verse 9* to become a reality.

We can see the wisdom of applying the cross in our lives when we observe Israel. The Israelites never hated the evil of their enemies to the degree that God required. They refused to destroy their enemies completely, and those who lived caused them to fall away from God.

We are to be like Samuel (*1 Samuel 15*). We are not to live at peace with an enemy of God, which lives in our flesh. We are to drive it out. We should pray for the hatred of evil, so we can recognize it, no matter how enticing it may be. In areas where our flesh is an enemy to God's purpose, we must destroy it. The flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit who gives life (*John 6:63*).

Crucifixion is not entirely negative, it just happens to be the only way to a resurrected life on earth. It is not the end; it is the means God uses to accomplish His end, His purpose.

We have a tendency to think of the cross as something destructive and revolting, and it does destroy some areas of our lives, but only those areas, which are carnal and contrary to God. They must be put to death in order for the eternal, spiritual life to grow and produce fruit.

God uses the cross like a plow to clear the ground in order to get a richer harvest. It is God's means for eliminating everything that makes it impossible for Him to do what He wants to do in our lives.

Our body is for the Lord; it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 6:13,19*). We must yield it to God in order for Him to receive His inheritance (*Ephesians 1:18*). The heir inherits only after there is a death. He died that we might live; now we must die that He might live through us. Paul said, "*I die daily.*" (*1 Corinthians 15:31*). He understood the necessity to be a living sacrifice, putting to death those characteristics displeasing to God, which surfaced in his daily walk.

The best of our flesh is really the worst, because that is where we trust. God wants all the flesh crucified. God does much with little, most with least, and everything with nothing.

*Ephesians 2:1* says He has quickened us. That is, He resurrected us who were doomed to eternal death. But there can be no quickening unless there is a dying. Until the cross has done its work, nothing heavenly can be brought in.

Our personal temple, our house of God, can only be built on the foundation of our willingness to place everything on the cross. God must come first! We must empty ourselves of a desire to be important. Our temple should be a place where God is God, where He can dictate His divine purpose and receive an immediate "Amen" from us.

The Spirit of Christ must be given authority (*Romans 8:9*). We have come to a relationship with God that is the end of what we can do alone. It was only after Christ died that He multiplied, and we are no different in that respect.

The cross appeared to the world to be a disgraceful defeat when it was, in fact, a glorious victory! When we can properly understand that and appropriate it in our lives, we will be ready for the next step.

## Lesson Thirteen . . . Crucifixion

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 121)

1. Why does the sin of disobedience bring on all our problems?

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2. What can be proved by our willingness to accept the cross?

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3. Why is it important for us to hate the evil within us?

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4. Why is crucifixion not really a negative thing?

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5. Why is the best of our flesh really the worst?

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6. What do we mean when we say it is only after we die that we can multiply?

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## Lesson Fourteen

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### Righteousness

There are over three hundred references to righteousness in the Bible. They all point to one specific: being in right relationship with God through obedience to His precepts.

Now that we have submitted ourselves to the crucifixion of the flesh, we have nothing left to rebel against God. Therefore, we need only to depend upon His Word as truth and it will be accounted unto us as righteousness (*Romans 4:3*). God's principles are so simple they are beyond intellectual acceptance.

The step of righteousness involves mopping up after our crucifixion. We now have the power to put off the old and take on the new (*Colossians 3:8-10*). It is time for a character change (*Ephesians 4:22-24*). We begin by renewing our minds in order to determine God's will in our lives (*Romans 12:2*).

True righteousness demands maturity concerning the Word of God. We have moved far beyond initial salvation, and we are slowly being formed into usable vessels. This places a responsibility upon us to research the Word and to apply it in our lives. We are no longer to depend upon pulpit-feeding (*Hebrews 5:13,14*).

If we want to walk with God in the fullness of His purpose, we have to dispose of two people. We are to rid ourselves of the person we think we are, and the person we would like others to think we are. With these two out of the way, we are left with the person God knows we are. As we face the reality of our frailty and impotence, we can then go along with Him without argument, as slaves of righteousness (*Romans 6:18*).

There is a very important lesson to learn here. We simply cannot proceed another step unless we learn to rely completely upon God. We must come to the place where we realize we can't handle an inner problem, such as lust, by seeking to deal with the problem. This is because we're trying to deal with consequences rather than causes.

Sin itself, is a consequence. The seed of sin is pride. Pride is a self-exalting characteristic which elevates us to a position of unbelief. We doubt God's Word as being true, and we decide to believe in ourselves instead. This leads us to a state of departure from God, and the inevitable outcome is sin. So, we must get rid of the two people who are prone to pride.

Righteousness is also a consequence. Its seed is the recognition of God as God. From that seed, faith grows, and as faith grows, it produces righteousness.

We see, in *Isaiah 51:1*, that those who seek the Lord follow after righteousness. In *Isaiah 41:10*, the Lord says, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." (*Matthew 5:6*).

In seeking God for everything, we come into right relationship with Him. We depend upon Him, and we place ourselves in a position to serve Him. As servants, we willingly obey His Word. We then receive His righteousness and, along with it, His protection (*Isaiah 54:17*).

Joshua and Caleb were two good examples. By faith, they believed the Word of God as true. They believed He would deliver the promised land into their hands, regardless of the giants who had to be overcome. By faith, they saw the promise fulfilled, because it was God who had made the promise.

However, most of Israel was against Joshua and Caleb because of the report they received from their spies. They placed more credibility upon the threatening circumstances than upon God's promise (*Numbers 13:26-33*). Joshua and Caleb had no choice but to go along with the rest of the nation. Unfortunately, the forty days they had searched the land, became the basis for their forty year sentence in the wilderness (*Numbers 14:26-38*).

But by faith, Joshua and Caleb held to the promise and looked forward to its fulfillment. And because of their righteousness, their right standing with God, they received the promise and occupied the land. They were the only ones who did, for all those who participated in the rebellion forty years earlier, died in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb had been upheld by the right hand of God's righteousness (*Psalms 48:10*).

In *Romans 3:22*, we see that we receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. There is no work we can perform to earn righteousness. It is simply imputed to us by God according to our faith (*Romans 4:6*).

Unfortunately, we often go about as Israel did. Ignorant of God's righteousness, we attempt to establish a righteousness of our own (*Romans 10:3*). We would much rather do something good, serve a good cause, for example, than submit to God's righteousness through faith and obedience to His Word. But in order for righteousness to be valid, it must be of God, through Jesus Christ (*2 Peter 1:1*).

God sees us as righteous when we accept Jesus, then He works it out in our lives. Sometimes God uses Satan's sifting to separate unrighteousness from righteousness. The chaff was separated from the wheat in Peter as Satan sifted (*Luke 22:31*). Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail in the process of sifting. He knew Peter would fail in the eyes of the world. But if his faith held, he would be emptied of his unrighteousness and become a useful vessel, as happened on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2*).

So we see that righteousness is positional. We do not perform works, we do not battle the ways of the flesh to become righteous. We maintain righteousness through obedience, and the flesh falls into line. We become new creatures as God works out our imputed righteousness (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).

Our attitude has made a real change at this point. Our eyes are upon God more than upon men. We come into His presence before we try any outside activity. If the activity is not born out of our quiet time with God, we will not consider it. Our quiet time with God must not simply stay abreast and complement our public activities; it should be their birthplace!

If our concern is to please men, we will only experience imperfection and failure. However, if God has directed us out of our private time with Him, there will be effective accomplishment. We should have the peace of mind to wait until God activates us.

We should never move on the basis of something we have seen in someone else and try to make it our own. It is that kind of righteousness, a product of fleshly works, which Isaiah described as filthy rags (*Isaiah 64:6*).

God has chosen those willing to be considered as fools by the world in order for His glory to be displayed (*1 Corinthians 4:10*). He has placed His treasure in weak earthen vessels. There will be no question that all the power and authority comes from Him, and He alone will receive the glory (*2 Corinthians 4:7*). When we understand this in our hearts, we have made a major advance toward righteousness.

We will have to do spiritual battle to maintain every stronghold we have gained. Our step of crucifixion has been a chastening one, which has enabled us to make this next step (*Hebrews 12:11*). But there is still the remnant of flesh, which will occasionally rear its head and demand recognition. *Ecclesiastes 7:16* instructs us not to consider ourselves too righteous.

King Uzziah was righteous in the eyes of the Lord. He even had the wisdom to counsel with someone spiritually stronger. Yet he allowed his fleshly pride to tempt him to trespass the sanctuary and perform the priestly duty of burning incense. He had found favor in God's sight and mistakenly thought, because he was blessed by God, there was nothing he couldn't do. This righteous man, because of his self-exaltation, became a leper for the remainder of his life (*2 Chronicles 26*).

It is possible to turn away from our righteousness. But forgiveness, through repentance, is always available to us if we act before it is too late (*Ezekiel 18:24-28*).

Peter said the righteous are scarcely saved (*1 Peter 4:18*). Yet we know the righteous are considered objectionable and are persecuted in many areas of the world. But righteousness cannot be destroyed by persecution; it can only be refined and strengthened.

The Son of God was persecuted because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Because He persevered to the cross, His Father presented Him with a scepter of righteousness (*Hebrews 1:8,9*). Before He endured the cross, He promised that those persecuted for the sake of righteousness would inherit the kingdom of heaven (*Matthew 5:10*).

*1 John 3:10* says the children of God are manifested by their righteousness, and those who are not righteous are not of God. Let us pray that our hearts will allow us to become slaves of righteousness (*Romans 6:18*), so that our Master may cover us with His robe (*Isaiah 61:10*), as preparation for our next step.

## Lesson Fourteen . . . Righteousness

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 122)

1. Why do we have to dispose of the person we think we are and the person we would like others to think we are?

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2. Why are Joshua and Caleb good examples for us?

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3. How do we obtain righteousness?

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4. What happens to our flesh when we become righteous?

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5. What is one way we can be certain our work for the Lord will be effective?

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6. What happens to our righteousness when we come under criticism and rebuke and persecution from the world?

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## Lesson Fifteen

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### Discipleship

Discipleship is a journey, not a destination.

Jesus Christ, the man, was a disciple. The word "disciple" means disciplined follower. Jesus did nothing of Himself; He did only what He saw the Father do (*John 5:19*). Now it is time for us to keep our eyes upon Jesus, to put Him first in our lives, to become His disciplined followers.

Jesus called no one to be a Christian. The term "Christian" was just a label attached to the disciples by others as they watched the disciplined followers at Antioch (*Acts 11:26*). Jesus called His followers to be disciples only, disciplined followers of His Word.

When Jesus called Levi, the tax collector. Levi left everything and immediately followed Jesus (*Luke 5:27, 28*). This act placed him in the position, which later enabled him to write the first book of the New Testament. That was not his reason for joining up with Jesus, it was the outcome of his obedience. We know Levi by his Christian name, Matthew.

In *Mark 10:28-30*, Jesus stated that nothing should stand between Him and His disciples. Everything is to be put aside to put Jesus first.

In *Luke 9:57-62*, there is an interesting story about three men who had the opportunity to become disciples. Two of the men volunteered, and the other was called by Jesus. Jesus challenged the first man to give up his earthly comforts and take whatever Jesus had to offer. The man evidently decided the sacrifice was too great, for we hear no more about him.

When Jesus called the second man, he told Jesus he had a job to do first, a responsibility to bury his father. It is not clear whether the father was already dead, or expected to die, but the key to the man's refusal lay in the words, "...but first, let me..." It was a matter of placing a job or responsibility ahead of Christ.

The third man also gave precedence to something other than Jesus, his family ties. "I will follow you, but first let me..." This attitude is not acceptable for one who truly commits to discipleship. Jesus must have priority. He will settle for nothing less.

In *Philippians 3:7-9*, Paul makes it clear that he forsook all to place Jesus first. He had come a long way from that day on the road to Damascus when, as Saul, he was dedicated to the annihilation of all of Christ's followers (*Acts 9:1-31*).

At the time of Saul's conversion, he suddenly became aware that Jesus was alive. He asked, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" In an instant, this proud religionist was plummeted to a humble position, a servant relationship with Jesus and with the world.

Prior to this occasion, everything had centered around his own life and activities. All his acts had been according to his own plans and upon his own conditions. He was a zealous religionist, determined to do what he considered to be in God's best interests. He was devoted to the law and his intentions were good. However, what he considered to be proof of his devotion actually was a disservice to God.

The revelation of a living Christ brought an immediate change. Faced with this reality, Paul promptly humbled himself and submitted to the Lordship of Jesus.

There is a type of Saul of Tarsus in each of us that needs the revelation experience of the living Christ. When the experience comes, it carries with it the power to humble its recipient. Until this happens, discipleship is difficult.

## **Lesson Fifteen . . . Discipleship**

### **Personal And Group Exercise** (see page 123)

1. What is the difference between a Christian and a disciple?

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2. When we look at the outcome of the obedience of Levi, what does that say to us?

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3. What is wrong with saying to the Lord, "I am willing to become Your disciple, but first let

me...?

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4. In what way is each of us like Saul of Tarsus?

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5. Why are humility and submission essential to discipleship?

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6. Why does each of us really need the revelation experience of the living Christ?

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## Lesson Sixteen

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### Discipleship

We have just moved up from the step of righteousness. This move is necessary because discipleship is the means by which we maintain our righteousness.

As we continue to go higher in our spiritual walk, the price also continues to escalate. This should not come as a surprise to us for we are no strangers to the Word. In *Luke 14:27-33*, Jesus said it is wise for us to count the cost before we proceed toward a life of discipleship. It is better not to start at all, than to begin without the commitment to finish.

We should already have dealt with commitment; therefore, we should have decided to pay whatever price is required at each level. But also at every level we have become more dependent upon our Source. As we lay our foundation upon the Rock, the Lord gives us more light in which to build. At the same time, He extracts something from us as payment. With the additional light comes the responsibility to walk in its fullness.

As we proceed with our construction program, we realize more and more clearly that we haven't the sufficiency within ourselves to finish. Our commitment is really tested at this level because, in the flesh, we would have no choice but to quit the climb.

We have reached the stage where our only alternative is to rely upon His grace (*2 Corinthians 12:9*). If we make the wrong decision and choose to quit, we stand to lose all we have accomplished (*2 John 8*). Also, we discover that everything we have gone through has been in vain (*Galatians 3:4*).

We constantly face choice in our spiritual walk; there is no way to avoid it. We are brought back time and again to Joshua's challenge (*Joshua 24:15*), "Choose you this day whom you will serve." We will definitely serve one or the other, either God or a substitute god in which we are encouraged by Satan. It always helps us make the right decision when we remind ourselves that God performs in our lives on the basis of our choice, not on the basis of our ability.

In the process of discipleship, we are to become like our Teacher. Paul says we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (*Romans 13:14*), and not to make provision for the flesh. If we are Christ's, our flesh has been crucified; therefore, we should be free to walk in the Spirit (*Galatians 5:24-26*).

We are to lose ourselves in Him, that is, in His body, which is comprised of His believers. If we are properly situated in His body, He is the Head, and we perform as integral parts of His system. In this way, God's purpose can be accomplished.

Jesus emphasized, by having it recorded six times in the Gospels, the need to lose any personal claim to our lives in order to receive the kingdom life He has for us (*Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25*). It is a Divine principle which we must activate as disciples.

## Lesson Sixteen . . . Discipleship

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 124)

1. In what way is discipleship the means by which we maintain our righteousness?

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2. Why should we become more and more dependent upon Jesus?

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3. Why are we constantly placed in the position of having to make a choice?

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4. Why isn't God as interested in our abilities as He is in our decisions?

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5. What is involved in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ?

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6. What is so important about relinquishing any personal claim to our lives?

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## Lesson Seventeen

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### Discipleship

We saw, in *Luke 14:33*, that we must forsake all in order to become disciples of Jesus! This means unconditional surrender to Him.

Christians have a difficult time with unconditional surrender. Everybody expects soldiers to give their lives because it is their patriotic duty. And no one is surprised when a Muslim gives his life for religious reasons. But Christians don't believe Jesus is sincere when He says to forsake all.

Yet, that is the call Jesus makes. We are to forsake in order to seek. We are to take no thought for our lives, but to concentrate instead upon the kingdom of God (*Matthew 6:25-33*). We accomplish this through obedience to His Word.

We are to follow Jesus (*Matthew 16:24*). To follow Jesus, we need to observe His character. Of course, the highlight of His character was obedience to the will of God. For us to know God's will, we must be familiar with His Word.

Jesus, himself, gives us basic instructions concerning a disciple's behavior in relation to the Word.

First, to have Him abide in us, we must abide in Him. We can effectuate this through His Word (*John 15:4-7*).

Second, when we express our love for Him and receive His love in return, the natural outcome will be a desire and an ability to obey His Word (*John 14:21*).

Third, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, dwells within each disciple to guide him in the truth of the Word (*John 14:16,17*).

Fourth, we are to continue in the Word in order to walk in it's truth. To look back to the old life, rather than continue to focus upon Christ, makes us unfit to be a disciple (*Luke 9:62*). In *1 John 3:22*, we find that when we obey the Word our petitions are answered.

Another characteristic of Jesus was His zeal to complete His task. In *John 9:4*, He said, "*I must work the works of Him who sent Me, while it is still day; the night cometh when no man can*

work.” And, in *Luke 12:50*, He said, “*But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am straightened till it be accomplished!*”

Every disciple must understand he likewise has a calling, a purpose to be fulfilled, and he must be zealous about it. No disciple knows when his day will be over, and his night will come. Because of this, he must diligently seek God and be sensitive to Divine guidance.

*Hebrews 1:7* states that God's ministers are to be a flame of fire. They are to drive the enemy from their personal temples and zealously be about the Father's business (*John 2:13-17*).

## Lesson Seventeen . . . Discipleship

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 125)

1. What does unconditional surrender really mean?

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2. How do we follow Jesus?

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3. What sort of instructions did Jesus give about the Word?

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4. Why is it important for a disciple to be zealous?

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5. Why can we be certain there is a Divine purpose for our lives?

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6. What is involved in driving the enemy from our personal temples?

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## Lesson Eighteen

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### Discipleship

High on the list of a disciple's activities is prayer. He is to draw near to God with a true heart (*Hebrews 10:22*). He does not pray just for his own selfish interests (*James 4:3*). He prays according to God's will (*1 John 5:14, 15*). He knows God's will because he knows God's Word. He also prays in the name of Jesus (*John 14:13, 14 and 16:23*).

Prayer is closely linked to faith. Nehemiah is a good example of one in whom prayer and faith show their relationship. In *Nehemiah 2:4*, we see that he had instantaneous contact with heaven. If we look at *Chapter 1*, we see this came about because he had already opened a line of communication through concerted prayer. The Lord went before him and prepared the heart of the king to cooperate with the ministry He had appointed to Nehemiah. Then, once the preparations were made, Nehemiah had to move on faith.

We should hold dear our early preparatory periods, which the Lord blesses. But later, if the blessings seem to disappear, we should not assume things have gone wrong. The Lord sets us on our way, but He does not keep us on our way by sight. He arranges for us to have an opportunity to walk in faith. We would prefer to have His visible, reassuring hand with us always, but He wants us to progress beyond that stage.

Nehemiah met hardships later, but he never forgot the way the Lord facilitated the initial stages of His divine purpose. If the Lord has indicated a thing is right and has helped it along in the beginning, the disciple must go on in faith. This is an exercise in discipline.

It is not reasonable for us to expect prompt response to hurried prayers unless we have a background of prayer and a discipline to the Word. God is not just an emergency God. He expects a deep relationship from a disciple, a secret prayer life in which there is open communication and faith response.

Nehemiah did nothing without prayer. At every turn of his experience, he lifted his heart to God. Prayer was always his birthplace for action. It was this type of discipline that made him an acceptable instrument, a vessel whom God knew could be trusted with His works.

Faith is an identification mark of a disciple. He must accept *Luke 1:37 and 18:27* as completely true, that nothing is impossible for God.

Sarah laughed when the angel of the Lord said she would bear a son, but the angel challenged Abraham and Sarah with the question. *"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"*

Jesus said all things are possible to them that believe (*Mark 9:23*). Paul grasped the reality of that when he said, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,"* (*Philippians 4:13*).

Joshua really put his faith to work when he took Jericho according to God's directions (*Joshua 6:1-20*). He was a fighting man, and God's procedure didn't fit at all into any battle strategy. But Joshua was a disciplined man of God. His commitment to obedience was greater than his desire to prove himself a mighty general.

He must have appeared foolish to his subordinates, but they too were disciplined and committed to follow their leader without question. The result was that the wall fell down flat and Jericho was taken, just as the Lord had promised Joshua.

It happened in an impossible way, except that nothing is impossible to God. Joshua had learned to walk by faith, just as Nehemiah and the apostle Paul learned. To walk by sight means we have visible means of support, but God expects the disciple to do better than that (*2 Corinthians 5:7*).

Disciples are not unfamiliar with warfare. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he instructed him to be a good soldier of Christ (*2 Timothy 2:3*). Actually, discipleship is a form of warfare. The disciple constantly encounters the forces of Satan's principalities and powers (*Ephesians 6:12*).

No warfare is without danger, but no opponent is a match for God. Because of this, the disciple must always assume the position of total dependence upon God. Unless he takes such a position, there will be no victory.

The disciple must always have his spiritual eyes open to avoid deception, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. But the righteousness of the disciple should enable him to discern evil, no matter how well it is disguised (*2 Corinthians 11:14, 15*).

Finally, disciples should be recognizable by their love for one another (*John 13:35*). Disciples should manifest an unselfish love, such as that spoken of in *1 Corinthians 13*. There should be no murmuring, no criticism, no manipulation, nor maneuvering for a better position. Jesus expects from His disciples the kind of love which covers a multitude of sins (*1 Peter 4:8*).

There cannot be friction among disciples, for they have been called to help one another produce more disciples (*2 Timothy 2:2*). The goal of all disciples is to fulfill the great commission given by Jesus (*Matthew 28:19,20*).

There are no apostles, no prophets, no teachers, no pastors nor shepherds, who are not first called to be disciples. For example, the undisciplined leader has no right to appropriate the epistles, for he has no way of appropriating them except by his flesh. It is in the Gospels that Jesus must first do His work of renewal of the mind, and of crucifixion and resurrection.

It is the resurrected disciple who is then qualified to be sent out as an apostle.

A prophet of God must first be molded by God. He must have a relationship which fashions understanding. He must be a disciple.

Unless a teacher is first a disciple, his teaching will be limited to his own intellect.

A pastor or shepherd cannot possibly develop disciples of Christ unless he is a disciple himself. This is one reason so many churches have only a remnant of committed Christians.

Every leader must take on the mind of Christ to be able to break through the barrier of denominationalism. He must allow the love of Jesus to control every fiber of his being. He can then yield unselfishly to a unified body.

All of this is impossible without a commitment to discipleship. The importance of discipleship cannot be overemphasized. It is the call placed upon every believer by Jesus Christ. Anyone who claims to be a Christian, but rejects Christ's call to discipleship, is little more than a religious fraud. This may be through ignorance or by direct choice, but it makes little difference. Jesus called every believer to become a disciple.

When we have committed ourselves to that task, when we have committed to become a disciplined follower of Christ, we are ready to take the next step.

## Lesson Eighteen . . . Discipleship

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 126)

1. Why should prayer be high on the list of a disciple's activities?

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2. Why does the Lord arrange for us to have an opportunity to walk by faith rather than by sight?

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3. When a disciple meets the enemy, why should he never hesitate to enter spiritual warfare?

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4. How does a disciple manage to avoid deception?

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5. What part does love play in the life of a disciple?

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6. Why should every spiritual leader first be a disciple of Christ?

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## Lesson Nineteen

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### Holiness

"But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15,16).

God has called us unto holiness (1 *Thessalonians 4:7*), it is His command. If we reject holiness, we reject God. We must understand that all holiness begins with God.

His holiness is unique to Him (*Exodus 15:11*). Everything brought into His presence must be submitted to His holiness, dedicated, devoted to Him in order to be acceptable.

In *Zechariah 14:20,21*, we see that every vessel, every instrument, everything brought into service to the Lord, is called to be holy. The priests and the ark were holy (2 *Chronicles 35:3*); the prophets were holy (*Luke 1:70*); even the nation of Israel was called to be holy through obedience to God's commandments (*Numbers 15:40*).

God's very name is holy, and He dwells in a holy place (*Isaiah 57:15*); He spoke to His people out of His holy hill (*Psalms 99:6-9*); He has a holy heaven (*Psalms 20:6*), in which the holy angels live (*Mark 8:38*); He has a holy city (*Isaiah 4:3*), and a holy temple (*Psalms 11:4*).

God is the personification of holiness. The psalmist asks, "Who shall stand in His holy place?" (*Psalms 24:3*), and again, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle and who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (*Psalms 15:1*) In both each Psalm the answer is given, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh truth..."

It becomes obvious that one who seeks holiness must be separated from the world in his heart and be joined to God. There can be no holiness without cohesion to God, and there can be no cohesion if the ways of the flesh dominate our personality (*Galatians 5:19-21*). To be holy we must be as the man described in *Psalms 1:1-3*. We are to put on the characteristics of holiness, add love, and conduct ourselves as one of the elect (*Colossians 3:12-14*).

The purpose of the many scripture references is to establish firmly that all holiness emanates from God, and that anything to be consecrated for His use must be submitted to His holiness.

That is the place to which we have come. We have gone through the stages of commitment and crucifixion. We now have God in the proper perspective. We have brought ourselves into right standing with Him, and we are maintaining our position through discipleship. This has delivered us to the level at which we can go no further without receiving His holiness.

We have left the state of doing and have come into the state of being. These next three steps reveal what we can be with Him. He will no longer accommodate our desire for intellectual understanding. From this point we will be required to move on revelation. Our basic trust will be our only source of security as He calls us into His presence.

We have reached that facet of salvation, which includes the whole man and his reaction to the circumstances of life. We now realize we are no stronger spiritually than our weakest moment, and that our inner man can be strengthened in only one way (*Ephesians 3:14-19*). We have been called by God into His royal priesthood. We have become part of His holy nation (*1 Peter 2:9*). We are to be peculiar to Him only, for He has brought us out of the darkness of the world.

It would be well for us to observe God's manner of consecrating His priests. In *Leviticus 8:22, 23*, He instructed Moses to place the blood of a ram upon certain parts of Aaron's body. In this way Aaron identified with a life, which was poured out, yielded, dead to self.

The ram was a symbol of Jesus Christ, who poured out His life and presented His blood in the holy of holies in heaven (*Hebrews 9:11-14*). We are to identify with Him.

First, the blood was put upon the tip of Aaron's right ear. That means the ear is dead to any voice except the voice of God. Things to which we would normally give ear are now ignored. This includes our own inner voice, which has directed our ambitions and personal interests. The lure of the world and the affections of others are all put aside as we adjust our ear only for the Lord.

In this way the ear is consecrated, dead to anything, which comes from another direction. We must set aside a daily quiet time. This enables our ear to focus upon the spiritual voice, and grow in its capacity to receive. Then, upon receiving, we are to obey.

Next, the blood was put upon the thumb of Aaron's right hand. Our hand must be dead also to any work in which the Lord cannot be glorified. There can be no seeking of honor or glory or reputation for self. The Lord will not move one of His priests to a position, which will give Him greater glory until that priest has proved himself. He does this by performing his present service as unto the Lord, no matter how mundane or degrading it may be.

Finally, the blood was put upon the great toe of Aaron's right foot. This means the Lord is to have control of the direction of our lives. Whether we go or stay will be according to the Lord's interests, not our own, for we have rendered our own direction dead.

Our pattern for all this is our High Priest. He was dead to self-consideration and self-preservation. He was alive only to God. As priests, we are also to present our ears, our thumbs, our feet, our entire bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. This is our priesthood.

In *verse 30 of Leviticus, Chapter 8*, Moses also anointed Aaron with oil, and in *Psalms 133:2*, we find that the oil ran down from Aaron's head, through his beard, even to the skirts of his

garments. Oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. As His priests, we are to allow the Spirit of God to permeate every part of our being.

We must remember holiness is a state of being, not doing. It does not call for self-martyrdom. That is a charade God will not tolerate. Jesus came to provide abundant life for His priests as well as for other believers (*John 10:10*). Holiness is a recognizable condition which even the demons acknowledge (*Luke 4:33, 34*).

Jesus didn't maintain His holiness by separating Himself from every unholy influence. Instead, He separated His will to the will of a holy God. By constantly turning to God, He constantly received God's holiness. Jesus was walking proof that humility and holiness coexist. He humbled Himself all the way to the cross (*Philippians 2:5-8*).

By observing Jesus, we see that if we continually turn to God to receive His Holiness, we will naturally do the right things. It is not the other way around, that if we do the right things, we will be holy. In *Ephesians 5:27*, we learn that only Christ can make His body holy, and He has sent His Holy Spirit to accomplish that task in each of us individually. As we individually receive His holiness, we then fit into His corporate holy body.

So we see that God is the Source of holiness. Through the act of Jesus we are justified. Our slate is wiped clean. And the Holy Spirit is the One who works holiness into our lives. Our past is wiped away, Christ has done that for us. We can do nothing but accept that, and to accept also that we are holy as heirs with Jesus (*Galatians 4:4-7*).

The process of holiness is progressive, along with everything else in the salvation package. God has set us apart, but everything must be developed as He works in Zoe, the God-life.

## Lesson Nineteen . . . Holiness

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 127)

1. Why does everything brought into the presence of God have to be holy?

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2. What is the difference between the state of doing and the state of being?

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3. Why are we no stronger spiritually than our weakest moment?

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4. Why is it necessary for the disciple to understand the concept of consecration?

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5. How can we be assured we will do the "right" things?

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6. In what way do holiness and humility coexist?

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## Lesson Twenty

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### Holiness

Jesus prayed to the Father that He would sanctify us (*John 17:19*). We have been bought, purchased, redeemed to God. We belong to Him, we have no legal right to serve anyone else.

Sanctification means set apart, consecrated from sin. This is worked out as we surrender our will to His will by obedience to His Word. It is the intention of Jesus to present His disciples to the Father as a holy people (*Colossians 1:22*). But He can do this only as we reckon ourselves dead to our old self and alive to a new personage (*Romans 6:11*).

Jesus is not interested in patching up our old person. We need to present ourselves a living sacrifice so the Holy Spirit can transform us and work in holiness (*Romans 12:1,2*). Remember, holiness does not come through any method, it grows out of our relationship to Jesus through His Holy Spirit.

We find in holiness that there is no room for self-interests and worldly principles. There is also no room for the fear of man. Daniel concentrated upon one thing. "*Thou didst set thine heart.*" (*Daniel 10:12*). To set our heart is a deliberate act of the will. It requires a focusing of our energies through a commitment to be persistent until we discover God's purpose in our situation, regardless of the opposition.

To be holy, we must concentrate upon God. Daniel also humbled himself (*verse 12*). He gave up all self-indulgences and ignored all distractions to get at what God wanted. His burning desire was to cooperate with God in order to bring about God's purpose. That is why his prayer was effectual (*James 5:16*).

We know God's purpose is for us to be holy; therefore, we must set our hearts to fulfill His purpose. A large portion of this is accomplished through prayer. It is not enough to have a revelation of what God is doing. The revelation is our call to start praying it through. It is in prayer that the tap root of our relationship with God is fed.

Perhaps it is a little late to mention repentance at this stage of our walk, but there can be no holiness without repentance.

We should begin to see that everything in our lives is interrelated. If we intend to submit ourselves for consecration, we cannot reserve anything for the world. We cannot expect God to bless ninety per cent of us and ignore the other ten percent, which has not been brought into submission.

The difference between feeling sorry for a disobedient act and repenting for that act is in the measure of repetition. If we continually repeat the disobedient act, we have not repented. If we have not repented, we cannot receive forgiveness and we cannot go on with God. This is very elementary, but it is a good practice to return to the basics to avoid error. As we take inventory of ourselves, we must constantly return to our prayer closet to strengthen our commitment.

We can expect changes in our character as our attitudes are reformed in our secret times with God. We may not be aware of these changes personally. But as we go deeper with God, we become more honest with Him and with ourselves. He alone knows exactly what He is working out.

As we submit more and more to His kingship, our spiritual personality is formed. In these intimate times, God does not just show us ourselves, He performs spiritual surgery. That portion of us has no alternative but to be transformed.

Jesus, the man, lived in secret with God a long time. For thirty years He lived through a period of what appeared to be spiritual inactivity. This was prior to carrying out His real life work. But God performed surgery all the time, dividing flesh and spirit so there would be no last minute slipups. During that time Jesus lived His life pleasing to God, totally submitted. Finally, when that great moment came, He was so engrossed in God's purpose that He was able to discern when His task was complete. That was when He said, "*It is finished.*" (*John 19:30*).

Our spiritual personality and its outgrowth, our change of character, are developed in our secret place with God. We should not be in a hurry about this and try to hasten the development on our own. God has His timetable. There will not be a moment lost, even though we may feel He is not moving fast enough. We need only to keep our eyes upon Him, our hearts obedient to His Word, and our attitudes submissive and trusting.

Holiness is something we can get from God alone, it cannot be obtained in a Bible school or college. When Isaiah saw the holiness of God, he declared, "*Woe is me, for I am undone!*" He was overwhelmed when he caught the true perspective of God. His ego melted as in a fervent heat, and his pride shattered into the dust. "*I am a man of unclean lips,*" he muttered, "*for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.*" At that point, when he realized his own fragile incapacities, he was ready to receive God's holiness (*Isaiah 6:5-7*).

Holiness is a positive purification accomplished by our Maker. He fashioned us in the womb (*Job 31:15*). When we came into the world, He breathed life into us and we were pure.

Since that time, we have taken on many worldly impurities. These impurities must be dealt with before holiness can be manifested. Some impurities have been removed at the other steps, but the ones with deeper roots need to be recognized and submitted to God.

It is a case of the Potter and the clay (*Jeremiah 18:1-6*). The more we yield to the hand of God, the quicker we take on the form He has in mind for us.

The Lord cleanses our blood, our very life substance (*Joel 3:21*), as we cleanse ourselves. In this manner, holiness is perfected (*2 Corinthians 7:1*). This cannot be accomplished by introspection. Our focus must be upon God until we are filled with His fullness and there is no room for self (*Ephesians 3:18, 19*).

One who is holy seeks the Blessor, not the blessing. Holiness inspires worship; and we tend to become like the One we worship. As we enter into worship, the impurities grow more apparent and more ugly. And we have more of a desire to lay them on the altar to be consumed by His holy fire.

We are like the Levites standing before God, except the offerings we make consist of those personal things He requires of us (*Ezekiel 44:15, 16*). And we must stay there until we have been released, until we have had His holiness imputed to us. When this has been effected, we are ready for our step of freedom.

## Lesson Twenty . . . Holiness

**Personal And Group Exercise** (see page 128)

1. Why is Jesus not interested in patching up our old person?

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2. What method can we use to acquire holiness?

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3. When we have a revelation of what God is doing, what should we do about it?

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4. What is the difference between feeling sorry for a sinful act, and repentance?

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5. How is our spiritual personality formed?

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6. What is the only way we can deal with the impurities in our lives?

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## Lesson Twenty-One

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### Freedom

We have arrived at the next to last step. The world has been put aside now, and everything is filtered through God.

Freedom comes as we begin to relate to a living Christ. It slowly occurs to us that only Christ can completely satisfy God because only Christ is perfect. He alone can do God's perfect will and perform God's perfect work.

Jesus Christ is the One who defeated the forces of evil. He is now supreme over all principality and power (*Colossians 2:10*). It is Jesus alone who can live the true Christian life. As our relationship with Him grows, we become able to release our lives to Him. When we do this, we appropriate more of His indwelling presence, and we experience more freedom from ourselves.

When we really understand the finished work of Christ we approach a point of rest which brings freedom. This is a heart-understanding, something which has progressed beyond the intellect and settled in our spirits. It is a type of rest and freedom we cannot manufacture for ourselves. It is special because it comes from God.

There is no longer need for introspection and constant self-analysis. Our days are spent with God, void of insecurity and restlessness. Each day is a Sabbath, a seventh day of rest. Because it is tied to a Person, it becomes a constant, continuous experience, secure in the certainty of our Lord.

This type of freedom manifests itself as our spirit begins to emerge from its incarceration. It has been subordinated to the demands of the flesh, unable to express itself until now. But slowly, especially during the last few steps, the flesh has undergone a circumcision.

Through the appropriation of His Word, Jesus has deftly wielded His scalpel and separated the flesh from the spirit (*Colossians 2:11*). The circumcised flesh has been put to death. After death there can be no sin; therefore, no influence upon the spirit (*Romans 6:7*).

Jesus promised He would dwell within anyone obedient to His words (*John 14:23*). It is imperative we realize that the Jesus who lives in us has already overcome all temptation and deception. "*I have overcome the world,*" said Jesus (*John 16:33*).

Our personal freedom from the temptation and deception of the world comes only as we defeat the worldly tendencies in ourselves. There is no way this can be permanently accomplished unless the flesh is circumcised and allowed to die. This is possible only as we turn the temptations and deceptions over to Jesus.

The freedom comes as we concentrate upon serving the Lord. It may seem to be a paradox, but it is only as we submit ourselves to servant hood that we become free (*1 Corinthians 7:22*). There is no striving on our account. If we strive, it indicates we have decided to take the thing into our own hands. We have chosen to be lord of our own lives in that particular aspect.

If we are our own lord, we cannot be His servant. If we discover ourselves striving, we should recognize we have abandoned servant hood for the moment, plus the freedom, which accompanies it (*2 Timothy 2:24*).

Striving on our own is nothing more than a useless struggle. The Holy Spirit has been sent to be our Comforter. We are to govern ourselves and make our decisions according to the degree of peace expressed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (*Colossians 3:15*).

The Holy Spirit will never help us nor give us peace if we spend our energies struggling to get better. We can lose all our freedom and struggle ourselves right to the grave, and the Holy Spirit will not make one move to help us.

But when we turn our eyes upon Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit's full cooperation. He will help us understand that only by appropriating Jesus in our lives can we move toward perfection. Everything must be filtered through Him in order for us to grasp its truth. He is our salvation; He is our righteousness; He is our holiness! We cannot touch any of that without first touching Jesus.

The Holy Spirit clarifies that for us. He inspires us to persevere in seeking a relationship with Jesus, which will place Him above everything and everybody else in our lives. The Holy Spirit will help us take our eyes off our sins, and ourselves and fix them upon the Lord.

It is not what we are that matters; it is what He is. Freedom from self comes as our appreciation of Jesus grows. Deliverance from old habits and thought patterns takes place as the Holy Spirit steadily works to clear our perspective.

The more our willingness to yield, the greater our transformation. Like all mankind, we have been seeking truth, something solid upon which to establish a foundation for existence. It is only after the flesh has been crucified and the heart circumcised that we can receive the revelation that all truth rests in Jesus, the crucified, resurrected, reigning Christ.

"*I am the truth,*" said Jesus (*John 14:6*). The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth (*John 15:26*). When we abide in Jesus, we abide in truth. We receive truth by continuing in His Word (*John 8:31, 32*), and the truth we receive sets us free.

We had not been able to grasp this before the renewing of our mind. Walking without God, we relied upon the knowledge acquired through our senses. We had only a vague God-consciousness, with philosophical concepts influenced by our environment.

But now we have gradually accepted the revelation that our real person is spirit, not flesh. Our body is not the real us, but simply a housing. The same is true with our mind. The body and mind are instruments to be used by the spirit.

Walking without God, we are out of balance. The senses take control. We become servants to the desires of the-flesh and the fantasies of the mind. Our world revolves around our senses. Our spirit is quashed to a point that it is unable to communicate through the darkness of the world (*John 14:17*).

But by exposing ourselves to the Word of God, we have pierced through all that. We have discovered that God is a Spirit (*John 4:24*), and our communication with Him must be through our spirit.

Jesus said if any man will do God's will, he shall know the truth (*John 7:17*). God's will is revealed in His Word. As we yield ourselves in obedience to His Word, we open ourselves to more of His truth. We receive more freedom from the bondage of the world. Our spirits are set free, and the Holy Spirit guides us into a relationship with Jesus.

## **Lesson Twenty-One ... Freedom**

### **Personal And Group Exercise** (see page 129)

1. When we realize Jesus is the only One who can do God's perfect will and perform God's perfect work, where does that leave us?

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2. Why should we come to the end of constant introspection and self-analysis?

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3. If Jesus has overcome the world, where does that put us?

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4. What does it indicate when we find ourselves to be striving?

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5. Why will the Holy Spirit never help us become better people?

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6. Why is it important for us to understand our real person is spirit, not flesh?

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## Lesson Twenty-Two

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### Freedom

We have discovered as we yield ourselves in obedience to His Word, we open ourselves to more of His truth. In the process, we receive more freedom from the bondage of the world. Our spirits are set free, and the Holy Spirit guides us into a relationship with Jesus.

We are likely to meet opposition as we come into this revelation. Satan is a master at temptation and deception. He tries to sidetrack us any way he can. He may send people to detract us from God's purpose in our lives. We will be tempted to concentrate upon such people and strive with them unless we recognize the attack is spiritual in origin.

If we flow with God's Spirit, we will be free from personal sensitivity. That is what draws us away from God and causes us to focus upon our attackers. If instead we turn to the Holy Spirit, He will help us stay in the truth, and concentrate upon God and His purpose. In this way, Satan loses his effectiveness.

We must realize that Satan is deadly in his element. His element consists of lies, counterfeits, hypocrisies, anything apart from the truth. This is his element of darkness (*John 3:19, 21*). He is like a shark in its element of water. But, like a shark out of water, he is ineffective outside of darkness.

A shark is deadly, but if it should be placed in the center of a dusty battlefield and forced to fight an armored tank, it would lose its effectiveness. If we stay in the light of the truth we are like the armored tank. But if we allow ourselves to believe lies and deceptions, it is as if we have entered the shark's waters. We then become no match for the opposition. We all believe something. If we choose to believe the truth, we choose freedom, for we can clearly see that Satan has been defeated (*Ephesians 1:18-23*).

Satan's power over us depends upon his legal right to us, and that depends upon the attitude in our hearts. The cross and the scalpel of the Word should have dealt with our attitudes. They should have destroyed any legal right for him to exercise power over us. He may accuse us and try to lay a charge against us, but we need only to quote the scripture to remind him that his power is broken. "*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.*" (*Romans 8:33, 34*). Our revelation of the risen Christ scatters the enemy.

Once the bondage is removed, we have the opportunity and the freedom to exercise our spiritual rights. First, we receive the truth, then we respond. No longer under the influence of bondage, we are free to receive. This takes effort on our part because we are unaccustomed to the freedom.

As we receive, it is our duty to respond, to step out in obedience to the Holy Spirit. As we obey, we receive more. We receive on the basis of our response. Fear to respond, weakens our ability to receive. Willingness to respond, in faith, rewards us with a deeper spiritual walk.

Our emancipation into the fullness of God's provision depends upon how far we have let the Holy Spirit apply the cross to everything in us that has not been submitted to Jesus.

It is only the flesh which rebels, and the flesh must give way to Christ's sovereignty until He is truly Lord. Anything emanating from us must be His. It is His ministry, His obedience, His dominion. We have only a part as participating observers. In the process, we lose our identity, but gain His. When the world looks at us, it should see Jesus.

True discipleship is the result of this transformation. As His disciples we must be sensitive to His directives. Freedom from worldly priorities allows us to assume the responsibility He has placed in our hands, the distribution of the Gospel. That responsibility is primary.

Jesus didn't personally feed each of the 5,000 and the 7,000. True enough, the limited supply was initially given to Him, but only for Him to sanctify. The transformation took place in the sanctification. Jesus then gave back the loaves and the fishes to the disciples, and they fed the people. The multiplication came as the disciples obediently distributed the sanctified elements.

As His present-day disciples, we must submit our talents to Jesus to be sanctified. Eventually, He will return them to us ready for distribution. As we distribute, they will multiply, and He will be glorified.

Everything, no matter how small, must be given to Jesus for sanctification prior to use. This is an individual requirement for each of us. Two widows of the Old Testament are good examples. The first widow had only a handful of meal and a cruse of oil. "*Make me a little cake first,*" said Elijah. Even though she and her son faced starvation, she honored God by submitting her small treasure to His prophet. Immediately, the meal and the oil were sanctified and multiplied (*1 Kings 17:9-16*).

In a similar act of obedience to another prophet of God, the second widow poured out the last of her oil and it was likewise multiplied. Both of these women submitted what they had to God, and their obedience was honored by Him (*2 Kings 4:1-7*).

As we study this step we should arrive at a point of deep certainty that unless God does everything in us by His Spirit, there is nothing done of any value. We should have the heart-revelation that to come into His fullness, we must come to the end of our own good works. There should be no more strain for spiritual growth. We now understand that growth comes as we occupy ourselves with Him and give Him first exposure to every situation and circumstance in our lives.

We perceive the significance of Christ dwelling in the heart. This brings us to, a secure, stable place where there will be no more wavering, no more fear of vulnerability. We are now open to receive freely from God, confident His anointing will teach us, no matter whom He may use as His instrument (1 John 2:27).

We are free from everything which would possess us, and we, ourselves, desire only one possession, our relationship with God.

## Lesson Twenty-Two . . . Freedom

**Personal And Group Exercise** (see page 130)

1. Why is it important we understand much of our opposition from people is spiritual in origin?

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2. What is a sure way to make Satan lose his effectiveness?

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3. Why is obedience so very important in our walk with Jesus?

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4. What happens when we submit ourselves and our talents to Jesus to be sanctified?

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5. Even though we may feel we have very little to submit to Jesus, why is it important for us to submit it anyway?

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6. Why should we no longer strain for spiritual growth?

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## Lesson Twenty-Three

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### Open Heaven

"And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him," (Matthew 3:16).

"But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," (Acts 7:55, 56).

If our heart's desire is to experience an open heaven, it is the Holy Spirit who is to be our Revelator.

This is the last step revealed in our study, but there are probably countless steps to experience after reaching this level. An open heaven will permit a constant communication with God by way of His Holy Spirit.

Visualize the exhilaration of receiving one new revelation after another. Anticipate the excitement of rejoicing in each spiritual adjustment engineered by the Holy Spirit as He changes us from glory to glory (2 *Corinthians* 3:18). This is what we can expect from an open heaven.

Enough flesh has been put aside at this point that we can now be trusted as spiritual stewards. There is no more desire for personal power. We have learned the secret that only as we recognize our weakness is His power free to be expressed through us (*Isaiah* 40:29-31).

As we concentrate upon the basic fundamental of obedience to His Word, the Holy Spirit steadily leads us to His highest and best use.

We have finally arrived at that place of which Paul spoke, "*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Of which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*" (1 *Corinthians* 2:12, 13).

We have really entered the faith life. We are ready to act confidently upon what God has said in His Word, trusting in its authority. We can declare as Paul did, "*By the grace of God, I am what*

*I am.*" Like Paul, going forward on that declaration, we can labor more abundantly (*1 Corinthians 15:10*).

We have moved beyond the redemptive love of *John 3:16*, into a new dimension of relationship with the Father. We are like Daniel, in that we have an understanding of God's purpose for our lives, and we have given Him a positive response.

Three times, Daniel was called, "greatly beloved" (*Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19*). This was a message straight from God, delivered by an archangel, a communication in recognition of Daniel's dedication. It came because Daniel studied the Word, and the Holy Spirit gave him enlightenment.

Daniel responded to the spiritual revelation on his knees. His intercessory prayer activated the heavenly powers to fulfill God's purpose. There was reaction in both dimensions of the spiritual realm, and a battle raged between the opposing forces. Meanwhile, Daniel continued to pray, until twenty-one days passed and the victory was won.

We can see that such activity is not an expression of simple, redemptive Christianity; it is another plane of relationship with God, entirely different. It is a relationship which places us in a position to be called, "greatly beloved."

We should recognize that Daniel was not studying the Word simply to receive head knowledge. He was seeking God's will and his personal relationship to it. As he studied and prayed, revelation came. He studied, expecting to receive an answer, and God honored his faith.

We should study with the same attitude. Our concern should be the extent of our discipleship to the Word of Jesus Christ. Are we really His disciplined followers? Has the cross done its work? Is the Holy Spirit free to work His will in our lives? Until we can answer yes, we cannot be trusted with an open heaven.

God's purpose for us is that we should be free from worldly bondage. We must come to a point in our relationship with Him which enables us to see the difference between His purpose and what actually exists. If there is bondage, we must recognize and deal with the cause, so we will achieve the spiritual position He desires for us.

God uses instruments who are in tune with His orchestration. He will use a Daniel who seeks His will for His people. He will use a Nehemiah who is consumed by the burden that the people of God have lost communion with Him. He will use an Ezra who is uncompromising in his commitment. He will use an Esther who is willing to lay down her life to deliver God's people out of the hands of the opposition.

God will use any instrument willing to give Him the opportunity to work through him. And His effectiveness will be in direct relation to the measure of Christ within each instrument. He cannot go beyond that.

In all of this there must be the expression of God's love. In *1 Corinthians 12*, Paul spoke of spiritual gifts, of unity within the body, and of the usefulness of every believer. But, in *verse 31*, he mentioned a more excellent way. Then he gave his dissertation on love (*1 Corinthians 13*).

As we stay tuned to God and allow the communication to flow between us and open heaven, we constantly partake of God's love. As we share this love with others. God will continually refill our cup to overflowing.

There must never be an end to the sharing. If we cut off the overflow, God will stop the inflow. Christianity is communal in nature. There is a natural broadening of horizontal relationships as our vertical relationship with God is enriched.

He may cause a disciple to be set aside for a brief season, perhaps for a new learning experience. But He will shortly call him back into the fray. He does not feed cave dwellers, for it is impossible to minister to God through His people while living in isolation (*1 Kings 19:9-18*).

## Lesson Twenty-Three . . . Open heaven

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 131)

1. Why should we have no more desire for personal power?

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2. How is it possible for us to have an understanding of God's purpose for our lives?

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3. Why was Daniel called "greatly beloved" by the archangel?

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4. Why is it important for us to see the difference between God's purpose and what actually exists?

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5. How can a person be an instrument tuned to God's orchestration?

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6. How is there a natural broadening of horizontal relationships as our vertical relationship with God is enriched?

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## Lesson Twenty-Four

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### Open Heaven

We have submitted all our talents to God by the time we have reached this step. We must be sure we have submitted our hearts to Him also. God said, "*My son, give me thine heart,*" (*Proverbs 23:26*). God wants our hearts because it is in our hearts that faith takes root (*Romans 10:10*).

It is not enough simply to give Him our substance or our time. We cannot earn brownie points with God by doing good deeds. Satan would keep us occupied in doing good, in responding to worthwhile causes. But God tells us to seek Him first, to spend time in personal relationship with Him. We are to yield our innermost selves to Him.

Any ministry in which we are involved must come out of our quiet, secret life with God. If we don't allow this process to occur, we run the risk of experiencing a reawakening of our old nature. That is the part of us which is vulnerable to the world of darkness.

Mighty men of God have fallen because they became more involved in their ministry than in their relationship with God. We are told to draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to us (*James 4:8*). There is no other safe way for a believer to exist.

Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom (kingship) of God (*Matthew 6:33*). In seeking God's kingdom we seek to make Him king. He must have preeminence in every aspect of our lives. When this becomes a reality, open heaven is the result.

When heaven opened to Jesus, it opened to His disciples through Him. Sin had shut up heaven to all of us, there was no open communication with God. But now, Jesus has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The heavens were opened when Jesus was baptized. This should teach us that we can also expect to experience open heaven when we obediently implement God's ordinances in our lives.

When heaven opened to Stephen he was full of the Holy Ghost. Actually, he had been chosen for ministry because he was full of the Holy Ghost (*Acts 6:5*). Now he was anointed with fresh oil, enough for the task at hand.

This shows us that those who relinquish all to the guidance of the Holy Spirit are equipped for any type of combat. It also shows that when the battle becomes extreme, an extra ration of God's grace is bestowed.

In the heat of the conflict Stephen looked up and was honored with a special view of the glory of Christ. It filled him with joy. In placing his eyes upon Jesus, he was raised above the fury of his persecutors. He was in a position to receive a Divine manifestation.

*"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"* said Stephen (Acts 7:59). Stephen had the emphatic revelation that Jesus is God, and that it is Jesus who receives our spirits at death. How much more important it becomes to release ourselves to Jesus while still on this earth, when we realize He will be the first One we meet in eternity. We should be well acquainted prior to that meeting.

*"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,"* (Acts 7:60). With heaven opened before him, Stephen took the opportunity to intercede for his persecutors. Filled with the Holy Ghost, he was also filled with the love which accompanies that condition.

Jesus had died for these tormentors, but they were totally deceived, acting in ignorance. Stephen knew they could receive forgiveness if only their eyes were opened to the truth and they were to repent. As it turned out, at least one did repent, was forgiven, and used mightily by God. Saul, of Tarsus was a consenting observer of the episode. When the scales were removed from his eyes, he was transformed and became the Apostle Paul, transmitter of the epistles.

As we observe Stephen, we see a special strength with which to endure. We see agape love which reaches beyond the circumstances. We see Divine revelation outside the reach of anything the intellect can conceive.

If we, ourselves, faced a gang of murderers, we wouldn't have time to indulge in a fantasy. We would be totally occupied with the reality of the situation. This was Stephen's position. He knew he was powerless to alter the circumstances, so he looked up to the Source of all power.

That was when the truth was revealed to him in a mighty revelation. His perspectives were brought into proper order, and the temporal scene lost its importance. His viewpoint became eternal. There was no fantasy, no illusion; he saw the truth in all its glory. Heaven was open and he beheld it all.

In *Jeremiah 33:3*, the Lord said to Jeremiah, *"Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."* We must submit our intellect to the Lord, so we will not impose our limitation upon His intelligence.

We may feel we could never reach the commitment state shown by Stephen. Of course, we are correct in that assumption if we intend to try it alone. But that is where Jesus Christ comes in.

It is Christ in us who accomplishes the impossible. Jesus conquered death in a human vessel such as ours. If we give Him command of our vessel, He will achieve the will of the Father, no matter what that might be.

We have to become as broken bread and poured out wine to make room for Jesus to have His lordship. It is always the measure of Christ in us, which determines the measure of our obedience to the will of God.

It is a popular teaching to claim all the providence of God for ourselves. But a true disciple does more aiming than claiming. He aims for the high calling of God through Christ Jesus (*Philippians 3:14*).

His concentration is upon the Provider rather than the providence. He is not concerned with what the world would call sacrifice. His interest in God is not proportional to his own personal benefit. He is consumed with the desire to grasp what has happened in his life. "*That I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended of Christ Jesus,*" (*Philippians 3:12*).

It is Jesus who drew us out of the world, we did not step out of our volition. Even our love for Him is because He first loved us (*1 John 4:19*). The disciple realizes that without Jesus, there is only frustration and desperation.

So here we are, at a level beyond intellectual satisfaction, completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our lives. It is as if we are standing naked at the threshold of an open door. Our Lord Jesus has invited us to step across the threshold. We have laid aside all the garments which have protected us from the elements.

He has promised us a new garment, one He has fashioned for us Himself. We have a restricted view of what lies beyond the doorway, for He has permitted us limited revelation. As in every step, the choice is ours. But this step is slightly different in that the only requirement we can see is basic trust.

It is a simple step, but it is a step which will provide a constant eternal relationship. Open heaven will be a daily experience. It should be our prayer that every aspiring disciple will step across the threshold.

## Lesson Twenty-Four . . . Open Heaven

### Personal And Group Exercise (see page 132)

1. Why does God want our hearts?

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2. Why should any ministry in which we are involved come out of our quiet, secret life with God?

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3. What makes us eligible to experience open heaven?

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4. What does the stoning of Stephen reveal to us about God's grace?

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5. What is the only way for us to accomplish the impossible?

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6. How can we maintain a daily experience of open heaven?

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## Lesson One . . . Religion

### Points for Discussion (see pages 3,4)

1. It becomes necessary for each denomination to defend its doctrinal beliefs. This attitude keeps the body of Christ fragmented, instead of preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (*Ephesians 4:1-6*).
2. There is a body of true believers, seeking a deeper walk with Christ, within every church body. This is the true body of Christ. These born-again believers feel free to cross denominational barriers and join with other born-again believers from other church bodies to become one in Christ.
3. It is very easy to get involved in organized church activities and in worthwhile causes, yet never come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a danger signal to find we have no time for prayer or for Bible study because we have too many things to do for the Lord. It means we are evading the truth of God; we are refusing to abide in Him.
4. The world can easily see the superficiality in ritualism. It considers religion to be an escape from reality, similar to drugs and alcohol. It sees no power in religion, especially, no supernatural power. The world fears the supernatural. When we begin to walk in the supernatural, the world will be drawn to the church. This will not occur until we learn how to exercise our measure of faith.
5. It is bringing people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, without drawing attention to ourselves. We bring them into His presence, then step back and allow Him freedom to work in their lives. We know we have been successful when the people forget we were involved in the transaction.
6. We can be limited by that person's limitations. He is human; therefore, he has only a portion of the truth to deliver to the people. We are responsible to broaden our spiritual walk. We can do this by reading books and listening to tapes. Above all, we should study the Bible, individually, or in groups, always praying for the real Teacher, the Holy Spirit, to enlighten us (*1 John 2:27*).

## Lesson Two . . . Salvation

### Points For Discussion (see pages 7,8)

1. a) Believe that Jesus died on the cross for me as the sacrifice for my sins, and that God raised Him from the dead.  
b) Declare openly what I have accepted by faith.
2. It is only when we reach the lowest level that we are willing to admit we are incapable of making anything really worthwhile out of our lives. At that point, we are ready to look up, and to reach out to God.
3. We must have a personal relationship with Jesus to experience the fullness of what He has for our lives. We can never get this kind of relationship intellectually, it must come through the heart.
4. This is our first experiment in faith. It is our initial discovery that Jesus is alive and has a personal concern for each of us. Every step of faith should make the following step of faith easier.
5. God will not superimpose His will upon our will. Our freedom of choice means our lives will reflect our decisions. Of course, our best decision is to turn to God for guidance. We can then step out in faith as He leads.
6. From His eternal vantage point, God can see the end from the beginning. His purpose for our lives far exceeds anything we would consider possible from our limited perspective. For this reason, we should leave as many decisions as possible in God's hands.

## Lesson Three . . . Joy

### Points For Discussion (see pages 11,12)

1. Joy springs from our relief in the realization that we are no longer held accountable for our sinful past. Our born-again experience means we can start a new life centered in Christ, free from the bondage of our old nature. We have reason to be filled with joy.
2. It is perverted because it is substitutionary. Happiness is not synonymous with joy. Real joy has an eternal origin and a permanent nature. The world's joy is superficial in that it appeases the senses, but it does not penetrate to the heart. It is temporal because it has no permanent, lasting qualities.
3. As new Christians, we are not prepared to rightly divide the Word (*2 Timothy 2:15*). To avoid deception and to recognize temptation, we need to become well-grounded in the Word. Unless we do this, we may revert back to the ways of the world.
4. A Christian's walk is a walk of faith. Our faith is that the Word of God is true and that we are saved. Our faith is that God is our Provider, our Healer, our Shepherd, our Righteousness, our Sanctifier, our Peace. Our faith is an optimistic faith.
5. The nature of God is blessing. All blessings come from His overflowing grace. Blessings do not come because of the faultless character of those who receive them. The blessings are ours because we have been willing to receive His Son as our Savior, and because we are making Him Lord of our lives.
6. Christ is a joy to all people because He is the only way to salvation and freedom from the bondage of the world. Joy is not happiness. Joy is the result of the perfect fulfillment of the purpose of life. This can be experienced only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

## Lesson Four. . . Healing

### Points For Discussion (see pages 16,17)

1. When we don't believe, we don't actually turn to God for our healing. We may pray, but without faith it is impossible to please God. When we pray without faith, we are simply performing a ritual, hoping God will hear and answer. We are to believe when we pray. God knows our hearts.
2. We understand that the God of history healed, but we have trouble bringing Him into the present. We have been taught only a part of the truth; therefore, reality to us is only what we experience in the world on a daily basis. Because of this, we are inclined to take whatever the world has to offer, including its infirmities.
3. If we don't believe God heals, we must believe He doesn't heal. This means we don't believe the Word (which Jesus says is the truth). Consequently, we believe a lie. Since Satan is the father of lies, the bottom line is that we believe Satan, but we don't believe God.
4. God does not honor our intellect, He honors our faith. Everything that comes from God, comes through the vehicle of faith. If we had intellectual understanding of healing, we would devise a system to utilize every time healing was needed. It would be only a matter of time until our dependence would be upon the system, rather than upon God.
5. Doubt is actually unbelief. When the serpent caused Eve to doubt, sin was the result. The sin of unbelief keeps us in bondage to Satan. Doubt can be overcome only by a decision to believe, not based upon our understanding, but based upon our faith.
6. We cannot experience healing unless we touch God, for all healing is in God and from God. It is a deception to concentrate upon our need. Concentration upon the need, feeds the need and actually nourishes it. We must concentrate upon God with such intensity that we actually make spiritual contact. We enter into His presence and abide with Him. There is no darkness in proximity to God; therefore, no infirmity.

## Lesson Five . . . Prosperity

### Points For Discussion (see pages 24,25)

1. We must accept as true that God owns everything. Prosperity has many facets, it is not limited to material wealth. Only God has the key to complete prosperity. Anything less than God's complete prosperity will leave us feeling empty and dissatisfied.
2. We can be considered winners when we produce fruit which will glorify God. We may bring forth a hundredfold, or perhaps sixty, or thirty. Our yield will depend upon our trust in God. Jesus produced more fruit than any other human being. He brought all mankind out of the bondage of Satan. He delivered us to the Father, regenerated. He was unquestionably the greatest winner imaginable.
3. The acceptance of God's Word as true. This brings on repentance, a change of direction. We no longer depend upon ourselves, we no longer do battle in the marketplace, striving for our own concept of prosperity. The price is to turn loose of ourselves, and to trust God. It is a simple thing, but not easy.
4. The basis of everything in which we believe, should be the Word of God. Faith drummed up to satisfy selfish desires, is not the kind of faith which will please God. It will not put us in the proper position to receive God's prosperity.
5. If we hold our palm open to God, He can give us what He wants us to have, and He can take from us what He wants to take. If we maintain the open palm, God will pour out His abundance, because He will know He can trust us. We must be careful never to clench our fist in an effort to hold onto something God has given us. It is impossible for us to receive anything from God through a clenched fist.
6. a) Our own **personal relationship** with the Lord. Unless we have this, we will not be in right relationship with Him; therefore, we will miss His prosperity.  
b) Our **attitude**. We cannot con God. We cannot manipulate nor maneuver Him in such a way that He will bless us. God will not bless a selfish attitude.

## Lesson Six . . . Commitment

### Points For Discussion (see pages 29,30)

1. Because, for the first time in our lives, we are relinquishing control to someone else. Even though it is God, we still become nervous. We have no idea what God has in store for us, and we tremble at the uncertainty of our situation.
2. The goal for each Christian is to become Christlike. To be Christlike is to be inconsistent and unpredictable in the eyes of men, but always consistent to God. God expects us to walk in supernatural power, and with the capacity to expect success in our prayers.
3. We know the enemy has been defeated by Jesus Christ. We also know when we submit to the kingship of Jesus, we step into His kingdom. At that point, we have the authority of the kingdom of Jesus behind us. This gives us the power to resist the devil, and he will have to leave.
4.
  - a) He was deliberate. He had a purpose from which he would not waver.
  - b) He was persistent. He stayed in prayer, diligently seeking a word from God.
  - c) He put aside his personal desires. He didn't allow his flesh to distract him from his focus.
  - d) He was determined to discover what God truly wanted to do, and he had the tenacity to stay with it until the answer came.
5. It is the nature of faith that it has to be tried. It is in the trial that it is purified. We are in a spiritual battle, and the enemy will constantly look for chinks in our spiritual armor. We must recognize these attacks for what they are, and turn to God for the victory.
6. Only a committed believer has the courage to test the Word of God and discover it to be true. It then becomes another part of the foundation in his Christian life, another place where he discovers he can trust Christ. The more he builds the stronger his foundation becomes. On the other hand, the uncommitted believer never applies the Word to his life; therefore, he has no foundation to support him when he is attacked by the enemy.

## Lesson Seven. . . Commitment

### Points For Discussion (see pages 33,34)

1. Our submission to baptism is our statement that we are putting the seal on the death and burial of our "old man." We are identifying with Christ's death and burial. When we come out of the water, we identify with His resurrection. We proclaim that we are born again. We are ready to walk in newness of life with Christ.
2. A servant submits his life to his master. He responds to his master's wishes as if they are commands. That should be our position if the desire of our hearts is to fulfill God's plan for our lives. Anything of value in our lives we owe to our redemption. Consequently, we should be eager to give up our rights to ourselves, and to become His bondslaves.
3. As servants, we are called to commit our lives to Jesus.
  - We are to prepare our hearts, so our desires are to please God.
  - We are to seek the Lord's will according to His written Word. We can only accomplish this by becoming familiar with His Word
  - We are to act upon the Word, to conform ourselves to its directives, and to step out in obedience. This will be a demonstration of our faith.
  - We are to teach others, by example, by sharing how Jesus has changed our lives, and by guiding them through the Word.
4. By turning to God first, we show Him we trust Him and we honor Him as God. If we wait for God to go before us, we can be assured of the victory. Our commitment is real when we are willing to wait upon the Lord. We are to trust Him, and to have peace in our hearts that He is working all things together for good in our lives.
5. Everyone is called. There is not one human being for whom Jesus did not die. Salvation and redemption is for the entire human race. The problem is that the enemy has blinded most people. They are kept in ignorance through deception and temptation. The chosen are those who have responded to the call. No one who responds is ever turned away. Our God is a loving God, but He has given us a free will.
6. Our faith will dry up if it is not utilized. When we exercise our faith by stepping out in faith, our faith grows stronger. Faith embraces the whole man. It is an act similar to diving headlong into a swimming pool. It is total commitment to take the plunge. It is believing what the Word states is true, and altering our lifestyle to conform to the Word of God.

## Lesson Eight . . . God

### Points For Discussion (see pages 38,39)

1. When we set our hearts to reach God, He hears our prayers. We have no idea what is actually accomplished by our prayers. It is foolish to assume God will answer our prayers according to our terms and conditions. He alone has the wisdom to take our prayers and answer them in the best way possible, at the best possible time.
2. It is difficult for us to relinquish the kingship of our lives to anyone, even to Jesus. To release control over our lives to Jesus is to make ourselves vulnerable. This is contrary to everything natural within us. We have spent a lifetime building walls of protection around ourselves. If we submit to Jesus, that means all the walls must come down. We must rely totally upon His protection and well being for our lives.
3. Although we have the Spirit of Christ within us, we also have our sinful nature, which we have inherited from Adam. So long as we are in our flesh, there is not any possibility that we can attain perfection. In view of this, there is no way in which we could become as God.
4. Unless Jesus is One with God, He is less than God. If that was the case, it would be wrong to worship Him, for He would be a false idol. Jesus was in the beginning, before time. He is a part of the triune Godhead.
5. The Holy Spirit is also a part of the triune Godhead. God is a Spirit; therefore, the Holy Spirit is the essence of God. It is the Holy Spirit Who brings us revelation. It is the Holy Spirit Who draws us closer and closer to Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit Who reveals God's grace to us, and Who writes God's laws on our hearts.
6. As we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus, we learn how to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. This places us in a dimension beyond the natural ability of man. We begin to walk in the supernatural, no longer confined by our own limited capabilities. The Holy Spirit helps us build our faith and expand our vision. The more we are willing to believe the Word as true, the deeper the Holy Spirit will lead us in our walk.

## Lesson Nine . . . God

### Points For Discussion (see pages 43,44)

1. Unless we learn how to hear God's voice, we will travel through life uncertain about anything. We will never be sure we are in God's will, or fulfilling God's purpose for our lives. Most of us do not hear God because we don't believe God wants to communicate with us. That is a lie from the enemy. God wants to communicate with us on a daily basis.
2. Every person has need for significance in life. When we realize God has a pattern for our lives, we realize we weren't born without a purpose. The more we develop the habit of saying, "Yes," to God, the more we will begin to understand His purpose for our lives.
3. God is love. As we get close to Him, we become able to love as He does. God wants us to desire to do His will, out of love for Him. If He superimposed His will upon our will, we would no longer have the freedom of choice. We would no longer have the free will to love God.
4. The only method we have of fighting a storm in our lives is through the strength of our flesh. When we bring God into our problem we activate His spiritual power in the problem. Nothing is more powerful than God; therefore, we are bringing in the most powerful force in existence to confront our problem.
5. Anything we try to control on our own, without submitting it to Jesus, is vulnerable to attack by the enemy. If we haven't submitted it to Jesus, that means it does not have kingdom protection. We serve either God or Satan. If we refuse to submit something to God, it automatically becomes legal ground for the devil.
6. This is not something we can accomplish on our own. It happens as a result of our submission to God. The more we submit to the kingship of Jesus, the closer we get in relationship to Him. The closer we get in relationship to Him, the more we reflect His nature, and the more we become like Him. The more we become like Him, the more of our own identity we lose.

## Lesson Ten . . . Crucifixion

### Points For Discussion (see pages 46,47)

1. In order for Jesus to have dominion over our lives, something has to give. It is the flesh which stands between us and Jesus. Therefore, it is the flesh which must be placed upon our cross.
2. Jesus realizes we can't reform our old nature. There is really nothing good in our flesh, so there is no opportunity for improvement. Jesus is not interested in trying to patch up our fleshly nature. He wants it put to death, so it will no longer influence us.
3. We have spent all our lives protecting and providing for ourselves, usually at the expense of others. Now Jesus wants us to lay down our lives for Him. He says if we are willing to lose our lives for His sake, we will find what real life is all about. This can never occur until we are willing to deny our own fleshly desires. Also, we are to trust Him to protect us and to provide for us, as He promises in His Word.
4. We can learn about this in *Romans 6, 7 and 8*. "I" is our spirit. Our life is in our spirit, that is the real person we are. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, we received a new spirit, one united with the Spirit of Christ. That is the "I" which can communicate directly with Jesus. "It" is the flesh, with its fleshly nature. That is what has to be kept under subjection.
5. "It" is selfish by nature, and its demands are carnal. "It" takes us away from God and His ways. This places us on the road to darkness and sin, the wages of which is death.
6. When "I" is in charge, we are spiritually connected to our Lord. Our spirit is in direct communication with the Holy Spirit. This places us in right relationship with God. It is the proper position to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, along with God's protection and direction.

## Lesson Eleven . . . Crucifixion

### Points For Discussion (see pages 50,51)

1. If our cross is too heavy it simply means we are refusing to submit control of our lives to Jesus. We are insisting upon doing things our way. We are deciding what is right and what is wrong, based upon how we feel about it, rather than upon what the Word says about it. There are certain habits we are unwilling to let go. There are personality characteristics, which we refuse to do anything about, even though we know they are not pleasing to God.
2. If we have a problem with lust, for example, we can feed it by purchasing pornographic material, or by watching lustful programs on television. As we continue to feed our lust, it will continue to grow. Someday it will be completely under the control of Satan, and he will use it to kill, steal or destroy a part or all of our lives. It works the same way with all our flesh. It is our decision whether we will feed it or starve it.
3. Jesus is our High Priest (*Hebrews 3:1*). We have nothing of value to take to our High Priest. We have only those ways of the flesh which need to be put to death. We must take them, one by one, offer them to our High Priest, and ask Him to consume them with His holy fire. He is a faithful High Priest; He never sleeps; He is always available; and He is waiting patiently for us to come to Him, and to release our lives to Him
4. Our patterns of behavior have set deep grooves in our brains, which prompt us to react certain predictable ways. For years, many of us have used anger as a means of protection. It is not easy to relinquish something which has kept us from being vulnerable to hurts. But it is an undesirable characteristic, so we give it to Jesus and ask Him to consume it with His fire. Suddenly, we discover it has returned. What should we do? We should take it immediately to Jesus once more. We must do this 1,000 times, if necessary. If we could measure it each time we take it to Jesus, we would find it has become smaller and smaller. If we persist in this practice, the time will come when it will disappear completely.
5. The only means we have to crucify the flesh, is our own fleshly strength. It is easy to see that if we try to fight flesh with flesh, flesh will win. We may be able to put down a habit temporarily, but eventually it will resurface. Only Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, can make a permanent, eternal change in our lives.
6. Anything not submitted to Jesus, is submitted to Satan, whether that is our intention or not. We serve either God or mammon, there is no middle ground. If it is not submitted to Jesus, it is an open target for Satan, because he has a legal right of entry.

## Lesson Twelve. . . Crucifixion

### Points For Discussion (see pages 54,55)

1. Satan wants to kill us or to incapacitate us so we will be unable to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. He knows our bodies will finally break down if we continually bombard them with excesses. He uses temptations and deceptions to lure us toward this self destruction.
2. The desire of Peter's heart was to follow Jesus, even to death. But he underestimated the strength of his flesh in its unwillingness to die. It wasn't until Peter discovered how powerless he was to control his flesh, that he began to depend entirely upon Jesus. The result was that Jesus used him mightily on the day of Pentecost
3. The cross is where Satan was defeated. As soon as we apply the cross to our problem, Satan loses his power in that problem. We apply the cross by taking the problem to Jesus. There is no way the darkness of Satan can stand the light of Jesus. Our victory is always in our willingness to take everything to the cross and release it to Jesus.
4. When we decide we haven't the ability to function properly on our own, we lay our lives on the altar in complete sacrifice to Jesus. He will then impart His life into us. At that point, we have chosen death to our self-life. We are trusting Jesus to give us a resurrected life which has eternal value.
5. We must first understand that we are spirit beings, housed in bodies of flesh, equipped with minds, wills and emotions. Next, we must understand that when we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior God performed a spiritual transplant within us. He united our old spirit beings with Jesus on the cross. He allowed those old spirit beings to die and be buried with Jesus. Then He gave us new spirit beings, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, resurrected to walk in newness of life (*Romans 6, 7 and 8*). When we understand our spiritual nature, we can look past the flesh of others. We can love them and pray they will receive the enlightenment which will enable them to accept salvation and spiritual rebirth.
6. Bondage is always related to flesh. It is the flesh which develops sinful habits. It is the flesh which fears death. It is the flesh which falls to temptations. The only way we can receive freedom from bondage is to submit ourselves completely to Jesus Christ. We present ourselves to Jesus and say, "Take me, I am yours, I am your servant, I trust You with the rest of my life." That is when the chains will fall off and all bondage will be gone (*Romans 6:22*). That is when Jesus will impart His life into our lives.

## Lesson Thirteen . . . Crucifixion

### Points For Discussion (see pages 58,59)

1. It was disobedience which brought about the fall of man in the garden. Disobedience springs from doubt. If we doubt God's Word as being true, we are not compelled to obey it. Disobedience carries us in a direction away from God. This means we are walking away from the light, toward darkness. This will inevitably bring us into problem situations.
2. Our willingness to accept the cross proves our commitment to exalt Jesus. It is in our willingness to put ourselves aside, that we purposefully lift Jesus up. This is contrary to all our natural tendencies. However, when we arrive at that state of mind and intention, we really begin to live.
3. Evil works like leaven, eventually it leavens the whole lump (*Galatians 5:9*). If we allow it to remain, even though it may appear to be harmless, it will incubate and, in time, bring forth something negative. Evil rarely appears to be evil. That is why it is wise for us to pray for the hatred of evil, so we will recognize it, no matter how it may be disguised (*Psalms 97:10*).
4. Crucifixion is not only not negative, it is also painless when we willingly let Jesus do the crucifying. Crucifixion clears the way for resurrection. Only those characteristics which have held us in bondage need to be crucified. This sets us free to flow with the Spirit without being restricted by the flesh.
5. The best of our flesh are those areas in our lives which we feel we can handle on our own, without God's help. We have been programmed all our lives to be self-sufficient. We have a natural tendency to feel there are certain things for which we should not have to call upon God. These are the very areas of our lives in which we get into trouble. God wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives with no exceptions.
6. When Jesus died, He multiplied by being able to send His Spirit to us. The Spirit is unrestricted by flesh; therefore. He can minister everywhere, all the time. Our flesh also restricts us, and we can minister in a limited fashion only, until the flesh has been put aside. When that has occurred, our effectiveness is multiplied, because we are ministering under the power and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

## Lesson Fourteen . . . Righteousness

### Points For Discussion (see pages 64,65)

1. Most of us are performance oriented. We have learned from infancy to perform to get approval. Many of us have low self-esteem. This is the flip side of pride, because the emphasis is upon "self". Because we are thus programmed, we have constructed two facades, one to please others and win their applause, and the other to please ourselves. These facades allow us to live in a world of fantasy, with our real selves protected from vulnerability. To walk with God, in the fullness of His purpose, we must allow the Holy Spirit to strip the facades away and deal with us in reality.
2. Even though Joshua and Caleb were outnumbered by millions of Jews, they maintained their faith in the Word of God. Many times we will be outnumbered by the popular opinion of others. But if we stand firm on God's Word, He will honor our faith and He will uphold us with the right hand of His righteousness.
3. First, righteousness is of God and from God. It is imputed, or ascribed to us by God when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. Because of the work of Jesus, God sees us as virtuous, blameless, sinless saints. All false pride has to be done away with in order for us to submit ourselves to God's righteousness. We would rather serve a good cause, but God requires faith and obedience to His Word, as proof that we have accepted His righteousness.
4. When we become righteous through obedience, this means we have committed to have faith in the Word, and to conform ourselves to it. Once we have made that commitment, the flesh has to fall into line. It may complain and try to rise up in rebellion, but if our commitment is strong, it will have no choice but to subject itself to God's discipline.
5. One way we can be certain we will be effective is to allow God to open doors for our ministry. If He has opened the door, that means He has gone before us and prepared the way. Our responsibility from that point is simply to step through the open door and be obedient to His directions. It is never necessary for us to kick a door open, then ask God to bless our efforts.
6. Because our righteousness is a Godly righteousness, nothing can destroy it. It may be tried and tested, but that will only serve to strengthen it. The more determined we are to maintain our relationship with the Lord, regardless of the opposition, the stronger our righteousness will become.

## Lesson Fifteen . . . Discipleship

### Points For Discussion (see pages 68,69)

1. A disciple is a Christian, but a Christian is not necessarily a disciple. Actually, every Christian should be a disciple because the term "Christian" means Christ-like. We can only become Christ-like by being disciplined followers of Christ. It becomes obvious the term "Christian" has lost its original meaning. Anyone may become a Christian today by joining a local Christian fellowship.
2. Levi is an excellent example of where obedience to Christ can take us. Levi had no idea his writings would minister to people for nearly 2,000 years. Likewise, when we submit ourselves to Christ, we have no idea what the long range effect will be when we minister to people. God could use us to speak the Word of life into a potential Billy Graham, or Watchman Nee.
3. It is telling the Lord that He is not first in our priorities. We must be willing to put everything else aside and, like Saul of Tarsus, say, "Lord, what will you have me do?" The Lord knows our hearts. It would be a good idea for us to know them also. Our hearts can easily be judged by our priorities. What priority does the Lord have in my day?
4. We are like Saul of Tarsus in that we would prefer to busy ourselves with work of our own choosing, dedicating it to the Lord. and expecting Him to bless it. We work in ways that are convenient to our lifestyle, and ways that seem good to us. We rarely consult the Lord beforehand, but we always ask His blessing upon everything we do.
5. Unless we humble ourselves, and submit our will to His will, we can never come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus was both humble and submissive. He drew no attention to Himself, but always gave precedence to the Father. And He did nothing apart from the Father's will. If our intention is to be His disciplined follower, we must become like Jesus. He is our Pattern. As we allow ourselves to come into closer union with Him, we will begin to reflect His attitude.
6. Unless we encounter the living Christ, we are only going through the motions of being a disciple. The way we get the revelation experience of Jesus is through concerted prayer and diligent study of His Word. When He directs us to step out in obedience to a portion of His Word, and we do so, we meet Him in Person at that point.

## Lesson Sixteen . . . Discipleship

### Points For Discussion (see pages 72,73)

1. All our righteousness is as filthy rags unless it consists of the holiness of Jesus in us uniting us with Him. But imputed righteousness does not mean that God puts the robe of His righteousness over our moral wrong. He doesn't pretend we are all right when we are not. Righteousness is the impartation of the life of Jesus, which enables us to walk in the light as He is in the light. Our responsibility is to remain in the light. This means our thoughts and our feelings, reflected in our actions, must be maintained at the level of God's Word. Our dedication to discipleship makes this a reality.
2. Only Jesus can live the true Christian life. As our walk with Him deepens, it becomes more clear to us that we cannot accomplish discipleship on our own. Our only alternative then is to rely upon His grace. Anything we touch without Jesus will contain our imperfections. As we grasp the reality of this truth, we are quick to bring Jesus into every facet of our lives.
3. The power of individual choice is the secret of human responsibility. We can choose, but we have no power to alter the destination to which that choice is taking us. We do, however, always have the power to make another choice. God places choices before us to exercise and strengthen our commitment. Every time we choose His way over our own, the taproot of His love grows deeper in our hearts.
4. Often people with natural abilities make the worst disciples, because they are reluctant to give Jesus dominion. He performs through us on the basis of what He puts into us. We must understand our inability. God can do very little with those who feel they will be of some value to Him. When we commit ourselves to discipleship, the work of the Holy Spirit is then free to be manifested in and through us.
5. When we put on Jesus Christ, He brings three important qualities into our personal lives.
  - (1) He brings us into a real, definite communion with God;
  - (2) He brings us into right relationship with our fellow-men;
  - (3) We come into a right relationship with ourselves, by becoming God-centered instead of self-centered. All this is accomplished by simply bringing Jesus into every aspect of our lives, every decision, every relationship. He does the rest.
6. Our personal claim to ourselves is all we have to give to God. We can't give Him our possessions, because they have been given to us. We can give Him our sins and our relationship with the devil, but that is for our benefit, not His. But Jesus wants us to give Him the most precious thing we have, our right to ourselves. This is the last bridge that prevents Jesus from having His way in our lives. We must relinquish it to Him so our relationship with Him will be pure and undiluted.

## Lesson Seventeen . . . Discipleship

### Points For Discussion (see pages 76,77)

1. Unconditional surrender means we have reserved no rights for ourselves, we have given our lives completely, absolutely, inescapably to the Lord. Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." Nobody, not even God, can bring us to this denial. We must come there of our own free will.
2. Following Jesus means stepping out in faith where we do not see anything. Logically, we want to clear the ground first, before making the step. But there is no logic to faith. Faith is deliberate commitment to Jesus, even though we see no way before us. We follow Jesus by following Him, not by leading the way ourselves. The idea is not that we do work for Him. Instead, we follow along behind His leading, so He can do His work through us.
3. If we want to abide in Him and He in us, we accomplish it through the Word. If we want to express our love for Him, we do it through obedience to the Word. If we want to know the truth, the Holy Spirit reveals it to us through the Word. If we want to walk in righteousness, we are to continue in the Word. If we want our prayers and petitions answered, we are to obey the Word. The Word always brings forth new life in us when we ask the Holy Spirit for revelation.
4. Committed disciples encounter one obstacle after another. Unless we are zealous for the Lord, we may find ourselves in a moral or spiritual panic. Being zealous for Jesus eliminates devotion to creeds, or forms of belief, or to any phase of truth, or to prayer, or to holiness, or to work of any kind. We are zealous in our relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ. We know out of that relationship comes the ability to overcome all obstacles, and to fulfill God's purpose for our lives.
5. God is not frivolous. He does not create life without a purpose. Even the ant and the buzzard have a purpose in life. Certainly God has a purpose for the human being, the highest form of life in His creation. Everyone wants to know God's purpose, but the only way to find out, is by not trying to find out. As soon as we are born again, we enter into His purpose. From that moment, it is safe to follow our common sense decisions because we are led by the Holy Spirit within us. Unless He gives us an inner check, we can rest in the reality that we are fulfilling God's purpose. If His purpose is something great for our lives, He will lead us there, step by step.
6. We can recognize an enemy in our personal temple because it distracts our attention from God. We should never underestimate the subtle power of the enemy. Those things which distract us are usually most attractive. They can take any form. We can make them harmless simply by taking them to Jesus. When we give Jesus preeminence over everything else, He gently cleanses our personal temples.

## Lesson Eighteen . . . Discipleship

### Points For Discussion (see pages 81,82)

1. Jesus prayed, and He told us to do the same. Prayer nourishes the life of the Son of God in us and enables Him to manifest Himself in and through us. Prayer activates God's power in the person or situation for which we pray. The disciple understands that; therefore, he prays with conviction and faith. Prayer is supernatural; it relies entirely upon God. The disciple realizes he must keep open the line of communication between himself and God. He recognizes prayer as the vehicle with which to accomplish it.
2. When we walk by sight, we rely upon our logic to guide us. When we walk by faith, we discover that God's methods are a perpetual contradiction to everyone of our preconceived notions. While we are struggling with the complexities of a problem, God makes a move in the simplest way, and the problem disappears. He wants us to recognize His wisdom, and to utilize His sovereignty in every situation. We can do this only in a walk of faith.
3. The war has already been won. Jesus accomplished that on the cross. The disciple knows that when he is in right relationship with God, he is a representative of God's kingdom. As a representative, he has the authority of the kingdom behind him. He can use the name of Jesus, because he is representing Jesus. Depending upon the power in the name of Jesus, he is assured of the victory.
4. The disciple is constantly bombarded by temptation and deception, the two tools which Satan uses to attack those in the kingdom. But God is never deceived. When the disciple takes everything to God and lays it at His feet, God will reveal the deceit.
5. It is impossible for our natural heart to love, unconditionally. But when we allow the Holy Spirit to take over, He will enable us to love beyond ourselves. He will begin by giving us the capacity to love the Lord. Then He will strengthen our love so it may be shed abroad to the hearts of others. God's love is perfect in order for us to have perfect love in our hearts, we must have the nature of God within us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.
6. The secret of a disciple's life is devotion to Jesus Christ. Spiritual leaders should not be devoted to people, they should be devoted to Jesus. They should not be concerned with being in the spotlight, their concern should be the satisfaction of Jesus. With that attitude in the forefront of their ministry, they will be in a position for Jesus to minister to the multitudes, and for the Father to receive the glory.

## Lesson Nineteen . . . Holiness

### Points For Discussion (see pages 85,86)

1. The essential nature of God is holiness. His holiness radiates from Him to those in proximity to Him; therefore, when we come into His presence, we become holy. There is only one holiness, the holiness of God.

Jesus did not call us to make ourselves holy, He came to impart His holiness to us. This occurs without any effort on our part, it is the by-product of the indwelling Spirit of God. God has called us to Himself. Through sanctification He has passed His holiness to us so we can come boldly before the throne, and stand in His presence.

2. Being with God does not come out of doing for God, it is the other way around. When we have taken the time to be with God. He will fill our remaining time with doing for Him. We are so performance oriented that we are inclined to run out and respond to a cause or fill a need, simply because it is there. It is such a good work, we are certain God will bless it. But God may have had someone in mind who could do the job ten times better.

The basis of everything we do, should come out of our quiet time of being with Him. When we wait for Him to open the door, He will have prepared the way and there will be very little striving on our part. He said, "My yoke is easy." He really meant it.

3. Our weakest moment, that moment when we react impulsively, reveals the true nature of our spirituality. If we are trying to make ourselves holy or righteous, we are working in the flesh. God will let us see how futile it is by bringing us into an emotional crisis. He will let us lose control and explode all over everybody as many times as it takes, until we finally give in and turn to Him for our holiness and righteousness and spiritual strength. Until we stop trying on our own, we will never find the more excellent way.
4. Consecration means presenting ourselves to God without reservation. Consecration is the separating of a holy thing to God. It is not the separating of an unholy thing to be made holy. To the disciple, consecration means separation from all other callings which we may prefer, trusting His providence to place us where He wants us, whether in business, or school, or full time ministry.
5. The disciple should not concern himself with what is right and what is wrong. He is not apt to do the wrong thing if he has trained himself to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He does, however, have to watch the "right" things which are placed before him. The disciple usually has so many doors open to him that he has to ask God to close those "right" doors which are not in God's perfect will for his life.
6. Holiness and humility go hand in hand. When we submit ourselves to the kingship of Jesus, He is able to express His humility in us. Humility has to be an unconscious state. As soon as we become aware of it, we lose it. As the disciple trains himself to focus upon the Lord, humility and holiness take up residence.

## Lesson Twenty . . . Holiness

### Points For Discussion (see pages 89,90)

1. Our old person has the sinful nature inherited from Adam. The very essence of that old person is sin; therefore, it can never be made pure. That is why God gave us a new inner man when we accepted Jesus (*Romans 6:3-11*). This new person we are in Christ is the person to whom God imputes His holiness. Although our flesh still has a tendency toward sin, our new inner man has the spirit of Christ, and is capable of walking in holiness.
2. There is no method, no performance, no behavior, no prayer through which we can obtain holiness. Holiness is the natural outcome of our relationship with Jesus. As we relinquish control to the Holy Spirit, we take on His holiness. This is an unconscious thing.
3. God's revelation is a call to prayer. Unless we have been called to the office of Prophet, we are not given revelation so we can shout it from the housetop. God uses the prayers of the saints to accomplish His purposes. Like Daniel, we are to continue to listen. When God's time comes for us to share the revelation, He will set the stage and prepare the hearts of the people to receive it. We can look to Ninevah as an example (*Jonah 3:1-10*).
4. It is easy to feel sorry for a sinful act, but it is easier to repeat the sinful act than it is to repent. The second lie is always easier to tell than the first. The second adulterous act is easier than the first. The same is true for all sins. Once the ground is broken, the next part takes less effort. Repentance stops repetition. Repentance involves a change of heart, a change of mind, and a change of behavior. Repentance carries with it a commitment. The Lord meets a person at the point of true repentance, and gives him strength.
5. We are told in *Philippians 2:12 and 13*, to work out our salvation, and that it is God who is at work in us to will and to work for His good pleasure. The closer we get to God, the more freedom He has to work upon our character and to reform our personality. He knows exactly what He has in mind for us. If we will trust Him to work everything for our good, he will perform some excellent spiritual surgery. He will remove areas of flesh, which stand in the way of His purpose.
6. There is only one way to deal with the impurities in our lives. We must take them to Jesus, lay them on the altar, and ask Him to consume them with His holy fire. It is not necessary for us to delve deeply into our character to determine what God would have us rid ourselves of. He will bring those things to the surface, Himself. Our responsibility is to give them immediately to Him, even though they may not seem important to us. It is in the act of obedience that we make positive strides with our Lord.

## Lesson Twenty-One . . . Freedom

### Points For Discussion (see pages 93,94)

1. No human being is perfect apart from God. With Jesus, every power of His nature is in harmony with the will of God. Understanding this, we should place every situation and circumstance into the hands of Jesus as soon as it appears. "Lord, here is my latest problem in this relationship. How do You want me to handle it? I am going to release the problem to You and trust You to work it out. I will keep my hands off it until You have finished Your work." This is proof to Him that we are making Him Lord of our lives.
2. It is only when we come to the end of ourselves that we decide to look to God. Nothing can be solved or altered eternally until we change our focus. Introspection and self analysis are indications that our focus is still on self, rather than upon God. God is the only One who can heal. We may be able to apply a band-aid, but He can perform perfect surgery.
3. We can never overcome the world until we allow Jesus to overcome the world in us. Our flesh will dominate our lives until we deliberately relinquish control to Jesus. He is the only Person who can free us from the personal temptations and deceptions of the world. But He can accomplish this in us only as we relinquish control of our lives to Him.
4. Striving indicates we are still trying to do everything ourselves, rather than rely upon the Lord. It is difficult for us to turn loose. But if we insist upon taking everything into our own hands, we can expect to suffer the consequences. It is only after we have relinquished all, that we have anything at all. It is only after we have surrendered that God floods us with His abundance.
5. We try desperately to become better people. We try to behave, we ask the Lord for more faith, but we make no headway. It is as if the heavens have turned to brass. The problem is that we have made no moral surrender, we have not laid our lives at the feet of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is not interested in our self-improvement, He is interested in leading us to Jesus. When we take our eyes off ourselves and place them upon Jesus, the Holy Spirit will do whatever is necessary to take us to the throne room.
6. It is only after we understand our real person is spirit, that we can understand what happened at the time of our regeneration. We can then accept the fact that we have a new, regenerated spirit, given us by God upon our acceptance of Jesus. Our new spirit replaced our old unregenerate spirit we inherited from Adam. When we can see the separation of spirit from flesh, we can deal with the flesh more objectively and more effectively. This also helps us to see the advantage in freeing our spirit for direct communication with God, without filtering everything through the flesh. The pre-programming of our flesh dilutes the purity of any spiritual communication we have with God.

## Lesson Twenty-Two . . . Freedom

### Points For Discussion (see pages 97,98)

1. The enemy is a master at deception. When we find ourselves tempted or confronted by someone, we should look beyond that person. We should try to see what the result of our encounter might be. If we find that it could degrade Jesus, we can be fairly certain it has been arranged by the enemy. The purpose is to draw our attention away from Jesus and put it on the person or situation we are facing. If we will deliberately channel everything through Jesus, we will avoid a lot of our problems.
2. *James 4:7* tells us to submit ourselves to God, to resist the devil and he will flee. The key is in our submission to God. When we submit to His kingship, we enter His kingdom. That is an area in which Satan is not allowed. When we step under God's umbrella of protection, through submission to Him, the devil loses his effectiveness. It is impossible for his darkness to penetrate God's light
3. Obedience is an expression of our willingness to step out in faith. Every step of faith gives us an opportunity to experience another dimension of God. That is why the walk of faith is never boring. It is exciting to watch God prove the truth of His Word as we place our trust in Him. Of course, when we are reluctant to step out, we cut off our opportunity to receive deeper spiritual revelation. It is only through the act of obedience that we get to know the living Christ.
4. When we allow Jesus to sanctify us, we open ourselves to a supernatural transformation. To be sanctified, is to be set apart from the world, made peculiar to God for His particular purpose. Like the loaves and the fishes, our ability to feed the masses the bread of life becomes multiplied. The more we move out in obedience to the direction of the Holy Spirit, the more multiplication takes place.
5. God can create great things out of our smallness. When we feel we have too little to submit to God for His use, that is a sign we have our eyes upon ourselves rather than upon God. The man who had been given only one talent, thought he didn't have enough to work with. But his master berated him for not using it to the maximum of his ability. We should never limit the unlimited One. His thoughts are different from ours: therefore, we must give Him the freedom to use our limited talents to the fullest extent.
6. We should never have to strain to grow spiritually. We cannot struggle ourselves into holiness, nor can we subdue the flesh by wrestling with it. All spiritual growth comes as a result of our relationship with Jesus. We are to set our minds to focus upon Him and to commit our lives to Him. He takes care of our spiritual growth. The more intent our focus, the faster and deeper our growth.

## Lesson Twenty-Three . . . Open Heaven

### Points For Discussion (see pages 101,102)

1. Personal power gets in the way of the power of the Holy Spirit. When we insist upon doing it "our way" that means we are not giving control to the Holy Spirit. To a disciple, only God's power is important. If we are in right relationship with Jesus, we will have reached the position where people don't really notice us. They notice only that the power of God comes through us all the time.
2. God's purpose is to make us one with Himself. We are to maintain communion with God and realize He is accomplishing His purpose in our lives on a daily basis. If we do this, we will not be troubled with finding out what His purpose happens to be. As we stay rightly related to Him, God will fulfill His purpose in our lives.
3. Daniel was committed to God. He studied the Word, he prayed, and he responded positively to spiritual revelation. He was a strong intercessor. It was his intercession, which activated the heavenly powers to fulfill God's purpose for that time. None of this would have happened if Daniel had not the persistence to continue in spite of the opposition. God moved sovereignly through Daniel's commitment. We can use Daniel as an example when our commitment is challenged.
4. If there is a difference between God's purpose for our lives and what is actually happening in our lives, there can be only one reason: disobedience. God will let us discern what He is doing, but we slow His progress because we are slow to obey. Therefore, what actually happens in our lives will not necessarily flow harmoniously with His purpose. However, as soon as we obey, the windows of heaven open, and the truths come pouring in. Our understanding always follows obedience, it never precedes it.
5. When an instrument is properly tuned, it will produce the perfect note. We are like that. When we are in right relationship with God, we are properly tuned. We can hear God and respond immediately with the perfect note of obedience. When we are in harmony with God, we will produce the results He has orchestrated, and He will get the glory.
6. Right relationship with God occurs when we focus upon Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, He passes to us the ability to relate to others. When left to ourselves, all our relationships are conditional to the behavior of the other person. But when Jesus has control over our lives, our relationships with others become unconditional. Their behavior is no longer the gauge upon which we measure the relationship. Relationships of this kind become eternal, because they are rooted in the nature of God.

## Lesson Twenty-Four . . . Open Heaven

### Points For Discussion (see pages 105,106)

1. In the Bible, the heart is the center of our thoughts. The brain is the vehicle through which the heart expresses itself. The heart is the center of everything, it is the central altar, and the body is the outer court. What we offer on the altar of the heart will be revealed through the body. The heart is where God works. Once the Holy Spirit is in the heart, He will bring us into unity with God. God wants to deal with our innermost selves, that is why He wants our hearts.
2. If we start on a ministry of our own, without consulting God, but expecting Him to bless it, we may be inclined to deify the ministry. Christian ministry can hinder concentration upon God. Many people are giving their lives for the sake of worthwhile causes. This is dangerously wrong because it is so nearly right. Anything which prompts us to act on the line of principles rather than a relationship with Jesus, fosters our natural independence. It becomes a barrier to our yielding to Jesus. If we will take the time for quiet moments with Him, He will give us all the ministry we can handle.
3. All communion with God is spiritual; therefore, all communion with heaven is spiritual. We become eligible to experience open heaven when we become full of the Holy Spirit, the same as Stephen. The marvelous characteristic of the Spirit of God is that He can raise us up to the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the means by which the triune God abides with the saint. We do not experience open heaven by climbing, or by struggling. God lifts us straight out of our sin and weakness, and lets us see the wonders of His spiritual realm.
4. Stephen was undergoing extreme physical torment, finally to the point of death. It was a time for the flesh to scream out for mercy and deliverance. But when Stephen fastened his eyes upon Jesus, God's grace took over and delivered him to a point beyond physical suffering. God's grace flowed through Stephen with such intensity that it overflowed in a prayer for forgiveness.
5. With God, all things are possible, nothing is impossible for Him. The only way for us to accomplish the impossible, such as praying successfully about an impossible situation, is to channel our prayer through Jesus. He is our lord and our Intercessor. He is in tune with the will of the Father, and we have an open communication line with Him through the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility is to get out of the way and make room for Him to accomplish the impossible. We need only enough faith to go to Him. He will do the rest.
6. We must develop our trust in God. If we really trust Him, we will deliberately involve Him in every second of our lives. We will come to the same place as Jesus. We will do nothing except that which we have submitted to the Father for His approval. As we put this into practice, as this dimension of trust becomes a lifestyle to us, our daily experience will be an open heaven.