

A Disciple's Handbook

Charles Pinkney 2013

Chapter 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP

Charles Pinkney

Believers need to be nurtured in order to grow as disciples. The *great commission* was given by the risen Messiah to his original disciples. In it he commands them to "make disciples" of every nation. This reveals two important foundational principles: First that the kingdom would grow through the making of disciples; and second, that these disciples would be from not only Judea (Jewry) but people from every nation. Prior to this the "Gospel of the Kingdom" was confined only to the people of Israel who worshiped JHVH God. The mysterious age of the "Church" of Jesus Christ was about to be birthed into existence. Previously prophecy hinted at the time when the gentiles would be brought into the covenant; but when and how this would happen was not considered seriously nor understood. The Church was born at Pentecost, about a week after Jesus commissioned his assembled disciples and then ascended into the glory clouds of the heavens.

Today, when I use the term "church" I always imagine it in quotations because not everyone regards this word the same way. The way that we of the twenty-first century regard it is a far cry from that experienced and understood by the disciples who witnessed the arrival of the Kingdom of God in power at that first Pentecost.

I believe that most of us imagine that the familiar church meeting-house model where most Christians routinely meet for Sunday services when we refer to the church. We typically think of a location, an edifice and a kind of meeting that might occur at this place called "worship." This reference is not the original New Testament model. The term ***Ek-kles-sia*** in the original Greek text is translated "Church" throughout the New Testament Bible. The proper connotation of Ekklessia is *the called out, the gathered out ones*. We tend to assume that church life in early Christian times is equal to its present day form. However, the form of the 'church' in the days of the apostles was quite unlike modern understanding of familiar religious forms built around a church house.

In ancient times Ekklessia was a form of gathering in which members came together to transact a specific kind of business on behalf of a community. In the case of the Christian Ekklessia it was and is the business of the heavenly shepherd, Christ Jesus. In this kind of fellowship all members are called to participate actively. In this church body we are called out of the world by the Spirit to be a part of Christ's body, (He, Christ the Messiah, is the head over the church.) All members bring with them unique abilities, gifts or enablements. God's *grace* provides the activation or enablement of those many gifts that are needed for Spiritual fellowship and growth in understanding. (1 Peter 4:11)

Becoming A Disciple

Membership (discipleship) in the Body of Christ, occurs through faith by *believing*.

We have to have a belief that somehow addresses:

Who Jesus is,

What He has done, and

What we *hope* and *expect* Him to do for us.

When we come to Jesus we believe that:

He is alive,

He is supernaturally empowered and to perform, and

He is willing and able to fulfill every promise that which is promised in His word.

There is a general attitude that *joining a church* is the entry way into God's kingdom. This is assuredly not the case! The entry point in reality, is that of having your name written in the "Book of Life." No church exercising mere human authority has the *power to do this although they often seem to promote that position. The membership of becoming a disciple is established by a supernatural and sovereign act of God. It has been called by various names:

Coming from death into life;

Being born of the spirit; becoming a new creation;

Being born again;

Having your sins forgiven and wiped clean,

Being born from above.

*power (*dunamis*) is God's supernatural power. The Gospel as described by the Apostle Paul is established upon "*the power of God.*"

The Work of the Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit is the divine personage who brings to each believer the *gifts or enablements* of Grace. The role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Jesus and deliver His knowledge, His power, as well as His attributes of character. We who are *called out of a world of darkness* to partake in the “*Kingdom of Light*.” In God's kingdom we are empowered to mature, gain experience and develop our own *testimonies* concerning this Kingdom of God. These testimonies are our personal 'God Stories.' "We declare the things we know and we testify about the things that we have seen." (John 3:11)

This is what it means when the resurrected Jesus declares, "You shall be witnesses (bear witness) to me, In Jerusalem, In Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Our God stories and testimonies, when shared, build faith among those with whom we share. Testimonies describe the reality and the dynamics of how heaven touches us individually. Through the power of Grace, we are not only regenerated and converted into the kingdom of God, but also endowed with various Spiritual gifts.

Spiritual Gifts

These gifts are supplied to every believer as enablements that bear witness of God's presence in our own day to day experience. There is through the ongoing "Grace of God" enablements to learn the Word, depart from the past life from which we were rescued, and eventually mature and grow as a disciple who can function in a particular way in the Body of Christ, which is the church. Church house religion, has proven to be deficient in providing a platform to grow and flourish as a disciple who is a partaker in the things of

God. It is God's intention to use all whom he calls. The true expression of the ekklesia is to provide a platform for both growth and ministry. I dare say that such a platform is mostly absent and not available in the majority of traditional churches.

The “Church” was born at Pentecost. The disciples numbering 120 of Christ's closest followers and family gathered together to pray and await with expectancy that which Jesus had promised would come, “power from above.” Pentecost is the Jewish festival 50 day after “unleavened bread,” the second day of Passover. We are told that Jesus appeared to numbers of his disciples physically showing himself to be unmistakably alive for a period of forty days. Thus we know that Pentecost occurred about a week after Jesus *physically* ascended into heaven having at that time spoken the 'great commission to his assembled disciples.

Let's Take a Look at the Church

When I use the term "church" I always imagine it in quotation marks because not everyone regards this word the same way. The way that we in the twenty-first century regard it, is a far cry from that which was experienced and understood by the disciples who witnessed the arrival of the Kingdom of God in power at that first Pentecost.

I imagine that most of us think of the church as the familiar church-house model where most Christians routinely meet when we refer to the church. We typically think of a location, an edifice, and a kind of meeting that occurs at this place. It is commonly called "worship." This reference is not the original New Testament model. The term *Ek-kles-sia* in the original Greek text is translated as "Church" throughout the Bible. The proper connotation of Ekklesia is *the*

called out, or the gathered out ones. We tend to assume that church life in early Christian times is equal to its present day form. However, the form of the 'church' in the days of the apostles was quite unlike modern understanding of familiar religious forms built around a church house.

In ancient times Ekklessia was a form of gathering in which members came together to transact a specific kind of business on behalf of a community. In the case of the Christian Ekklessia it was and is the business of the heavenly shepherd, Christ Jesus. In this kind of fellowship *all members are expected to freely participate.*

In the ekklessia, this church body, we are called out of the world by the Spirit to be a part of Christ's body, (He, Christ the Messiah, is the head over the church.) All members bring with them unique abilities, gifts or enablements. God's *grace* provides the activation or enablement of the many gifts that are needed for Spiritual fellowship and edifying, which is growth in understanding. (1 Peter 4:11)

How Does One Become a Member of the Church?

Again, our membership allowing us to partake in Body of Christ occurs only through faith in believing.

A belief that somehow understands:

Who Jesus is,

What He has done,

What we expect Him to do for us.

When we come to Jesus we believe that:

He is alive,

He is supernaturally empowered and able to act,

that He is willing to fulfill every promise that he promised in His word.

These God stories and testimonies, when shared, build faith among those with whom we share. Testimonies describe the reality and the dynamics of how heaven touches us individually. Through the power of Grace, we are not only regenerated and converted into the kingdom of God, but also endowed with various Spiritual gifts. These gifts are given, supplied, to every believer as enablements. These help to bear witness of God's reality and presence in our own day to day life. There is through *the ongoing Grace of God* power from God to learn the Word, depart from *our old natures*, which characterized the past life from which we were rescued, and to gradually, step by step, mature and grow as a disciple.

Do not doubt it, you who are called become ***a disciple*** and ***a saint***. This is Christ's designation. Do not accept less. You are called to function in a particular way in the Body of Christ, which is the church.

Church house religion, has proven to be deficient in providing a platform for us to grow and flourish as a disciple, a partaker in the things of God. This is due primarily to the division in the body designating some active, the clergy, and some passive, the laity.

It is, however, God's intention to use all whom he calls. The true expression of the ekklesia is to provide a platform for both growth and ministry. Sadly, such a platform is mostly absent in the majority of traditional churches.

Among the assertions I will present in the discussion of discipleship is that we as believers, after being born of the Spirit, may not only know God, but that we all (men, women, boys, or girls) can have a spiritually *empowered* life. The "church" as Jesus Christ established

it, was given this provision. But in spite of this provision, both knowing God and developing a spiritual life, is often unrealized in the institutional church. Time, circumstance and unrelenting forces of spiritual resistance (authored by our spiritual adversary) embattle believers, to derail or to side track us from attaining the spiritual life. Human traditions are instigated instead. Jesus warned his disciples in Mark 15 to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and also the leaven of Herod, superficial religiosity, and worldliness. Jude, half brother and an apostle of Jesus, writes that we must, " - - earnestly contend for the faith given to us by the apostles.

Disciples, Learning the "Way"

The foundation of the life of Christ begins as we become a disciple of Jesus. Just as he made disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) Religion has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal. It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious folk heroes. The sense of their being our brothers, sharing the same life of trials and faith has been all but lost. In our minds Bible days were another time, another faith, another kind of application. This is not the case. Religious tradition places apostles on pedestals and this should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons.

A short time after the apostolic age, the lust for human leaders to exalt themselves in *rulership* and corrupt motives began to undermine the apostolic foundations. Liberty and spiritual forms of worship began to erode. We are entitled to the same promises and gospel practices that New Testament believers knew. The Christian life, being Holy Spirit inspired, is not of human authorship nor human tradition. It is the way that I have found to be God inspired,

life-changing, fulfilling, and in perfect accord with the Bible.

Discipleship as described here is modeled by the saints and apostles in the beginning of this *church age*. Many denominations and religious teachers, attempt to mentor and advise others about the spiritual life. Since there has been a history of promoting religious traditions instead of knowing God, it is important that we look to grow in wisdom through the guidance of the *Spirit of Truth*, the *Holy Spirit*.

God has told us through the Word (James) that we may ask for wisdom or truth to be revealed to us. He further instructs us to be confident knowing that God is willing to give *good gifts* which bring fulfillment and blessings and not sorrows. When seeking the revelations which are of God and not false we must be fully aware of the risk of error and counterfeit. Deception and false teaching is everywhere. In order to discern the true from the false It is always necessary to invoke the name of Jesus, Yeshua, the Messiah. This is your safeguard against deception. His is the *name above every name!* This Holy Name is the name that commands and causes every demon to tremble. Know also that His Spirit will not lead us into bondage, fear, submission to abusive men, or lawlessness.

His Spirit is the right Spirit. While commanding heaven and earth it is that Spirit that was in Christ Jesus. It is one of meekness, gentleness, compassion and service to others while yet being full of the authority that caused the heavens and earth to come into being.

The Bible teaches that Jesus' name commands all powers of heaven and earth. It is above the authority of any other god or angel or worldly authority. The word states that at the name of Yeshua, Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess his lordship. It

is in His name that we can consecrate any prayer or any request. It is a safeguard and assurance that anything which will be revealed or imparted spiritually will be without deceptive influence. If you ask in Jesus, name *the deceiver* is unlikely to make his intrusion. Although he often comes back at a more appropriate time to beguile and cause doubts.

What is the Right Spirit?

2Corinthians 11: 2-3 cautions us that there are 3 components to the Gospel of Truth, The right Jesus, The right Gospel, and the Right Spirit. These must all be in evidence!

The true Spirit of Christ Jesus is the spirit of love, forgiveness, gentleness, meekness, selflessness, and patience. It is not tinged with fear, with condemnation, with urgency or panic, It is not contaminated by a lust for personal gain, ownership of another or any desire to control or manipulate another person. Check yourself if you are seeking with motives containing any of the negatives stated above for they are contrary to the nature of the God who will insure your being lead into truth.

Receiving True Gifts and not Counterfeit

Jesus instructs us about receiving gifts from God, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us that the God of heaven gives *good gifts* and not devilish or perverted ones. Christ also characterizes the fact that there are two sources who might affect spiritual results. God's gifts are good and true. Let us look at the scripture found in Matthew 7:8-11 and in Luke 11:11-13: These shed light on Spiritual gifts.

"For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." Matt 6:8; "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" :9; "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?":10; "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" -- :11. The two gifts which are requested are bread and a fish, God gives things which are life-giving (bread) and safe (meat of fish). Luke chapter eleven restates the same teaching about asking from God the Father with a slightly different emphasis, and includes the gift of the *Holy Spirit* which is the living gift of God's power and presence: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"; "Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" -- Luke 11:11-13

The references to the counterfeit gifts are not just coincidental or random examples they represent the fact that there is a source of the *bad gift*. The enemy is Satan. He does not give good gifts, nor give valid revelations. His gifts are not life giving, they give neither joy, nor health nor liberty. Yet it is possible that he will try to come in unless you exclude him from having any part of the asking and seeking transaction (namely the spiritual search for a spiritual life.)

Satan's gift is characterized as a stone instead of bread, as a serpent instead of pure food, a poisonous scorpion instead of an egg. Jesus has portrayed Satan as the deadly counterfeiter who will insinuate himself into the seekers life subtly and at any opportunity.

Forewarned is forearmed; for this reason we will need to initiate safe guards and precautions as I suggested above in order to keep the deceiver out of your life. There was a time when our lives were

entirely under his (Satan's) control. We may not think that this was the case but the apostle is very clear about it. A couple of apostolic letters bring attention to the nature of the unredeemed life, common to each and every life before that life is renewed *In Christ*.

Paul states in his letter to Ephesus, Chapter 2, verses 2 and 3. "- - *in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, (Satan) the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation (lifestyle) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*" Paul's letter to Colossae, Chapter 1 verse 21. "*And you, that were sometime before now) alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*" Paul's letter to Corinth, Chapter 1 verses 10 and 11, "*Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*"

Christian Koinonia

Chapter 2

The fellowship of the Family of God Koinonia and Sharing (with those of like precious faith)

*Every Believer Becomes a Disciple -
Matthew 28:19*

DISCIPLESHIP IS PARTAKING IN THE LIFE OF GOD EXTENDING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

KOINONIA:

Sharing, Communicating, And Partaking In The Kingdom Of God *Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to both know him and follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him.* During the Lord's earthly ministry, they walked at his side, conversed with him, and were both witnesses and **partakers** of his ministry. They knew his voice; saw his power; and marveled at his wisdom. On a strictly physical level they *knew* him! Yet, this was not considered adequate. These original disciples were instructed to receive a further supernatural empowerment. In order to demonstrate and build the Kingdom of God there were told to. "Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from above- -." Today I suspect that far too few nominal Christians are able to say they know him on a Spiritual level. Yes they know about him have been taught doctrines but how much do they know

him in the transformative power of his love and the power of his resurrection?

Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only **may know him**, but have fellowship with him **and partake** in his divine nature and *in his ministry*. When we gather as believers at any particular place of meeting can we say as we leave that meeting knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or have been empowered by his touch?" *1 Peter 4:10,11* defines God's idea of the importance of sharing the gift that is unique to each believer for indeed each has received a gift or many gifts to be shared from his or her life. Tradition has had the negative effect of barring or at least, discouraging the ordinary believer from ministry even though apostolic scripture consistently prohibits this.

All believers are told to grow and mature in the knowledge of Him who came to give more abundant life through the power of his resurrection. We are not to remain a novice and a baby in the faith, but that we attain "unto the stature of a 'mature man' even the stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4). The exaltation of a single voice in the role of authority **to disciple** us may be limited and limiting. Pulpit ministry is an unfortunate self-perpetuating legacy of 17 centuries of the "Church" age. Those who in fact have experience in Christ's life and ministry, made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit have a title in the Word of God; these individuals are called "**elders**." Certainly church denominations use this same term within some context of their doctrines. But those who Jesus calls elders may differ from what religious traditions might label as elders. The apostle John, the disciple who Jesus loved, begins his letter by talking about Spiritual **experience** as the qualification (credentials) that we must look to and lean upon. He noted what he had seen,

touched, looked upon, and handled in the Word of life.

(1John1:1)That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, these things we declare unto you - -"

True fellowship is elusive and hard to achieve since religious traditions tends to separate rather than unite in our sense of belonging and feeling one accord. The wrong motives and wrong understandings create disharmony. Correction is occasionally necessary but in the right Spirit. For we are to have the same Spirit that is Christ's and *- say the same thing - ", seeking that there be no schisms, walls, or disharmony among us. * (1Cor. 1:10,11)

Ministry Transforms, Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

After conversion, discipling pertains to their subsequent edification and maturing as part of the body Christ. This need not be the formal sort of ministry experienced as the normal Saturday or Sunday fare in a church congregation. In the apostles day it was done in intimate and loving fellowship groups where individuals shared their testimonies of the transforming life of Christ and the acknowledgment of the revelation of the Word of Truth with fellow believers. We pass through various stages as we grow. Just as in the natural, we begin as babies, then children, the strong young 'men', then mature sages expressing the character and spiritual nature of Jesus Christ. So is it in the matter of Spiritual growth. The Bible shows how we each are called to ***minister our individual Spiritual gifts to one another. (Rom.12; 1Cor.12. 1 Cor. 14, and 1Pet 4:11)***

The proper and best time to edify and grow is when fellow believers

come together in koinonia (fellowship). When two or more true believers get together the natural result is to share their common salvation and to have "fellowship" to minister "edification" to each other. When these two or more gather, Jesus 'joins' them and becomes a co-participant through the Holy Spirit! This fellowship process is not complicated, nor formal, it is not domination of one individual authority over another. It is not adversarial. Discipleship happens as we share the several gifts given to each believer. Koinonia is about participation, communication and sharing. As referenced in 1John 1:1-3, It begins with actual experiences given as a witness of Jesus' life and resurrection. It is about the revelation of Christ within each person and how he is living through our lives and doing his work through us. **Koinonia is about sharing what Christ has given to each believer and ministering that gift to others.**

According to the measure of God's grace, individuals have various of testimonies and experiences, some have more, some fewer. There may be some with musical gifts which enhance worship and some with less of that ability. Some may have verbal skills, some less. Some with practical kinds of skills, some not so much. Some may be working through personal tragedies or rejection, while others have already had healing in these areas. All need to be encouraged to participate at some level so that **leadership skills** may be fostered in each.

The dynamics of fellowship will change from week to week. Few or more people may be present at a house or meeting place and the Spirit of God will act in accordance to the time and persons present. I believe fellowship should never turn into something regimented or formalistic. However it often becomes that especially when everything is controlled by one leader. Those unfamiliar with the kind of fellowship I have described need to experience for themselves what can happen in a place of meeting where the Spirit

of God is given liberty! God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing; restore broken hearts and broken relationships and save peoples souls. The Holy Spirit administers just such actions.

(See link to [Why We Gather](#))

Religion is a pitfall Jesus warned against

The Encroachment of Formalism

A Religious spirit tries to manifest in any fellowship where the liberty and power of the Spirit is flourishing. It manifests in the form of supremacy, control or formalism. It stalked the church in the days of the apostles and it stalks the believer today. Satan aims to transform God-life into **dead religion**.

I suppose *church liturgy* was created in times past, following the kind of liberty and glorious fellowship described above. Liturgical forms may have started with good intentions with the hope of bottling up and preserving something very good and worthwhile, perhaps to preserve some of the glory of an earlier day. If only God's manifest presence could be captured and preserved, but alas it can not. He is moving on as the pillar of cloud moved ahead directed the sojourners in the wilderness in the book of Exodus.

The Bible demonstrates that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed they were left with a lifeless object (a religious artifact or idol.) The temple remained, the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained, but the manifestation of its power was gone. A cistern remained, the fount of living water was gone. God's continued glory and fellowship with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. Years and centuries past and only rituals and catechism remained supplanting the glory that had been lost. The

ritual enactments remained and the liturgical trappings but the presence of God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth God's 'glory' through waiting upon Him in faith.

As God's presence leaves it is replaced by religion. "Ministry" follows a similar transition. Leadership becomes the domain of a very small body of liturgical experts. It has come to pass that the priesthood or the clergy only is trained and authorized to govern and rule over the flock of God. But in the new covenant as it was presented to the saints, discipleship is the domain of every believer.

A concept to re-think: Abolish the Laity!

God wishes each believer to be a ministering priest, just as he wishes each of us to become *a true worshiper*. What is this true worshiper and what is worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. Any one other than "true worshipers" fall short in worship. The natural mind is not accustomed to partaking in heavenly things. *These are strangers in the inner court of the temple*. Our Heavenly Father looks at the hearts he does not regard the man who is adorned with the outward regalia of religious uniform over any common believer whose heart is open.

A Temple or Cathedral is No Longer the Place to Meet God.

Our Heavenly Father does not require a building or cathedral but chosen a holy dwelling site *inside of us*. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, (It is not about where you worship,) not 'this mountain or another mountain,' **we worship what we KNOW!**

Many *do not know what they are worshiping*. The truth is that worship is inseparable from salvation. Salvation is through the root and foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained,

when men and women would worship the Almighty God in Spirit. Those without this Spirit receive nothing of the revelation and fellowship of God of which Jesus spoke. A divine meeting place for the first priest hood was a place behind the veil into the presence of God where no human could stand without having been made pure by scrupulous preparation. In the presence of God man does not utter a word nor risk the defilement of his own sweat.

Disciples, Learning the "Way"

The foundation of the life of Christ is laid by becoming a disciple of Jesus. Just as Jesus set about making disciples in the time of his earthly ministry so he continues today. (John 8:21 ; 17:20) The Great Commission is about discipleship. Too often, the Christian world has made the life of the Bible remote and impersonal through religion . It has made Peter, James and John or John the Baptist into icons or religious super heroes. It is too easy to lose the sense that Peter, James, Paul and Barnabus and the host of others are our brothers and our teachers. Though now having run their race, they shared the same life of trials and faith as we ourselves. In our minds Bible days were entirely another time, another kind of faith life , another dispensation. This is not the case. Religious tradition places men on pedestals. This should not be the case because it is contrary to every apostolic and Christ-uttered teaching. God does not show favoritism nor does he show respect of persons. s many that have received the gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace

You may be interested in checking out the writing of Frank Viola and George Barna - - [See www.ptmin.org](http://www.ptmin.org) and listen to some interviews as sound files describing the return to open, house church. For any that have received the gift, (God Life, Grace and Power) minister it to one another, as good stewards of the Grace of God. 1Peter 4:11

Apostolic Roots

CHAPTER 3

FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES

The Apostolic Foundation of the Gospel
Learning Christ - Issues of Discipleship

God has provided that each believer who is born of the Spirit may grow in the Spiritual life. Learning Christ, in a general sense is becoming familiar with God not only through His word but also through His presence, thus gaining familiarity with His character and personality. We, in the process of time, should become partakers of His glory and His character. As it is written, we go from *glory to glory* (2Corinthians 3:18,) and *from faith to faith* (Romans 1:17.) We learn to hearken to the voice of His Spirit and respond accord to the way we are directed. I call this learning Christ. God's model for learning Christ is **imitation** of the first born Son of God, Jesus Christ. We are to model his manner of thinking, and his manner of acting. We are to duplicate his interacting with the Heavenly Father and his Spirit-directed ministry. The first disciples were given a living model but they were only able duplicate his Spiritual behavior after they had received the enabling Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

With Christ's life within us, we strive to submit our egos and wills to him. The world and the flesh still have a taste for the old life. But through the presence of the Holy Spirit and the strength of the fellowship of other we can sustain the proper spiritual attitude. We can be *in the world but not of it*. We aim to become *as he was in this*

world. (John 16:16; 1John 4:17) The total spiritual inability and helplessness of the natural man or woman, places huge limits upon him. We can not be the light of the world if God's light does not burn within us.

Too many nominal Christians experience a religion which could function just as it is without any resurrection.

We can not be *witnesses* of his resurrection if we have not been touched by the fiery hand of God that raised Jesus from the dead who also quickened our own body and spirit. We can not reflect the goodness of God if he has not made us good who were once reprobates.

We come in to this world to know God. This is our first calling and millions come and go from this world not having achieved that first calling. If we are fortunate to have God reveal himself to us then we press on to the next stage, that of being a functional *witness*. It is also unfortunate how many are thwarted in this second stage predominately by the incomplete or ineffectual teachings of religious tradition.

As we have noted, the institutional church has either lost sight of, or failed to actualize the provisions of the New Covenant which comprises the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Time has eroded true understanding, and spiritual subterfuge authored by an unrelenting adversary has come in to subtly sidetrack our spiritual lives and foster human understanding instead. I am not interested in presenting any kind of private methodology that is contrary to Biblical teaching.

What I am trying to share in this writing is not a unique revelation but simply a restatement of **the way** that was revealed by Jesus to his servants the apostles following Pentecost, in the beginning of the

church age . Any church or teacher (including denominational groups) who are attempting to mentor or direct others into a spiritual life are under divine obligation to be accurate. Private interpretation risks wrong doctrine. Since there is always a danger of deception, it is important that we proceed cautiously, both as teachers and learners. We are obligated to discern all things with the wisdom, the help, and guidance of the *Spirit of Truth* who is the *Holy Spirit*. God has told us through the Word that we may ask for wisdom and for truth to be revealed to us. He further instructs us to have confidence in this asking, knowing that God is willing. God is willing! God is willing to give *good gifts* which bring fulfillment and blessings and not sorrows. When seeking the revelations which are of God, or *from God*, it is up to the seeker to be on guard against deceptions and to discern the true from the false. If you are asking anything from God it is very important to invoke the name of Jesus Christ. This name is the name above every name and above every spiritual entity or authority. This name will consecrate or make pure anything which may transpire. It will guarantee that anything which will be revealed or imparted spiritually will be free of any corrupt or deceptive influence. If you ask in the name of Jesus, *the deceiver* can not work his way so readily into the workings.

Receiving True Gifts and not Counterfeit Ones

Jesus instructs us about receiving gifts from God, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us that the God of heaven gives *good gifts* and not evil, hurtful or perverted ones. Christ also characterizes the fact that there are two kinds of gifts which might be tendered, the true and the false, but God's gifts are good and true. The scripture is found in Matthew 7:8-11 and in Luke 11:11-13: "*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to*

him that knocks it shall be opened." :8; "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" :9; "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" :10; "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" :11. KJV The two objects which are sought are bread and fish. God gives things which are life-giving and safe (bread, and meat.) Luke chapter eleven restates the same teaching about asking from God the Father but expands the emphasis, toward the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the living gift of God's power and presence: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"; "Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" -- Luke 11:11-13kjv.

I have emphasized the word **son** to emphasize that relationship is the key to receiving from God. There are a whole lot of different kinds of seekers; some sincere and some less sincere. Some may be little more than curiosity seekers, dabblers, who attempts to receive a spiritual manifestation from God, it is uncertain what may transpire. God knows the hearts of those who seek Him, whether out of sincerity and earnestness or out of impure motives.

But God wishes to emphasize that he is for blessing His family. He is the giver of Good gifts. Counterfeit gifts are a peripheral issue. The above reference represents the fact that there is the possibility of receiving a *bad gift*. These kinds of exceptions bear upon the setting and environment where and with whom the "ministry" occurs and the sincerity of the hearts who seek the gift. We have a common enemy, Satan who is always ready to move in to deflect the gift of

God or to substitute a counterfeit. He does not give good gifts, nor does he give valid revelations. His gifts are not life giving, they give neither joy, nor health nor liberty. Yet it is possible that he will try to come in unless you exclude him from any part of the seeking and asking transaction Satan's gift is characterized as a stone instead of bread, as a serpent instead of pure food, something infused with poison instead of food. Jesus has portrayed Satan as the deadly counterfeiter who will insinuate himself into the seekers life subtly and at any opportunity. Forewarned is to be forearmed; for this reason, it is wise to initiate safeguards and precautions as I suggested earlier, in order to keep the deceiver out of your life and every spiritual transaction.

There was a time when our lives were entirely under his (Satan's) control. We may not think that this was the case but the apostle is very clear about it. A couple of apostolic letters bring attention to the nature of the unredeemed life, which includes each and every life before the renewal *In Christ*. Paul's letter to Ephesus, Chapter 2, verses 2 and 3. *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation (lifestyle) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."* KJV Paul's letter to Collosae, Chapter 1 verse 21. *"And you, that were sometimes (before now) alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled"*

The apostle contrasts the previous unredeemed nature our previous lifestyle with the redeemed nature. In Paul's letter to Corinth, Chapter 1 verses 10 and 11, he lists a number of these life styles; *"- Neither - thieves, - - covetous, - - drunkards, - - revilers, - -*

extortionist, shall inherit the kingdom of God.; And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The Foundation of the Apostles

Apostles were first **disciples**. Disciples walked with the Lord in an intimate way. They learned his ways by first hand observation, through hearing his word and knowing his voice. The disciples while they were growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus were also *participants* in the work of Jesus' ministry. It was they who announced, *'the Kingdom of God is at hand.'*" They showed that the Kingdom could be demonstrated by both **the spiritual power and the authority** to impact the afflicted, the oppressed, the poor and the broken hearted. Disciples were and are called to be partakers of Jesus Christ's ministry. Each of us continues to share the same access to Jesus Christ. We share the same Spirit, we share in the same commission. *"For this reason the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil."* (1John 3:8) We aspire to attain to the **same unity and inclusiveness** as the original fellowship of disciples. There was no member of the original circle of disciples who was just like another. Yet, there was a unique niche for each of those Jesus called.

Each of the first disciples had a divine destiny and an unlimited opportunity for growing up in the fullness of the Lord. Jesus chose the original disciples. He singled them out and called them aside to walk with him and to have a face-to-face relationship with him. Descriptions indicate that each had attributes which could label them as plain **folks** or ordinary people. Some associated with Jesus more intimately than others. Each disciple had unique traits and attributes of character; Matthew a worldly businessman, a publican, a tax

collector; Peter a robust, headstrong man who generally spoke without thinking and was always competing to be someone; John a warm, compassionate and trusting youth; Nathaniel innocent and open; Thomas a scientific minded pragmatist who had to have things proven before he could be persuaded and so on. The twelve included men who we might not have chosen, including Judas the deceiver and betrayer who Jesus also called a robber. Outside of the twelve were a multitude of other disciples *including women* who traveled extensively with Jesus though were not part of the inner group of the twelve. Mary the mother of Jesus was among the disciples gathered in the upper room along with Jesus' brothers and sisters. This is a biblical fact that should be considered by those of the Roman Catholic faith.

It is possible that those who were reasonably close and connected to Jesus may have been about 500 individuals. The apostles were men with whom Jesus visited, taught and broke bread. He also imparted his life and Spirit into them. After he had risen from the dead, he breathed upon the disciples saying to them, "receive Holy Breath (Gr. *pneuma*)." The word breath and spirit are the same word in the original text. This is the same as to say, "Receive the Holy Spirit." It was this action which imparted Holy life within each disciple this afforded, I believe the new heaven borne experience that we believers today call born again or spiritual renewal. The eleven and Judas Iscariot's replacement Matthias were born from above or conceived as a new spirit being at this time.

The apostle Paul (originally Saul) came on board some time later being called by Jesus for a particular revelation and ministry. Saul of Tarsus was a Jewish theologian, a Pharisee of the strictest sect of Judaic fundamentalism of the day. Saul was an intellectual of supreme discipline and credentials. The zealous Saul, set out to

destroy the disciples of Jesus, persecuting and imprisoning all who preached Jesus as Messiah and the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. Saul was added to the order of discipleship but in a special way **after** Christ's resurrection.

How did Saul become a disciple and an apostle? Paul recounted and retold his account of the encounter several times, but the original encounter is described in Acts, Chapter 9. God supernaturally intervened in Saul's life, on a journey to Damascus. His travels were interrupted by Jesus appearing to him in a brilliant light. Saul was blinded and knocked him off his horse onto the ground. The voice spoke to him saying, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*" Paul answered this voice saying, "*Who are you, Lord?*" and Jesus replied, "*I am Jesus who you are persecuting.*" Jesus then gave Saul brief instructions about who he was to visit to receive further ministry and instruction. Jesus began to tutor a new disciple after this. Jesus did not give Saul any information that he did not need to know at that time, but he told him the first thing to do. Paul was told where to go in Damascus to get further help. God likewise does not give us more information than we need to get started. He does list all of the stages of our journey, including both the trials and the victories. The journey of faith is an hour by hour, day by day program. The journey of discipleship begins with a first step forward into a new life. In the first chapter of his letter to Galatia, Saul who has been given a new name, Paul, to go along with his new nature, accounts how he was taken aside and how he began to be instructed face-to-face, personally by Jesus. For three years in the deserts of Arabia, Paul **learned Christ**. being discipled as one "*out of due time*" a description of his apostolic commissioning found in 1Corinthians 15:5-10.

Understanding the Apostle's Doctrine

Why should we place an emphasis on the apostles and the disciples? Because we wish to be connected to the same authentic and pure doctrine and the same spirit and the same manifested spiritual life that was brought forth in the beginning of the "church". It must breath the same purity, power and the same divine order. The apostolic teachings have been described as the foundation upon which the house of God is constructed. We who continue to build the Kingdom of God must continue building upon the same foundation which is true and sound. The foundation is the apostle's doctrine. It is based upon the essentials of the true faith. The "promise of the Father" a nation of kings and priests through Jesus Christ, designated as "the firstborn of many brethren."

The writings of the apostles constitute practical, uncomplicated, hands-on teaching of what is and how to live a Spiritual life during this dispensation of Grace. The Apostles who wrote the Bible gospels and epistles include Peter, James, John, Paul and Luke is credited with authoring the Book of acts as well as the Gospel of Luke, Paul is generally credited with writing most of the other epistles. Theologians fine tune and over-process questions of authorship and seem to glory in vain debates over endless issues of scholarship, but such debates bear little relevance to living the Spiritual life if we merely accept the epistles as true.

The apostle Paul has a unique revelation.

There are certain commonalities that all the apostles share. The original disciples (apostles) like us, received the power to become sons and daughters of God through the Spirit of adoption and the release of the Spirit of God to bear witness that we are now *the sons*

of God. The believing Jews of Jerusalem were prejudiced toward Jewish religious traditions. So there was a tension to want to preserve the Jewish connection to this new phase of fulfilled Judaism. They also looked eagerly to the establishment of the Kingdom of God as a Jewish prophetic event with the soon rule of the messiah.

Paul was given a revelation from Jesus that was to be directed to ***the gentile*** audience. The emphasis in Paul's teaching was directed to the entire world, the nations, a Gentile world. Like the other apostles he enunciates the *power of the crucified and resurrected Jesus*. The Messiah's resurrection is a legacy for all mankind, not just the Jews in Jerusalem, the promise of sonship and new life as a Spiritual Creation ***in Christ***. Paul's revelation speaks to a different audience, the gentile world and the concept of the "Church." (Ekklessia) Paul goes so far as to call this revelation '*His Gospel*.' The original apostles, while they began outreach beyond Jerusalem, maintained a focus on the Jews and Israel. Messiah's resurrection denoted the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel who would eventually restore the Kingdom to Israel. Jesus as the risen son on God was the corner stone of both group's gospel message consistent with the revelation of Christ's grace shared by Peter, James, John or Luke.

It is clear however, that Paul was not taught the Gospel by the apostles in Jerusalem but given unique revelation and instruction by Jesus personally, for 3 years after his conversion on the Damascus road.

The Foundational Features of the Apostle's Doctrine

(the following may be an incomplete list, and represent some that immediately have come to mind. Church counsels have made the same effort to determine what constitutes apostolic doctrine.)

Jesus Christ, the True Son of God Almighty,
Jesus Christ, God incarnated into human flesh;
Jesus Christ, Creator of all things
Jesus Christ, the lamb of God;
Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah
Jesus Christ, the King destined to reign a literal Kingdom
Jesus Christ, Virgin born, fulfilling the Messianic Scriptures
Jesus Christ, crucified, resurrected and alive;
Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man;
Jesus Christ has become the fulfillment of the Passover,
Jesus Christ, Fulfilling the Feast of unleavened bread; Jesus Christ,
Fulfilling the feast of First fruits;
Jesus Christ, Fulfilling the feast of Pentecost; (feast of weeks)
Jesus Christ, Savior of mankind;
Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer of mankind;
Jesus Christ, The healer of mankind;
*(and also the various names of Jehovah - - our healer, our peace,
our provider, our righteousness, etc.)*
Jesus Christ, The righteous judge;
Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead;
Jesus Christ, Our great high priest;
Jesus Christ, The Word of God; The Word made flesh;
Jesus Christ, who will destroy the works of the devil;
Jesus Christ, who will bring judgment upon evil doers;
Jesus Christ, The Lamb of God;
Jesus Christ, the perfect sacrifice and atonement for sin;
Jesus Christ, The Only Way, The only Truth, The Life;

Jesus Christ, The One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit;
Jesus Christ, offers Redemption through the blood shed at the cross;
Jesus Christ, makes new; we become renewed through him
Jesus Christ, imparts his Holy Spirit for dunamis power;
Jesus Christ, imparts his Holy Spirit to reveal truth;
Jesus Christ, our high priest and intercessor;
Jesus Christ, our only mediator of the Father to man.

Through Christ, The believer is given authority against spiritual powers;

Through Christ, we receive the nine gifts of the Spirit;

(prophecy, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, gift of faith, discerning spirits, gifts of healing, gift of working miracles, gift of tongues, gift of interpreting tongues.) (1Corinthians 12)

The potentiality of the children of God. Widely unknown or untaught who we are as children of God.

The law of the Spirit, has bought us liberty and freedom apart from the “Law of sin and death;”

The Church calls for Unity of all believers;

All blood bought believers are one in Him,

Unity produces synergistic power, peace and potentiality.

All believers ought to learn to discern matters of the Spiritual life and maintain unceasing vigilance over matters of the common faith;

Paul's Insights into the Gospel

Paul an intellectual's intellectual and a theologian's theologian, set aside his natural credentials when he began to minister the Gospel. Paul presents some of the most powerful insights into the conflict of intellectualism and theology. Paul experienced a total turn around in

his life. The features of his traditional achievements were discarded as were the merits of his classical education. Paul declared that the things which he once esteemed and considered meritorious were now no better than "dung". The Holy Spirit drew a line of division in Paul's life. He clarified the difference between the fashion of this world and the world of God. He revealed the matters which pertained to mind and soul and matters of spirit; *the thoughts of the mind* versus *the intents of the heart*. Vanity no longer had a place in his life. Personal pride and striving for status was cast down he was given another job description. A "slave" of Christ.

Paul in all his letters addresses two points of doctrine which are at times in tension or contrast. First the purely Spiritual nature of the Gospel and the God-connected source of life; and secondly teachings on leadership, headship and government impacting the long-term course of this entity called "the church," the body of believers. Contradictions have occurred in this respect, that individuals are placed in positions of leadership and authority who do not have spiritual credentials but merely human approval. Spiritual enablements allows the kingdom of God to be manifest according to the apostolic model. Even in the first years of the church age we hear accounts of men like the apostles Paul and John struggling with individuals who have assumed leadership though their motivation were entirely wrong or their doctrine was corrupt. We hear Paul describe associates who tried to undermine or destroy his ministry, or who departed because their hearts turned again to the world; or of the associates who preach for personal gain; or the associates who wanted to be pre eminent and gloried in having control over people. (See 1Timothy 1:19,20 1Timothy 4:14) regarding Alexander the Coppersmith; 2Timothy 4:10 regarding Demas; 3John 1:9 regarding the person of Diotrephes.)

Paul Defines his Apostolic Emphasis

In his first letter to Corinth Paul presses a very important foundation point in the first two chapters. This particular emphasis stressed the difference between a Spiritual message contrasted to a conceptual one. In chapter 1 verse 17 he states that his gospel emphasis is not based upon words of human wisdom but in power generated from the cross of Jesus. The cross of crucifixion is where the exchange of righteousness was made. The cross of crucifixion is where the sacrifice was made. The cross of crucifixion is where God paid the price in blood for every sinner. This doctrine of the cross does not end with a man's death but with a divinely-powered resurrection. Thus the doctrine that Paul speaks of includes the death and the resurrection of Jesus. It was Jesus who was crucified, dead, buried and resurrected. The holiday we call Easter concludes three Jewish Festivals; Passover, Unleavened bread and First Fruits speaks of the resurrection. As Jesus became the first fruits of those who have died. (1Cor.15-2) It is truly unfortunate that so few Christians understand **the Jewish roots of Christianity**, including the fact that Yeshua and most all of the first disciples and apostles were Jews. Jesus (Yeshua) rose from the dead, *ascended on high, took captivity captive, and gave gifts to the human race*. Paul's statement of the cross does not address sorrow or loss, it addresses rather, victory, effulgence and power. The resurrection speaks of *the power of an endless life*. It speaks about the Father's plan to extend grace and peace to every man, woman and child. It speaks about the ability to *become a new creation in Christ*.

Kingdom or Godly Wisdom Versus Human Wisdom

Paul going on in his first letter to Corinth, introduces the theme of "wisdom." Paul contrasts human wisdom to divine wisdom. He explains that man who deems himself wise through reasoning, can't

accept the wisdom of God. God's wisdom is framed in paradoxes and conundrums. For example the paradox of the least being the greatest; the weak being the strong; the first being last; the wise being foolish; the living being dead; the dead being awakened to live. If these concepts make any sense to you, perhaps God has already opened your eyes in a very significant way. God framed truth in such a way that when they are articulated sound preposterous, unbelievable and irrational.

The world says, "Be someone, do your own thing, express your individuality." God says, "Decrease to yourself, take your cross and let the outward "you" be crucified so that the Divine (Christ) can have effective sanctuary and expression in you. The scientific mind requires proof. The eye measures and discerns the things which we call real or reality. Yet Christians are entreated to disregard outward manifestations, the outward world. Neither is the mind the highest organ to lead and direct, **children of God are led by the Spirit**, not by acting purely out of reason.

The truth is not determined according to science and rationality. God requires **faith** on our part. Paul, again in the same letter speaks to the matter of making Spiritual realities manifest, *"I did not come teaching and preaching with enticing words of man's wisdom but with demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand upon man's wisdom but upon the power of God.* (1Corinthians 2:4,5) The Spiritual life first begins to manifest, because of the grace of God and secondarily by acting in faith. The gospel states with respect to the Kingdom of God that we are all *pressing into it.* (Luke 16:16) The Lord stands at the door knocking, the action of faith opens that door to him. Again, grace is the initiatory cause, it is God's hand in matters concerning our life, stirring, directing and empowering. Grace is the hand of God

outstretched to us, beckoning; he bids us to come forth. We respond to him and we press in to the world of Spiritual life that awaits. The hand of grace is outstretched in love. Grace speaks of loving kindness, compassion and giving. This love is caring and constructive in nature. Love builds the bonds of faith and defines the character and the parameters of the spiritual life. It is not knowledge that defines the spiritual life although there is a knowledge component. Scripture reminds us that knowledge ultimately has the affect of "puffing up" our egos. There is an adverse relationship to our character when knowledge becomes pre eminent in our orientation to God. We will always find "knowledge" being closely linked to "religious systems". It is a realm defined by expertise and expertise is usually defined by knowledge.

How Much do We Have to *know* Before We Become Spiritual?

I began to describe the Apostle's doctrine by mentioning doctrinal content, followed by emphasizing the power (*Gk. dunamis*) that God provides, through his Spirit, to empower our lives and relationships. The attribute of spiritual relationships may lie closer to the center of Spirituality than any other factor. The apostle's doctrine has fellowship and relationship within the very heart of it. Here is a glimpse into the New Testament church of the Book of Acts, "*They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread, and with prayer.*" (Acts, Chapter 2:42) The apostles who knew the way of God fully through first hand experience were to guide the novices into the same area of common experience; the community expands, the Kingdom of God is entered by more and more converts.

A community is being built and stands in the midst of a world of unbelief, carnality, and unrighteousness. God calls us into a family-

like community in which *God is not only glorified but in which God continuously interacts with the community.*

True fellowship is what this community is about. There is a sense of family, it is characterized by the joy of redemption (salvation, the first step in pressing into this community.) This intimate fellowship of believers is the closest thing to heaven God has for us on earth. We share a common mind, a common testimony, a common hope. We are baptized into one Spirit and into a common destiny. This community is redemptive owing to the fact that the smoke and tarnish of this world can not endure in the presence of the Living God, neither can the things which defile the flesh stand in his presence. We come together in this community of faith where we find restoration, strength and edification. We come together in fellowship to repair the bumps, bruises, and blemishes that life in this world inflicts upon those who are "*not of this world.*"

What is Ministry?

Chapter 4 What is Ministry? Who Ministers?

Edification and Ministry as it Pertains to Community

We have been conditioned by a religious world *to go to church* to receive ministry. After all, the church is where the minister is. I believe this is a viewpoint which needs to be reexamined in light of true fellowship and *the question of what true ministry ought to be.*

Those to whom *church is a place* to be ministered to, are still conditioned to think in terms of priest (clergy) and laity. In this model which has been the tradition for the past 17 hundred years, we are taught that we need someone else to do our spiritual work for us. We come to the priest; we have him pray for us, teach us, bless us, absolve us.

We presume that ministry is what happens in a church (fellowship,) and this kind of ministry is some kind of a "Band-Aid" to help us salve the current bruise. I believe there is an alternative, apostolic way of viewing the community of fellowship. It is the notion of coming to a place of restoration and strengthening; some have called this a "spiritual filling station." In this setting of fellowship there is rest, repose, and encouragement. There is a continuous need for teaching but the manner of teaching need not be formalistic. Those

who know and who have experience victory in one kind of challenge or another, are able to share and encourage others with less knowledge or experience. Edification can occur without formalized, programmatic services. There is sharing of food and the life of God.

Spiritual fellowship provides a redemptive community in which the bond of fellowship is not the bond of obligation but of the heart. Love is true and not an affectation. This kind of fellowship is far less structured, yet there is common motivation which guides everyone to seek first the things which are from God. God is purposely the focus and reason for being of all of the people who gather. God is not necessarily first in the lives of many, but in the right community this has a greater chance to change.

I do not see this kind of fellowship either taught, practiced or encouraged within the institutional church. Those who come to church for a formalistic program come in unsatisfied and they leave unsatisfied. Often church-goers come feeling estranged or alienated from God and they leave feeling just as far from him. They can however, pretend to be listening while they sleep; or they can pretend to be praying while they dream of their next adventure with the girl at the office or the guy at the club. The actions of formal ministry have no guarantee to touch the heart of those who need to have a spiritual heart transplant.

Remember, Learning Christ according to the Apostles Doctrine requires that we:

Be spiritually renewed by faith in Jesus Christ
Receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit
Renew our mind by studying scripture
Seek personal fellowship with God

Seek the fellowship of God's family where you're loved and valued
Imitate those who have mature spirituality
Walk in faith,
(the knowledge that God cares for us in our present moment)
Minister to others, to share and teach our own gifts and testify of the
wholeness that we have received from God

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

How Much Do We Have to Learn Before We Become Spiritual?

Mentors and Ministries

Part of the spiritual life is to make a connection with those who can supply valuable connections. The joints are connections to individuals in the body of Christ. Fellowship supplies input to areas of knowledge which will be encouraging, and edifying. When we are born into the kingdom, we must move forward or we will retrograde back to the old life in the world. The Holy Spirit will beckon and encourage us to do so.

At this juncture, according to most voices of ministry, we are encouraged to get connected to a "good" church. This should be a simple fact but it is not. There are few church bodies of believers who hold more than a traditional evangelical viewpoint. Most are adhering to forms and traditions as well as doctrines which do not advance the Spiritual life to a significant level of maturity. Once in a church you are expected to "play by their rules."

My best advice is to search for the church and set your sights on particular features which will allow you to be discipled and grow not in tradition but in spirituality. If one does provide "life" move on until you sense that it is where God would have you. In the mean time find a home fellowship where you can grow with others in an

informal setting.

God does not discriminate against home meetings. They are apostolic! It is how the "Church" began. It is obvious that formalized Christian ministry is everywhere in one form or another. As I have already described a vast majority of these churches or ministries are a manifestation of institutional and traditional religion in which the expectation is at best conformity to the norms of a Saturday or a Sunday ritual. Most offer no more than comfortable routine or ritual and little hope of gaining spiritual knowledge and understanding. Neither can they prepare us to fulfill Christ's gospel in the world.

Most churches, which are struggling to maintain membership, interest, or involvement, are extremely jealous of their members going astray or getting involved with meetings or activities which are not sponsored by their own fellowship. There was a time when such unfaithfulness could be met by excommunication, but today the usual rebukes from the pulpit are just admonitions or doctrines created out of hand which indicate an obligation to support the local body. Yet it would seem to be close to a cardinal sin to consider "church hopping" or being active in any outreaches from other congregations. This is, in effect the fruit of division which institutional religion enforces.

The Electronic Media Church

There are many other kinds of ministries that are currently accessible to us. Among these are media ministries. Men or women who have some special gift of teaching or evangelism or certain personal *charismas* have been able to share their spiritual understandings and insights with any who will watch or listen. If we

appreciate the content of a given message we write to them or request their tape series or perhaps, we think that they have enough clout with God to pray for our special needs. These ministries, sometimes called the "**electronic churches**" are not always highly regarded by pulpit ministries.

One hears all kinds of castigation directed toward the names of such ministries, whether Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Robert Schuler, Benny Hinn or countless others who fill the airwaves of radio and television and short wave broadcast channels. In view of practical matters of church survival and management, local preachers and church leaders need to maintain membership and viability. 'Grandma Smith' might write a check to a radio or television evangelist and forego giving her five dollar donation to the church collection plate. A pastor might make the following remark to parishioners, "Grandma Smith, if you want to support Reverend So and So on TV maybe you should call them when you need a trip to the doctor; or need someone to pray for you when you are sick; or have them officiate your funeral."

What has the Electronic Church ministry to offer? In some cases they be offer better teaching or preaching than some tradition-bound churches where so many to languish in their pews around the world? Televangelists usually have some unique strengths and certainly the ability to preach and persuade. There are important matters to consider in choosing any ministry to support whether remote or local. However, they do subsist on donations from listeners which at times becomes problematic. How may media ministries provide value and features that provide edification?

Let's Look at Some Attributes of Ministry:

- First and most importantly is the message; Do we hear the

correct gospel being taught?

- How much of the appeal of this ministry is performance and dazzling rhetoric which attracts us and how much is a sense of devotion to the truth of the Gospel?
- Does the minister seem to model Jesus Christ? The best mode of discerning a minister or a ministry is to imagine Jesus behaving and saying the things as the evangelist or teacher.
- Is devotion and reverence modeled and portrayed?
- Does the person try to draw attention to themselves through colorful mannerisms?
- Does he seem preoccupied with authority and followings?
- Does the leader indicate as we listen to his messages that he wants influence, control, or worship?
- Does there seem to be more of emphasis on one aspect of the Gospel than another?
- Is it a Gospel of power and wholeness or just continually underscoring sin?
- Is it a Gospel in which we can become partakers of God's life or are we blessed because of our supporting the "Super Ministry of Brother X?" There are some media evangelists who I listen to and support because they have helped to mentor me in understanding the Word of God. I support them because they teach the full Gospel message, (more or less) and believe in the potentialities of becoming children of God, partaking in His Divinity. They teach what we should be taught in the local fellowship or church but are not.
- We need to practice discernment and note any inconsistencies in doctrine which place the teaching outside of norms of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The *Apostles Creed* is recited by many denominations in the context of a worship

service, but in spite of this, the content of the Apostle's Creed may hardly be addressed in teaching and preaching in sermons. Based upon denominations which I have belonged to or visited before and after I became a believer, *unbelief and spiritual deadness till characterize most of the churches today even those who recite the Credo!*

Mega-Churches

When a brilliant preacher, teacher or evangelist proves his (her) ability to move and edify people they begin to develop a following. People are attracted to spiritual gifts or 'anointings.' People are searching for a greater revelation of God. Seekers follow men or women who have demonstrated their abilities to impact the lives of others. The largest churches today grow around the giftings of a single person. Nearly every Christian I know has a natural desire to be in the presence of "anointed" preaching. Mega-churches are built around mega-men. I believe there are in America today well over a hundred such mega-churches. I have attended a few and have seen others via telecasts and cable networks.

Positives Associated with Mega-Ministries

There are both negatives and positives in following this kind of ministry. A few positives: God shows favor to his servant by anointing him (her) just as God anointed Jesus and the Apostles for ministry. God's favor indicates his approval to bring forth a minister's particular gift or understanding to the body. God's approval indicates that he foreknows that many will be touched and blessed by this individual. God allows a such a man or woman with special abilities to reach more people with a Gospel focus than they

would ordinarily hear or be exposed to. Many are born again through the mass media ministers.

Negatives Associated with Mega-Ministries

The gifted minister may be persuasive or charismatic in purely human terms, without necessarily walking in a divine anointing. The media evangelist may be preaching a partial or flawed gospel, a non-Christian gospel or simply traditionalism. There is no way for the novice seeker to know whether this person teaches true doctrine or not except by natural reasoning or mental judgment. There is a temptation for the minister to become puffed up in mind and think himself to be great. There is a tendency to focus on money and self promotion. Though there may be a great gift of preaching or imparting information there are serious limitations for body ministry or fellowship. To deal with this home fellowships or satellite congregations are set up to allow blessings of human interaction and loving community. Those who study under any ministry need intimacy and a human touch. *It is not good for man to be alone.* Ultimately the spiritual life is more than the acquisition of information about God.

Those who attend services in a mega church are content to be a mere audience onlooker. This is a terrible loss and limitation. *But the most serious limitation is that individual believers are never really trusted or free to lead when they have received personal testimonies or revelation. Typically, they are told that they must be submitted to a greater ministerial authority who must oversee any sharing by the 'laity'.*

Impressions of Mega-churches

I have attended worship services in several 'average size' mega-churches with bodies in attendance numbering 2 or 3 thousand.

Some mega churches have numbers approaching 10 thousand and those with 10 thousand that aspire to 50 thousand. While there may be brilliant teaching and preaching and outstanding musical worship, performance; one could not help but feel that those in attendance came mainly to view the show or to hear the inspired address of the mega-minister. What I saw was an enterprise in which each person was committed to make the mega-church even more of a mega-church. Something was missing. There was little or no contact between the "pastor" and the individual members. Individuals may have known and recognized a handful of people in the auditorium but they did not seek each other out for closeness, sharing, breaking of bread or lingering in the afterglow of God's presence. It seemed that the super Christians who were attending the super church quickly rushed home to resume life in whatever form life that awaited outside of church. If the members who number thousands each give their tithe religiously, one can only imagine the amount of revenue that affords luxury and resources of a personal and ministerial nature.

What is the Glorious Church?

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the authentic representation of the Kingdom of God in the world. It numbers approximately a billion persons around the globe. Is this the glorious church? Does the number associated with the church make it glorious?

The issue of a glorious church may well be addressed in the context of the mega-church. There is evidence that many ministries of mega-churches teach an emphasis of the gospel that introduces the concept of a "glorious church." Will the church function as a dynamic economic and political force in the earth as well as a moral power to renovate society as well? For those who judge on externals this may

appear to be the case but God does not regard externals. How can the size of a building or the number of people attending a mass or a service have any bearing on Godly glory? Glorious must bear more on the quality of the heart and the sincerity and earnestness that allows the love of God to be shared.

[See Description of the Kingdom Theology](#)

Doctrine. In secular societies, Christians have been regarded as the bane of society because of their conservative and fundamental viewpoints but quite the opposite is true. The true Spirit of Christianity is compassion, forgiveness, and understanding. Moral precepts include personal honor and righteousness, integrity and responsibility; kindness, mutual support and family stability. Though the world does not like to recognize sin and unrighteous behavior as anything other than a "choice," Christians see that we humans *all share* alike, having a need for a redeemer along with the essential need of being hopelessly lost until God extends mercy upon our lives. In recent decades, Christians were too long absent and silenced from the counsel of social values and political ideas. In the present hour it is surely appropriate for those who have so much cause to rejoice and give voice to the life-changing testimony in the arena of public opinion. Men and women of integrity need to stand up publicly and politically and exercise their rights on behalf of issues of righteousness.

The Bible makes it clear that the day is coming when the righteous kingdom will be established upon the earth. In this current dispensation called the church age I believe that Jesus statement to Pilate stands; - - Now my kingdom is NOT of this world. While many are stating the contrary, the church is not now chartered to extend itself as an empire of political power. Why? The spiritual life is essentially a non secular and a non materialistic life. We are

strangers and sojourners in a foreign land. Social or political activism may be a Godly calling in some. Those who follow a leading to become apologists for social and political issues it should be presumed have their own foundations in correct doctrine and not equate activism with the gospel.

The emphasis of the Christian life can not be focused too strongly upon the things which are social, political, or economic at the expense of Spiritual relationships. These are not lines that I draw, but lines that the Holy Spirit has drawn. These parameters have been in place since Jesus spoke these words, "My kingdom is not of this world," and "*You are not of the world.*" (*John 18:36; John 15:19*)

The nature and operation of the world is contrary to God's ways and I do not look for this situation to change until Jesus returns to set up an unending righteous Kingdom. Just how far into the future this event will occur is open to debate, there have been hundreds of book titles addressing it but the Bible itself has "sealed up" many of the answers and insights into the "second coming" of Jesus Christ. This is another area of scholarship.

So then, does this "glory" refer to the size, influence and authority of mega-church to rule upon the earth? Does glory refer walking in the knowledge of truth; does it refer to all of the above or none of the above? Is it possible that the glorious church refers to the whole body has among it the faithful remnant who somehow remains separate, pure and faithful in the middle of a reprobate generation of spiritual pretenders and flaccid, Luke warm church goers? Church as empire is not an new idea. It was in fact the goal of the early church since Constantine's day, both in Rome and in Constantinople, where power, influence, authority and might married the political and the religious. For a time church membership and theological belief was forced upon the whole world. A person was then a Christian because

of political decree and not by the grace of God and such ordinances do nothing to enhance the life and promises of the Gospel. In such an empire men were exalted who held the power of life and death over others; who acted as spiritual judges over others; who were mediators between God and man and who rewarded themselves with worldly luxuries while being exalted to the point of worship in their offices.

It is the nature of most men to lust for power and control. The unredeemed clamor for recognition and strive to achieve self exaltation. They lift and promote their own names as someone great, "as the great power of God." Acts 8:10) No, I do not think this is the Glorious church. The true glory remains shrouded with humility. This cloud of glory can only be penetrated with meekness, self-effacement and kindly service. Success which comes from such is contrary to the apostolic foundations of the Gospel which we need to follow.

Professional Ministry

The concept of the clergy, professional ministry is so thoroughly established that it has become an unquestioned paradigm. ([See the power of paradigms.](#))

The concept of **Ministry** has long been connected to a career or occupation. The concept of clergy as a professional career extends into the dim past of Christendom. The traditional church operates in accord with, and is enabled because of **the professional clergy concept**. The question of institutionally accredited, "professional ministry" appointed to churches and church giving is something that I believe each of us has to examine in light of Scripture and draw

our best personal conclusion in the light of the Word. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible and to experience the potential of Christ's Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long held traditions.

Every person should support the **Kingdom of God** as we judge it to be **best expressed**. We need to see the life of God as a Divine promise and a human potentiality. We need to see ministers bringing others into this potentiality. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather *to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible* and to experience the potential written of in the Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long- held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we see it best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a potentiality and the people who minister bringing others into it. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving.

Giving – Ministries are Supported by Their Followers

Giving for the Sake of the Gospel

If you want to experience anger, dissonance, or heated theological debate this is the topic to broach. Giving is the bread and butter of ministry. It is support for a man and his message. It is the financing of the Gospel to world. It is the support of both the local church missionary outreaches. Because men and women go forth with good intentions and have devoted a large part of their lives to preparing for "ministry" they proceed believing that they are now prepared to live by the Gospel. This happens to be scriptural.

"The Lord hath ordained that those preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." (1Corinthians 9:14)

Giving: Giving is Blessed by God There should be no laws (rules) for giving in the Kingdom of God. God has set us free from rules including rules about giving. Giving is good. Giving supports the man of God and also supports people who are not necessarily "ministers" of churches but who God wishes to bless through us. Various kinds of worldly commitments which touch upon the Kingdom of God need support, whether it be church buildings, outreach expenses, travel or any of a wide variety of needs which can only be met by others sharing the cost. God wants his will to be done through selfless sharing and contributions of money resources. Yet we need to be able to hear God leading us in these gifts so that it is truly a work of God for the Gospel sake and not just another good sound cause or charity.

Basic principles identified in the Bible shed light on the subject of giving.

It is more blessed to Give than to receive
Give and it shall be given unto you
Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven
Those who give to the poor lend to God
The Tithe is the Lord's - (Old covenant principle)
In the measure you give it shall be given to you
Sow sparingly, reap sparingly
Give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven
Give as you purpose in your heart, Let no one give out of obligation
God loves a cheerful giver

Maturing to Minister

It is God's plan that every disciple partake in Jesus' ministry!

Jesus is the living "head of the church" for all believers. He has designed a way for us to follow him, even as the original twelve disciples followed him. They walked at his side, discoursed with him, and were both witnesses and partakers of his spiritual ministry. They new his voice; saw his power; and marveled at his wisdom. They new him! By contrast I fear that few nominal Christians are able to say they know him. Yes they have heard about him, but do they know him? Perhaps the greatest thing to be revealed in the "gospel" is that we not only may know him, but have fellowship with him and partake in his nature and his mission and calling. To reveal the rule and authority of God to the principalities and powers arrayed in the heavens. (The domain of Lucifer and his Angels) "For this reason the Son of God was manifested, that he should destroy the works of the Devil." - - John 3:8 - - We worship what we know. We know him. He called us to have fellowship with Him. We hear His voice; we see what He shows us in the Word and what he reveals in the place of his dominion. As we gather as believers in a place of meeting can we say that we leave that meeting, knowing him better? Can we say that we have heard his voice, felt his presence, or were empowered by his touch?

Ministry Edifies, Strengthens, and Blesses

It would be good for unbelieving eyes to see what things can and do happen in a place of meeting. For in such times of fellowship God can make his glorious presence known; lift people out of their fears and oppression; bring joy and healing; restore broken hearts and broken relationships and save peoples souls. Church liturgy, put together in a time far past, perhaps following shortly after the kind

of glorious kind of fellowship described above may have had good intentions.

Liturgical forms no doubt hoped to preserve some of the truth or glory of those earlier days. Maybe they wished to insure the manifestation of God's presence and to provide a platform to disciple those who needed to understand the truth of Christ's eternal ministry. But God can not be bottled and preserved! For He is alive and powerful, acting always in the NOW, never in the THEN. The Bible shows that God's presence can not be captured and preserved. The Israelites of Old tried to do so, but when God's Glory departed it was gone they were left with a lifeless idol. The temple remained the glory was gone. The brazen serpent remained but the manifestation of its power was gone. God's continued glory and fellowship with us is determined by the hearts of those who gather to worship him. With passing years catechism remained but the glory had been lost. The ritual remained and the liturgical trappings remained but the presence of God vanished. Ritual happens, I believe, when men try to duplicate a behavior which once brought forth the glory of God through faith. Elements that remained were vainly held and became a substitution for God's presence.

In the minds of most of the world, "Ministry" is the domain of a very small body of liturgical experts, called the priesthood or the clergy. Despite this belief, it was always to be the domain of every believer. Just as God wishes each believer to be a ministering priest, he wishes us to become a true worshiper.

When Believers Gather

Chapter 5 Gathering Together as a Body

Expectations and Guidelines for Christian Fellowship & Worship

The form of Christian fellowship and worship described here may be very different from the religious experience you are familiar with. The manner of assembling as it was known in the apostolic first century *ekklesia* (gatherings of believers) is virtually unknown in contemporary denomination churches. It is nonetheless entirely Scriptural, modeled after the Teachings of Paul in all his epistles.

What is this true worshiper and what is worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth? (John 4:23) God is always looking for True Worshipers. He looks at the hearts he does not regard the man with the religious uniform over a common person whose heart is open. He does not favor a cathedral over a location which has been made ready on the inside of us. As Jesus told the woman at the well of Samaria, it is not where you worship, not this mountain or another mountain, but what and how we worship. He said to her that some do not know what they are even worshiping but the truth is that salvation is connected to worship, it is through the foundation of the Jews. The time was coming, Jesus explained, when men and women would worship the Most High God in Spirit. Those who do not have this Spirit can not have the revelation of God of which Jesus spoke.

Koinonia (fellowship) is the hallmark of the Christian gathering. Unlike Biblical koinonia that were usually home meetings, the traditional church experience that we see everywhere in denominational Christianity lacks little more than token participation among the body of believers. This familiar form of denominational Christianity is guided and controlled by credentialed leaders or overseers who are generally called the priests or pastors. The Ec-cles-si'-a (Greek word translated church) might be translated "called out assembly" consists of a relatively small group of professing and Holy Spirit empowered believers. These believers meet to regularly to share and participate in the active life of and interaction with God. Such sharing is exercised with openness and liberty.

The the essential aim of the gathering consists of transacting life of the Kingdom of God; of sharing food, making prayer, offering praise, bringing forth teachings, testimonies, psalms, spiritual songs, prophetic revelations and in celebration of the cup and bread of the Lord. Such gatherings are mostly democratic with a good deal of freedom to express whatever the Holy Spirit is pleased to do in that time. We can presume based on all the truth of Scripture noted elsewhere in these texts that each believer has a place, a gift and a essential role to play in the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus is the rule and the authority of any Ecclesia. Where the body gathers Christ Jesus is the invited and welcomed participant.

WHY GATHER AS A BODY? SOME GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

1. To be: United in Spirit and purpose - knowing the reality of Jesus as Savior; and having fellowship with God our Father through Him and giving glory to God. After any person is reborn spiritually, they become part of one heavenly family who share the "gift of God." To continue to be United in Spirit - The same Spirit that is in Christ Jesus.
2. For the body in fellowship to continue to grow (be edified) in knowledge of truth
(Holy Bible must be the surety of doctrine and a guide to revelations and practices.)
3. To be bound in mutual love and acceptance. The spirit of Love denotes we are Christians.
4. To seek God's manifested presence corporately. (Seeking and activating His kingdom to be manifested on earth)
5. To recognize and invite the Holy Spirit to empower, lead and guide; to reveal Jesus.
6. To value and build from the unique gifts and abilities that the Holy Spirit of God has given to each believing disciple. (our brothers and sisters)
7. To follow the "Gatekeeper", shepherd, or the head of the home, who is practiced in following the Holy Spirit in an orderly way.
8. For all to discern and guard against spiritual pitfalls, against against disunity; To guard against the expression of any wrong spirit -- anger, prejudice, suspicion, jealousy that will "grieve" the Holy Spirit.
9. To see to it: That all things serve to edify and build each believer kindly with liberty in the Holy Spirit.
10. Doctrinal purity must employ the whole counsel of God,

The Word of God (Scripture) used for instruction in Godliness, correction and reproof thus contending for correct doctrine. *The Scriptural model of intimate corporate fellowship (Koinonia) is found in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 12, 14; 1 Peter 4:10*

Jesus' Pattern for Ministry

Chapter 6

Daily Life in the Kingdom of God

The Spiritual Life - Learning Christ

"Be Ye Imitators of Christ as dear Children."

Through the power of the Holy Spirit our egos and wills become conformed and yielded to Christ Jesus. Christ in us is our only hope of glory. We are told that we may be **as he was in this world**. (John 16:16; 1John 4:17)

The Human heritage of this world (cosmos): Spiritual Poverty:

Our natural human state, despite what some with talent and gifts of intellect will proclaim, must eventually come to understand that we are actually helpless and without the power necessary to live a truly spiritual life. We are dead in our trespasses and sins and thus unable to ascend to the necessary status of righteous children of God!

We can not be “the light of the world” if God's light does not burn within us. We can not be witnesses of his resurrection if we have not been touched by the fiery hand of God that raised Jesus from the dead who also quickened our own body and spirit. We can not reflect the goodness of God if he has not made us good who were once reprobates. We come in to this world to know God. This is humankind's first innate calling. Some come and go from this world not having achieved that first calling. If we are fortunate to have

God reveal himself to us then we press on to the next stage, that of being a functional witness. It is also unfortunate how many are thwarted in this second stage predominately by the incomplete or ineffectual teachings of religious tradition.

As we have noted, the institutional church has either lost sight of, or failed to actualize the provisions of the New Covenant which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Time has eroded true understanding, and spiritual subterfuge authored by an unrelenting adversary has come in to subtly sidetrack our spiritual lives and foster human understanding instead. I am not interested in presenting any kind of private methodology that is contrary to Biblical teaching. What I share here is not a unique revelation but simply a restatement of the way that was presented by Jesus to his servants the apostles, in the beginning of this gospel age.

Any church or teacher (including denominational groups) who are attempting to mentor or direct others into a spiritual life are under divine obligation to be accurate, and of course all are certain that they are orthodox and correct. Private interpretation risks wrong doctrine. Since there is always a danger of deception, it is important that we proceed cautiously, both as teachers and learners. We are obligated to discern all things with the wisdom, the help, and guidance of the *Spirit of Truth* who is the *Holy Spirit*. God has told us through the Word that we may ask for wisdom and for truth to be revealed to us. He further instructs us to have confidence in this asking, knowing that God is willing. God is willing!

God is willing to give *good gifts* which bring fulfillment and blessings and not sorrows. When seeking the revelations which are of God, or from God, it is up to the seeker to be on guard against deceptions and to discern the true from the false. In asking for anything from God it is very important to invoke the name of Jesus

Christ. This name is the name above every name and above every spiritual entity or authority. This name will consecrate or make pure anything which may transpire. It will guarantee that anything which will be revealed or imparted spiritually will be free of any corrupt or deceptive influence. If you ask in the name of Jesus, *the deceiver* can not work his way so readily into the workings.

JESUS' LIFE MODELS A SPIRITUAL LIFE & MINISTRY

The Typology of Jesus Life and Ministry

The Bible reveals that certain key events ushered in the power of God to the world through the Lord Jesus. There are parallels to us who are born of His Spirit as new creations. The Lord replicates these same patterns in a very real way.

These surely are not be as profound or dramatic as Jesus himself experienced as we are still largely limited flesh bound human beings and still manifest too much our common Adamic inheritance and having lived most of our lives under the domination of the God of this world and the reasoning system of the world.

The traditional religious world, however, tends to discount any such parallels to God's divine presence within us just as the religious world of Jesus' time accounted it blasphemy for a man (Jesus, The Son of Man) to be made to liken equality to God.

For centuries of religious life church authorities had no interest in promoting the divine potential of the individual believer who is crucified in the likeness of his death and has already risen with him in Glory and has already been placed above all things in this world in Christ Jesus.

The Greatness of the Power to Us Who Believe

The apostle urges believers to pray to have their eyes enlightened with respect to this amazing potentiality of the inheritance of the children of light.

Reading the letter to Ephesus we find in Chapter 1 verses 18 to 22, Paul tells us to pray to have enlightenment on three specific large questions, "*the hope of his calling;*" "*the riches of his glorious inheritance to us;*" and "*what is the exceeding greatness of his power given to us.*" The chapter concludes with the nature of the church placed, over all things as as rulership and power. As yet Christians simply don't know how much has been promised and much can be accessed of the divinity of Christ within each of us individual believers.

Here are some of the milestone events in the life of Jesus.

Yeshua, Jeus, is Divinely Conceived By the Holy Spirit and Birthed into the fallen world.

We know that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The *virgin* birth was a supernatural birth. It was not a natural process of the flesh but a supernatural work of the Spirit. The manifestation of the Christ in human flesh begins with a divinely planted "seed" which gives rise to a "miraculous conception." After this "conception," Mary brings forth her first born and in the fullness of time, the life of Jesus is revealed in the world.

When a sinner comes to the knowledge of Christ as *a savior*; repents and asks God to make a new life available to them, a parallel miracle occurs. The Holy Spirit conceives and implants *a Diven Seed*, whole new *Holy and Spiritual life* within the flesh of a mortal human being.

Regardless of the measure of our sins and shortcomings in previous times, even though our sins were *as red as scarlet* they become purged and made pure as that of a virgin.

We are all part of a fallen world, typified by the "barn manger" and so the divine is again revealed in the presence of beasts and uncleanness. *We were born in a corrupted form and are being raised incorruptible. We ascend from Glory to Glory as Christ is fully being revealed in us.*

Becoming a Christian, therefore is not just about believing something and judging it to be true! This would be merely intellectual assent. But in reality becoming a believer, or "coming to Christ" is a miraculous new life which has been birthed in the Spirit. It is a new birth from an incorruptible seed and becomes in an instant a new creation. The old ceases to be and the new commences.

Angels rejoice and give praise at the birth of Christ (the holy child)

The angels surround the place of the birth of the infant Jesus Christ. They rejoiced and gave praises to God. The Glory of the Lord shown forth in the heavens. The family of God is portrayed as universal in nature, it spans heaven and earth. Its kingdom includes heavenly beings and human earthly beings. Heavenly events touch happenings upon the earth, earthly events impact things which happen in heaven. The "cloud of witnesses" described in the epistles of Paul, may probably refer to angels who continue to applaud the victories and glories of salvation as they impact humans who find their place in the family of God.

Yeshua, Jesus Grows in wisdom and stature and in the fear of the Lord

The life of the young Jesus is described with little detail. In the briefest description we read that he grew up in the fear and admonition of the lord and grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. Jesus is aware of his divine calling though his ministry is not yet fully activated. He works and learns the Torah, the laws of Moses as any other Jewish youth.

Each believer has a Spiritual infancy, and grows in experience to levels of maturity. In the spiritual sense there is no set number of years which allow the foundations of wisdom and understanding. Many never leave the stage of novice. It is the availability of *Spirit and Truth* which (by the Active Force of [The Spirit of Grace](#)) allows growth in wisdom and authority to occur.

(If you continue in my word then are you a true disciple, and you shall know the truth; and the truth will make you free. John 8:31)

The word of God is the guide to wisdom and understanding; the Spirit upon the Word is life and power as it is spoken into our inner Spirit.

Yeshua, Jesus, Baptized by the Holy Spirit

The gospel account begins with Christ having reached *maturity* at approximately 30 years of age. Now we read of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan river by John the Baptist. What was Jesus doing the day before, the week before, the year before? Probably finishing jobs in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth; attending the synagogue; studying the word; and praying to the Heavenly Father.

The time came, however, when he was revealed to Israel. This time was precisely in keeping with God's prophetic timetable. With Jesus'

baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit came to rest and remained upon Jesus. The Holy Spirit was given in its full measure to Yeshua. This is when his ministry and teaching began. The Spirit of God descends from above, the voice of the Father proclaims, "This is my beloved, in whom I am well pleased."

In God's time we ourselves, may partake in the same experience which Jesus modeled. We are instructed to receive the Holy Spirit. Our growth in the knowledge of truth depends entirely upon this "good gift." We have a small measure of the Holy Spirit but when the body assembles the amount of gifts is multiplied.

The Holy Spirit baptism causes the Holy Spirit to infill and empower the believer. This experience is called "*the promise of the Father*", after receiving the Holy Spirit's baptism we become "*Witnesses of Christ*." Christ begins to take those things which are his and reveal them to each of us as we seek him in fellowship. The father is well pleased to call us into his family. We are the latter borne of many brethren. The Father in heaven has many great plans and many precious promises which he is anxious to deliver to his sons and daughters.

Jesus Tempted & Tested (in the wilderness)

Until the Holy Spirit Baptism we have not been acutely aware of the two Spiritual Kingdoms which stand in opposition to one another, but now after this initiation into the Spirit of Truth, we begin to experience the "Mind of Christ." We now sense that the world is a spiritual place, and that thoughts and actions of others are inspired by spiritual influences and are not just "our thoughts." Satan who has possessed human flesh and human institutions and nations since the fall, is not willing to let go of his influence on the life and thoughts of human beings easily. *Jesus experiences the temptation*

of Satan.

In his temptation Jesus, received temptation on three levels, of the flesh (physical), the soul (personal) and the spiritual (Described in the apostle John's epistle as the Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the eyes, and the Pride of Life.)

Jesus response to each temptation was the Word of Scripture to answer the voice of the tempter: He was tempted through appetites and responded, "*Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" He was tempted in the soul or ego when offered fame, fortune and power, and responded, "*You shall worship the Lord only and him only shall you serve.*" He was tempted in the Spirit when told that he could exercise his God-given inheritance for vain reasons, and responded, "*You shall not put the Lord thy God to the test.*"

Believers are no threat to the kingdom of darkness until we have been born of the Spirit and Baptized in the Spirit. Being religious offers no threat to the kingdom of darkness. Satan is religious too and in fact promotes [religion](#) and religiosity. Satan's kingdom is terribly at risk when a human knows his inherited rights in Christ. Jesus said, as I am so are you in this world! (1 John 4:17) For this reason there are very dramatic attacks which are leveled against believers who begin to know about the power of God. Jesus through the Spirit was victorious in great trials, Likewise, refined, and fully empowered, the man of God is prepared for ministry.

Jesus returned from the wilderness experience not weakened and discouraged but "*full of the Spirit and power.*" **Victorious in great trials, refined, the man of God is prepared for ministry;** he is *thoroughly prepared for every good work.*
(2 Timothy 2:21)

Empowered to Minister through the anointing of the Holy Spirit

In Luke's gospel Chapter 4, we are shown Jesus announcing the whole purpose of his ministry to the lost, the bruised and the needy of this world. "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for He has anointed me -to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (the Lord's favor.)*

This proclamation quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 addresses Yeshua's call to **spiritual ministry**. It defines completely the purposes and parameters unto which Jesus Christ was called. The same declaration may be claimed by every believer. We are called into this same ministry including the proclamation of the “acceptable year of the Lord.” The age of grace or the church age falls within this dispensation of the Acceptable year of the Lord.

This is a stark contrast to human religious tradition. Every redeemed soul is called to the same potentiality, the same anointing, the same ministry which is to be performed by the same unction or anointing of the same Holy Spirit. This kind of ministry is absolutely impossible except for the empowerment which comes from God through the His Spirit. In our own natural abilities and strength all we are able to do is to discuss concepts of ministry and the nature of God, as a theological concept. In the anointing we become as He was in this world! This is where true ministry lies, not in services and rituals conducted in church buildings but in the power of God to impact lives whether in or out of a house of worship or any kind of building.

Jesus seeks continuous communion and intimacy with the Father.

Jesus is described as continually seeking the father in the most intimate way in a kind of fellowship which was personal and empowering. This is where the power came from; This is where the revelation came from; This is where the direction came from; This is where the authority came from; This is where the strength came from.

This is where we who are seeking need to seek more. This is where we who are without power need to find our source of power and authority. Without relationship in the secret place of the most high we can have no hope at all in doing the works of God. For in the most basic of understanding we have got to know that we can not do the works of God. Only Christ can empower and direct those works. Seeks intimacy with God, Daily - Hourly

Before anything like revival can happen in the Christian world, we as individuals have got to come alive in Christ. The "*waste places*" of human life and thought have got to be restored and rebuilt to make them a habitation for the life of God to make them flourish and bear fruit.

The Soul Thirsts or Longs for Various Things.

The soul thirsts or longs for various things. Most of these things have no bearing on the Kingdom of God or His righteousness. These things are the pleasures and longings of the heart of man. We long for human treasures and human pleasures we do not seek for the life of God. It is the grace of God which can turn our hearts again to Him. Until we esteem the life and reproach of the "life of Christ" more highly than the pleasures of this world and its lusts and

pleasures we have not crossed the river into the land of fulfillment and of promise which are in Christ. Friendship with Christ is enmity to the world and friendship with the world is enmity with Christ. The meditations and treasures of our hearts can be focused on transient treasures or eternal treasures. The abiding in Christ which brings the Spiritual life is an unmet task in all but a few in the Christian world today.

Meditating on The Word Word betokens Intimacy

"In thy law do I meditate, day and night." (psalm 1:2)

The thoughts and intents of our hearts bring into focus that which we focus on in our meditations. Our heart has its own kind of treasure, either good or wicked. We can not meditate on the word of God if we do not know what that word may be. Part of discipleship is to learn the word and the Way of God. This requires that at some time we have to delve into that source of understanding and revelation that is written in the Word, from Genesis to Revelation.

The Scriptures are an empowering force and also allow the voice of God to speak to our hearts. It is the Word speaking to our hearts which defines meditation. Yes, we can also have meditations on any number of things, but when we see and hear things which are worldly, vain, sensuous or profane, we can be sure that God is not speaking to us but the spirit of the world, and the God of this world. The Holy Spirit places the unique issues we face in our lives from day to day. The word of God speaks to us and becomes a light to lighten our pathway. We personally must walk out the challenges, struggles and the hopes that we face daily. These are our individual paths and we were never meant to face them alone.

Responding to the Father's voice *"My sheep hear my voice, and another they will not follow."* (John 10:4)

To have an active spiritual life as Jesus did. The meditations of our hearts must be adjusted significantly. We need to address the issue of double mindedness which is discussed in the epistle of James. Double minded Christians do not receive things from God (of God.) The Christian who is not different from the world in thoughts, beliefs or attitudes is not the kind of Christian that Jesus encouraged us to become.

We have a benchmark or a high standard to conform to. It is the fullness of the stature of one man, he is Jesus Christ. God grant us grace to understand and to know what is the greatness of his power to us which believe to empower us to become sons of God, having the same mind which was in Christ, having hearts which are ever turned toward the kingdom of the heavens.

FELLOWSHIP the body in union

Chapter 7

DISCERNMENT AND PITFALLS ISSUES OF DISCIPLESHIP

SUMMARY: GROWING AS A DISCIPLE

God has purposed that each believer *born of the Spirit* may grow in the Spiritual life. Learning Christ, in a general sense is becoming familiar with God through the Word and through his Spiritual presence. It is through the Holy Spirit that we gain familiarity with his divine nature and our place in Him. We begin to partake of his love and and his understandings. As it is written, we go from *glory to glory* (2Corinthians 3:18,)and *from faith to faith* (Romans 1:17.) We learn to hearken to the voice of the Spirit and respond as we are directed. I call this *learning Christ*.

God's model for learning Christ is **imitation** of the first born Son of God, Jesus Christ. We are to model his manner of thinking, and his manner of acting. We are to duplicate his interacting with the Heavenly Father and his Spirit-directed ministry. The first disciples were given a living model but they were only able duplicate his Spiritual behavior after they had received the enabling Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul exhorts us to follow (*imitate*) me as I imitate Christ.

DOCTRINES OF FAITH WHERE UNDERSTANDINGS BECOME SUBJECT TO WRONG TEACHINGS

(This is a small sampling of matters pertaining to the Kingdom of God and our place in it.)

Whos is Jesus Christ, True son of God almighty, Virgin born, fulfilling the Messianic Scriptures of the Old Testament, Christ Jesus, crucified, resurrected and alive
Jesus Christ, the *one and only* mediator between God and man;
Christ Jesus reigns from heaven as the High Priest and intercessor and Mediator
All dominion, judgment, and all authority are given to Jesus Christ.

Redemption through the blood of the Cross, God's Lamb (Jesus Christ) the perfect acceptable sacrifice; The blood of Jesus Christ the lamb of God has the power to take away sin;
The power of the Cross and resurrection from the dead enables becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus;

The Power of God at work, Manifest enablement - **Graces**, through the **Holy Spirit**;
The Spirit of Truth (the Holy Spirit) reveals all truth in Jesus and our place in Him;

The essential doctrines of Faith and Grace are verified in the (Scripture)

The Word through the Spirit provides wisdom and power.

The law of the Spirit, has bought us liberty and *freedom from the Law* of sin and death;

The Body in Unity of all believers; All blood bought believers are one in Him; Unity produces peace and potentiality while it unites believers in love. Believers must build fellowship bonds, continuing to walk in Love and Forgiveness;

All believers need to discern matters and maintaining unceasing vigilance over matters of the common faith; Believers must be diligent to Safeguard against false teachers; Worldly rebellion and unbelief will be dealt with at the hand of the returning Jesus in divine judgment before;

Future Times and The Nature of The Kingdom to Come

At Jesus' second advent he returns in power to judge peoples and nations in eternal consequence The culmination of the church age; Is not the end of the world;

Judgment will be visited upon the unbelieving and the lawless, End times will be a time of increasing evil, leading to the ferocious rule of an anti christ and false prophet

The redemption of Israel as a praise in all of the earth; The second advent. Israel will be the head of all nations The authority of the believer against spiritual powers; Deliverance and discerning of the spiritual world

Who Are God's Children?The potentiality of the children of God. Widely unknown or untaught who we are as children of God.

The Spiritual World; Awareness that doctrines of Demons that take believers into bondage
The Cross of Jesus Christ paid the price for our sin
The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead made it possible for us to become the children of God most high

Paul's Insights into the Gospel

Paul an intellectual's intellectual and a theologian's theologian, set

aside his worldly credentials when he began to minister the Gospel. Paul presents some of the most powerful insights into the conflict of intellectualism and theology.

Paul experienced a total turn around in his life. The features of his traditional achievements were discarded as were the merits of his classical education. Paul declared that the things which he once esteemed and considered meritorious were now no better than "dung". The Holy Spirit drew a line of division in Paul's life. He clarified the difference between the fashion of this world and the world of God. He revealed the matters which pertained to mind and soul and matters of spirit; *the thoughts of the mind* versus *the intents of the heart*. Vanity no longer had a place in his life. Personal pride and striving for status was cast down he was given another job description. A "slave" of Christ.

It is Paul who addresses two points of doctrine which are at times in tension or contrast. First the purely Spiritual nature of the Gospel and the God-connected source of life; and secondly teachings on leadership, headship and government impacting the long-term course of this entity called "the church," the body of believers.

Contradictions have occurred in this respect, that individuals are placed in positions of leadership and authority who do not have spiritual credentials but merely human approval. Spiritual enablements allows the kingdom of God to be manifest according to the apostolic model. Even in the first years of the church age we hear accounts of men like the apostles Paul and John struggling with individuals who have assumed leadership though their motivation were entirely wrong or their doctrine was corrupt. We hear Paul describe associates who tried to undermine or destroy his ministry, or who departed because their hearts turned again to the world; or of the associates who preach for personal gain; or the associates who

wanted to be pre eminent and gloried in having control over people.
(See 1 Timothy 1:19,20 1 Timothy 4:14) regarding Alexander the
Coppersmith; 2 Timothy 4:10 regarding Demas; 3 John 1:9 regarding
the person of Diotrefes.)

Mature Disciples Minister

Chapter 8

You Are Being Prepared for Ministry

THE MATTER OF MINISTRY

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

How Much Do We Have to Learn Before We Become Spiritual?

Mentors and Ministries

Part of the spiritual life is to make a connection with those who can supply valuable spiritual understanding and companionship. These are the *joints* that support and nurture us. They are our connections in the body of Christ. Fellowship supplies input to areas of knowledge which will be encouraging, and edifying. When we are born into the kingdom, we must move forward or we will retrograde back to the old life in the world. Here according to most voices of ministry is where one would be encouraged to get connected to a "good" church. This should be a simple fact but it is not.

There are few church bodies of believers who hold more than a traditional evangelical viewpoint. Most are adhering to their own forms and traditions, or doctrines. Often these do not advance the Spiritual life to a significant level of maturity. Once in a church you are expected to "play by their rules." My best advice is to search for the church and set your sights on particular features which will allow you to be discipled and grow not in tradition but in spirituality. If one does nurture spiritual "life" move on until you sense that it is where God would have you. In the mean time if it at all possible,

find a fellowship of believers who share a passion for God. In a home fellowship you can grow with others in an informal setting.

God does not discriminate against home meetings. They are apostolic! It is how the "Church" began. It is obvious that formalized Christian ministry is to be found everywhere in one form or another. As I have already described most of these churches or ministries are a manifestation of institutional and traditional religion. The forms and expectation are in conformity to the norms of a Saturday or a Sunday ritual. People support the familiar comfortable routines or rituals and may even add a little to their spiritual knowledge and understanding. At the same time the Kingdom of God is not strongly advanced as it was originally intended.

Churches, struggle to maintain membership so are eager to enhance interest, or involvement. A church may be jealous of their members going astray or getting involved with meetings or activities which are not sponsored by their own fellowship. There was a time when such unfaithfulness could be met by excommunication, but today the usual rebukes from the pulpit are just admonitions or doctrines created out of hand which indicate an obligation to support the local body. Member are ingrained to regard as close to a cardinal sin to consider "church hopping" or being active in any outreaches from other congregations.

This result becomes, in effect, the fruit of division which institutional religion enforces.

Professional Ministry

The concept of the clergy, professional ministry is a well establish and unquestioned paradigm. ([See the power of paradigms.](#)) The concept of Ministry has been traditionally connected to career or occupation. The concept of clergy as a professional career extends

into the dim past of Christendom. The traditional church operates in accord with, and is enabled because of the professional clergy concept. The question of institutionally accredited, "professional ministry" appointed to churches and church giving is something that I believe each of us has to examine in light of Scripture and draw our best personal conclusion in the light of the Word. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible and to experience the potential of Christ's Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we judge it to be best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a Divine promise and a human potentiality. We need to see ministers bringing others into this potentiality. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving. It is not my desire to subvert a system that you may believe in for your own best reasons, but rather *to encourage each person to strive to know God as fully as possible* and to experience the potential written of in the Gospel, even if it means setting aside certain long- held traditions. Every person should support the Kingdom of God as we see it best expressed. We need to see the life of God as a potentiality and the people who minister bringing others into it. Once that criterion is met, we can go on to other matters concerning Giving.

Giving and Tithes

Giving: Giving & Sharing is Blessed by God

Giving is still taught as an obligation and a requirement for any Christian who is a faithful church attender. In spite of this I believe, there should be no laws, rules, or obligations for giving in the Kingdom of God. God has set us free from rules including rules about giving.

Giving is good. God reminds us that there is joy in giving and there is a blessing associated with giving. Giving supports the men or women of God who have given their lives to ministry. It also supports people who are not necessarily "ministers" of churches but who God wishes to bless through us. Various kinds of worldly commitments which touch upon the Kingdom of God need financial support, whether it be church buildings, outreach expenses, travel or any of a wide variety of needs which can only be met by others sharing the cost.

God wants his will to be done through selfless sharing and contributions of money resources. Though it is not through compulsion or obligation but through being able to hear God leading us to supply the gifts that are needed to enable a certain work of God. Other good causes or charities must be weighed among our choices.

Some basic principles identified on the pages of the Bible shed light on the subject of giving.

*It is more blessed to Give than to receive
Give and it shall be given unto you
Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven
Those who give to the poor lend to God
The Tithe is the Lord's - (Old covenant principle)
In the measure you give it shall be given to you
Sow sparingly, reap sparingly
Give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven
Give as you purpose in your heart,
Let no one give out of obligation
God loves a cheerful giver*

The above scriptures are a few of many references to money and giving as introduced in the Bible. When we become more spiritual when are able to discern that God wants us to give to special ministries or to special servants of God. But we would miss God will if we only gave to ministry professionals and not to individuals and especially the poor. God love is about giving. Ministry is about sharing. Koinonia is also about mutual support. This whole world thrives in the light of a generous heart. **"God so loved the world that he gave -"**

Christians who have a reborn or redeemed nature do not resist giving and sharing. The unredeemed do not want to let go of anything. The world thinks that their well being and survival are threatened by releasing necessary assets and resources. Believers know that when they give they are really investing in returns that are certain to come back to them, either now or later.

The Tithe

The doctrine of the tithe (a tenth of one's increase) is taught in churches often not just as a principle but as an obligation. Very few congregations actually enforce the giving of tithes by recording all receipts and maintaining scrupulous records of the income although some come very close to this. Mostly what we hear is teaching which explains that tithing is a practice pre-dating the Christian era and the era of law. We find Abraham tithing before the era of law in the Book of Genesis. Thus with Abraham giving to Melchisedek we have a type of giving which all Christians should wish to embrace. The Book of Malachi supplies the greatest picture of God's displeasure at those who withhold the tithe. God calls it robbing Him. "*The Tithe is mine,*" says the Lord, therefore to withhold it is to rob him. Malachi describes the "storehouse" where we are supposed to bring our tithe to God. Pastors love to teach that the storehouse is the local church, where all of the sheep are fed. This model has some problems associated with it, as follows:

Is God there?

Is his presence manifested?

Is His Word being taught?

Is the Spiritual life a reality and accessible?

Are the needs of the poor and needy being met?

Are important voices for the Kingdom of God being supported who also edify us individually?

The Storehouse

is associated with a view of the Levitical priesthood which existed in early Israel. The Levites were the tribe chosen to minister to the house of Israel. It was only the Tribe of Levi (Levites) who were the designated priesthood, This tribe, had no other source of livelihood and were sustained by the rest of the tribes of Israel.

With the ascension of Jesus Christ into the heavenly temple of God it is my belief that the nature of the storehouse has changed as radically as the priesthood.

At this time in the church age dispensation, the people of God are supported and fed by natural bread nor by the lambs and oxen of sacrifices once given up to the Levites. Now we are a different priesthood before God; we give spiritual sacrifices unto Christ who is now King and High Priest over all. *(Read Hebrews which explains the transition from the old covenant to the new.)*

From where do these blessings flow? From a heavenly place. Unto whom are our sacrifices given? To God in heaven. What is the sacrifice? It is the sacrifice of our lips; both praise and thanks giving. Who is the overseer who watches over our gifts and measures a blessing today and in the time to come? It is Jesus The Great High Priest who accounts for those things given in his name, whether money in a church collection plate or food to a hungry child, or a visit to an invalid or a drink to a thirsty man, or a visit to a person sick and alone in a hospital.

God sees every act done and the motive of every heart in which that gift is bestowed. God loves a cheerful giver. The motive of the heart touches faith. We know that Jesus sees our love and kindness to another in need. Giving as one giving to God that is faith. We know that he will also meet any of our needs in a time of lack because we did not withhold to others. We do not give out of obligation. We are not debtors to the law. We are free to give because God is a giver. Giving is sowing seeds. We sow bounteously we expect to reap bounteously. We expect something to come from our planting. Sower of seeds also believe in the crop which will come at harvest

time. This is surely a part of giving to the Kingdom of God. God will meet our needs at a future time because we have planted. God stores up treasure for another day in a heavenly place, because we have given.

Tithing in Faith As an Act of Worship

The giving of tithes is not just a simple token gift placed in an offering plate or bag. Tithing in the scriptural sense relates to act of worship in presenting the "tithe" to God. **We find the act described in Deuteronomy Chapter 26.**

"Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it."

*"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwellest therein;" (- 26:1-) "That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there." (- Deuteronomy 26:2-15) **Note** this is during the dispensation of The LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.*

Abraham gave a tithe to Melchisedek the King Of Salem two thousand years before the Church age and prior to the Age of the Law. This tithe prefigures the law of commandments, giving, as it were, to the King of Heaven who exists outside of geneology forever. We give as unto him. Jesus abides forever, in the order of that high priest, Melchisedek.

Now as regarding tithing as worship, it is not my desire that you should memorize a ritual it to recite as a rite. But it is good to have a sense of the understanding noted in the Leviticus 26 text. The giving of such a gift or tithe should be something which touches our own understanding of our previous "captivity" and God's hand at work to take us out of that place of bondage and oppression, want and sorrow.

The spiritual life acknowledges that we were also taken out of bondage. It is a faithful saying which needs to be spoken. Notice that all of this tithing worship is spoken to God in the place which has His name written upon it. Today we are redeemed and the house of God is not a special place it is the human house where the spirit resides. The tithing worship reminds us of God's covenant with us and how he is taking further towards strength, blessing and victorious living. Speaking these things tells God that we know what he has done for us and that we are truly thankful that he knows and remembers us each and that he will continue to be with us supplying good things.

The Prosperity Message (Giving to get)

The past several years has seen a great emphasis on the Prosperity message. Poverty and lack are seen as a curse throughout scripture. God does want us without provision. The redemption from the curse of the law also freed us from want and lack. We believe that "God shall supply all of our needs according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." In gaging any matter of doctrine we have to hold it up not only to common sense and scripture but to discerning what the spiritual life needs to be. Though we should not lack nor want, God wants more of us and not less of us. Therefore anything which takes our focus away from God and places it upon unfruitful things, those

things which only decay, is really a stumbling block for a believer.

Preachers quickly made the prosperity message a way to enrich themselves. They became guilty of making merchandise of those who believed their messages of being the source of blessing.

Those who preach riches and wealth are leading people away from intimacy unless they are able to handle wealth and prosperity more graciously than I. Many are able to assume possessions of wealth and money and property without being seduced away from God's presence. Riches are seductive and a pitfall. The knowledge of the emptiness of wealth comes may come too late when are already victimized by excesses.

This was the case of the writer of Ecclesiastes, Solomon who realized late in life that with wealth comes other griefs and sparseness of the soul. Gain is not Godliness, the apostle writes in 1 Timothy 6:5, withdraw yourselves from such doctrines. *but Godliness with contentment is great gain*, (1 Timothy 6:6) God wishes to supply our needs, to bless us in our going out and our coming in to make us fruitful in body and in all of the pursuits of our life. (Deuteronomy 28:3-6)

The doctrine of **prosperity has blessing** (Deuteronomy 28) connected to it to be sure; but the negative side of it is its link to selfish motives both in the giver and the receiver. Many who preach the prosperity message are in a position to directly benefit by the unrestrained giving that is encouraged in sermons and in seminars. Some of those who preach the doctrine exceed the Word of God by suggesting that gifts given to their own ministries have the greatest return connected to them. Of course faith is infused into the process to insure a greater degree of return, thirty, sixty or one hundred fold according to scripture as is described and taught as a consequence of giving. (There is greater insight in the 30, 60 and hundred fold

metaphor than mere cash and assets. The prospering of the soul is accounted above all, in Spiritual richness.) Giving, according to Jesus, should not be in the manner of the Pharisees who "sound a trumpet" to give notice that they are doing an alms deed. Jesus teaches to give in secret and for the left hand not to see what the right hand does. All of these teachings address anonymous giving rather than a public display in which people are applauding the giver for his excellent generosity. The Lord says of such people, they receive their reward by the act of receiving public acclaim and applause. It is far better to give when only the Father who sees in secret knows. He will be the one who insures a return in the best possible time. Any man or woman can give or contribute in any 'kind' or commodity. One can give a gift of service another a gift of a song. Another a gift of kindness. The same principle applies when the motive is right, God who is the author and overseer of every good and perfect gift knows when our giving is free from self exaltation. He will insure the return.

Praise and Worship

Chapter 9

Becoming a True Worshiper

WORSHIP PRAISE AND WORSHIP

John 4:23 "-But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24, God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

A form of worship is part of all religion.

Certain sects believe in worshipping their ancestors; others worship or hold in reverence creatures or objects; others worship gods, hundreds even thousands of gods with different names. There worship consists of intricate and specific rituals and rites practiced by its believers. All of these rituals and rites come from serious and sincere beliefs and are fervently practiced by its practitioners.

Religious worship may be in the form of the burning of incense, or the spilling of blood, sacrifices are offered in the most solemn manner. Priests or 'holy men' wear sacred garments. In order to follow the rigor of perfected worship, worshipers follow rites of purification. Supplicants bow and posture, fold their hands and make mystical gestures heavenward. It is easy to follow a ritual and think that you are a true worshiper. Why? Because anyone when learn a ritual and follow that ritual with some degree of solemnity. All such worship is mostly a human endeavor but is it true worship? Is God the Almighty in it? Does such worship please the King of the Universe?

Praise and worship are practiced in all Christian Churches but in very different ways

What Jesus said about True Worshipers

A foundation of understanding of the subject of worship is found in the gospel account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at a well in Samaria:

John 4:19 - John 4:24 19 - - The woman said to Him, *“Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20, Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” 21, Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22, You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23, But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24, God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

We who believe ourselves to be True Worshipers, claim to know who we worship. We also have our own notions about whether or not we are worshipping 'in Spirit' or 'in Truth.'

Certainly not all of the world's religions worship our God who we call "The Father" in Spirit and in truth. I am also confident that not all those who practice certain

forms of Christianity in their church meeting houses know the one they claim to worship. Moreover, I seriously doubt whether all who are label Christian have a sense of Spiritual union with the Father.

What is required to become True Worshipers?

Following is a description of **a form of a worship service** that we would see in a typical Christian church house.

Musical preludes may be performed by an organist or musicians;

The congregation sing hymns from a hymn book at intervals throughout the 'service';

An individual, usually the priest or pastor, offers a Bible lesson or homily that engages the congregation in order to enhance the spiritual life and understanding of the congregation;

The congregation or a choir sings musical responses after particular parts of the service such as scripture readings, prayers and petitions, or collection of offerings.

A group of specially appointed singers may perform well rehearsed anthems

Individuals may perform special music (as a featured soloist.)

This sort of programmed worship service is standard fare in most Christian denominations. Such programs are performed with greater or lesser degrees of sophistication or excellence depending upon the size of the congregation and its pool of talent and resources.

Churches that have access to greater talent and imagination are more successful in creating performance based presentations and eventually attract larger congregations. Thus the church or ministry is considered more successful and viable.

An important point to note is that the things listed above are designed to be executed by relatively few individuals and the majority are onlookers acting in their role of an audience. How much of this seems to accrue to being true worshipers?

Or are individuals allowed to be passive and disengaged?

Praise and Worship, The Cornerstone of the Christian Life

In the scripture quoted just above, Jesus makes a number of points about worship that reveal a new paradigm, the mystery of relationship of believers to the (spiritual) Father. First, worship is not about a place. While Jesus speaks of the mountains where people go to be in Holy communion with their God (God) any such seeking of a *holy place* in the present time is wrong. God meets with His children in an entirely different way.

I believe the next point that Jesus makes is that a large segment of world in their effort to worship a particular God, may affect a form of worship but have no connection to the object of their worship. There God is unknown to the worshipper. Absent any spiritual bond no worshipper can come into union with their deity.

For Christians who would be worshipers, I think it can also be inferred that *if one is not of a particular spiritual class any effort to be a true worshipper is in vain!* A mere form or mechanism of worship will not bridge the gap to make you a true worshipper. I am talking about worshiping our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Father of the Messiah Jesus.

True worshipers must be true believers.

True believers must be called into the Kingdom of God. This is not a wholesale process. Each individual must approach the throne of grace seeking mercy and pardon for sins. Of this seeking is sincere and *heartfelt* each individual is born of the Spirit. Now they become partakers in Jesus Christ's divine nature. They have become sons and daughters of God and come into fellowship with Him. This point will not be understood or agreed upon by some religious experts because of the fact they do not know what they worship.

Any who would say there is no God. Or if anyone would say we can not know God or claim to have his Divine nature imparted to us are simply reasoning these things and have not been blessed to become **born of God** and become a brand new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:16 - 2 Corinthians 5:18 17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18, Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ- - "

The Spiritual side of worship

First understand that **the mind is NOT the spirit** although some may teach this. Understand also that **the soul or personality of a person is not the spirit**. Human are *soulish* beings before coming to Christ and tend to remain so after coming to Christ. But the **soul which equates to -mind, intellect and emotion**, is not the part that is born from above (or reborn) in Christ Jesus. The soul can exalt in itself or react in many ways to someone else's emotional presentation. But such is not Spiritual worship. Soul music is aptly named. Soul music comes from the soulish, personal side of human beings. Uniqueness of presentation that exalts the performer characterizes soulish worship.

Soul music says, look at me. Soulish performance is made for an audience. It says, "Aren't I a snappy performer!" Spiritual worship requires no audience but God. Spiritual worship does not have to have special gifts, ornamentation or sophistication. It is just from ourselves, who were in times past, entirely unworthy.

The Spiritual side of worship is about our interaction with heaven. It is free and unrestrained. It exalts in the joy of salvation and the wonder of being called forth to be called, with Christ, into heavenly places.

Colossians 3:1 - Colossians 3:3 1,"- -So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2,Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. "

Spiritual life is about engaging the very presence of God. In the times of the Old Covenant priesthood, the high priest went annually into the presence of God through a heavy veil but only after exhaustive preparation and purification. In such a place the priest

hardly dared to make a move in the presence of a Holy God. Any falling short resulted in the death of the officiate. The veil of God's temple was rent in half at the death of Jesus on the cross.

Worship within the Holy Place is now a part of the legacy of the child of God born of the Spirit. We can now boldly go into God's presence through the blood of the Messiah Jesus who has purchased this right for us.

Hebrews 10:19 - Hebrews 10:22 20, - -by the new and living way that he opened for us through the veil (that is, through his flesh), 21, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. - -"

Lest this topic might become overly heavy, let me try to make it more plain.

We worship the Heavenly Father with our hearts.

The heart is the very center of our passion and desires, for what the heart desires becomes its worship. Those born from heaven esteem and value the Spiritual life which is given from heaven and orchestrated from heaven. Heaven interacts with our hearts to make us true worshipers. Zeal is not the emotion of the soul it is the passion of the heart for Him who called us out of darkness into the Holy presence of heavenly things. (Mount Zion and the heavenly company of angelic beings and righteous souls.

Our souls can be inspired and stimulated by stirring music but takes the Holy Spirit to lift our hearts to heaven. The Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) animates and empowers the worshipers with inspiration and revelation in times of worship. When some particular saint is in

worship he may be at the very feet of Jesus or receiving a revelation of a truth that has been hidden from us until this very minute.

Free worship versus program worship

We do not all have a sense of comfort about thanksgiving, praise and worship. As we gather together we should feel free to give praise or thanksgiving with the liberty that God allows. This means it does not have to be scripted to be heartfelt.

Thanksgiving:

A heart of thanksgiving is called for by all who claim to be the children of God through Christ Jesus. If we are callous and have no true thanksgiving in our souls it would appear that we have not been impacted by God's loving kindness, mercy and grace:

If we were impoverished and received a legacy valued beyond all the riches of this world, would we not be happy and wish to give thanks?

If we were spared an eternity of judgment and hell by God's gift of righteousness which says we do not have to pay the penalty for being unrighteous or unworthy because Jesus himself bore our sins, would we not be happy and full of thanksgiving?

If we are spared from the horrors of oppression by tyrants or sorrows of natural calamities ought we not offer up thanksgiving to God?

If we eat are comfortable while thousands go without food and shelter, ought we not give thanks? The people who do not know God are called "unthankful, unholly, etc. - - "

2 Timothy 3:2 - 2 Timothy 3:2 - - , for men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, evil-speakers, to parents disobedient, unthankful, unkind - - .

The Psalms: Examples That Teach Us Thanksgiving, Praise

Psalms are not entirely made up of songs of praise as they include prayers and prophetic utterances.

The 150 Psalms of the Bible are the best examples of a man possessed of God's Holy Spirit (The Ruach Ha Kadesh) whose life and thoughts are turned continually God-ward. God refers to David as a man 'after His own heart.' While addressing the matters of trouble which surround him, David looks to the Lord as his strength, his hope, and his deliverer. He never forgets God's mercy and faithfulness. Even while praising the Lord actively (with his mouth) God at various times intervenes in the midst of his utterances and begins to speak His words through the psalmist's mouth. (Psalm 91, a good example)

Here are typical utterances of Praise and Thanksgiving.

Psalms 9:1-2 - Psalms 9:1; I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. ;2 I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. **

Psalms 111:1 - Psalms 111:1 Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.**

Psalms 34:2 - Psalms 34:3 1) I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2) My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3) Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. **

Psalms 30:12 12) To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will

give thanks to You forever. **

Psalms 106:1 - Psalms 106:1 1) Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. **

Psalms 5:11 - Psalms 5:12 11 But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You. 12 For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield. **

Psalms 13:5 - Psalms 13:6 5 But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. 6 I will sing to the Lord, Because He has dealt bountifully with me. **

Psalms 31:7 - Psalms 31:8 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities, 8 And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; **

Psalms 71:23 - Psalms 71:24 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed. 24 My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; **

24 This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. **

Psalms 148:2 - Psalms 148:5 1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! 2 Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! 3 Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! 4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created. **

Psalms 148:13 - Psalms 148:14 13 Let them praise the

name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. 14 And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints— Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him.

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Psalms 149:2 - Psalms 149:6 1 Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3 Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. 4 For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, **

Psalms 150: - Psalms 150:6 1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! 2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! 3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! 4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! 5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! 6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

We see that there is no shortage of Praise and Thanksgiving addressed here in the Psalms. There is much more throughout other Old Testament books as well. "Praise is an ornament of beauty" for the upright. There is strength in praise. Praise is active and not passive. When we praise The Lord we are interacting with the hosts of heaven who continually offer praise unto Him who sits on the

throne. There is deliverance in praise, it brings confusion to the ranks of the enemy (demonic spiritual orders.) Praise takes all kinds of forms. It includes music and dance. Praise includes shouting loudly to extol the virtues of God. Praise includes making joyful noises to God. Praise brings us into the very presence of the Holy presence of God. 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving' speaks of making the way into God's place, as one would enter the Tabernacle from the world of care into the gate beyond the fence. Enter into His courts with praise, addressing progressing into a place of greater intimacy. This part of the tabernacle is the Holy Place. Here we may still praise and speak to God and extol his goodness and mercies. But the ultimate place is entered with a higher lever of worship where we can nothing but *worship* in the Holiness of His presence.

Those who say there should no be noise and clammer in the zeal of worship are not biblically accurate. Those who say there should be no musical instruments, are not biblically accurate. Those who say there should be dancing, again, this is not in harmony with what we see in the Psalms.

Words translated Praise in the psalms and other books and include at least 7 words. Each word addresses somewhat different kind of praise or thanksgiving which may include, singing, playing, shouting and others. This would be an interest subject to investigate with the Strong concordance. Look at words translated as Praise in the KJ Bible.

Liberty in Spiritual worship allows a lot of praise. It should not be curtailed. It should allow each person to engage in his or her own forms of praise. We all are called to Praise. Let everything that has breath, Praise the Lord! Freedom in praising the Lord creates a beautiful tapestry of sound and glory into which God's presence is pleased to dwell.

Mystery of God's Power - PDF FILE:
How all believers may receive
'The Promise of the Father'
Through the Holy Spirit



A
DISCIPLE'S HANDBOOK

Charles Pinkney - 2011