

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

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Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

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At this point I need to express a very special thanks to all of the people who have contributed to my series of books, both directly and indirectly: First and foremost, His most wondrous of gifts--my wife Janet and the incredible blessings from the Lord as I continue to write this series of books. Next, all of the help and spiritual growth I received from attending and ministering in the Lord's non-instrumental churches: McPherson Church of Christ, Council Bluffs; Redline Church of Christ, Harlan, Iowa and Harlan Church of Christ. Also the instrumental churches: First Christian Church, Council Bluffs, Iowa; my home congregation--East Side Christian Church, Council Bluffs. And finally: my family, Kathleen Kachulas, and many other wonderful friends and brethren, and my nephew David West who offered his professional web design services. I truly appreciate all of their help and encouragement.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought no cease to yield fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

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Statement of Purpose

In mid-nineteen nineties I set out to research what took place when I first decided to obey the Gospel. The interest reaches back to 1978. This is when I first heard the gospel message from a preacher who served in a Council Bluffs, Iowa, Church of Christ – noninstrumental. My wife Janet had quietly and very effectively led me to attend this church and respond to the Lord’s call. Throughout our dating and engagement she consistently modeled a Christian woman, greatly influencing my interest in the Lord. She never stopped.

The minister taught me the basics of salvation and I chose to answer the Lord’s call. From this moment I became increasingly interested in learning what took place and began a systematic study of salvation. As I accumulated more knowledge and research information the thought occurred to me to share what I have learned. Thus my book began to take shape from a rough outline to a manuscript.

Through many years of writing I included other books and ending up with a series of books in various stages of completion. They speak about salvation, sin, the Lord’s work of salvation, the covenant, and an overview book.

The books include the integration of many different types of theology: theology – information about God, Christology – the work of Jesus, pneumatology – what the Holy Spirit is doing, ecclesiatology – about the Lord’s church, anthropology – mankind’s response and accountability to God, soteriology – the process of salvation, and eschatology – concerning the end of time and eternal life in the body of Christ.

This book is the overview. I have organized the chapters to briefly look at many differing aspects of salvation. It has nine chapters which include basic steps of information leading to a greater insight about God, what takes place when responding to His free offer of salvation in Christ, and spiritual confidence.

The parts of each chapter are like stepping stones, one of many crossing a stream of spiritual water. As the reader progresses from one step to another he will begin to grow in a better understanding concerning his present fellowship with Jesus and knowledge of what lies ahead. Once he reaches the other side he is able to look back across the stream and see the wonders of God’s grace. He is better equipped to recognize his participation and partnership in the Lord’s eternal plan.

I sincerely hope this information becomes as useful to the reader as it is for me the writer. May God richly bless your efforts to understand the blessings of salvation which the Lord so lovingly gave to all humanity. I pray God will give you the confidence and faith to witness the wondrous grace of God to the lost and fellow servant’s in the Lord.

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Section Seven: Partnership with God

Mind in Christ

In the body of Christ, God honors diversity among His children, but differently from the world. In the world diversity is protected by a mutual respect for multitudes of differing aspects of the human experience based upon the relative nature of cultural values and morals. In the body of Christ the diverse parts of His body all work and strive for one common purpose--bond-service through Jesus Christ in order to glorify God the Father according to His standard of righteousness.

Even though each member serves God in his own individual way, his service is for Christ and his fellow believers. He is his own person even as he is one body in Christ. He is one yet he is many, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 *Corinthians* 6:19-20).

The Lord's children are living in all parts of the world, under radically differing social, economic, and racial circumstances. But all are equal as children of one God the Father through one God--Jesus Christ. All are equally indwelled with God the Holy Spirit. All are in fellowship with one God. All are in fellowship with one another, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 *Corinthians* 3:16). His people are able to fellowship with Him because they are blessed with the blessing of being allowed into His presence and to serve Him. His servant's fellowship because they share in the Lord's work on earth, His holiness, inheritance, and one another love.

In Christ all are of one mind and heart as they fulfill the will of God within their immediate spiritual family, culture, and the physical experience of life. In *First Corinthians* Paul taught: "we have the mind of Christ" (2:16b). This is a unique blessing only believers in Christ receive. It is a singular state of mind within which all are joined in their focus upon the will of God through Christ, even though the focus is worked out according to each one's differing gifts and faith.

Every one of His saints knows his identity. They know God because God lives within them. They know who they worship. They all share a common identity with Jesus Christ. *Jeremiah* once prophesied, "And they will not teach again, each man his neighbor, and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'" (31:34).

His prophecy foretold of a future day when God will forgive sin. During this time the knowledge of God will not be lost amongst His people. They will not need to reteach each other about knowing the Lord because of continued compromise with the world.

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They will know: to receive forgiveness the servant must learn to know the Lord, and only the forgiven know the Lord. All of His forgiven children will both know the Lord and be known by the Lord.

In *First Corinthians* Paul clearly identified two spiritual sources of information:

1) Those who are of the world have “the spirit of the world”, which may mean the ways of the world or an actual indwelling evil spirit (2:12a). It’s impossible to tell which one. A major sign of the existence of the spirit is like-mindedness with the world’s attitude towards sin and rebellion against the will of God through Jesus Christ, “the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience” (*Ephesians* 2:2b).

2) The blessing of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God” (2:12a). All believers in Christ are given a singular knowledge from Jesus through the work of the Spirit which leads the Lord’s servant into a deeper understanding of spiritual realities in Christ.

Spiritual information is one of the many reasons why the world is hostile towards the servants of Christ. The world receives its guidance from its spiritual leader-Satan, as God allows, and its ways usually vary according to the culture of the time. All spiritual information coming from Satan is designed to give offense against God and destroy His creation. Satan’s will often appears to conform to His truth but this is the nature of deception – unseen lies, “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 *Corinthians* 11:14b). In the same letter Paul also wrote: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God” (4:3-4).

Those who serve Jesus receive guidance through the Holy Spirit who is living inside of them. His information is changeless and eternal. His internal presence enables God’s will for the spiritual restoration of His children. Since the servant knows God the Father through Jesus he lives according to the guidance of the Spirit. His life is his service, worship, communion with God and sharing in the common purpose of His saints – to glorify Him. Living out the common purpose of God’s will is how fellowship is engaged.

The world does not want any light to expose its sin and the true source of its spiritual enlightenment. Jesus revealed this spiritual reality early in His ministry, “men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (*John* 3:19b-20).

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The absence of the Spirit of God in one's life leaves him in spiritual darkness, unable to properly comprehend the will of God, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 *Corinthians* 2:14). This is one of the basic reasons why fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ is so actively opposed by anyone who does not belong to Him. He simply does not think like Jesus.

These revelations are just a sampling of all the spiritual obstacles placed in the lives of those enslaved to sin. Separation from God's knowledge and purpose helps to explain why people who are not believers in Christ have such a difficult time understanding the exclusive nature of the one mind and purpose of those who are believers in God through Jesus Christ. It is impossible for unbelievers to comprehend spiritual realities and truths revealed by the Spirit.

God slowly renews the minds of His servants in order to: "prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (*Romans* 12:2b). When a slave of sin is purchased his spirit is reborn a new creation when resurrected with Jesus. However, it must live in a body still enslaved to the feelings of lust and desire to sin. His physical mind remains the same along with his memories, cultural conditioning, and learning, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (*Romans* 8:10).

Relearning how to live a righteous life is so important because it prepares the spirit and soul for eternal life. It also protects the newly created spirit from the desire of the body. Flesh is very persuasive and is able to refocus the new spiritual babe in Christ to fall back to serving sin. The servant is a living witness of God and glorifies Him by living His will even in the most difficult of circumstances. Living and thinking the righteous "will of God" in a hostile environment demands single-mindedness in Christ and personal faith motivated discipline. Steadfastness depends upon fellowship with God through His word, the Spirit, and one another, regardless of personal circumstances.

It is impossible for the spirit of the world to duplicate a true servant's life in Christ. Even though a servant of sin may appear to other people as being saved and conforming to God's will through Jesus.

He may even believe the deception himself. God intimately knows the true intention of heart and spiritual status. Deceptive spiritual inclinations and motivations cannot fool God who knows the heart and spiritual position, even if the servant fully believes in his own faith and intentions.

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If anyone tries to serve God without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, he is still serving sin under the worldly authority of Satan's dominion. This is the most dangerous of deceptions because it is self-deception and cannot be discerned by self. Saul, before his conversion, is a perfect example of this spiritual condition. His heart reassured him of salvation, his faith led him to fulfill the expectations of a common culturally accepted belief about God, yet God considered him an enemy. It is very easy to feel assured of salvation while at the same time serving sin and Satan. Physical evidence of salvation, such as feelings of heart, emotion, and tests of faith, do not assure salvation.

In *Colossians* Paul tried to encourage his brothers and sisters to understand the significant spiritual difference between a worldly mindset and learning the mind of Christ, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (3:2). He goes on to explain why this distinction of mind and life is so important: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (3:3). The spiritual difference between the Lord's kingdom and the dominion of Satan is far greater than any believer realizes. Without the counsel of the Holy Spirit it would be impossible to even partially understand. A common mind with the Spirit is essential for spiritual survival. This is why fellowship is so important. Fellowship helps to mature faith, grows one another unity and love, helps prevent patterns of sin from developing, and witnesses to the world Christian love and unity, and glorifies Jesus.

The intent of Paul's teaching about separating one's self from the world is oneness in mind with Christ and His servants. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Philippians*: "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (2:2). It's important to allow the Spirit to lead the servant through life as he progressively grows closer to the righteous will of God through Jesus. This in turn progresses his life in unity with the mind of Christ and his fellow-believers. One mind in Christ enables His body to work together in order to fulfill the Lord's purpose on earth.

No believer fully understands the will of God. The Spirit leads each believer in the body of Christ into a common understanding of the will of God through Scripture. The diversity of the body working to serve Christ creates one common identity, purpose, and glorifies God. John offered some insight into Spirit leadership in his Spirit inspired *Revelation*: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (2:29) When the Spirit is speaking, it's time to listen. He speaks through Scripture.

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When a believer strives to allow the Spirit to help him develop a mind aligned with Christ, he will progressively conform to the purposed fellowship of His body. Paul wrote in *Galatians*, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (5:16). He tried to stress the importance of allowing the Spirit to lead a believer's life and open his eyes to the dangers of self-perceived needs, thoughts, and feelings of heart, which may influence a breakdown of spiritual unity with Christ and His body. The lack of single-mindedness in Christ, individually and collectively as a body, will directly affect the Lord's witness on earth in adverse ways.

The Spirit is not encouraging a believer to work good deeds for the sake of personal goodness. He is teaching him the righteousness of the Lord and Master. The reason why he serves, and what motivates his service, is more important than the service. David once wrote: "Sacrifice and meal offering Thou hast not desired; my ears Thou hast opened; burnt offering and sin offering Thou hast not required. I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is hidden within my heart" (*Psalms* 40:6, 8). The contrast of attitudes illustrates the importance of motivation. God is looking for servant's who are willing to serve Him with an undivided heart. Motivation is the servant's responsibility and he will be held accountable for why he does what he does.

Growth in righteousness will lead to a changed personal lifestyle and understanding of the importance of fellowship and worship as a member of the body of Christ. Jesus once revealed: "that which proceeds out of the man that is what defiles the man" (*Mark* 7:20b). A believer's life is a reflection of what is in his heart. His heart is what motivates his service which in turn is his sacrificial offering. When the heart is focused upon God's will through Jesus, then the mind of Christ will be reflected through the words, works, and love of the believer.

The servant's level of spiritual maturity and faith deeply affect his ability to allow the Spirit to lead his life. God gives all of His children a lifetime of fellowship, Spirit leadership and understanding of Scriptures, to grow and develop. One of the reasons why Jesus has such a diverse body of believer's is to facilitate fellowship, faith, overall spiritual growth, dependence upon the Spirit, interdependence and interrelationships with fellow servants. These are all factors which help to develop and secure a strong unity, connecting the Lord's body of believers, "there should be no division in the body" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

Every servant of Christ is in fellowship with God the Father, but he must develop interrelationships within the body of Christ to have a relationship with Him. Developing relationships with one another in the Lord's body is the same as building a relationship with the Lord. The two are the same.

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The servant cannot have a relationship with the Lord if he does not have a common relationship with His body, “love one another just as He commanded us” (1 John 3:23b). Loving one another is the same as loving Christ.

In order to develop a relationship with the Lord’s body the servant must first be joined in fellowship with Jesus. Interpersonal relationships are works of fellowship. Fellowship is not a relationship with God even though all interrelationships amongst fellow believers are the result of fellowship with God. Fellowship with God means the servant is now working as one with Jesus to accomplish God the Father’s will upon the earth which in turn glorifies God the Father through Jesus. One another fellowship becomes a reality as soon as a servant becomes a child of God. The purpose of fellowship is to further the will of God by glorifying Jesus. However, all servants must develop one another interrelationships in order to physically mature the spiritual reality of oneness with Jesus. Being united with Jesus means all believers are united with each other.

Body relationships reflect the common love and unity of fellowship, witness to the world, glorifies Christ, which in turn glorifies God the Father. One common mind with God glorifies Him because it shows the world all things are indeed possible through Jesus. One another fellowship in the Lord’s body accomplishes a miracle and fulfills prophecy – love motivated interrelationship between peoples of diverse backgrounds, race, national and cultural identities. Physical relationships depend upon Spirit motivated love within the body and witness to the world how the Lord levels the ground of human diversity. Everything is accomplished in fellowship with Jesus because the servant is working with God. Fellowship is the work of working together with Jesus to accomplish the will of God on earth and in heaven.

The physical and spiritual brokenness and weakness’ found within the body are the very things which glorify Jesus. For only Jesus is able to unify such a diverse number of sick and divided people into one holy body. Isaiah once prophesied: ““For behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox; and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,’ says the Lord” (*Isaiah* 65:17-18, 25).

A servant of Christ is unique in his fellowship with Christ and his fellow-servants, for no matter where in the world a brother or sister may be located; all have the same mind in Christ and all are led by the same Spirit. They work their fellowship

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in countless differing ways. Yet with the seemingly impossible diversity the body functions in perfect unity and fellowship.

In Paul's letter to the *Romans* he encouraged his brethren with these words: "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Jesus Christ; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:5-6). The ultimate purpose of the common body and mind of Christ in the present world and in eternity beyond is to glorify God. Everything is done to accomplish this one greater purpose.

Questions

The new mindset of a believer focuses on Christ and His body, not on self and the world.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 8:5-8; Psalms 26:2; Jeremiah 17:9-10, 20:12; Romans 15:5-6

- 1) What do you allow to predominate the thoughts of your mind: worldly ideas, values, traditions, philosophy, Spirit led knowledge and spiritual values, or a combination of the two patterns?
- 2) Do you ever pray to God for Him to test your mind in Christ?
- 3) How do you consider the accuracy of your heart to lead you life in Christ?
- 4) Does God test the mind of His saints?
- 5) What is one reason why God tests the mind of His saints?
- 6) Why is unity of mind in the Lord's body so important?
- 7) How are you trying to change how you think and consider your new service as the Lord's servant or slave?
- 8) Do you think past life experiences, worldly thoughts, and present lifestyle choices affect you fellowship and relationships among brethren?

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The oneness of common fellowship is inseparable from the common mindset of the body.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

- 1) How important is positive fellowship among brethren?
- 2) Do you think about the spiritual reality: how you treat and think about fellow brethren is how you are thinking and treating Jesus?
- 3) Do you think Jesus has the same expectations for Christian interrelationships anywhere there are Christians?
- 4) How do you think the integrity of the gospel message is linked to unity of mind and fellowship?

One mind is a Christian only unity of mind with God.

1 Corinthians 2:16

- 1) What does one mind mean to you?
- 2) What does the "mind of Christ" mean to you?
- 3) Does Jesus expect you to learn the "mind of Christ" or is this unity of mind given to His saints by other means? How does the Spirit help you with this type of spiritual growth?
- 4) Is Jesus and His new covenant in unity as one with His entire body of saints?

One mind is the common focus on God the Father through Jesus Christ by the Lord's body.

Jeremiah 31:34

- 1) Why do you think God places such importance on unity of mind?

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2) Does the same mind mean every saint serves and worships Jesus the same even though personality, works, and gifts vary?

There are only three sources of spiritual information: from God, human wisdom, and the "spirit of the world".

2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 1:22, 2:12; Colossians 2:8; Ephesians 2:2b

1) Where does your spiritual wisdom come from?

2) Do you feel it is important to discern the source of your spiritual information?

3) Do you need to be careful when reading spiritual material from religious sources which do not believe forgiveness is only received in baptism?

4) What is the Lord's one gospel response?

5) Do you think the Spirit helps you to understand Scripture?

The world is not able to understand the unity of mind which believers enjoy. It is a blessing unique to the Christian faith.

2 Corinthians 2:4, 11:14b; 1 Corinthians 2:14; John 3:19b-20

1) Why do you think God prevents the world from fully understanding Scripture?

2) Do you think many in the world (not saved) sincerely study Scripture?

3) What do you think about their opinions concerning Scripture?

4) How are you able to discern truth from often subtle misinformation and doctrinal error?

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The witness presented by the single mindedness of a body of diverse people is a powerful witness of Jesus to the world.

John 17:13-23

- 1) Why do you think unity is such an important witness to the world about Jesus?
- 2) Are you able to witness Jesus to the world if your assembly is splintered with disunity and does not practice one another love?
- 3) Why do you think Jesus placed so much importance on the connections between being “sanctified in truth” and the unity of one mind and body?
- 4) Is unity possible if there are compromises in doctrine?

One mind is a continual work as maturity levels change in the body of Christ.

Romans 12:2

- 1) When do you think you will be fully mature in Christ?
- 2) Will you ever know everything about Jesus and His new covenant?
- 3) What type of attitude towards bible study should you try to develop?
- 4) How does your growing maturity help the Lord’s body function better?
- 5) Does spiritual maturity help to develop better interrelationships among brethren?
- 6) Does spiritual maturity help to develop one another love?
- 7) How does one another love affect body unity?
- 8) How does body unity affect one another love?
- 9) Does spiritual maturity help to separate you from the old lust and self of your flesh?

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One mind amongst a radical diversity of faith levels, cultural values, and racial differences is a miracle.

Romans 8:6-10

- 1) What could happen if a believer begins to set his mind on the desires of his flesh and worldly pleasures?
- 2) How does a believer understand the often subtle differences between positive and negative influences from his flesh and old self?
- 3) Does a better understanding of personal spiritual awareness affect unity of mind in the body of Christ?
- 4) Why is unity of mind in the body of Christ such a marvelous blessing from God?
- 5) What makes unity of mind witness so brightly when compared to the chaos often found in the world?
- 6) Why do you think Jesus places so much importance on the connection between unity of mind and body and one another love with the witness of the body?

One mind is focused on “the things above”, everything else is a distraction.

Colossian 3:2-3

- 1) What are “the things above”?
- 2) How do you focus on the above “things” in the midst of so many distractions?
- 3) How do you take control of distractions which adversely affect your spiritual life and the lives of those you love?
- 4) Does faith in Jesus determine your lifestyle or do lifestyle choices determine your practice of faith in Jesus?
- 5) Do you ever find yourself compromising “the things above”?

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6) How do you take control of your compromises?

One mind with the Spirit is essential for spiritual survival and clearly witnesses the power of Jesus in life.

Revelation 2:29; Galatians 5:5, 16, 18, 25

1) How does allowing the Spirit to lead your mind and heart affect your life?

2) Is your life in Christ obvious?

3) How does your life reflect upon your mind and heart?

4) Do you try to hide the Spirit's work?

5) Do you ever find yourself suppressing the work of the Spirit for the sake of enjoying the fruits of the world?

One mind with one another brother or sister in Christ is unity in mind, love, spirit, and purpose.

Philippians 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

1) Why do you think Jesus emphasizes "one mind ... love ... spirit ... purpose"?

2) What do the four have in common?

3) Are you choosing to grow in this unity?

4) What does this unity witness to the world?

5) If your purpose in life is to help the poor, physically, and spiritually disadvantaged people of the world, and yet do not try to develop "one mind ... love ... spirit ... purpose among your brothers and sisters, how will this scenario affect your witness?

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- 6) What should be the Christians first priority: working to develop one another love and unity among his immediate body of fellow servants to witness Jesus or serving nonbelievers as a witness?
- 7) What will happen to evangelism if every servant prioritized maturity in one another love and unity?
- 8) Why do you think Paul connected the Lord's attitude of self sacrifice with unity of mind, love, spirit, and purpose?

One mind enables the Lord's body as a whole to fulfill His purpose on earth.
Ephesians 3:3-12; Acts 13:35, 16:24-31

- 1) What do you think His purpose is for the church?
- 2) What do you think your purpose on earth is for Jesus?
- 3) How does unity of mind affect body witness and purpose?

The one mind of the Lords body is much more than single-minded unity in works. It is a single minded effort of the collective heart of the body.
Psalms 40:6, 8; Mark 7:20

- 1) Why do you think single-mindedness of the body as a whole is so important to Jesus?
- 2) What is the connection between a single believer's heart and the collective heart of his congregation? Does a single believer make a difference?
- 3) How does a lack of single-mindedness in the body affect evangelism?
- 4) Do you think servants of sin carefully observe individuals and assemblies of the body of Christ in order to understand why it is so different from the world and other religions?

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- 5) What are you doing to help develop and mature a one mind body of believers in your community?
- 6) If two congregations of the Lord's new covenant servants cannot function as one mind what does this witness to the world?
- 7) Even though congregations are functionally separate and individual assemblies of the Lord's children, how should they share their blessings, one another love, and unity?

The one mind of the body is directly witnessed by the amount of division in contrast to one another love and unity which exists in the body.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27, 31-13:7; John 17:15-23, 13:34-35

- 1) Do you think division, one another love and unity, and evangelism are connected and proportional?
- 2) How does one another love and unity witness the ability of Jesus to lead His body of believers?
- 3) Are one mind, love, and unity inversely proportional to division?
- 4) Are you unintentionally encouraging division by how you treat a fellow saint?
- 5) Are you being divisive in any way?

One mind with Christ is proportional with single-minded fellowship with His body.

1 John 3:23b

- 1) A servant's relationship with Christ is directly related to interrelationships with his fellow servants in the Lord's body.
- 2) Since the body of Christ is His people what happens when His servants refuse to practice one another love?
- 3) How does one another love affect your personal fellowship with Jesus?

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One mind in Christ creates a uniquely Christian community environment and reflects the new spiritual reality of new covenant life.

Isaiah 65:17-18, 25

- 1) Where else in the world is it possible for extremes of human differences to melt into a single minded fellowship?
- 2) Are you able to visualize the importance of one mind in Christ?
- 3) Are you able to visualize the vast difference between the spiritual realms where a saint lives and where a nonbeliever lives?

One mind in Christ has one ultimate purpose – to glorify God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5-6

- 1) Are you striving to glorify God the Father through Jesus Christ?
- 2) Do you try to considerer circumstances and reactions from a spiritual point of view?
- 3) How do you include Spirit counsel into your everyday thoughts and decisions?
- 4) Do you try to keep from being spiritually distracted by focusing your attention on Christ instead of the world?
- 5) Are you ever fooled by what you perceive as right but is actually more evil than good?
- 6) Do you have a tendency to focus on minute (even though they may be important) things rather than the Lord's big picture of single mindedness?

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Purpose

Even though the body of Christ is made up of many millions of uniquely different people world-wide, all are united with one purpose in life. They are like countless cells all working together in order for the human body to work as God intended.

God created purpose for His human creation even before creation. Even though sin disrupted and corrupted what He intended for mankind He still maintains His original purpose in the flow of the promise until the restoration is completed with the second coming of Jesus Christ. The ultimate purpose God intended is His personal glory among His holy people and the world generally. He is restoring personal fellowship once enjoyed with Adam and Eve.

Ezekiel revealed parts of the mystery of the promise of restored purpose, during the age of the new covenant. Concerning the final restoration of Israel: “thus says the Lord God, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name ... Then the nations will know that I am the Lord ... when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water in you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from your filth and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. I am not doing this for your sake ... let it be known to you ... On that day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt” (*Ezekiel* 36:22, 23a, 23b, 24-28, 32a, 33a).

The restoration of Israel and its purpose and is all about establishing the glory of God in the world. He will do this by restoring direct fellowship with His people. His people are the restored kingdom belonging to Jesus the King. His restored capitol is Jerusalem. His restored temple is His holy people. His holy people are the body of Christ – the church.

In *Ephesians*, Paul declared God has an “eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus” (3:11). He described the revelation of the purpose as “insight into the mystery of Christ” (3:4b). God hid understanding about the Messiah until Jesus began to reveal it during His ministry. He completed its revelation through His apostles and new covenant writers during the first century. Specifically, God’s hidden purpose for the new covenant age in Christ revealed,

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“the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). God restored hope to the world. God’s purpose which is His servant’s purpose, is the reunification of as many servants of sin as possible back into His family through Jesus in order to restore His glory and family.

His purpose is the unification of all His holy servants into one likeminded body of believers in Christ who are one with God His father and the Holy Spirit. In *Acts* Paul told the elders of the church in Miletus: “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (20:24, 27).

Paul stated at least two very important facts about the revealed purpose of God in Christ Jesus:

1) The purpose is what he preached “the gospel of the grace of God”, restored fellowship between God the Father and His holy children through Jesus Christ. The gospel is the means by which God has chosen to call out to servants of sin. It’s an offer to choose restoration through Jesus Christ. The gospel is how mankind is able to reenter into the purpose of God.

2) The Lord revealed the “whole purpose” to mankind as early as this writing in the first century. The purpose of God is not a continuing revelation of new spiritual insights about salvation. The completed revelation of the mystery of the gospel provides for mankind the only possible way for the restoration of direct fellowship.

Peter also reminded his fellow saints of their accountability to the purpose of God, “that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 *Peter* 2:24b). As holy children they are responsible for a continuing effort to repent. They do this by separating the old self and the body of flesh with its lust from their new created spirits and selves. The separation is guided by the Spirit as He leads them through life. The ultimate purpose is God the Father’s glory through Jesus. When a child of God strives to focus his life on the will of his Father through Jesus and allows the Spirit to lead him onward then he is growing in the righteousness of the purpose of God the Father.

The believer’s growing maturity in righteousness is a continuing fulfillment of God’s purpose in the lives of His saints. In *1 Thessalonians* Paul wrote: “For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification” (4:7). The purpose of God in the lives of His saints is demonstrated through their continued separation from the death of the world, separation from the will of the flesh, and separation from sin. Life in Christ witnesses the servant’s newfound purpose to the world which in turn glorifies God the Father.

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Jesus had to come and offer His body as an innocent sacrificial lamb for sin in order for a slave of sin to die in unity with Him for redemption. God wants the people whom He created to learn and imitate His example of love in their new lives.

Mankind has always had the divine purpose available to them. The historic promise flowed through history in parallel with the lives of all people. But only those considered by God as His saints enjoyed the blessing of being included in the promise of life. During the lifespan of Israel before the death of Jesus the promise included only the Lord's saints. Before the birth of Israel the promise only included the Lord's saints.

Since the resurrection of Jesus, God has fulfilled His purpose for man's restoration while living in holy perfection. He revealed its completion through His apostles. From then onward through history the Lord's purpose is fulfilled within the spiritual body of Christ as led by the Holy Spirit. The object of the promise – the Messiah, is fulfilled. The gospel of the promise is fully delivered. The promise will continue its march through time continually adding new saints until the Lord returns. The purpose of the promise is the purpose of His saints – restoration of fellowship between God and His holy people.

God revealed the mystery through Jesus and Jesus revealed it to His body of believers through the work of the Holy Spirit: "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places" (*Ephesians* 3:10). Which Paul stated is "in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him" (3:11b).

God made it very clear, only those who belong to Him will be able to glorify Him in accordance with His purpose. His will and the revelation of the mystery of the promise are made known to both the physical and spiritual realms through His body of believers as they continue to teach and practice the New Covenant in Christ. For they are the only ones who are able to understand His will, because it is being revealed to them by, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him" (*John* 14:17a).

God created man to care for His earth and to have fellowship with Him on a personal basis. He made this known to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In Christ the work and purpose of His body, the church, is to express one another fellowship with love and unity which in turn glorifies God the Father through Jesus. Love and unity work together as a witness of Jesus.

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This witness, which is miraculous, blesses each saint's effort to preach the gospel to the world. Love and unity are the believer's most powerful ways to witness the Lord's purpose. To His glory the Lord's children must learn how to love each other as brothers and sisters who serve the same Lord for the same purpose despite often times radically differing cultures, lifestyles, and idiosyncrasies. They must learn the same gospel in order to wisely use the blessings of His endless grace and creation.

In Christ, God has fully restored personal fellowship, for He now lives within His children. Fellowship is working with God to further His purpose for mankind and is much closer and intimate than His servants are able to comprehend. In *1 Corinthians* Paul noted: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1:9). In *2 Corinthians*, he wrote: "and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (13:14b). And in *John's first letter* he wrote: "if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1:7a). Fellowship is a united effort with God to fulfill His purpose for mankind.

Christian purpose is fulfilled by lifestyle decisions based upon the Lord's will. When the believer's lifestyle is submissive to the Spirit's leadership then fellowship will become an effort of one another love which in turn fulfills the spiritual expectations of purpose in Christ. Spirit led lifestyle choices, fellowship, one another love, and purpose cannot be separated.

The Lord's body fulfills the purpose of God and will continue to do so until His second coming. His purpose is fulfilled when the unity of fellowship is restored and maintained through faith in Jesus Christ.

Questions

The purpose of the Lord's body is a complete restoration of fellowship between God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit with His people.

Ezekiel 36:22, 23a, 23b, 24-28, 32a, 33a

1) Do you think God is trying to restore people to their originally intended intimacy with Himself?

2) Is striving to think unity with God as a state of being too difficult to understand and mature towards?

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The “eternal purpose” of God is realized in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:11

- 1) Is Jesus the only way in which the Lord’s divine purpose for His humanity is fulfilled?
- 2) What do you think His “eternal purpose” for you is in this world?

The purpose is revealed by the “mystery of Christ”.

Ephesians 3:4

- 1) Does His purpose include you?
- 2) What are you doing to respond to the Lord’s call for purpose?
- 3) Do you understand the mystery of Christ?

The mystery of the purpose revealed the restoration of all mankind into fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:6

- 1) What do you think God means when He revealed His desire to restore fellowship with His people?
- 2) How do you fellowship with God?
- 3) What is scriptural fellowship?
- 4) Is fellowship the same as a relationship?

God’s purpose through Jesus is the purpose of His saints.

Luke 19:9-10

- 1) What is your purpose as the Lord’s servant?

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- 2) How do you discover what your purpose is in His plan?
- 3) Do you purpose your life in such a way as to imitate Christ and His purpose?

The purpose is revealed through the gospel.
Acts 20:24b

- 1) How is the gospel and God's purpose with mankind connected?
- 2) What does the gospel mean to you?
- 3) Does the gospel connect you with the Lord's purpose?

The Lord's purpose for mankind and His church is completely revealed by His first century prophets and apostles.
Acts 20:27; Jude 1:3

- 1) Do you think there is a further need for God to reveal more secrets?
- 2) Do you believe revelation and prophecy ended when His servants finished writing all of His new covenant Scripture?
- 3) Why is it important to believe in the completeness of Scripture rather than searching for new post first century revelations?

Every righteous servant is accountable to the Lord's purpose of living according to His standard of righteousness.
1 Peter 2:21-25

- 1) Do you know what your purpose in Christ is right now?
- 2) How is your sense of purpose connecting with the Lord's purpose?
- 3) Does your purpose have something to do with glorifying God?

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- 4) Does purpose have anything to do with fellowship among all brothers and sisters in Christ?
- 5) How does your purpose facilitate fellowship one another love, unity, and evangelism?
- 6) Does purpose reach into the world by evangelism and relationships with the unsaved?
- 7) How does divine purpose function within normal functions of the world – family life, work, play, politics, ect?
- 8) How do purpose and maturing in righteousness work together?
- 9) How does purpose and everyday life connect?

Accountability to righteousness sets the Lord's servant physically and mentally apart from the world.

1 Thessalonians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18

- 1) Do you think purpose places accountability to how you practice what you are learning about God's standard of righteousness?
- 2) Do you allow the Spirit to lead you by Scripture or are you searching for other mystical ways?
- 3) How do you think the Lord is holding you accountable for how you fulfill your purpose?
- 4) How do you know what your purpose is in the Lord's body as well as personally?
- 5) Are your trying to be your own person serving Jesus or are you striving to serve like a unified fellow servant?
- 6) Do you practice servant service envy?

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Jesus depends on His servants to teach His purpose to both mankind and to the spiritual realm.

Ephesians 3:10-12

- 1) How do you react when offers to serve come up which are challenging?
- 2) Do you think there is a difference between the purpose and faith required for normal everyday living and the purpose of spiritual service to the Lord?
- 3) What happens to your perception of purpose if what you are working or praying for by faith doesn't work out or fails?
- 4) Do you perceive the possibilities of being molded into God's purpose or are you too busy with life to recognize what is happening in your spiritual life?
- 5) Are there things in your lifestyle which could be changed in order to better recognize the subtleties of God's grace and your purpose within His grace?
- 6) The Spirit revealed how every saint is being watched and studied by spirits, both good and evil. How does this information affect your heart, mind, and lifestyle?

The wisdom of the Lord's purpose is only revealed through His church, no one else is able to teach accurately.

Ephesians 3:10; John 14:17a; Micah 4:1-5

- 1) Do you receive purpose from sources of spiritual information other than Scripture?
- 2) What is your primary source of spiritual information?
- 3) How do you receive Spirit counsel?
- 4) Does Scripture reveal the trustworthiness of your feelings and heart?
- 5) What does Scripture have to say about depending on your heart and mind for spiritual confirmation and guidance?

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- 6) Do you depend upon signs or other perceived communication from God?
- 7) How do you know if a sign is true or not? What is your standard by which to judge its trustworthiness? What does Scripture counsel about trusting feelings of heart and mind?
- 8) How does a search for visible signs to confirm faith decisions or thoughts connect with faith, hope, and purpose?
- 9) How are you a part of God's wisdom?

The Lord's purpose reveals the vital importance of the witness of one another love and unity.

John 13:34-35, 17:21-23

- 1) Do you think purpose helps to lead the Lord's servant to fulfill love and unity within His body of saints?
- 2) How does interbody love and unity affect purpose within your interactions among unbelievers?
- 3) How does interbody love and unity affect your personal purpose?

One another love and unity witness the purpose – the restoration of fellowship with God.

1 Corinthians 1:9-10; 2 Corinthians 13:14

- 1) What type of witness does interbody love and unity present to the lost?
- 2) Is one another love and unity of purpose overemphasized idealizations or spiritual reality in Christ?

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The Law of Liberty

James wrote: “But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does” (1:25). He tried to remind his readers about the importance of allowing the Spirit to lead them within the framework of righteousness. A freed servant of the Lord is no longer bound by the curse of the law – legal accountability. The Law of Moses, instinctual moral law, or any other law are no longer able to spiritually condemn.

The law’s still exist but their purpose has changed, they are no longer a cause of spiritual death but are used as moral and spiritual guides for growth in righteousness. Within freedom law is a positive influence in the life of a believer. The freedom does not allow for a hedge of perceived do’s and don’ts picked from Scripture in order to protect saints from sinning. Their freedom to serve as led by the Spirit is their protection.

Freedom transfers the responsibility of leading the Lord’s saint safely through a righteous life in accordance with His will to the counsel of the Spirit. The freedom allows each saint to choose how he is going to express service to the Lord through his faith motivated lifestyle and attitude.

Law, tradition, perceived Scriptural commands, and spiritual hedges designed to protect faith are not based upon faith but sight. When worship by sight is practiced, even the best of motivations may eventually become focused upon the work instead of the Spirit. This can lead down a slippery slope where worship is focused more on the method of worship than who is being worshipped. This may be a subtle form of idol worship.

The motivation behind how a saint expresses his freedom may also determine if his response to the Lord’s will is from accountability to a method of worship or the Spirit. Thus freedom oftentimes reveals the difference between works in order to earn the Lord’s favor and spiritual protection, and Spirit led works in order to serve the Lord.

Freedom may allow a saint to make bad choices causing a loss of eternal blessings. But law has the power to condemn him. John quoted Jesus, stating: “If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (*John* 8:36). Jesus spoke of at least three basic freedoms:

- 1) Freedom from sin debt to God through redemption; Paul wrote in his letter to the *Romans*, “For he who has died from sin is freed from sin” (6:7). When a slave of sin decides it’s time to fulfill his belief and faith in the word of Christ, he will confess Jesus as Lord, commit to repent, and submit to baptism in unity with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The outcome of this spiritual experience with Jesus

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is redemption from sin debt and its bondage, and God's gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

He is considered by God as righteous because he died, and experienced a spiritual resurrection into life. His spirit is new, his self is new, his conscience is innocent of any transgression. Since he is spiritually recreated and new, the old debt and legal accountability to curse of the law have ended as well. Spiritually he is a different person. This is what rebirth is all about, being born a new spiritual person. As a result of this Paul wrote: "And having been freed from sin, you become slaves of righteousness" (6:18).

The first freedom ties in with the third. In Christ slavery to obedience and righteousness is an expression of freedom. It is impossible for a slave of sin to serve obedience and righteousness.

2) Dying with Christ in unity with His death, burial, and resurrection effectively separates the one who died from the legally binding statutes of spiritual law, regardless of whether it is the Law of Moses or one's instinctual moral law. Both have the same ability to condemn those who transgress against their statutes. In Romans Paul clearly stated, "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law" (2:12). God does not see accountability the same way as people are accustomed. People tend to rationalize what goodness is according to human standards of perceived righteousness, but God established goodness according to His standard of holiness which is nothing less than perfection.

A few chapters later Paul revealed how the Lord releases a person from the binding statutes of these two very powerful laws. He likens the separation process to what takes place when a spouse dies thus releasing the other spouse from their marriage covenant. Death or adultery releases the surviving spouse from all obligations to the marriage covenant laws. However, law is a covenant which cannot be defaulted against. It's binding under all circumstances, only death will end its power to condemn and enslave.

He wrote, "So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man" (7:3). When a servant of sin dies with Christ, is buried, and resurrected into a new man, the Lord frees him from his covenant obligation to either the Law of Moses or his inner instinctual law, legally freeing him to join in marriage with Christ and life in His covenant of grace.

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3) A freed servant's freedom involves serving God however possible within the framework of His standard of righteousness, the new covenant of Christ. When God reckons the belief, faith, and obedience of a redeemed and holy slave as righteousness because of his unity with Christ, the newly born bond-servant of God becomes a servant of the righteousness of God. Within the freedom given by redemption is the freedom to serve God as a slave "of obedience" and "of righteousness" with whatever means of faith which God gives him within the framework of His new covenant (*Romans* 6:16b, 18b). In the body of Christ bond-service is freedom from the bondage of sin. His chosen service to Christ is his freedom to freely serve Him.

Even though the servant is righteous and holy before God he still needs to learn how to live righteous. He needs to learn how to live free. This is why Spirit leadership and Scripture study are vital aspects of the servant's new life in Christ. Without an understanding of Scripture, faith and Spirit leadership is greatly hindered. In Christ freedom is expressed by faith led accountability to the Spirit and spiritual maturity. If this freedom is allowed to flourish then faith will grow into greater levels of understanding and ability to live righteously.

Slavery to obedience and righteousness expresses the servant's freedom to learn and conform to the righteousness of God, which is His holy nature. Obedience to righteousness is not the same as the righteousness given to a slave of sin when he becomes holy and pure in Christ. No one progresses in holiness, but all will grow in maturity concerning how to live according to the Lord's standard of righteousness.

The first form of righteousness is a lifelong process of learning how to live a righteous life as a holy servant of God the Father through Jesus Christ.

The second form of righteousness is the grace of holiness given to a reborn, freed, and redeemed slave through Jesus. He is holy, he cannot become more holy, more sinless, yet he needs to learn how to live holy. Before he is considered as holy by rebirth with Christ he cannot learn how to practice righteousness because he cannot be righteous. An unholy person cannot live a holy life even though it may appear as such from outward perceptions. As a servant of sin he is not allowed this freedom.

James offered insight into how a servant of God is free, yet accountable to Jesus.

Freedom lies within the framework of the Lord's new covenant concerning choices of moral and ethical behavior, love for fellow servants in Christ, responsibilities, and accountabilities, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful doer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does" (1:25).

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Liberty in the life of a redeemed servant is practiced through faith motivated obedience. It's governed by the redemptive grace of the Lord instead of obedience motivated by does and don'ts found in Scripture, or tradition.

In his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul also explained how the law of liberty is applied in real life circumstances: "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor" (10:23-24). In this context Paul is speaking to and about his fellow believers; ones neighbor is his brother in Christ, he is not speaking about the believer's interrelationships with unbelievers. With this simple instruction the Spirit explains how to move through social and personal situational nuisances which may be okay to enjoy in private but need careful consideration in public. Paul brings up at least three very important points about freedom and liberty in Christ:

1) In the covenant of grace there are no laws governing how to love and fellowship with other believers, and develop interrelationships with nonbelievers, "all things are lawful". However, the Spirit does draw parameters; a believer must try to remain within the Lord's standard of righteousness. A holy child is highly encouraged to learn how to live a righteous life. He needs to remember he must not regress spiritually to the point of serving his old master while serving his new Master. How he chooses to develop righteousness is up to him but the Spirit also said all choices are accountable to God and have eternal consequences. How the Lord's servant expresses his freedom is a very serious responsibility of service and worship to his Master.

2) Paul also said, "not all things are profitable". One of the most important questions a believer needs to ask himself before words come streaming out of his mouth or when he does something is: "Is this a worthwhile thing to say or do within the standard of the Lord's righteousness and personal growth in righteousness and does it 'edify' either self or a fellow believer." What is the saint communicating to the lost? Expressions of freedom directly affect self, fellowship, and interpersonal relationships within and outside of the body of Christ.

The Spirit's strong encouragement to edify and love one another in Christ is the glue which binds unity in His body. Both are personal choices which witness Jesus in the world. Even if no one is present who could be affected by personal choices, the choice needs governed by how "profitable" it is to growing in righteousness and in the greater work of serving Jesus.

Paul offered insight about the importance of well contemplated choices when he spoke about Christian accountability and its direct affect upon the body of Christ. In *First Corinthians* he wrote: "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

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Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (3:11-15). In the Lord's body personal choices do matter and they will continue to make a difference in the believer's eternal life. Personal choices always affect more than self. They affect Jesus, His body, His glorification, and witness of His grace.

3) The encouragement to "let no one seek his own good" focuses attention away from fleshly self desire to real self needs and one another fellowship requirements in the brotherhood. This redirection of motivation and attention directly relates to the love involved in one another fellowship and interrelationships with nonbelievers.

This is not an easy freedom to express and Jesus is fully aware of human frailties and imperfections. It's important to keep in mind how actions are brought about. They begin with the heart, proceed into rationalized motivation, and extend outwards into life choices both personally and involving others. How a believer expresses his freedom to choose his lifestyle and standard of behavior directly reflects the spiritual maturity of his heart and willingness to allow the Spirit to lead him into the Lord's standard of righteousness

Jesus expects his children to learn how to express love towards each other regardless of circumstances, emotion, and level of forgiveness. This type of mutual love is expected and must be learned from Scripture, by counsel of the Holy Spirit. The believer's freedom to love his brother's and sister's in a Christ-like manner is in fact one of his greatest witnesses to the lost. *John* quoted Jesus stating: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (13:34-35). Love and unity preach the gospel in a real world way which is completely foreign to the world yet understandable.

When a believer chooses to express Godly love towards his brethren he directly contributes to the unity of the body of Christ. This in turn helps to fulfill an equally important and powerful witness to the world – unity among brethren. Jesus noted the importance of unity in one of His final prayers. He directly linked unity and love with being "sanctified in truth" (*John* 17:19b). These are believers who choose to remain set apart from sin, and Satan's dominion because of their practice of Scriptural truth. How the body of Christ expresses love and unity witnesses their separation from the world because of their holiness and service to God the Father through Jesus Christ.

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Even though they must live within the world they make lifestyle choices very differently. The world needs to see and feel how Jesus works within His children in order to see the unseen spiritual differences. The witness of faith is expressed through common everyday decisions.

John also quoted Jesus revealing: “I do ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me” (17:20-21). When the body of Christ expresses its freedom to love and bond together in the unity of fellowship their common work directly witness the reality and power of who Jesus Christ is – His identity as God’s “only begotten Son” (3:16a). They are living a lifestyle which is not only foreign to the world but impossible to achieve. Love and unity is an expression of freedom in Christ which makes or breaks the Lord’s overall gospel witness within the darkness of a loveless, disjointed, and dying world.

A believer’s freedom is expressed in context with his liberty to live a Spirit led life according to what the Lord is counseling through Scripture. In return He promises to bless the “effectual doer” (*James* 1:25b). James continued by defining religion as a freely offered sacrificial response to the Lord’s will. The Lord’s will is not religion; however the practice of His will may be considered as religion. James defined the practice of religion as the freedom of freely offering the service of self to Jesus.

He offered three examples in the following two verses: “If any man thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless. This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (1:26-27). He spoke this to fellow believers who needed to take care of themselves and one another as they practiced love. The believer’s expression of love toward his brethren is religion in action. It develops unity within the body and witnesses service to the Lord to the world – the gospel.

Expressions of the Lord’s will as religion are a response to the servant’s freedom in Christ. He is free to practice his faith as he desires according to the guidelines and counsel of the Spirit within the framework of the Lord’s standard of righteousness. The freedom of the Lord’s religion is expressed when the believer chooses to prove Spirit led behavior in his life. The Lord’s freedom is according to free will and is motivated by faith; not by any obligation, assumed Scriptural commands, well intentioned traditions, or legal applications of scripture designed to protect the believer’s faith.

Requirements to serve a particular way under threat of religious penalty or transgression of a condition for salvation, and freedom in grace are opposite spiritual

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forces. The servant cannot live under the grace of God and assume he is compelled to obey aspects of Scripture in order to satisfy His will and maintain his righteousness. If any believer is living under the grace of God according to the covenant and counsel of the Spirit his response and service must be free in the grace of God. What is most important to the Lord is the motivation in the servant's heart. Why is he obedient? This one question has always been a standard for revealing the contrasting motivations required to serve in order to fulfill standards for salvations based upon law, traditions, ect., in contrast to serving in order to glorify God by serving His will. The first glorifies self while the second glorifies God.

To live freedom to its fullest extent and pleasure, a bond-servant must be knowledgeable of Scripture in order to clearly understand how to make choices counseled by the Spirit. The difference between feeling obligated to work a service in order to please God and freely working to serve His will is often a very subtle one. A servant who is purposefully ignorant will have a very difficult time serving the Lord according to His will. All servants maintain their lack of knowledge on purpose unless they are simply unable to learn or understand His Word. They are free to do this. They are also free to return to sin and its slavery.

A spiritually ignorant servant is not able to allow the Spirit to lead him through life, simply because he does not know His will. Listen to what Paul said to *Timothy* in his *second* letter, "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good deed" (3:15-17).

The servant's freedom is not a license to freely sin in order to take advantage of His forgiveness, intentionally pushing the limits of God's grace in order to receive perceived benefits of grace. One example of pushing the limits is mentioned by Paul in his letter to the *Romans*, "are we to continue in sin that grace might increase" (*Romans* 6:1b). An opposite example is the disciplined practice of self-controlled freedom expected in fellowship love, "let all things be done for edification" (*1 Corinthians* 14:26b).

An undisciplined and Scripturally ignorant lifestyle may discredit Jesus, His church, its witness, God the Father, one's own ministry and witness, the effectiveness of the church to preach the gospel, love towards one another, unity of the church, and potentially cause a weak Christian to stumble and even fall from God's grace of

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salvation. A believer's choices as he expresses his freedom in Christ will determine the effectiveness of his practice of lifestyle-righteousness.

And if he is not careful his attitude, motivations, choices, worship, and lifestyle, may repeat the same mistakes made by Israel. Out of spiritual ignorance they often practiced open spiritual adultery against the Lord greatly diminishing the glory of the Lord amongst the Gentiles, "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (*Romans* 2:24a). How the servant chooses to practice his freedom in Christ has present and eternal consequences. Freedom affects his interrelationships with the world, his fellowship with brethren, and the effectiveness of the church. His freedom directly affects the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God the Father.

Spiritual freedom is a very serious responsibility to the will of God for His servants. John stated, "love one another, just as He commanded us" (*1 John* 3:23b). The love He spoke of is purposeful, self-giving, and is sacrificially offered for the spiritual and physical betterment of the brother or sister regardless of personal feelings. Godly love directly affects interrelationships with servants of sin. Spiritual freedom in Christ involves the freedom to make choices motivated by Godly love.

The only way to accomplish this spiritual work of faith is by allowing the Spirit to lead the believer through life. This is why it is so important to follow Paul's advice set forth in his letter to the *Galatians*, "But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (5:16). Fleshly desire and lust will fight for dominate control of a believer's lifestyle the rest of his life. God has blessed His servants with the Spirit's special counsel because He knows the servant will suffer this uniquely Christian struggle.

Spirit led advice concerning how to live righteously is vital. No servant knows how to live according to God's standard of perfection on his own. He doesn't even know God's standard of righteous living. Jesus personally battled against the same forces of fleshly desire. Liberty and freedom for Jesus is the servant's battle cry in his fight against the flesh and lust. In light of this struggle Paul offered this strongly encouraged word of advice, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (5:25).

Spiritual freedom has such an important influence within the maturing life of a believer it is even a part of his judgment, "So speak and act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty" (*James* 2:12). Minute by minute choices and decisions are important for those who strive to serve Jesus. A servant's most basic mission is to glorify Him, for one day he will find himself accountable for each and every choice and its motivation.

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The importance of distinguishing the difference between freely serving Jesus and following a legal system of does and don'ts to govern ones worship life. Does and don'ts in the practice of faith and righteousness will always change the focus of worship to self while freedom will lead the focus upon Jesus by Spirit leadership. Focusing or trying to protect righteousness by law, traditions, methods, or ritual, even with the best of intentions, simply repeats another major mistake made by Israel, "but Israel pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works" (*Romans 9:31-32a*). The law of grace can easily become legalized from the best of protective intentions just as Israel focused on obeying the Law, traditions, and ritual, rather than on the creator of the Law. Good intentions sometimes lead to unintended consequences.

Religious mandates are often hid behind a curtain of good intentions and lie upon a foundation of mental manipulation, peer pressure, or lifestyle decisions which must be made in order to conform to traditions, traditional values, long held values, and standards of the faith or denomination. This type of manipulation also focuses the attention of the believer on expected lifestyle changes instead of Christ, even though they may be Scriptural and for Christ. It's simply well dressed and mannered law, and accomplishes the same thing – it destroys freedom and faith because grace must be earned by submission and conformity.

Freedom is as spiritually vital as it is dangerous. All believers need led by the Spirit to make lifestyle decisions which grow righteousness, but it's their own exclusive choice. How other believers share and help each other in the freedom is through one another love. Freedom is a personal responsibility which is shared by every servant in the body of Christ. Are all one in the same battle against the same enemies – flesh, sin, the world, and Satan. Paul wrote: "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (*Galatians 6:1-2*).

A few verses later Paul reveals the very real accountability to which God holds all servants in accordance with His standard of righteousness. Freedom always includes accountability, but so does legalism. However, freedom allows room for change and repentance but legalism, traditions, and ritual, make change very difficult. Following manmade doctrine will not change the servant's degree of accountability to his freedom concerning how he worships Jesus, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from his flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if

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we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (6:7-10). Following the flesh will only cause spiritual problems or worse for the Lord's servant. And the flesh desires the comforts of tradition, law, and ritual. It loves the apparent stability of regulated religion.

The righteousness of one's response to the law of liberty must be through faith in the Lord rather than determined obedience to all of the perceived commands presented in new covenant Scripture. In the Lord's realm of grace and faith the servant's response is motivated by his desire to freely serve according to the level of faith given to him by God. The difference lies in motivation. Is the servant obeying stipulations out of fear he will disobey the Lord's will or is he trying to imitate the apostles and the early church?

Remember what the writer of *Hebrews* encouraged: "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and consider the result of their conduct, imitate their faith" (13:7). In his *third* letter *John* added more insight into how to address spiritual freedom even in the midst of very serious doctrinal issues, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God" (11). "Good" is always holiness in action, for the servant must be holy in order to serve God.

When Paul addressed very pressing spiritual matters taking place in the Church at Corinth he encouraged in such a way where their freedom did not get refocused into do's, don'ts, law, or traditions. Instead he chose to address corrections in their lifestyle decision making through encouragement to do the right thing God's way, "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 *Corinthians* 4:16-17). Later in the same letter he said: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (11:1). Freedom allows the Lord's servant to mature in his desire to choose how he is going to serve Him, even if he must accept correction because of sin. The encouragement to imitate early first century examples mentioned in Scripture is counseled by the Spirit concerning the real life practice of righteousness.

Later in his letter to the *Ephesians* Paul mentioned the importance of focusing freedom in Christ on Christ – God, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant offering" (5:1-2).

The writer of *Hebrews* offered more insight into the many facets of freedom. He tried to remind his brethren how righteousness in and of itself does not guarantee salvation upon death. In order to die in faith the servant must freely choose to apply

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personal “diligence” to make sure his life choices are Spirit led not self led. When self is allowed to take dominate leadership over spiritual life the Spirit seems left out in proportion. Self leadership is a very risky spiritual endeavor. Spirit led freedom will lead to “the full assurance of hope until the end” (6:11). He then explained how to correct spiritual listlessness by expressing freedom in Christ, “that you may not be sluggish but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (6:12).

Freedom in Christ is dependent upon understanding why the Lord directed His early church to practice such things as belief, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, regular fellowship on the first day of the week, the Lord’s Supper once a week, loving one another, evangelism, treatment of people who oppress a believer, interrelationships with the lost, and a host of other examples of early Christian Spirit led practices of faith. The expression of freedom involves imitating first century believers who freely chose their path in righteousness. A basic understanding of why the Spirit counsels a particular service to Jesus is critical to the free expression of the service.

Just doing what God states in Scripture simply because He said to do it can easily lead to rationalizations of why simply out of ignorance. The same can be said about trying to understand spiritual realities which are not fully explained in Scripture. Ignorance often opens the door to tradition, legalization, and ritual. It is impossible to rationalize spiritual realities based upon human assumptions and experiences. Scripture must be studied in order to see what God is trying to communicate to His people. If something is not explained then His children should not speculate understandings.

Freedom and liberty is a stark contrast from a single-minded focus on obeying perceived new covenant commands. Both involve obedience to the will of God and are recognizable responses of sincere regard towards the will of God. Works of obedience or liberty if not carefully checked for motivation can easily lead to spiritual misdirection. The Lord provides the law of liberty as an important tool to prevent the freedom of obedience from slipping away from being a faith led responses to the Lord’s will and into an obligation to accomplish the Lord’s will – a response based upon sight.

God desires for His servants to practice a heart originated, holy, Spirit led, and freely given service motivated by self-giving sacrificial love based upon Scripture. A servant of God is free to live his life however he chooses, but at the same time he is reminded of his accountability to God, his fellow servants, and his service as an ambassador of Christ to the world. God requires freely chosen and responsible decisions based upon the counsel of His word, or in other words, life leadership by the Holy Spirit. This way both self and the Spirit are involved in worship and glorifying

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God. God's freedom will lead to a growing and maturing spirit and self. Liberty motivates righteous behavior and controls the desires of the flesh.

Questions

The law of liberty is the freedom to choose how to serve Jesus.
James 1:25

- 1) Why is freedom of choice so important to God?
- 2) What do you think of your personal freedom of spiritual expression?
- 3) Does freedom mean freedom from spiritual accountability?
- 4) What spiritual standard guides your freedom in Christ?

Liberty transfers accountability of law, bondage to tradition, cultural values, and ritual, to the freedom of guidance by the Spirit.
Romans 8:12-15, 7:1-6

- 1) As a Christian are you still bound to legal accountability to any spiritual law?
- 2) How have spiritual law's changed their purpose for a Christian?
- 3) How does spiritual law and freedom work together in the new covenant age?
- 4) Do you feel obligated to a tradition or spiritual law for fear of sinning against God?
- 5) How easily do traditions, social values, and rituals bind your heart and mind in bondage?

Liberty is a vital part of a spiritual environment which helps to develop spiritual worship.
Philippians 3:3; John 4:22-23

- 1) Why do you feel Spirit led worship needs freedom from law or tradition?

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- 2) Do you think imitating first century worship practices is a practice of worship freedom?
- 3) How do you express freedom in personal worship thoughts and practices?
- 4) How do you express freedom in assembly worship and practices?
- 5) How does “an orderly manner” (1 Corinthians 14:40) of worship connect with freedom of worship expression?
- 6) What do you feel about the need for tradition and the need for freedom to express worship as the moment reveals?
- 7) Do you feel the Lord’s Supper is a ritual or an imitation of what first century Christians did in their worship together on Sunday? What else did these early Christians do in their worship services?

Freedom may offer opportunities to sin but law, implied commands, traditions, and rituals often lead to enslavement, guilt, and condemnation.

John 8:36; Romans 4:1-5; Galatians 3:23; Colossians 2:8

- 1) Why do law, implied commands, traditions, and ritual often lead to unintended consequences which are often negative and divisive?
- 2) How does spiritual freedom offer life to worship, both personal and in the assembly?

All children of God are free from the guilt of sin.

Romans 6:7

- 1) Do you feel free?
- 2) How do you know you are free from guilt when you may still feel guilty of past sins?
- 3) How does spiritual freedom affect your personal feelings about God?

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4) Are you free?

5) How do you know you are free?

All children of God are free from legal accountability to law.

Romans 7:1-6; 2:14; Genesis 3:22; Galatians 4:3

1) Christians are freed from legal accountability to what common law?

2) What do you think is the purpose of old covenant law within the new covenant age?

3) How did you die to accountability of law?

All children are free to serve God as a slave of "obedience" and "righteousness".

Romans 6:16b, 18b

1) How can a servant be both free and a slave?

2) How do obedience, God's standard of righteousness, and freedom, work together?

3) If you are given righteousness, why do you need to serve according to God's standard of righteousness as an ongoing work of faith?

Freedom in Christ is the blessing of being able to freely serve Him.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

1) Would you consider the opportunity to serve Jesus as Master a work of freedom?

2) Why do you want to serve Jesus?

3) How does your use of freedom glorify Him?

4) In this context who is your "neighbor"?

5) What is the purpose of freedom?

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Liberty in Christ involves the basic freedom to freely decide on moral and ethical behavior choices, one another love, responsibilities, and accountabilities.

James 1:22-25; Romans 6:1-2, 11, 15-18,19b, 21-23

- 1) Do you think how you use your freedom affects how you serve the Lord's will?
- 2) How does freedom in Christ connect with grace?
- 3) Can freedom and grace be taken advantage of by compromising with the world?
- 4) Does freedom affect how you mature in the Lord's standard of righteousness?
- 5) How does freedom conflict with fleshly desire?
- 6) How does freedom interact with everyday life in the world?

Liberty is the real-life practice of obedience and righteousness according to the faith level of the servant.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

- 1) Is freedom difficult for you to practice when you are in the company of nonbelievers?
- 2) How do you express freedom when others try to tempt you into worldly behaviors which are enslaving?
- 3) Is understanding the nature of your freedom important?
- 4) Does a clear understanding of freedom help you to better understand the difference between the practice of good and evil?
- 5) How do you practice discernment when no one is around?

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Liberty is a responsibility to serve God righteously, “all things are lawful”.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

- 1) What “things are lawful”?
- 2) What things are not lawful?
- 3) How do you determine God’s standard of righteousness in contrast to the worlds?
- 4) Which is more important: manmade protective barriers intended to prevent sin or a growth in faith in order to develop a stronger fellowship with God and fellow saints?
- 5) How does law conform to freedom?
- 6) Is a Christian free to express good to his “neighbor” or is he under compulsion? Who is a Christian’s neighbor?
- 7) How does Spirit counsel and freedom work together?
- 8) Why is the freedom to edify fellow believers so important?
- 9) What is an often neglected unintended consequence of trying to build protective barriers of perceived rights, wrongs, and guilt around liberty and free will?
- 10) How do you think liberty should be taught and practiced?

Liberty reveals necessity of faith based self control and discipline, it does not set specific limits, but simply--“not all things are profitable”.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 6:12-20

- 1) Are there things you are free to do which will not conform to God’s standard of love and edification?
- 2) What do you think determines parameters for your expression of personal freedoms?

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3) What do you think God is allowing you to freely express?

Liberty offers guidance and opportunity to express one another love and develops unity.

James 1:19-27

1) Why do you think love and unity are so important within the Lord's body of believers?

2) Do you think freely expressed love and unity in the Lord's body have anything to do with witnessing the power of His redemptive grace to the world?

3) How does your freedom to express one another love encourage unity?

Liberty is an expression of love; it does not focus on self.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

1) Why do you think it is so important to remove the influence of self from your practice of freedom?

2) Is the practice of love important?

3) How does the freedom of one another love impact your congregation?

4) Is one another love easy or difficult to practice?

5) How do you overcome difficulties to practice one another love?

Liberty helps to protect the believer from his flesh.

Romans 8:5-8; John 17:15-19

1) Even though God has given you a new heart and conscience can you still trust your feelings?

2) What is flesh capable of doing to your freedom of spiritual expression?

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3) Is your heart a dependable way to determine the Lord's will?

Liberty directly affects body unity.

John 17:20-23; Romans 4:11; Ephesians 4:1-15; Philippians 2:2-16; Colossians 2:12-17

1) What is body unity?

2) How do liberty, one another love, and body unity connect?

3) Do you think your daily lifestyle affects body unity?

4) How does liberty affect one another love?

5) What can you do to help body unity to mature?

6) Do you think personal spiritual development helps unify the body of Christ?

The witness of the church to the world depends upon the wise practice of liberty.

John 17:21, 13:34-35; Philippians 2:2, 15b

1) Do you think perception is important?

2) Have you ever met a non-Christian who is closely watching your lifestyle?

3) Are your personal lifestyle decisions being critically watched?

4) What are you able to do in order to build a positive perception of your faith in Christ to non-Christians?

5) Is a divided church a good witness?

6) Is unity possible among a group of Christians who do not practice their liberty to love one another?

7) Is a fellowship which acts more like going to work on Sundays an image of love?

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8) In what ways do you think your assembly could improve expressions of love towards one another?

The practice of liberty is religion.

James 1:22-27

- 1) How would you define religion?
- 2) How do you think James defines religion?
- 3) Are there religions which try to mimic the Lord's church?
- 4) What are you able to do in order to practice James' definition of religion?
- 5) How does religion revealed by the Spirit connect to unity and love?
- 6) What type of message to the lost does one another religion express?

Liberty depends upon learning the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 10:17, 12:1-5;

- 1) Is an assembly of all babes in Christ able to function well?
- 2) Why do you think it is important to grow Christian maturity?
- 3) Is Scripture important to you? If it is how do you express the importance in your life?
- 4) Is learning the Word of God important for discerning good and evil?
- 5) Do you need to learn very much of the Word to teach the Gospel?
- 6) Why do you think it is important to understand the gospel?

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In order for the Lord's servant to practice Liberty he desperately needs to allow the Spirit to lead him.

Galatians 5:16, 25

- 1) Why do you think God doesn't want His children to let their hearts and minds to lead them in the faith?
- 2) Why is Spirit counsel so important?
- 3) How does a new Christian learn how to relearn life?
- 4) How does a Christian learn God's standard of righteousness and how it applies to his new life, heart, mind, attitude, motivation, and lifestyle?

Liberty directly affects eternal judgment and rewards.

James 2:12; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; Galatians 6:1-2, 7-10

- 1) Will you be held accountable for what you choose to do as a servant of the Lord?
- 2) What type of judgment will a Christian have to experience?
- 3) How do current lifestyle decisions affect future rewards?

Liberty allows each believer the freedom to choose what to imitate in their lives and thoughts.

Hebrews 13:7; 3 John 11; 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, 11:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-9, 2:13-14; Hebrews 6:9-12

- 1) Liberty encourages all believers to imitate the faith of each other.
- 2) Why is imitation so important?
- 3) Do you think imitation adversely affects independent spiritual growth?
- 4) How do you imitate faith while pursuing your own gifts and talents?

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- 5) Is imitation the same as envying another servants work?
- 6) How do you express faith in such a way it can be imitated?

Liberty encourages the use of encouragement and imitation to build faith.
1 Corinthians 4:16-17, 11:1; Ephesians 5:1-2

- 1) The Spirit tells us faith comes from Scripture, how does encouragement and imitation help mature faith?
- 2) Can faith develop on its own?
- 3) Does faith come from fellowship?
- 4) Can faith develop in the midst of spiritual ignorance?
- 5) Do you think you can be fooled by thinking you have more faith than reality allows?
- 6) How does your heart and mind encourage an illusion of faith?
- 7) Is it wise to allow your heart to determine your level of faith?

Liberty helps to develop assurance.
Hebrews 6:11-12

- 1) What does eternal assurance mean to you?
- 2) Do you feel queasy when the subject of assurance comes to mind?
- 3) Does a nagging feeling of unforgiven sin ever affect your assurance?
- 4) Do you feel a necessity to try your faith in order to test your level of assurance?
- 5) How does assurance affect your use of liberty?

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A Mission Statement

The mission statement of the body of Christ is simple: Glorify God the Father through Jesus Christ. Believers accomplish this through their continuance of belief and faith in Jesus as their God, Lord and Master. Unity and one another love enable the Lord's servant's to witness His grace of salvation, preach the gospel to the world, teach, share the word of God, and encourage fellow believers.

In his *first* letter, *John* wrote: "And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. And the one who keeps His commandment abides in Him and He in him" (3:23-24a). Jesus is asking those who desire to serve Him to honor Him as Lord and Savior. His expectations for His servant's are very simple. They freely choose to honor their confession by practicing belief in Jesus.

The choice is free despite the fact all believers must believe in Jesus. The freedom to believe is not contradictory with the command to believe. The importance of one another love is revealed by the command. Yet it is still up to the free will of the servant to practice the command with whatever sincerity he desires. But he will be held accountable for his choices. The command reveals the importance of choosing the Lord's will concerning His identity. A critical part of glorifying God is each believer's freedom to love the Lord's physical body on earth—the church, those who believe in Him. Belief in Jesus depends upon learning how to live faith and practice fellowship with His body.

Matthew recorded some of the Lord's final words before His ascension, "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (28:19-20a). When a servant of sin is redeemed by believing in Jesus he is honoring Him as Lord and Master. He is recognizing through belief and faith motivated obedience the truth of the Lord's word, regardless of whether he is able to see or sense the spiritual realities of His promises.

Matthew recorded Jesus detailing how the process of honoring His name takes place. A slave of sin shows respect through his response to His grace of redemption. Within baptism under the authority and power of Jesus he is united as one with the Spirit and Jesus and becomes a newly born disciple. This in turn unites the servant with His body of servants and enters him into fellowship with God the Father. His mission is to glorify God the Father through his unity and growth in righteousness and service according to the level of faith given to him by God. Regardless of what his Spirit led mission responsibility is, if accomplished in faith, it is according to the purposed mission of the Lord and gives Him glory.

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The believer's mission on earth is basically following a two part commandment.

1 John 3:23-24a

- 1) What are the Lord's two basic commandments?
- 2) What does believing in the Lord mean?
- 3) How do you practice one another love?
- 4) How does this commandment connect with God's grace and liberty?
- 5) What is your first impression of the Lord's expectations for His servant/children?
- 6) Are these commandments general stipulations of His new covenant?
- 7) How do you reconcile the fact all Christians are in a covenant with Christ with grace and liberty?

To believe in Jesus is to submit to Him as Lord and Master.

- 1) What do you think the Spirit meant when He said all believers must "believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ"?
- 2) How do you think believing in Jesus connects with faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and a life in faith?
- 3) Why is it important to understand what Jesus is requiring?

To love one another is to honor His body--the church and covenant.

- 1) Are you able to love Jesus without loving His servants?
- 2) How does one another love affect your expression of love towards Jesus?
- 3) Are you able to love one another without fellowship and personal contact?

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- 4) Is social media personal contact? Is it fellowship? Does it express one another love?
- 5) How is one another love and believing in Jesus connected?
- 6) If you dislike a brother or sister are you disobeying this commandment?
- 7) If you refuse to practice love towards all of the Lord's servants are you a hypocrite when you say, "I love my Lord" or commune with Him at the Lord's supper?
- 8) If you say you love Jesus yet express dislike for parts of His body what are you expressing to Jesus?

To obey Jesus as Master is the servant's service to Him.
Matthew 28:19-20a; Romans 12:1-2

- 1) Did you confess Jesus as Lord?
- 2) Does Lord also mean Master?
- 3) Does this mean you confessed Jesus as your Master?
- 4) Are you serving Him as Master?
- 5) What is your level of commitment?
- 6) How does compromising with the world affect commitment to serve?

Ultimately the believer's purpose is to glorify God the Father through Jesus Christ.
John 13:31-32; Romans 15:1-6; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Jude 24-25; Psalms 86:9; Isaiah 25, 43:19-21, 60:1-7, 21, 61:1-3

- 1) What do you think God meant when He said His servant's ultimate mission is to glorify Him?
- 2) Are you able to glorify Him if you choose to dishonor your belief?

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- 3) Are you able to glorify Him if you compromise your one another love?
- 4) How is expressing love towards the lost able to compromise your one another love?
- 5) How are the Lord's most powerful witnesses: unity and one another love, connected with glorifying God?

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Ministry

While ministry includes an infinite variety of different works of faith, there is one common thread binding them together. They all work together as one to fulfill the will of God the Father on earth within the guidelines of the new covenant will of Christ. The purpose of ministry is to honor and glorify God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Every ministry which helps the kingdom grow and mature is glorifying the Lord. He is why the ministry exists in the first place. Jesus is the purpose of ministry.

Ministry is similar to the infinite number of differing cells in a body. Every cell works together doing a unique work in unity with the whole for one purpose and mission. Each ministry is different because the servant is unique. Yet each work is guided by the Spirit to accomplish the Lord's will within the body as a whole. No work is more important than another. All are dependent on how a servant chooses to apply His faith. The Spirit will work to enlighten the servant concerning the Lord's will but He will not compel him to do anything against his will or do it for him.

Many ministries seem to fall into at least two major categories:

1) The servant has a responsibility and accountability to "believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us" (1 John 3:23b). Earlier in his gospel John recorded Jesus describing love as a work of faith motivated obedience to His New Covenant will, "if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (14:23b). The ministry of a servant of Christ is basically to glorify God His Father by honoring the Lord's name and covenant by how he chooses to live life, how he chooses to express love within the body life ministry of fellowship, and how he interacts with the world.

In his letter to the Romans Paul revealed how ministry is essentially the servant's way to worship God. His life is his sacrifice. His ministry is one of continuing maturity in Christ by transformation into greater levels of righteousness according to the Lord's standard of righteousness. All of this involves an active ministry of fellowship, one another love—body love, obedience to the Lord's will, and interrelationships and ministry to the lost.

The most important aspect of Paul's plea of worship is Jesus Christ. The Spirit counsels all believer's to: "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 3:23b). Worship is his ministry, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

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How the Lord's servant chooses to love God the Father is largely determined by how he expresses his ministry of love towards his fellow-saints in Christ. Loving God and practicing love with the body of Christ are mutually dependent upon each other. Loving God through obedience to His will is the same as loving God by practicing love towards one another. One service is spiritual while the other is physical yet both are unified. Both minister through obedience to His will which results in proven selflessness focused upon the positive growth of the entire body of saints. Love is self-giving and other receiving regardless of feelings toward the receiver. Love is the most basic aspect of ministry. It is the offering of self to Jesus – His body.

A major part of His will and one of utmost importance to Jesus is how His children express selfless love toward each other; after all, they are His body. How one treats his brother or sister is how he is treating Jesus. How he treats Jesus is how God the Father receives him, "he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father" (*John 14:21a*).

When Saul persecuted believers in Jesus he not only harmed the church but Jesus Himself, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me" (*Acts 9:4b*). The example left by Saul should be carefully considered by all believers as they practice fellowship among fellow believers. One another fellowship involves an unbreakable love response to brother, sister, Jesus, Holy Spirit, and God the Father. One another ministry is one with God.

Fellowship is working with God the Father through Jesus to glorify Him within the human experience. The ministry of one another love cannot be spiritually separated from glorifying God the Father. The ministry of love is the binding force of the Lord's body resulting in unity. In turn body unity witnesses to the world the power of the Lord's love. Through the ministry of one another love belief in the deity of Jesus is expressed – He is truly Master. Thus God the Father is glorified through Jesus Christ. Loving fellow believers is not an easy task and requires a great amount of faith, discipline, and forgiveness. In *1 Corinthians* Paul lists a few of the Lord's expectations of His servant's fellowship with one another: "love is patient ... kind ... not jealous ... does not brag ... is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly ... does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness ... rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (*13:4-7*). The dominate points of any ministry is faith led and confident selfless one another service to will of Jesus. Ministry is life in Christ.

Sprinkled throughout Scripture are numerous other examples and exhortations concerning how to practice love. Each servant's ministry of love takes a lifetime of faith motivated transformation to learn how to practice. His life is a spiritual response to the Lord's will. As he matures the growing attributes of righteousness serve to glorify God's purpose through fellowship ministries to His chosen and restored people.

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One another love purposes ministry both within the body and powerfully witnesses Jesus to the world.

2) The servant has a responsibility to minister to the world. He is responsible and accountable for his stewardship as a representative of the Lord's kingdom. Those who are enslaved in the world cannot understand the word of God without a believing preacher; Paul stated in his letter to the *Romans* this very reality, "How then shall they call upon Him in who they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher" (10:14).

One of the reasons why evangelism is so important is the inability of the world to clearly understand anything spiritual from God, especially truths concerning salvation, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised" (1 *Corinthians* 2:14). A servant of sin cannot just pick up a Bible and expect to understand salvation. Nor will his heart direct him in the right path. He needs to have a believer explain what he must do in order to receive salvation. Scripture must be honored as the only reliable source of information concerning how to believe in God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Another important reason for spiritual ignorance among those who are unbelievers is also out of their control, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 *Corinthians* 4:3-4). Not only are the unsaved unable to comprehend the gospel, Satan is making an active effort to prevent them from even receiving the truth when they are blessed to hear the gospel.

The servant of Christ is His personal spokesperson to those who live under Satan's authority in his dominion. Their work and life in the world shows the world a physical image of Jesus. For as individual servants and the assemblies of Christ are witnessed, so is developed much of the world's perception of Jesus and His body as a whole. Love, unity, and Scripture, are the three most valuable witnesses of the Lord's gospel of redemptive grace to the world.

The body of Christ is able to do a multitude of positive ministries which enhance the lives of those beaten down by sin and Satan. Many do this in the world in order to witness the grace of God. But if they do not practice love and unity towards one another then their witness is greatly hindered.

Many ministries are involved in fulfilling the will of God through Jesus. All are based upon whatever gifts, talents, and faith God gives to each one of His children to carry out the ministry. God desires for each of His children to serve Him using

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whatever talent and gift they have, whether He gave it to them naturally or learned. His children need to understand and mature their ministries in order to facilitate physical and spiritual growth within the church and kingdom of Christ. All are worthy works and fulfill the ultimate purpose of glorifying God the Father by glorifying Jesus. Ministry expresses a united effort to share love and build unity in Christ.

From a human point of view a servant's ministry may appear insignificant or exceedingly humble, but spiritually it is entirely a different story. Not only is he helping to grow the kingdom of Christ, he is also adding treasure to his inheritance in heaven. No work of ministry for God goes without notice regardless of how great or inconsequential it may appear from a physical point of view.

Questions

The purpose of ministry is to glorify Jesus, His body--Israel.
Isaiah 25:3-9, 43:19-23, 59:17-6:9, 12, 14b, 16b 18b, 19b, 21, 61:1-6

- 1) What do you think your ministry is right now?
- 2) If you are uncertain about your ministry, how do you know if you have found your niche?
- 3) Are ministries ranked in levels of importance?
- 4) Are you a servant of the Lord?
- 5) Is ministry simply life as the Lord's servant?

Ministry involves believing in His name.
1 John 3:23b; John 6:28-29

- 1) How is believing in Jesus a ministry?
- 2) What do you think Jesus meant with His answer, "This is the work of God ..."?
- 3) Does believing in Jesus mean much more than heart and mind feelings?

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Ministry involves one another love.

1 John 3:23b; John 14:23b, 21a

- 1) How is one another love a part of your ministry?
- 2) Is one another love important to Jesus?
- 3) Is one another love an important witness to the world of God's grace?
- 4) What are you doing to minister one another love?
- 5) How does one another love connect with unity?
- 6) Is unity an important witness to the world of God's grace?
- 7) How does one another love and unity connect with your efforts to evangelize the lost?

Regardless of what or how a ministry is recognized according to human standards, in God's eyes it is worship.

Romans 12:1-2; John 3:23b

- 1) Why is the connection between ministry and worship so important?
- 2) What is worship?
- 3) How do you worship?
- 4) Is worship a Sunday only activity?
- 5) What are some of the most important aspects of Sunday worship?
- 6) What is so important about living worship?
- 7) Is your worship a ministry?

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Ministry is a vital spiritual training tool which helps to mature spiritual growth in both giver and receiver, "by the renewing of your mind".

- 1) How is your ministry connected to the renewal "of your mind"?
- 2) What is "renewing your mind" and how is it connected with God's standard of righteousness?
- 3) Is "renewing your mind" connected to repentance?
- 4) Is how you choose to think important to your service to Jesus?

Ministry is necessary in order to "prove what the will of God is" in life circumstances.
James 2:14-26

- 1) What does "prove" mean to you?
- 2) Does "prove" mean you need to act out your convictions and belief?
- 3) How is faith accomplished if it is not proven through your lifestyle?
- 4) Is it important to prove your faith?
- 5) How do you prove your faith while at the same time avoiding self-testing your faith?
- 6) How does a lifestyle of applied faith connect with assurance?
- 7) How do you prove the "will of God"?
- 8) How do you know what God's will is for you?

Ministry is the believer's presentation of his body as "a living and holy sacrifice".

- 1) How do you connect ministry with sacrifice?

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- 2) What does the Spirit mean when He speaks about sacrifice?
- 3) How does sacrifice relate to worldly expectations?
- 4) Is your sacrifice a ministry?

Ministry helps the Lord's servant to understand and apply the spiritual nature of fellowship – working together with God.

Acts 9:4b

- 1) Is there a Scriptural connection between fellowship and relationship with Jesus?
- 2) What do you think fellowship means in Scripture?
- 3) What do you think relationship means in Scripture?
- 4) How does working in a partnership with God affect your ministry?
- 5) Do you think fellowship is a ministry?
- 6) How do you fellowship with God?
- 7) Do you ever consider your lifestyle as working with God's will?

Ministry helps to develop a more realistic sense of purpose and identity – servant's of the Lord.

Luke 17:7-10

- 1) Do you ever think about the spiritual reality: you are a servant of the Lord?
- 2) Do you serve God from a servant point of view?
- 3) How does servant and purpose connect?
- 4) What do you think Jesus requires of His servant?

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- 5) Do you think your ministry helps to fulfill your purpose?
- 6) Does your ministry identify who you are and who you serve?
- 7) Does your ministry give you confidence concerning your purpose and identity?

There are no boundaries to ministry; it involves both physical and spiritual works of love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- 1) Do you feel boxed in by your ministry?
- 2) What must you do in order to develop and mature your ministry?
- 3) Do you think of your ministry in terms of future effects upon future generations?
- 4) Do you think Jesus places boundaries upon your ministry of service?

Ministry involves the lost.

Romans 10:14; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

- 1) How do you connect believing in Jesus, one another love, unity, and sacrificial service, with your evangelistic witness of Jesus?
- 2) Do you think your daily sacrificial service to you spiritual family is of value to the lost?
- 3) How does the gospel connect with your service?
- 4) How does your service to the lost connect with your ministry?

Ministry is the servant's witness of the grace of Jesus Christ in a graceless world.

- 1) How do you feel your spiritual service perceived by the lost?

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- 2) What is an effective personal witness?
- 3) Is your personal witness a ministry?
- 4) How does your ministry help to develop one another love and body unity in order for an effectively witness to the unsaved?

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Ambassador of God

An ambassador is sent by his government to represent his country in a foreign land. As a servant of Christ, the man or woman of God is no longer a citizen of the worldly dominion of Satan, "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (*Colossians* 1:13). He is a citizen of the kingdom of Christ, "He has made us to be a kingdom" (*Revelation* 1:6a). Since the kingdom is the Lord's body the kingdom is the Lord who is also the King of the kingdom.

All believers in Christ live in His kingdom and are His ambassadors. They are encouraged by Jesus to go forth into a foreign land, the world, "the dominion of Satan" to represent Him, defend His interest, witness His grace and love, preach His gospel, and to glorify the name of God the Father (*Acts* 26:18a). In his *second* letter to the *Corinthians* Paul wrote, "Now these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were entreating through us" (5:18-20a). The servant's ministry to the world is to represent Jesus in every aspect of his life and its interrelationships. All believers are accountable to this ministry for all are identified as one with Jesus. The Lord's will for the world is His servant's will.

God's ambassador is responsible for delivering to the world the message of reconciliation. God desires the reconciliation of every servant of sin. He wants people to return to His family. It is the work of the Lord's ambassador to deliver the gospel message to a world dominated by the evils of selfish lust, sin, spiritual slavery, and Satan. It is the ambassador's responsibility to witness love and unity in Christ in order to effectively preach His gospel to lighten the darkness of the world.

The Lord's servant directly reflects the grace of God through his relationships in the world and submission to the world's laws and governance. The ambassador must work in a spiritually difficult and potentially hostile spiritual environment where servants of sin love "the darkness rather than the light" (*John* 3:19b). Yet the Lord is helping him in ways utterly inconceivable, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil" (*John* 17:15)

Earlier Jesus prepared His disciples for the many differing attitudes toward their ministry and worship of God the Father through Jesus Christ when He said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to

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you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will also keep yours" (*John* 15:18-20).

Hatred involves a very mixed reaction to Jesus. It is offered through an infinite variety of attacks ranging from passive attitudes of not caring one way or another to bitter retribution. Jesus is trying to prepare His children for negative reactions. When someone chooses to reject the Lord's Scriptural word, or witnesses of unity and love, it is never the servant who is being rejected. The servant is merely representing the Lord; he is His spokesman, His preacher.

An ambassador for Jesus should not be surprised if he receives the same treatment from the world as Jesus did. He should be proactive about it, expect it to happen, and be prepared to allow the Spirit to counsel him through his experiences. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Ephesians*, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the best of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (4:5-6).

All nonbeliever's have a spiritual veil blocking or diffusing the light of the gospel message to a point where it cannot be easily understood, "our gospel is veiled ... in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel" (2 *Corinthians* 3a-4). All have hearts hardened by the effects of sin to various degrees.

The world offers a spiritual environment where, "the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart" (*Luke* 8:12). Temptation has the power to even influence a newly redeemed believer to stray from the light, "in time of temptation will fall away" (*Luke* 8:13). The "worries and riches and the pleasures of this life" may motivate immature believers to return to the familiar scenery of the darkness of the world (*Luke* 8:14). The believer's ministry in the world is both spiritually dangerous as well as rewarding beyond imagination.

The task given to His ambassadors is critically important. They are responsible to reach people with the gospel message of hope which in turn glorifies God the Father through Jesus Christ. There is no other way they can be freed from their spiritual oppression in sin and Satan's authority.

The Christian is God's light to a world shrouded in a misty dark cloudy fog of spiritual ignorance. Those who live within it are constantly being deceived by their own hearts, sin, and Satan. The responsibility of the ambassador is to introduce light into the darkness in a clear and easily understood way. The deception must be revealed.

The challenges of the duties of an ambassador for God are great beyond understanding, but the blessings are far greater. Every moment of the day God's

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servant represents the kingdom of Christ. He influences such grand things as world history one spirit at a time. He is a steadfast example of righteous behavior. He glorifies God the Father by glorifying Jesus. Dead people are given new life through Christ. Families are forever changed, friends are enlightened, and work associates get to experience the everyday influences of a believer in their midst. The list can go on and on.

Every time a slave of sin is introduced to Jesus and God mercifully opens his heart to receive the truth of his circumstances, he is freely offered the choice to respond to His gospel message with belief and faithful obedience. Redemption is an event so important even the angels of heaven rejoice over every victory. *Luke* quoted Jesus stating, "I tell you, there is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (15:10a). Being an ambassador of Christ is an immensely important spiritual work of faith.

Questions

An ambassador is sent to another land to represent his nation.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 20-21, Ephesians 6:18-20

- 1) What do you think an ambassador does for his country?
- 2) Have you ever considered your service to Jesus the work of an ambassador?

There are only two spiritual kingdoms: the "domain of darkness" and the "kingdom of His beloved Son".

Colossians 1:13; Acts 26:18a; Revelation 18a

- 1) Is there a distinct difference between these two kingdoms?
- 2) Where do these two kingdoms exist?
- 3) How do you transfer from one to another?
- 4) Who are their rulers?
- 5) What do you think Jesus is trying to tell His servants about their service in the world?

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6) An ambassador is distinctly different from his host country. How distinctly different are you from your host country – the world under Satan’s dominion?

The Lord’s servants are His New Covenant Israel.

Matthew 21:43; Hebrews 8:8-12; Acts 28:20, 31; Romans 9:6-8, 11:25-27; Galatians 6:14-16

1) Is there a difference between present day Israel in the Middle East and the Lord’s spiritual nation of Israel?

2) If the Lord’s Israel is different, what is the difference?

3) Who are the citizens of the spiritual nation of Israel?

4) Where does the nation exist?

5) Are all Christian’s citizens of the Lord’s spiritual nation of Israel?

The Lord’s servants are His “holy nation”.

1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 8:8, 10; Acts 5:31, 28:20; Romans 9:6, 11:25-26; Galatians 6:16

1) What is a holy nation?

2) Are there any other holy nations in the world?

3) Does this mean all of its citizens must be holy in order to live within its borders?

4) What is holiness?

5) Are you holy?

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The essential work of His ambassador is reconciliation – to encourage the Lord’s enemies to return to friendship through Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20a

- 1) As the Lord’s priest do you feel reconciliation is a major part of your Job as His ambassador?
- 2) What is the task of reconciliation?
- 3) How do you go about with the task of reconciliation?

Every servant is his ambassador.

- 1) Do you consider your life right now is conforming to the Lord’s expectations of an ambassador?
- 2) What do you think you should be doing to better equip yourself to the task?
- 3) What do you think some of the responsibilities of an ambassador are?

The work environment is often spiritually difficult, hostile, and sometimes lethal.
John 3:19b, 17:15, 15:18-20

- 1) Does the service of ambassadorship make you feel inadequate to the task?
- 2) How do you develop the faith necessary to feel confident?
- 3) Is it important to allow the Spirit to lead your life in order to better serve Jesus in the world?
- 4) Who calls for whom: the Spirit calls for you to follow His counsel or are you expected to call for the Spirit to help?
- 5) How do you react when confronted in uncomfortable or hostile reactions while serving as an ambassador?

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Questions

Ambassador of God

The Lord's ambassador must develop faith motivated discipline to allow the Spirit to guide him instead of his heart and flesh.

Ephesians 4:5-6; Galatians 5:16-25; Romans 8:5-8; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Ephesians 6:6

- 1) Why is it not a good idea to place too much emphasis upon the leadership and counsel of your heart and mind?
- 2) How does the flesh with its old memories, guilt, conscience, apprehensions, experiences, and feelings of heart try to influence you in your work among the lost of the world?
- 3) What kind of advice should you expect from your recreated heart and mind?
- 4) What is the difference between following the advice of the heart and mind and serving God with all of your heart and mind?

The ambassador must react carefully to the spiritual influences of the world.

Luke 8:12, 13, 14

- 1) How do you allow worldly influences to affect your service as an ambassador?
- 2) Which tends to influence your service the most: people, physical circumstances, politics, or religion?
- 3) How do life choices affect your service?
- 4) What do you do to protect your heart from turning to the right or to the left?
- 5) Do you ever give in to self-justified compromise?
- 6) Is the work of an ambassador relative to the circumstance which he encounters?
- 7) What do you use as a guide when a controversial circumstance arises which requires a definite reaction?

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8) How do you rationalize your justifications to compromise the Lord's standard of righteousness?

The ambassador is often the only light of the Lord's grace which the world will ever see. Matthew 5:14-16; Colossians 1:13

- 1) Why do you think Jesus said you are a light?
- 2) Does light have any spiritual connections with the murky darkness of life in spiritual death?
- 3) How bright is your light? Is it hidden under a basket?
- 4) Does your light shine in such a way as to send a beacon in all directions?
- 5) Do prejudices and past experiences hinder the full rotation of your beam of light or dim its intensity?
- 6) How can you use the adverse circumstances of your life to the Lord's advantage?
- 7) Do you ever consider the possibility: God allowed your special circumstances, even very bad ones, to give you the background necessary to glorify Him in your work as an ambassador today?
- 8) Do you rely upon self or the Lord for the energy to sustain your light?
- 9) Who gets the glory of your light?
- 10) As an ambassador do you ever find yourself representing yourself more than Jesus?

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Ambassador of God

The work of the Lord's ambassador is immensely important.

Luke 15:10

- 1) How important is your service in the world?
- 2) Are there degrees of importance?
- 3) Is one service more important than another?
- 4) What is the ultimate goal of your service?