

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. 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 D. 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 nor cease to yield fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

I began my journey as a servant of Christ many years ago. At the young age of twenty six I met my wife and soon began attending church together. I first heard the gospel message from a preacher who served in a Council Bluffs, Iowa, Church of Christ. 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. As the years went by we continued as active members of the church, learning to teach bible studies. At one point a small congregation of Church of Christ members invited me to preach until they could hire a full time preacher. As I grew in the Lord, many questions began to come to mind.

In the mid-nineteen nineties I set out to research what took place when I first decided to obey the Gospel. The interest reached back to 1978.

The minister at the Church of Christ taught me the basics of salvation and I obeyed. However, at this point in time I only understood the essentials of what took place by the hand of God. I became increasingly interested in learning more about God's work. Thus, I began a systematic study of salvation. As I researched Scripture and accumulated more knowledge I felt a deep desire to share what I have learned. As a result my study began to grow from notes to a rough outline, then to manuscripts, and finally this book.

Through many years of writing I included other books and now have a series of books in various stages of completion. They speak about salvation, sin, the Lord's work of salvation, and the Lord's new covenant.

This book includes 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.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success is an overview. There are nine sections in the book 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 as it flows through his life. My hope for this book is to better equip the reader to recognize and understand his participation and partnership in the Lord's eternal plan of salvation.

May God richly bless your efforts to understand the blessings of salvation which the Lord so lovingly gave to all humanity.

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Statement of Purpose

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Introduction

Uniqueness

This book focuses on the distinctiveness of faith in Christ Jesus. In Christ, everything is in unity with Him, His Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit, and the church--His kingdom. In other words, all are one.

The world's perception of God's loving grace tends to focus on unlimited tolerance of religious diversity. Try to picture a vast, stained glass window with myriad pieces connected together to form a single panel. Imagine God is the artisan and His intent is to manifest religious diversity. With this in mind consider how God's artistry demonstrates His willingness to allow multiple and diverse ways to serve His will. If God is love doesn't He make it possible for everyone to enter into Heaven or another similar spiritual existence? Hell is a concept which is simply unacceptable and incompatible with a loving God.

However, Scripture delivers a dramatically different point of view. The stained glass window picturing the unique nature of the church of Christ is an unbroken plate of flawless glass. There are no connectors or pieces of varied sizes yet it vividly shows many shades of color. Although the image is one of a seamless panel, a closer look reveals the outlines of countless faithful and well-cared for sheep grazing in reverent admiration toward their Savior, Shepherd, and King.

God designed the church before creation, foretold of it in prophecy, and fulfilled it in person. The body of Christ – His church, shows how God is not impersonal, elusive, hidden, or fragmented.

Belief in God through Jesus Christ is a faith within which religion is practiced. Requiring only belief, faith, and obedience within the framework of God's living grace – Jesus Christ. For example: *James* reminded his brethren how religion is a practice which is based upon the Lord's will and motivated from the heart with an attitude and discipline of self-giving love, "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not abide 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).

The Christian religion is not a doctrine but the practice of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It embraces the most important and cherished freedom God has given to mankind – his freedom to make spiritual choices and to express will as he wills. He is free to practice self-will or the Lord's will. He freely accepts accountability for his heart, motives, and life. James noted a few very important insights about how God feels about the practice of religion:

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1) A person is able to deceive himself into believing he is religious or nonreligious. A servant of sin is perfectly capable of reverently serving God even though it is not according to the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. He is equally free to religiously practice belief and faith in the non-reality of God. He is free to believe in God yet worship self or some other created object.

2) Christians must be very careful about what they say to others, especially fellow believers--speech is the practice of religion. Words are powerful tools. When used effectively they build strong solid buildings. But when used destructively they are capable of ruining fortresses.

3) A believer's religion can be "worthless" in the eyes of God. He is free to waste his service to the Lord by refusing to follow the counsel of the Holy Spirit as He tries to lead him to mature in righteousness.

4) The major expression of "pure and undefiled religion" is the engagement of fellowship and selfless love towards fellow believers.

5) "Undefiled religion" is the practice of love within the context of self-sacrificial service inside the Lord's body – fellow servants in Christ. Believer's need to focus special attention towards fellow brethren who are fundamentally helpless and without any other support, deceived by sin, or in need of edification. This is not love originating from self or the world but from Christ, His New Covenant, and counsel by the Spirit. In the Lord's body a servant must focus selfless love to fellow servants.

Paul wrote in his letter to the *Colossians* about the very dangerous work of compromising the freedom of worship with laws handed down from the old covenant from Moses, or any law. He said, referring to the restrictions of legalized religion, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using) – in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence" (2:20-23).

1) "Pure and undefiled religion" has a manmade alternative which is highly deceptive and attractive.

2) A Christian can easily fall into the temptation to include rules of perceived Christ-like behavior in order to protect beliefs of how the Christian religion should be spiritually and physically practiced. The temptation is often based upon the very good intention of maintaining faith. It can be pictured as very green and lush pasture bordered on all sides with a fence. The purpose of the

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fence is to protect the sheep from wondering. But in reality it hinders their expression of free will and faith in Jesus and obedience to His New Covenant.

3) "Self-made religion" is easily substituted for or compromised into the Lord's New Covenant. It has the "appearance of wisdom". But the object of the deception is to destroy faith in Christ.

The faith (not faith in the faith) designed by God and revealed through the Lord's ministry, death, burial, resurrection, and New Covenant is not a physically organized spiritual structure, but a living body of believers who are united with Christ. Serving the Lord Jesus Christ is their religion. They dwell in all parts of the world and serve God according to His revealed will through belief and faith. Though undistinguished in the world, those who are of the Lord's faith are spiritual descendants of Abraham. In the eyes of God they are His saints.

Just as the unbroken stained glass window awes viewers gazing upon its magnificence, the Creator's glory is manifested as He reaches down and touches His people with an outstretched hand in an expression of indescribable love. God came to His creation to die for people who have chosen to rebel against His will, regardless whether they appreciate it or not. He does not seek ritualistic dogma as a condition for fellowship. He desires to walk hand in hand in fellowship with His people of faith just as He did with Adam and Eve.

A New Beginning

The roots of the New Covenant and the Lord's church stretch back to the very first promise made to Adam and Eve by God soon after they committed humanities first sin. They chose to disobey His will, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (*Genesis 3:6*).

As a result of their transgression, "then the eyes of both of them were opened", they received a new knowledge. This is the awareness "of good and evil" God had previously warned them of, "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (2:17a). God must separate from His personal presence any person choosing to rebel against His righteousness, this is why He told them how any transgression would result in death, "for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (2:17).

They obviously didn't physically die. However, three very significant spiritual changes took place, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (3:7a).

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1) They became aware of the Lord's law of "good and evil". This is when humanity became accountable to a moral law. Before this transgression Adam and Eve were innocent of any recognition of morals. They had to be coached into their transgression.

2) They instantly became aware of the law of "good and evil". From then on the same law passed on as an inherited instinct in the heart of every baby. The freedom to choose to transgress against God is based upon insight from the instinctual law.

3) They died. As a result of choosing to disobey God their Father, Adam and Eve became accountable to their choice. Thus God fulfilled what He foretold would take place. Their sin against His will caused their spiritual state of being to change from holy and perfect to imperfect, indebted to God, and cursed. As a result God had to spiritually separate Himself from their presence, direct fellowship ended.

Satan is allowed to continue his work of deception and ruin in order to establish free choice by offering deceitful temptations designed to satisfy personal lust, "And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die!' (3:4). Nothing has changed over time, temptations and deceptions are just repackaged in order to conform to differing desires as contemporary culture changes with time. Freedom of spiritual choice is empowered by the "knowledge of good and evil". God gave the freedom of choice vast significance because of its accountability to the law of "good and evil". Its power lies in its ability to maintain or destroy innocence. God gives to every person four basic spiritual choices:

- 1) He is free to retain the innocence he receives at birth or to choose to transgress against the law of "good and evil".
- 2) The right to choose to appeal to Jesus for redemption and spiritual freedom.
- 3) He is free to remain under the authority of Satan and enslaved to sin.
- 4) A Christian is free to choose to return to serving sin and Satan which will destroy his spiritual innocence in Jesus

The promise given to Adam and Eve after their sin continues to flow through history. Included in the grace of God's promise are all of His righteous saints who have chosen to serve their Creator rather than the created. They are children of the promise God gave to Adam and Eve--the faithful remnant, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (*Genesis 3:15*). The promise is continually brought to light by faithful men and women as history progresses and will continue onward until the second coming of Christ.

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God began to reveal the mystery for the redemption of all mankind held within the promise to His people the moment He made Mary pregnant with His one and only Son Jesus Christ--“her seed”, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Never Ending

As history flows onward, so does the continued fulfillment of the ever present promise in Christ – the restoration of personal fellowship with God, His body of believers. All are spiritual descendants of Abraham through His spiritual and physical “seed,” Jesus Christ, “her seed”. Every saint is included in God’s eternal plan and fellowship. All saints are one with Jesus, who is one with His Father, the Holy Spirit, His body of believers-the church, which is His spiritual kingdom and restored spiritual state of Israel. All are heirs of the eternal blessings of the promise as a result of their restored righteousness, given by the grace of God as a result of belief, faith, and obedience to the will of God the Father through Jesus Christ.

A major spiritual transformation began to take place after the birth of Jesus Christ. The unfaithful among the Jewish people headed towards a judgment affecting all of physical Israel. But the judgment involved far more people than Israel. Upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, everyone would enter into judgment. This judgment did not lead into a cataclysmic, physical worldwide disaster, but an unseen and unfelt spiritual accountability to the will of God never before experienced universally. With the defeat of Satan, the New Covenant clarified the will of God for salvation in Christ Jesus, thereby invalidating all excuses for refusing to repent, “therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (*Acts 17:30-31*).

Restoration

After the “Spirit of Him” raised Jesus from his death, a restored King emerged (*Romans 8:11*). His Kingdom will continue to grow as it dominates the world. God granted the man – Jesus, complete authority over His creation, leaving Satan with only enough power to preserve freedom of spiritual choice for those who choose to remain blind and deaf to Jesus. Even though enslaved by sin and living under the authority of Satan, the captives of sin still retain enough freedom to seek the presence of God and salvation through Jesus

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Christ. They are given the free will to appeal to God for the redemption of their sin. Satan only has the power to deceive, confuse, and discourage. His work is designed to encourage the self-destruction of mankind both physically and spiritually. But he cannot restrain anyone from seeking redemption and accepting the Lord's purchase.

One of the greatest blessings of the New Covenant is the freedom servants of sin have to seek and attain salvation "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (*John 8:34b, 36*). With the Lord's ability to purchase a servant of sin, the captive of sin only needs to believe, develop faith, confess His Lordship, commit to repentance, submit to baptism, and express a willingness to obey and serve Him as Lord and Master for the rest of his life.

The free gift of His life on the cross provided the only sacrifice able to satisfy sin debt to God, nullify the curse of spiritual death, and end the penalties of law. For all time, His sacrifice has and will continue to satisfy the price for a sinner's freedom from bondage.

Many people seek out God in order to satisfy feelings of His presence. However, they may never realize He is seeking them as well, only differently from what they may expect. The deception to worship anything felt acceptable to God is a gray area of tolerable spiritual ignorance in contrast to the often unaccepted but clearly communicated will of God through Jesus Christ. Despite deceptions which often create an illusion of distance, separation, or even nonexistence, He is not allusive. Jesus Christ, God's "only begotten Son," (*John 3:16a*) offers mankind the only way to reach out for His mercy, "He is not far from each one of us" (*Acts 17:27b*). All other appeals are facets of deception.

Throughout His ministry Jesus tried to show His brethren the true nature of one God – He, His Father, and the Holy Spirit are three, yet one. When the rejected King of Israel visited His people, sin had so corrupted their spiritual reality they refused to recognize the Holy One in their midst. Nor could many rationalize within the restraints of the human experience how a holy God could enter into an unholy and corrupted environment as a man and yet still be God. Trying to rationalize spiritual truth from human perspective and experience is a form of deception.

Jesus tried to explain His identity, but to no avail. None-the-less, what He began continues to unfold as time marches onward. Human rejection of divine purpose cannot alter the will of God. After Jesus ascended back into heaven and Pentecost came and went, the church of Jesus Christ grew until it eventually reached the entire world. The branches of His tree of life began to encompass the

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entire world with its lush spiritual foliage and fruit. All of mankind is blessed and especially those grafted into its life and fed by Jesus.

A new age of redemptive history began when Jesus accomplished His work and sat down at His Father's right hand side, thereby restoring fellowship to all who desire to serve their creator. What Adam and Eve lost so long ago Jesus restored.

The rest of this book focuses on just a few of the many facets of the Christian experience enjoyed by God's people in their fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ.

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Section One: God

One God

God is one, yet He presents Himself to humanity through three distinct manifestations of His being. *Mark* recorded Jesus teaching the scribes the most important commandment of the Law of Moses. He said: God “is one Lord” (12:29). The Spirit inspired Moses to reveal, “then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’” (*Genesis* 1:26). The two identities are not contradictory.

Jesus revealed what is meant with the identity--“us” when He ordered His disciples to: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*Matthew* 28:19). He knew God is one, yet He described God’s manifestation to His creation as three distinct persons.

In his gospel, *John* quoted Jesus speaking about conditions of love toward God. How does a physical person express love towards God whom he is unable to sense? Loving God is basically very simple; all a servant needs to do is to obey His will and honor Him as Lord and Master, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me” (14:21a). In response to his expressed love, Jesus promised: “My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him” (14:23b). The “We” is a name identifying Jesus, God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And the servant who chooses to love Jesus is himself united with the One God because all believers who keep His word are “clothed themselves with Christ” and have received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, “and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*Galatians* 3:27b; *Acts* 2:38b).

In his letter to the *Romans* Paul helped to explain how oneness works between physical people, their spiritual God, and the oneness of God, “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are man, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (12:4-5). Later he wrote in *Ephesians*, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (4:4-6). With God, one plus one plus one equals one.

This may sound confusing and far beyond human understanding or acceptance. But what many people may think or believe doesn’t change the reality of God. Nor, does God ask anyone to rationalize Him from wisdom learned from the human experience. God only asks for people to believe and faithfully obey Him, not to understand Him, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens

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are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than yours ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (*Isaiah 55:8-9*).

Throughout history God revealed His reality in numerous ways. The fact no one has ever seen Him doesn't matter, “no man has seen God at any time” (*John 1:18a*). His subtle spiritual presence, power of creation, compassionate providential care for all people, covenants with His people, the internal law of “good and evil” given to all people, and the complete accuracy of the prophets of old should be enough to convince even the most unrighteous to recognize the presence of God. But greater than all of the other witnesses is Jesus. When He entered into His creation, “the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (*John 1:18b*). Jesus is Him. God is real and is intimately involved within His creation, regardless of what many people may say or preach.

In *Hebrews* the writer reminded his brethren how God communicated to His people through “prophets in many portions and in many ways” (1:1b). God became God the Father when He sent Jesus “his exact representation of His nature” to earth (1:3). He wanted to reveal Himself to mankind in an understandable way.

God the Father profoundly showed His love by sending “His only begotten Son” to save His people from sin and self destruction (*John 3:16a*). He wants mankind to understand they are loved by their God--Creator.

Luke quoted the conversation an angel had with Mary concerning Jesus, “behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus ... He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High ... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God” (1:31, 32a, 35b). Through Jesus, God the Father communicated exactly what He wanted His people to know. Many years later Paul said Jesus, “is the image of the invisible God” (*Colossians 1:15*). He is God. When looking upon Jesus, God the Father is seen. Jesus enabled physical man to see his spiritual God.

Jesus came to His people for many reasons, perhaps one of the most important: to remind them of whom they serve, God is the one true God and He alone is glorified as God. Jesus once said, “Not that any man has seen the Father, except the Son, who is from God; He has seen the Father” (*John 6:46*). Jesus has seen Him because He not only preexisted--one with the Father; He is always one with the Father. Since His resurrection He lives in human form, “Therefore

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having been exalted to the right hand of God ... The Lord said to My Lord, 'sit at My right hand, until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet'" (*Acts 2:33a, 34b, 35*).

Jesus set Himself apart from all other religious beliefs in gods, idols, created things, even faith in God. He is not a religion but a person, God in the flesh, the focus of belief and faith. He alone is the focus of faith. Without Jesus belief and faith in God the Father is meaningless, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father. But through Me" (*John 14:6b*). In Christ, religion doesn't seek for God; it is a spiritual and physical response to the will of God the Father, "If any one serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if any one serves Me, the Father will honor him" (*John 12:26*).

God actively seeks any person willing to answer His call through Jesus. While visiting Athens, Paul couldn't help but notice their great interest in many differing gods.

He pointed out to them how religion per se doesn't bring anyone to God: He "does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as if He needed anything" (*Acts 17:24b-25a*). This is what Jesus had earlier prophesied concerning the transformation of religious practices when the New Covenant takes effect, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father" (*John 4:21b*). He requires people to "seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one" (*17:27b*). In the New Covenant age God will no longer manifest His presence in a Jewish temple; He was never or ever will be in a Gentile temple.

This is why belief and faith are so important. The two words are virtually identical in meaning – they both demand a physical response in order to prove sincerity and love towards Jesus, but there are subtle differences. Even though He is unseen by physical eyes a servant is able to see Him through belief in the integrity of His word. However, without obedience to His word belief is meaningless and empty. Faith works the same. A servant can feel and allow his heart to lead him into perceived worship of God but until he is willing to submit faith motivated obedience to the Lord's will his response is meaningless and empty.

Anyone seeking Him must be guided by His gospel. Different religions created by man and God's creation may reveal His presence; but only obedient

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belief and faith in Jesus will lead a servant of sin into God the Father's holy presence.

When a slave of sin chooses to answer the call of God he must do so through Jesus. God the Father requires him to express his newfound faith through obedience to the expressed will of Jesus which in turn honors Jesus, "For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (*John 5:22-23*). As a result He gives to anyone willing to love honor Him by loving and honoring Jesus, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit unites the believer with God, "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" (*John 14:23*). He becomes one with God and fellowship is restored. Thus God is not only united in His three manifested personalities but with His holy saints of righteousness as well.

The blessing of the Spirit is unique, for He is given only to those who are willing to practice their belief and faith in Jesus for salvation. Jesus said the "world cannot receive" His indwelling presence because they do not "know Him" (*John 14:17a*). God the Father personally anoints those who express their love toward Him through Jesus Christ: "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our heart as a pledge" (*2 Corinthians 1:21-22*).

Questions

God is one.

Mark 12:29; Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19; John 14:21a, 23b

- 1) How do you picture God in your mind's eye?
- 2) Why do you think Lord is connected with God?
- 3) Who do you think "us" refers to?
- 4) How does God reveal Himself to mankind?

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5) Is God the same God who created everything so long ago?

All believers are united with God.

Galatians 3:27b; Acts 2:38, Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:4-6

- 1) As a Child of God, do you ever think about God living within you and experiencing your experiences and thoughts?
- 2) Do you go about with life with the constant knowledge of God experiencing what you experience?
- 3) How does unity with God affect your desire to serve Him?
- 4) How does unity with God motivate your desire to repent and live according to His standard of righteousness?

God does not ask anyone to understand Him.

Isaiah 55:8-9; John 1:18

- 1) Do you ever get upset about not knowing what God is doing?
- 2) Are you seeking signs from God to confirm His work in your life?
- 3) How do faith, signs, and doubt connect?

Jesus witnesses God.

John 1:18b; Hebrews 1:1-3; John 3:16; Luke 1:31, 32a, 35b; Colossians 1:15; John 6:46; Acts 2:33a, 34b, 35; John 14:6b; John 12:26; Acts 17:24b-25a; John 4:21b, 17:27b, 5:22-23; 14:23

- 1) Jesus is the source of all Scripture, but where do you source your information about God, from other people, books about Scripture, Scripture, or something else?

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- 2) When you read about Jesus what is your insight about God His Father?
- 3) Does the Lord's service to His Father offer insight about God?
- 4) Jesus is God, how do you picture God His Father and the Spirit?

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His Promise to all of Mankind

God revealed His promise to mankind soon after Adam and Eve rationalized Satan's deception as truth and transgressed against His will. Thus what God warned of came to pass: "you shall surely die" (*Genesis 2:17b*). As a result of their sin they lost their holiness and received God's punishment. However, He promised them a very distant blessing: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel" (3:15). Sin and spiritual death—separation from God's personal presence, soon spread to all of mankind. From then on His promise began its relentless march through history offering life to the repentant.

As the years came and went sin progressively grew to the point of universal spiritual self-destruction, jeopardizing the promise. However, the promise restrained God from completely eliminating mankind in the flood. He allowed His few remaining righteous saints--Noah and his family, to survive and restart the world, restoring the flow of the promise, "Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animal to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left together with those what were with him in the ark" (*Genesis 7:23*).

Many years later after the world recovered from the flood God again brought the promise to light, this time to Abraham and His seed, "and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (*Genesis 12:3b*). Specifically, but clearly not understood by the Jews, God did not state, "and to seeds," which refers to many; rather, He stated: "and to your seed"—referring specifically to Jesus Christ (*Galatians 3:16*). Even though He included the new upcoming nation of Israel through Abraham because Jesus would be human, God re-affirmed the spiritual side of the promise.

From then on He maintained the promise of the "seed" through His chosen but rebellious people. The nation of Israel facilitated the physical heritage of the Messiah. Their rebellion against His will ultimately helped to fulfill His will. Throughout the years leading up to the Messiah's birth the prophets of Israel offered a glimpse into the spiritual and physical sides of His life, death, burial, resurrection, restoration of mankind, reestablishment of His kingdom, Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple.

From Abraham up to the birth of Christ, and ultimately onward to His second coming, God continues to guide human history as He brings about the fulfillment of the long awaited promise—the eternal restoration of direct fellowship with His people.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section One: God

His Promise to all of Mankind

Peter pointed out the final fulfillment of the promise by Jesus the Messiah. He reminded the Jewish people: "It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed'" (*Acts 3:25*). Even though the Jewish people had a very special purpose in the promise as a people providing the way for the Messiah to enter into His creation, the promised "seed" remained spiritual in nature. The spiritual side of the "seed" pointed exclusively to the Messiah.

Throughout the ages before the Lord's birth, prophets constantly reminded the Israelites to honor the promise by being responsible, faithful servants, accountable to God. Luke recorded Paul revealing: "the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He has raised up Jesus" (*Acts 13:32b-33a*). The Lord's ministry prepared anyone willing to listen for a radical spiritual change. Ages old physical worship entered into its final moments of life with the appearance of the Messiah. During His ministry Jesus introduced the prophesied spiritual worship of the coming New Covenant, "worship in spirit and truth" (*John 4:24b*).

The chosen children of future generations who God promised righteousness through the Messiah would no longer be exclusively Jewish. Physical ancestry, a physical nation, physical circumcision, and the Law will no longer matter. Gentiles who choose to hear and respond to His gospel call through Jesus will be allowed to enter into the grace of the promise as spiritual equals with the Jews. All will be one in one God.

In *Galatians* Paul reminded his brethren of the radical bonding of ethnic, national, racial, social, and sexual identities in the body of Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). Universal unity in Jesus became a spiritual reality catching the Jewish people completely off guard. In the New Covenant every righteous person who receives the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit is in one spiritual body as a result of being in Christ.

In the New Covenant God gives righteousness only through Jesus Christ, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer ... in Christ Jesus

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Section One: God

His Promise to all of Mankind

the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles ... For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ ... And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:6-9, 14a, 26-27, 29).

Paul clearly stated: "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (*Ephesians* 3:6). God offered the blessings of the promise to anyone willing to respond to the Lord's gospel's call, "and to your seed, that is, Christ" (*Galatians* 3:16b). Thus, both Gentile and Jewish peoples are joined as one in Christ and enter into the eternal flow of the promise.

In *Galatians* Paul revealed: "Scripture has shut up all men under sin; that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (3:22). Jesus fulfilled the promise, and the flow of the promise continues to include the righteous into the family of God until the second coming of Christ.

Questions

Sin caused a separation.
Genesis 2:17

- 1) How powerful do you think sin is in your life?
- 2) Do you think sin separated you from God's presence?
- 3) When do you think this happened?

God promised to restore spiritual unity.
Genesis 3:15

- 1) Did God already know His mankind would rebel against His will?
- 2) Do you think God is interested in people who do not want anything to do with Him?

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Section One: God

Questions

His Promise to all of Mankind

- 3) Even as a believer are you still a little rebellious?
- 4) How do you think God spiritually reunites an unholy being with His holiness?

The promise affects all of human history.
Genesis 7:23, 12:3b; Galatians 3:16; Acts 3:25, 13:32b-33a

- 1) Do you think God intimately intervenes in human history?
- 2) Has God intervened in your life?

The promise led to radically changed worship.
John 4:24

- 1) Why do you think Jesus changed worship style so radically?
- 2) What are some of the worship changes which took place upon the Lord's death?
- 3) How do these changes affect your worship?
- 4) How do you feel about the new reality of being a living twenty-four-seven sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ?
- 5) Is it important to understand how worship and sacrifice are a singular response to serving God?

The promise led to worldwide unity.
Galatians 3:28; 3:6-9, 14a, 26-27,29; Ephesians 3:6; Galatians 3:16b, 3:22

- 1) How does knowing the Lord's body is one worldwide living organism affect your understanding of the church?

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Section One: God

Questions

His Promise to all of Mankind

- 2) How do you fellowship with another assembly of believers?
- 3) Do you have a tendency to disassociate yourself from brethren in a different assembly of the Lord's body of believer's?
- 4) How does one assembly help and fellowship with one another love?
- 5) Are all assemblies united as one even though they are individual?
- 6) Do you think a single assembly of Christians is a microcosm of the Lord's body as a whole throughout the world?

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Section One: God

God's love

God's gift of grace, Jesus Christ, demonstrated His incomprehensible love for everyone. John noted this in his often quoted words, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" (*John 3:16a*). The love of God is a very real and vibrant part of the faith revealed to His people through the manifestation of Jesus Christ. God is not passively waiting for people to vainly approach Him through traditional ceremony or self-taught perceptions of religion, belief, and faith. He openly "demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (*Romans 5:8*). The one true God seeks out mankind. For mankind has never sought out the one true God or even admits His existence much of the time: "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (*John 1:10*). This is one thing which will never change.

Jesus expressed to His people a new type of love which clearly demonstrated how He worked in their best interest. Godly love is selfless love, it regards the spiritual welfare of every person as most important, even those who hate Him. *John* quoted Jesus revealing,

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for His friends" (*15:13*). His statement revealed at least three insights about Jesus:

1) Jesus expressed His love for mankind by allowing the sacrifice of His body on a cross.

2) Jesus redefined love by introducing to mankind God's standard of love. This is much different from the limited physical standard felt by men and women.

3) God expects anyone responding to His love to return the same type of love by offering his life to God, "he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal" (*John 12:25b*). In other words, love towards Jesus, and ultimately God the Father, is expressed by any person choosing to fulfill belief and faith, by obeying His gospel, and dying with Christ. A servant of sin must choose to spiritually separate his life from his present state of being – a slave of sin, in order to spiritually live. Godly love can only be practiced by a holy saint in Christ Jesus.

However serious one's sins may be his sin debt to God is never too much for Jesus to pay in full, "to Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood" (*Revelation 1:5b*). God is actively appealing to any person desiring freedom from slavery to sin and a certain destiny of eternal separation from His presence. Even though He is compelled by His holy nature to judge those who reject His offer of freedom He has no enjoyment in the condemnation of any person. *Peter* noted this fact in his *second* letter: "The Lord is not slow about His

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Section One: God

God's love

promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (3:9).

But He will not force any one to serve Him against his will. If a servant of sin chooses to remain separated from His holy presence the separation will continue on into eternal existence. Dying in sin is the ultimate and final rejection of God's grace of love.

God expresses His love for the sinner through Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and His church throughout the world. His love flows through His merciful care for all of physical creation including the most rebellious in sin, "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (*Matthew 5:45b*).

However, God has a very special attentive and personal love for those redeemed into His family. Paul spoke of the confidence the Lord's children have in their loving savior: "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (*Romans 8:37*). Jesus doesn't just say He loves people; He has demonstrated it by His death.

Questions

Jesus demonstrated in person God's incomprehensible love.

John 3:16a; Romans 5:8; John 1:10, 15:13, 12:25; Revelation 1:5b; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 5:45b; Romans 8:37

- 1) Why do you think God loves people so much?
- 2) Why do you think God loves people who are comfortable living in sin, openly hostile to Him, and worship other god's?
- 3) Which is more reliable: to feel God's love or to know by faith God loves you?
- 4) Do you believe God loves you?
- 5) How does God practice love towards you and others?

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Section One: God

Questions

God's Love

- 6) Does God's love include discipline?
- 7) Will God save anyone simply because of His love?
- 8) What does God's love mean to you?
- 9) How does His love affect your lifestyle choices?
- 10) How does His love affect your worship?
- 11) Is worship the same as lifestyle?
- 12) Is your sin ever greater than God's love?
- 13) How is God's love connected with your willingness to acknowledge Him as God?
- 14) Do you think God's redemptive love is conditional upon obeying His commands?
- 15) How does God's love and self love connect?
- 16) What is the connection between God's redemptive love and one's response to His love? Is a response to His love necessary for salvation?
- 17) How patient is God's redemptive love?
- 18) In what ways is God's love expressed in the world?
- 19) How is God's redemptive love connected with assurance?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

The universal Word

In order to respond to God for redemption there must be an accurate and truthful communication from God to mankind which reveals the expectations, blessings, and judgments of the New Covenant of Christ. All New Covenant Scripture, including all Scripture written before His death, originated from Jesus Christ, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (*Romans 10:17*). Regardless of what many people believe, there is but one common word given by God to all of mankind.

In the first century every person who heard God's word, regardless of where they lived, listened to the same gospel and learned about the same New Covenant. He required all to respond with the same belief, faith, confession, committed repentance, obedience leading to baptism, and life of faith in the faith found in the New Covenant. The Lord has but one will and Jesus only authored one covenant for which He died a single death for all people of all ages.

God has inspired the writers of the Scriptures to communicate His will, and His will is the same for everyone. It is steadfast and consistent just as He is never changing. Towards the end of the first century *Jude* spoke of the unity of salvation in his short letter, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (*Jude 3*). He spoke of at least two major scriptural truths about the Lord's revelation to those ready to appeal to Him for salvation and those purchased by Him:

1) There is but one salvation, a "common salvation." If there are two differing ways of salvation being taught then one or both are wrong and the word of God needs carefully researched for the right answer. Paul spoke of the dangers of preaching a deliberately changed gospel message in his letter to the *Galatians*: "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (1:8).

Some people may preach the gospel differently out of ignorance of the truth. But their lack of knowledge concerning the gospel cannot change the unalterable and singular nature of the message or cancel out the curse. Misapplied Scripture cannot help those who hear and obey what they believe is God's redemptive call according to the New Covenant will of Christ. Therefore, they may not receive redemption from Christ. As a result these people could easily end up believing they are saved by Jesus while still enslaved to their sin and separated from God. Salvation is based upon faith, which by its

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

The universal Word

definition cannot sense anything spiritual. Assurance of salvation only comes from Scripture, not feelings, physical evidence, or perceived miracles.

All of God's inspired communication ended with the death of His apostles. If any person deliberately adds or takes away from Scripture he is violating the integrity of God's word thus corrupting both the Lord's New Covenant faith and faith in the faith. Everyone, especially preachers and teachers need to pay very careful attention about unintentionally delivering a false message in the Lord's name.

2) Jude mentioned "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints". He clearly revealed how the Spirit delivered the gospel message to the apostles and New Covenant writers in order for them to accurately preach to those who are lost in sin and counsel the saints. The message remained the same regardless of where the Lord's servants taught it and to whom. The gospel message remains the same as time marches on into the future. Paul stated the word of God must not be changed in order to teach in any other manner other than originally delivered by the apostles. Scripture does not evolve with history. History evolves within the parameters of God's word and will.

Paul wrote in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*: "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" (4:17). His gospel message remained consistent with what Jesus first taught him, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached to me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (*Galatians* 1:11-12). His message remained the same as all of the other inspired apostles and writers. A few years later in his letter to the *Colossians* he reminded them of the message "which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world" (1:5b-6a).

The message of the gospel is cohesive in both content and purpose. And regardless of where the servant's of the Lord preach and teach the word, His gospel always remains the same. The gospel is the New Covenant faith established by Jesus Christ, "proclaimed in all creation under heaven" in the first century (*Colossians* 1:23b). The work of the gospel message will continue the task of bringing people to Christ for redemption according to the revealed will of God worldwide. It will go on to lead the redeemed through life in sanctification until physical death or the return of Christ.

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

Questions

The Universal Word

All Scripture comes from Jesus.

Romans 10:17

- 1) Do you believe Jesus is the source of all Scripture?
- 2) Who do you think Scripture comes from?

Scripture communicates God's common will.

Jude 3; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Galatians 1:11-12; Colossians 1:5b-6a, 1:23b

- 1) Do you think God is communicating the same thing throughout the world and history?
- 2) What is God trying to communicate to you?
- 3) Is God trying to communicate to you personally?

Scripture must be carefully taught.

Galatians 1:8

- 1) How thoughtful do you study?
- 2) How do you share what you learn about God?
- 3) Do you determine your understanding of God's word: by feelings, what other people say, systematic study, or something else?
- 4) Is Scripture too complicated for personal study?
- 5) How in-depth should you study?
- 6) Is Scripture study important to you?
- 7) How do you prove its importance in your life?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

His Mystery

Although God continually communicated to His people throughout the ages, many of the prophecies concerning the new age of Israel and the Messiah remained a mystery, even to His prophets. These prophecies, including those concerning the Messiah, the restored Israel, and the New Covenant would not be clearly understood until their fulfillment by the Messiah, Jesus Christ many hundreds of years later.

Matthew recorded Jesus teaching His disciples, "But blessed are your eyes because they see; and your ears because they hear. For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (13:16-17).

God did not deliberately make these prophecies difficult to understand. He revealed many prophecies as He tried to warn His people of the consequences of repeated patterns of sin and spiritual compromise. God wanted the mystery prophecies taken by faith in the wisdom of His word, especially prophecy concerning the Messiah and His restoration of Israel.

The mystery of the gospel depends upon belief in the word of God as truth, and faith in God's truth by observing its counsel despite the difficulty of understanding many of the details. *Peter* noted this in his *first* letter, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories to follow" (1:10-11). The prophets knew the promise and prophecies pointed to the Messiah, but the mystery left them uncertain about when He would appear, how, and the purpose of His appearance. Much of their confusion seemed to originate from a literal interpretation of prophecy indicating a utopian physical state of Israel, the restoration of the physical kingdom and king, and world domination.

The mystery hidden within the words God communicated to His people a message of grace revealed by the Messiah--Jesus. Paul wrote in *Ephesians*, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He proposed in Him" (1:9).

In his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul explained: "But we speak in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages of our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age had understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory ... for to us God revealed them through the Spirit" (2:7-10).

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

His Mystery

Had the rulers understood the mystery, they could have chosen to treat Jesus differently, which would have altered history and the flow of the promise. God used the ignorance and sin of the people to accomplish His will for the salvation of His chosen people. He foreknew how they would respond to Jesus and used their response to fulfill His purpose in Jesus.

The puzzling meaning of the mission and purpose of the Messiah may have also prevented Satan from correctly influencing the people who put Jesus to death. Jesus had to offer His sinless life, the ultimate sacrificial lamb for all sin, in order to defeat Satan, the power of sin, and the curse of spiritual death. In his enthusiasm to kill Jesus he ended up setting himself up for total defeat.

After His death, burial, and resurrection, and ascension, Jesus sent the Spirit to fully reveal the mystery to His apostles. Paul wrote in *Romans*: "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to My Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but is now manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations, leading to obedience of faith" (16:25-26).

He also mentioned in *Ephesians* the inconceivability of the mystery to the Jewish people due to cultural, spiritual, and racial prejudices. No Jew would have ever considered the possibility of Gentiles being united with them as "fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (3:6).

Sin had caused the Jewish people to lose their God-given focus to remain a separated people from the world in order to witness His light to the world. Instead they chose to focus their attention on conforming to the world. As a result they began to compromise their original purpose of being God's people to serve Him only and provide a way for the fulfillment of the promise reaffirmed to Abraham. They chose to give up their uniqueness which often gave cause to the Gentiles to disrespect and mock God.

Many of the Jews believed God set them apart as a special people and felt entitled and special in God's plan regardless of their lifestyle and worship choices. They could do no wrong; resulting from an attitude of prideful exclusiveness. They assumed the assurance of their salvation. The deception of assurance caused by sin hindered a true understanding of their intended purpose and the meaning of the promise. They believed the "seed" referred exclusively to the physical nation of Israel.

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

His Mystery

The mystery of the Scriptures revealed God's universal plan of salvation through Jesus Christ; specifically the time when: "The deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My Covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (*Romans 11: 26b-27*). Hundreds of years earlier the Spirit inspired *Isaiah* to foretell--when the Messiah reveals the mystery: "all of Israel will be saved" (11:26a). According to *Isaiah* the Israel Paul spoke of is included in a New Covenant and cleansed of all sin. This Israel is spiritual and one with Christ, for it is the body of Christ. The spiritual state of Israel also includes all of the saints of old.

Jesus fulfilled at least five major signs in this prophecy from *Isaiah*:

- 1) The Messiah's deliverance will come from Jerusalem.
- 2) The deliverance is spiritual; the sin of Israel will be removed.
- 3) The Messiah will make a new covenant with Israel.
- 4) The covenant will include only forgiven people who have agreed to covenant with Him.
- 5) Israel will be a united people. The citizens of Israel are exclusively those who have covenanted with God in the New Covenant.

The mystery is revealed and it's very important to understand the nature of His word, it's one, not many, or one with many interpretations based upon culturally influenced perceptions of what He communicated. After His resurrection Jesus clearly communicated His mystery and its intended meaning. Its revelation does not depend upon any servant's ability to understand what is being revealed. In *1 Corinthians* Paul wrote: "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (2:4-5). His word fully and finally reveals the promise and the long hidden mystery of the gospel.

Questions

Even the prophets didn't understand many prophetic visions.
Matthew 13:16-17; 1 Peter 1:10-11

- 1) Why do you think God keeps details about the Messiah hidden?
- 2) Are there things in Scripture you do not understand?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

Questions

His Mystery

- 3) Do you ever try to understand what is difficult to figure out?
- 4) Why do you think God created Scripture in such a way to demand study in order to understand His will?

Jesus personally revealed the mystery.
Ephesians 1:9

- 1) Did Jesus reveal the complete mystery during His ministry?
- 2) Do you think the mystery is completely revealed or is there more?

After His resurrection Jesus continued His revelation through the Holy Spirit.
1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Romans 16:25-26

- 1) Who did Jesus reveal the rest of the mystery through?
- 2) Why is knowing this about the mystery important to you?

Sin played a major role in developing Jewish ignorance about their Messiah's true mission.
Galatians 3:6; Romans 11:26b-27; Isaiah 11:26a

- 1) During the Lord's ministry feelings concerning Jewish pride, exclusiveness, nationalism, and tradition played a major role. Concerning the Lord's will how important are feelings?
- 2) Are feelings from the heart able to compromise God's word?
- 3) How important is tradition to you?
- 4) How important are cultural perceptions of what Scripture reveals?
- 5) Are the writings of Bible scholars a substitute for personal Bible study?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

Questions

His Mystery

It is very easy to mix world-viewpoints with Scriptural truth.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 14-16; Ephesians 4:14

- 1) How much do you depend upon other sources than Scripture to learn about God?
- 2) Do you think a servant who has not received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is able to understand Scripture?
- 3) Can a Christian mix world viewpoints with Scriptural counsel in order to make the best of both worlds?
- 4) How do you handle conflicting points of view on important passages of Scripture?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

The Revealed Mystery

The words of God are in written form for common people to read and understand anywhere in the world during any generation, whether it's the first century or the fortieth century. Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (*John* 8:51). He spoke to any person willing to listen with open ears. The words of God are powerful and have the ability to reach into a person's heart in ways unknown to man.

The writer of *Hebrews* revealed: "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (4:12). The writer tried to make known something very mysterious about the word of God. Scriptures are not just letters and prophetic words arranged together to form another well written book. The words actually have a life of their own. God designed His word to work within the framework of His creation on a spiritual level simply inconceivable to understand. *Isaiah* noted God saying, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishes seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" (55:10-11).

God's word is truth or He is a liar. It's very simple. There are no gray areas of questionable truth. There is no other source of spiritual information in the world able to explain the unexplainable realities of the invisible spiritual realm to physical people. Up to the time of the Lord's visitation, no one has ever witnessed heaven. *John* quoted Jesus stating: "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven" (3:13). Only Jesus has seen heaven because He has always existed, He is God.

The words of God are not of human origin, even though God communicated His will through many different people and ways. Paul stated in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*: "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (2:4-5).

Faith is not developed from the evidences of sight, historical discoveries, or from human experience, but exclusively upon the word of Jesus Christ, "So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (*Romans* 10:17). Just because God chose to use people and other various ways to reveal His mystery

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

The Revealed Mystery

to Israel and the rest of mankind, it does not mean the word is compromised in its integrity and preservation because of people. The continuance of Scriptural integrity witnesses the power of God and how He works within the human experience. The word of God helps grow faith because it reveals the expectations of His will, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (*Hebrews* 11:1).

In his *second* letter, *Timothy* noted: “all Scripture is inspired by God” (3:16a), which of course left out all other writings claiming to have originated from a supernatural source, other than His appointed prophets and the apostles who lived in the first century. The writer of *Hebrews* tried to explain the divine origin of the process of revelation and its delivery throughout the early ages of mankind. He wrote: “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world” (1:1-2). Throughout the ages the prophets of old spoke of the coming Messiah and a new restored nation of Israel. Later Jesus began to reveal the mystery and what the prophets truly meant. Through the words of the Lord, His prophets, and apostles, God began to reveal the mystery hidden within His Scriptures.

In *Acts*, Peter bluntly stated to his fellow-Jews: “Moses said, ‘The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people’” (3:22-23). God began to reveal His mystery through Jesus Christ--the prophet spoken of in the prophecy. The Jewish people did not reject Jesus because of ignorance of God’s will. They knew Scripture well, but spiritual traditions, prejudices, pride, and a general refusal to comprehend spiritual truth from God prevented them from seeing and hearing what Jesus revealed.

Peter’s admonition about the seriousness of listening to Scripture brings to mind a warning Jesus gave to His people, “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I warn you whom to fear: fear Him who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him” (*Luke* 12:4-5). The point Jesus expressed is: respect for the words of God is an expression of a servant’s fear of the Lord. Peter revealed at least four major insights about God’s revealed mystery:

- 1) The Prophet Jesus will lead His people to freedom.

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2) In order to serve or “heed” Jesus a servant of sin must be willing to leave his old life, cross a spiritual sea, enter into a new land and life, and not look back.

3) The word of the Lord is more important than any legal or traditional stipulation created by men to protect the practice of faith in God.

4) Any servant who refuses to cross over to the Lord’s new land and freedom will continue to receive God’s wrath.

One thing very important to understand, the words written in Scripture are not sourced from human wisdom. Faith is utterly dependent upon the integrity of God’s word. The words of God are real and they offer divine guidance simply not available from any other source. They express His will and are communicated by an understandable message of spiritual realities otherwise impossible to reliably understand. *James* wrote: “in the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth” (1:18a).

A reliable source of spiritual truth is essential. The only other alternative is human wisdom written in the form of divine truth originating from imaginations only able in the best of circumstances, to guess about the spiritual realities they try to describe.

The words of God have purpose. They are meant to give a truthful look at His spiritual reality through an understandable look at how spiritual realities directly affect people within their lives before and after death. His words are a reliable guide to describe and demonstrate how the redemptive process works, how He works within the process, and a realistic look at mankind’s responsibilities, accountability to Him, and how to serve Him. His words offer true insight into the realities of sin, separation from God’s personal presence, and the work of Satan in his dominion--the world.

The words of God must not be underestimated or mocked as mere myth and superstition. There is much more going on in the invisible spiritual world than is realized and one’s eternal destiny will be determined by his attitude and response to the revealed will of Jesus Christ. The word of God is one with Him. How His word is treated in a servant’s personal life is a reflection of his attitude towards God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The words of God are meant to communicate divine wisdom. They are a spiritual how-to-guide designed by God to direct people to Him in an understandable way. *Peter* wrote in his *second* book: “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (1:3).

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Why would God do this? Peter explained the reason in the next verse: "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (1:4).

God gave humanity the gift of His word in order to offer a true source "of the faith and of the sound doctrine" (*I Timothy* 4:6). The words of God offer insight into the unseen spiritual realm, a reality otherwise known only partially through instinct, spiritual experiences, and everything created. Human wisdom is only capable of leading people into false perceptions of spiritual truth--who God is, and what His will desires.

Instinct or heart feelings cannot be trusted because of the damage sin and corruption inflict upon the heart. In *Proverbs*, the writer counseled, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (3:5). "I feel" or "my heart tells me" does not work with God. He strongly advises against allowing the heart to lead understanding, "for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth" (*Genesis* 8:21b). Hundreds of years before the Lord's birth the Spirit inspired *Jeremiah* to reveal a blunt truth about the spiritual insight of all people, "every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge" (10:14a). This is a basic reason why so many religions and idol worship begin and flourish.

The Lord encourages all servants to exert a full effort of heart to the pursuit of understanding God's word which develops wisdom. Wisdom itself cries out to anyone who will listen, "My son, if you will receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you ... then you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding" (*Proverbs* 2:1, 5).

What many believe as spiritual truth from other sources is corrupted by an infinite degree of deception and untruth which is impossible to confirm. The beholder of the incorrect information will have no perception of right or wrong regarding spiritual truth because he does not have a true spiritual standard to judge his perceptions. Outside of Scripture a true spiritual understanding of God is impossible.

God communicated to mankind in order to offer insight into His will, especially so through the Messiah--Jesus. *Luke* recorded Jesus stating "blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it" (11:28b). Jesus tried to tell His people they needed to actively listen to Him. All of their lives the people learned

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from their religious leaders to observe God's will according to human interpretation and tradition disguised by weavings of Scripture. Their spiritual mistakes grew progressively more serious through the ages as they slowly began to rely on tradition and commentary on Scripture, instead of Scripture with a bit of commentary included. They often tried to worship the method rather than the source.

Jesus told the Jewish people to listen up, they needed to hear Scripture and determine for themselves the will of God. Commentary and tradition are fine but they are not God's word. It's very well for someone of higher learning to explain difficult passages of Scripture, but they are not perfect and their comments often reflect how and what they learned from generations of earlier scholars as well as personal experiences in life. To listen is to observe and an accurate examination of spiritual state of being can only take place when one is willing to pay closer attention to Jesus and Scripture, rather than a human interpretation of what He said.

John also recorded Jesus speaking about the importance of the word of God, its link with spiritual life during life, and a servant's attitude towards God's word in order to realize the link, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (8:51). The only way to understand how God gives eternal life is to first understand what He is requiring in order to receive eternal life. God's grace of freedom requires the combined effort of belief and faith which results in submissive obedience to God the Father through God the Son – Jesus Christ.

Even though the grace of salvation is a gift from God it is dependent upon His conditions. The Jews could not have received redemption from the Egyptians if they chose to refuse to cross the Red Sea. Soon after crossing the sea Moses, "sang this song to the Lord ... 'Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. In Thy kindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed; in Thy great strength Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation'" (Exodus 15:1a, 11a, 12-13).

Salvation cannot be separated from righteousness. If a person wants to spend eternity with God he must somehow be made pure and holy – righteous before God. A servant of sin must be willing to allow the Lord to lead him from his life in the oppression of sin and Satan to the freedom of His spiritual holy land. God has revealed to His people how to receive righteousness, but they must first understand His will, and demonstrate a willingness to serve His will

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instead of the god's of the world. The only way to learn how to serve Him is through His word which clearly explains His will.

Paul later wrote in his letter to the *Romans*: "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (15:4). These are words Jesus desperately tried to teach His people.

Hope is often grounded upon the sand of false or compromised spiritual realities perceived as truth. Spiritual expectations without a solid foundation consumed many of His listeners. Jesus understood how easily false hope is whitewashed and made to look as if it came directly from Scripture. But if one looks closer the reality of death in disguise appears. This is a type of pseudo hope which many in the world cherish. It's weak, dependent upon physical circumstances, and dies with physical death.

Jesus tried to illustrate this spiritual reality in a parable, "And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against the house; and it fell, and great was its fall" (*Matthew 7:26-27*). In other words, a spiritual house is only as strong as its foundation.

Paul helped to reveal the second type of hopeful expectation, which Jesus tried to impress upon His people. It requires a different look at God, an often uncomfortable look at truth from God's point of view. The listener must go beyond his comfort zone of pseudo-faith in self to true-faith. The unseen work of God is detailed in His word, true hope can be achieved if based upon ones faith; He is in control of life. In Christ Jesus expectations end as hoped for, there are no surprises.

God sent Jesus to mankind for the specific purpose of releasing as many people as possible from slavery to sin enabling them to glorify their One true God and receive the rewards of the promise. The words of God are meant to fulfill this purpose. But the world will do its best to discourage every step of the way.

Paul noted in *1 Corinthians*: "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1:18). The point is: who to believe--God or the wisdom of mankind. This is an ageless quandary confronting every servant of sin regardless of his perception of

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God. At times the choice even affects the Lord's servant. Wisdom is a very powerful spiritual tool and can be used to destroy or build.

Paul goes on to say, "the world through its wisdom did not come to know God" (1:21a). This fact alone stresses the vital importance of the words of God found in Scripture. Before truth is revealed no one is able to understand the reality of their true spiritual state in sin. Sin cannot be perceived. Sin is an unseen spiritual reality which cannot be understood because it is not sensed. There is no physical evidence of its existence. The knowledge and wisdom found in the world will never reveal the truth about sin. All spiritual information from the world is assumed and conveys an intentional communication: it disguises the deadly reality of sin debt to God even if it attacks sin.

In his *second* letter to the *Corinthians* Paul revealed a very discomfoting spiritual reality about the world and its spiritual leader, "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" (4:3-4). The "god of this world is Satan, and the world is "the dominion of Satan" (*Acts* 26:18a). And every person who is a slave of sin unwittingly serves him as god, "you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air" –Satan (*Ephesians* 2:2a).

One of the ways he accomplishes this is by his very clever manipulation of one's own pride before God, "For indeed the Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom" (*1 Corinthians* 1:22). The need to confirm His word with supernatural signs or physical evidence is a subtle rejection of faith in the unseen realities of God's presence. Wisdom from the world is opposed to the word of God. Both the desire to see proof and the self-rationalization of needing to hear the world's point of view concerning spiritual realities may originate from a desire to satisfy pride. The servant of sin believes he knows better than God. It all leads to eternal death.

Only God is able to explain sin, righteousness, and freedom of eternal self-determination. And He alone chooses to explain what He wants to communicate. After all, people are a part of His creation, everyone belongs to Him. Paul revealed this fact of life to an audience of Athenian leaders when he said, "He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring'" (*Acts* 17:28b). Everyone has descended from Adam and Eve—whom God created.

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Even though God has left countless witnesses shining in the sky and impossibly creative work on earth, their witness alone cannot lead anyone to a full knowledge of salvation in Christ Jesus. His physical creation needs help to guide people to God and witness the reality of His being. His creation silently speaks of His glory. But it is unable to clearly communicate His redemptive will for mankind. This witness when compromised with human wisdom often leads to false religious beliefs and religions.

Even though every person has a basic moral instinct – the “knowledge of good and evil,” a moral life cannot lead any one to obey the will of Jesus as stated in His New Covenant (*Genesis 2:17a*). A moral and benevolent life is not that same as sinless righteousness. Human philosophy may lead people to speculate on spiritual matters and concepts but it cannot lead to God’s will in Christ Jesus. Regardless of what degree of wisdom one receives from the world he will never be able to perceive a correct understanding of God’s will until he reads and hears God’s will.

John quoted Jesus stating: “when the dead shall hear the words of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live,” he spoke about people who are dead in sin because they are separated from fellowship with God, not physically dead people (5:25b). They lost the innocence and righteousness given at birth. These people continue to live the same physically, but spiritually life is far different. They serve sin and the god of this world, not God the Father. Only the words of God provide the divine wisdom necessary and “able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 *Timothy* 3:15).

The Jewish people of Paul’s time should have known this, for “Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (*Acts* 10:43). The eternal purpose of Scripture will always be the salvation of as many people as possible. For this is the will of God. He did not create mankind to watch them destroy themselves in sin. He created mankind to live in fellowship with Him which in turn glorifies Him. His word leads those who are willing to listen back into fellowship.

The reality of sin is complete separation of fellowship with God. Even though God is always present and maintains life in all of its goodness He is forced to separate Himself from personal fellowship when one’s holiness is lost due to sin. A servant is not pure as long as he is enslaved to sin. His lord is no longer God but sin and the gods associated with the world. All servants’ have two spiritual choices available: either serve a god or God. There is no such thing

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as a non-servant. To believe otherwise is accepting a deception based upon human wisdom and is impossible to physically verify.

John quoted Jesus stating at least two important responses to the word of God and what takes place as a result of actively listening:

1) The Lord's disciple must be willing to "abide in My word" (*John 8:31b*). He must be willing to live in it and by its counsel; which is a response requiring belief in the truth of His word, and a willingness to act upon what is believed. His actions verify and prove his belief. Faith in the word of God is a physical realization of expectations in the integrity of His word and must be verified and proven by the servant's response to God's will. What He promises to do will be done regardless of personal perceptions. Both belief and faith are in proportion to the servant's willingness to allow the Spirit to lead him into a lifestyle which practices righteousness.

2) A servant's response of love towards God is determined by his willingness to "keep My word." If he agrees to love God according to His counsel, God the Father will honor this love response and "will love him" (*John 14:23b*). God's grace of love is not unconditional. Jesus redefined love. God's expectation of a love response is not based upon emotions. Even though it may involve emotions, it is not governed by emotions or the feelings of the heart and wisdom of the intellect.

True love towards God is expressed by a willingness to submit to God's will as the servant relearns how to live life. This type of love expresses respect for who God is and recognizes Him as Lord. A servant's love of God cannot be expressed until Jesus is honored in his life as Lord and Master. And he cannot honor Jesus as Lord until he understands how to do so according to His word. True love towards God is belief and faith motivated, and will result in obedience to His will. God's divine response also includes His promise to "make Our abode with him." In other words, the Holy Spirit will enter into him, and since the Spirit is one with Jesus and God the Father, the servant is one with God. He is a temple of God, "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God" (*I Corinthians 6:19a*). When this takes place sin debt to God no longer exists, resulting in the servant's restored holiness and fellowship with God.

God's word is not just a collection of ancient writers who made up a great story. They wrote spiritual truth inspired by the Holy Spirit communicating the will of God. Without direct inspiration, no writer could ever imagine and write

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prophecies clever enough to prevent failure after hundreds of years have separated the writer from the fulfillment of the prophecy. No one is able to see into the future. The inspired writer's spoke of heavenly insights, mankind's origin, true purpose, and the Messiah, knowledge otherwise completely hidden. The word of God is one's gateway into His heart, and plan for the people He created.

Questions

Scripture is understandable by anyone.

John 8:51

- 1) Are you able to understand Scripture?
- 2) Do you know how to study Scripture?
- 3) Do you care about studying Scripture?
- 4) Why is it important to study Scripture?

Scripture has an unknown power.

Hebrews 4:12

- 1) What does Scripture do in you?
- 2) Are you able to sense its work in your being?

Scripture is always effective.

Isaiah 55:10-11; Hebrews 4:12

- 1) Do you believe there is more to Scripture than a well written story?
- 2) If your heart disagrees with Scripture, which can you trust: your heart and feelings of rightness with God or Scripture?

Only Jesus knows what He is talking about.

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1 Corinthians 2:4; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:1; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2

1) Do you think Jesus is just one of many different sources of spiritual information?

2) Why only trust in Jesus?

3) What do you do if your feelings tell you not to trust in Jesus?
Jesus has the authority to judge one's response to His word.
Acts 3:22; Luke 12:4-5

1) Does knowing who will be your spiritual judge affect how you live life?

2) If Jesus is your judge how do you consider serving Him?

3) Is believing, confessing Him as Lord, faith, repentance, and obedience the same as worshipping Jesus as Master?

Scripture reveals unknown spiritual realities.

James 1:18a; 1 Timothy 4:6

1) A person may feel and even experience spiritual realities but are they understandable?

2) Is the heart able to understand unexplained spiritual realities or experiences?

3) Where do I go to find reliable spiritual information?

Scripture is God's how-to handbook.

2 Peter 1:3-4; Proverbs 3:5; Genesis 8:21b; Proverbs 2:1, 5; Luke 11:28b; John 8:51; Exodus 15:1a, 11a, 12-13; Romans 15:4; Matthew 7:26-27

1) Is allowing your heart to lead personal worship the same as allowing Scripture to lead worship?

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- 2) Are you able to understand how to serve God without very much Scriptural understanding? How much understanding do you need?
- 3) Should you depend solely upon other people to teach you how to live according to God's will?
- 4) Should you allow your feelings and heart to lead you through life in Christ?

Scripture reveals incomprehensible spiritual power.

1 Corinthians 1:18

- 1) Does Scripture affect you heart?
- 2) How does Scripture affect you life?
- 3) How does Scripture affect your faith?

The world cannot understand Scripture.

1 Corinthians 1:21a; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Acts 26:18a; Ephesians 2:2a; 1 Corinthians 1:22

- 1) Why would God only allow His servants to fully understand Scripture?
- 2) Should you rely upon people who are religious but have not obeyed the gospel for unquestioned Scriptural insight and guidance?
- 3) Should you allow your heart to lead you to sources of Scriptural information?

Scripture demands a response.

Acts 17:28; Genesis 2:17a; John 5:25b; 2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 10:43; John 8:31b, 14:23b; 1 Corinthians 6:19a

- 1) When you read God's word what does it mean?

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- 2) Do you believe serving God is an important part of worship?
- 3) Do sinners belong to God even though they are separated from Him?

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The Faith

As Paul began to close his letter to the Galatians he tried to encourage his brethren to follow the Spirit's counsel in life, "And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if 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" (*Galatians* 6:9-10). Faith is realized in one's life through an obedient response to God's will. His will is the faith which Jesus established when the New Covenant took affect the moment He died.

A servant of sin must first develop faith in the word of God, which is a working confidence in His integrity. Faith will begin to grow as he reads and applies his belief in what God has spoken. The word of God reveals the Lord's New Covenant faith. Paul noted in his *first* letter to *Timothy*, "the faith that is in Christ Jesus," referring to what the Spirit inspired concerning the realities of Jesus, His sacrifice, and covenant (3:13b). He described the gospel message of Christ as the faith in which to develop faith.

The two types of faith are not the same, one is the faith--the New Covenant gospel of Jesus Christ, and the other is how a servant responds with faith to the source of the faith. In *Colossians* Paul helped to clarify the distinction while trying to encourage his brethren to "continue in the faith" (1:23a). He didn't speak about a nonspecific faith or religion but one exclusive faith established by Christ. He spoke of this one faith as "the hope of the gospel" (1:23b) which is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The faith is the gospel of Christ and this is what faith is placed in and practiced.

The New Covenant faith began with Jesus and developed with the birth and early growth of the church. In his *second* letter *Peter* noted the common bond of the faith among his brethren who, "have received a faith of the same kind as ours," highlighting the singular faith of the brotherhood in Christ (1:1). He continued to reveal, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (1:3).

Jude mentioned the Lord's New Covenant faith in his letter when he stated "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," highlighting a first century understanding of the consistency and completion of the faith (1:3). God did not communicate an evolving theology dependent upon periodic special revelations contemporary with cultural changes in order to remain up to date. God does not change Scripture because He feels an adjustment in theology is necessary. God does not change, nor does His communicated will, "For I, the Lord, do not change" (*Malachi* 3:6a).

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All who have received the faith and share in “our common salvation” (1:3a) are known as God’s “saints” (1:3b). These holy people of God have received righteousness by God as a result of demonstrated belief and faith which led them to obey the will of Jesus Christ. Luke recorded in *Acts*: “And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” (6:7). Those of the faith are considered as children of God in “the household of the faith” (*Galatians* 6:10); which is the church of Jesus Christ, His very exclusive body of believers.

Questions

The faith is basically referring to the New Covenant gospel.
Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 3:13b; Colossians 1:23; 2 Peter 1:1, 3; Jude 1:3; Malachi 3:6a; Acts 6:7; Galatians 6:10

- 1) How does the gospel affect your everyday life?
- 2) How important is the Lord’s faith (Christianity), to you?
- 3) What is the Lord’s faith?
- 4) What is the gospel?
- 5) What approach do you usually take when witnessing the Lord’s faith:
 - a. You try to find fault in the other persons’ faith in whatever faith he believes.
 - b. You build up his faith with Scriptures which picture the true faith of Christianity.

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People from all over the world try to preach many and diverse ways to satisfy the will of a singular generic god, God, even God the Father through Jesus Christ. Many others worship multiple gods, some type of idyllic after life existence, or a second chance with physical life. But they miss a vital spiritual fact which sets their beliefs apart from the one true God (God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit) and His true will. Scripture teaches only one way to approach God the Father in order to worship Him according to His will. It teaches one faith, only through Jesus Christ, and only according to His New Covenant, "I am the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (*John 14:6b*).

Scripture clearly reveals a singular way to restore fellowship with God. A servant is only able to exist in a state of holiness or purity when there is no sin debt to God. When a person is born, he is innocent of all accountability to sin and is automatically included within the family of God because he is innocent and holy. Sin is not inherited, only the nature to sin and the law of "good and evil", "the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" (*Ezekiel 18:20b*).

However, once he matures to the point where he is able to understand the difference between "good and evil" he is free to choose how to react to his lust and any temptation caused by his desires. At this time in life he is mentally capable of choosing to sin and will choose to sin. Even the Lord exemplified how this works in the life of a young child. *Isaiah* prophesied of His birth, but added a few more details of His early childhood development, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good" (*7:14-15*).

Paul also described how the process works using his childhood as an example, "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (*Romans 7:8-9*).

By saying "sin is dead" Paul did not mean sin didn't exist, but simply powerless during the time period between his birth and accountability to the Law. A Jewish child became accountable to the Law when his family, teachers, and village determined the time of his participation as a productive citizen. However, during the early years of his youth he learned the Law and a trade. Moses once said, "the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth" (*Genesis 8:21b*)

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indicating a beginning point when the knowledge of “good and evil” takes effect due to mental maturity.

Jesus directly referred to the innocence and holiness of a child before the age of accountability when He said, “Permit the children to come to Me; and do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all” (*Mark 14b-15*). The following are three ways to inclusion in the Lord’s kingdom:

1) His is born into it due to his basic innocence of life before accountability to any kind of law.

2) Once a person has transgressed against God he must receive forgiveness and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in order to re-enter His kingdom, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (*John 3:5b*). It is impossible for a young child to understand the concept of “good and evil” and how to respond to the Lord’s gospel call.

3) His is “transferred” to the kingdom by God, “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (*Colossians 1:13*).

Before accountability neither the Law nor the law of “good and evil” are able to condemn. A law from God must be transgressed in order for a transgression to take place. No transgression – no sin. His innocence and lack of accountability separated him from the death of sin. For him, during this time of childhood “sin is dead” or separated from his spiritual reality. Even though he inherited a basic nature to transgress the Law Paul did not inherit the accountability of another’s debt of sin to God. But he could have inherited the ongoing physical affects of a family member’s sin or even an ancestor going back further in his family line.

Once a mature child chooses to transgress against one law, regardless how insignificant, he has transgressed against God’s will, immediately loses innocence, and becomes a slave of sin. Since he is no longer holy he is transferred out of the Lord’s presence and kingdom to live in the spiritual realm of the world as a slave of sin under the dominion of Satan. Luke quoted Jesus identifying the “domain of darkness” as the “dominion of Satan” (*Acts 26:18a*).

When an innocent child becomes a servant there must be a master. There are only two spiritual masters: sin or to obedience and righteousness under the

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Lordship of Jesus. Paul helped to explain this spiritual reality in his letter to the *Romans*: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness” (6:16). In (6:18) he said, “and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”. No one can serve both, it’s not possible. In the spiritual realm dual citizenship does not exist.

The only way a servant of sin is able to get rid of his debt to sin is through Jesus Christ. This is the reason why Jesus came to His creation, “for it is He who will save His people from their sins” (*Matthew* 1:21b). They will be “His people” because Jesus purchased their sins, “for you have been bought with a price” (*I Corinthians* 6:20a). What is the price—the cost of purchase? It is the life of Jesus, “the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (*Acts* 20:28b).

A servant is not one of His chosen because of genealogy, special responsibility to the Law, or position as God’s special people—the Jews. John the Baptist loudly proclaimed to the Jewish people, “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (*John* 1:29b). The soon to come death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus gave Him the necessary payment to redeem those indebted to sin. The cost of redemption requires the sacrifice of an innocent life.

Soon after His ministry began Jesus clearly stated, “the world should be saved through Him” (*John* 3:17b). At the end of chapter three the writer explained a well established fact of first century faith in Christ, only those who are willing to place belief “in the Son has eternal life” (3:36a). All others are considered by God the Father of Jesus Christ as disobedient to His son and therefore will not receive life and restored fellowship with Himself, “but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life” (3:36b). John later quoted Jesus teaching about the exclusiveness of faith; He alone is “the resurrection and the life” (11:25a). There are no alternative ways to heaven.

A few years after the church began, the Spirit sent Peter to a Gentile named Cornelius. After he arrived he began to teach this God fearing man, his family, and friends the gospel. Fearing the One true God or worshipping Him could not release their debt of sin regardless of their piety towards God and good will to others. His worship and prayers however caught the attention of God. But He needed to send Peter to Cornelius in order to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ; “of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (*Acts* 10:43). After the Lord’s death the accustomed ways of worshipping within the stipulations of the Law of

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Approaching God

Moses and tradition had ended and Peter needed to teach them the New Covenant of Jesus. Paul once said, "how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent" (*Romans 10:14b-15a*).

Once a slave of sin is purchased he becomes a servant of God through Jesus Christ. This is a spiritual transaction referred to as redemption and is only available through Jesus Christ. Only Jesus has the satisfactory payment to end sin death--an innocent sinless death. Any other way to salvation is simply a deception to convince a slave of sin to believe he is saved, when in truth he is not.

Earlier in *Acts*, Luke recorded Peter teaching the Jews about the major changes which took place after the Lord's death. Jesus replaced the covenant written by Moses with His New Covenant, outside of Jesus, God the Father is not able to save them from their sins. God the Father did not die in order to provide a redemption payment for their sins neither did the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus, God born in the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit, accomplished this spiritual task in His very real human body. Peter boldly told his Jewish brethren: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts 4:12*).

The words of God have final say in the matter of salvation. Every person has the freedom to choose who he is willing to serve. The choice is basically very simple, either to continue serving sin and Satan or receive freedom from sin and serve Jesus Christ.

Questions

There is only one way to God the Father.
John 6b; Acts 4:12

- 1) Does limiting access to God to only through Jesus seem a bit too restrictive?
- 2) As you live out your daily worship do you ever think about how important Jesus is, even in the most mundane activities?
- 3) Do you respect other faiths even though they do not lead their believers to heaven?

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Questions

Approaching God

- 4) What do you think concerning the spiritual purpose of other faiths?
- 5) Do you think people are aware of the fact they may be worshipping in vain?

Everyone is accountable for only his sin and response to God's grace of redemption.

Ezekiel 18:20b; Isaiah 7:14-15; Romans 7:8-9; Genesis 8:21b; John 3:5b; Colossians 1:13; Acts 26:18a; Romans 6:16, 18; James 1:12-15

- 1) Are people born with a sin debt to God?
- 2) Are people born innocent, free of all sin debt to God?
- 3) If a child is innocent when do you think he first commits a transgression against God?
- 4) Do you believe all innocent children are God's holy children?
- 5) How do you feel about a child who sins and becomes unholy and is transferred to Satan's dominion?

Jesus came to provide a way to God the Father.

Matthew 1:21b; 1 Corinthians 6:20a; Acts 10:28b; John 1:29b, 3:17b, 3:36, 11:25a; Acts 10:43; Romans 10:14b-15a; Acts 4:12

- 1) How does knowing Jesus came to offer freedom from slavery to sin affect your life right now?
- 2) Do you think you would have approached God for salvation if Jesus did not first offer it to mankind?
- 3) Are people able to love God if they are not saved by Jesus?
- 4) Before you chose to return to God how did you satisfy your spiritual needs?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

The gospel

When God communicated His grace of salvation through Jesus to mankind, He used at least four primary ways of assuring the integrity of His communication. Jesus enabled His apostles to understand the mystery of prophecy, to remember what He personally taught, and receive the knowledge necessary to learn and teach His New Covenant after His resurrection:

1) Jesus personally revealed the mystery of the gospel to His apostles. He did this through the work of the Holy Spirit, “when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth ... He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you” (*John* 16:14). Later Paul received his ability to preach the gospel directly from Jesus, “the gospel which was preached to me is not according to man ... I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (*Galatians* 1:11b, 12b).

2) Jesus gave His apostles the ability to understand the prophets of old, “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (*Luke* 24:44b-45); Scriptures written before the birth of Jesus.

3) He gave His apostles the ability to recall and remember what He taught, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (*John* 14:26).

4) “He will teach you all things,” also referred to the upcoming work of the Spirit to give inspiration to the apostles during their ministry. The apostles introduced the New Covenant word of God into world while the Spirit’s inspiration insured the divine origin and accuracy of what they taught and recorded for future use as Scripture. In his *second* letter to *Timothy* Paul revealed, “All Scripture is inspired by God” – Jesus Christ (3:16a).

The consistency of the gospel message is reflected throughout New Covenant Scriptures. In Paul’s *second* letter to the *Thessalonians*, he reminded his brethren, God “called you through our gospel” (2:14). In his letter to the *Romans*, Paul revealed the Lord’s strict use of only the gospel to lead mankind “to obedience of faith” (16:26b). After salvation the gospel is “able to establish” the saints in Christ (16:25a).

The person behind the gospel gives it its power, “it is the power of God for salvation” (*Romans* 1:16a). The gospel is basically the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, “that Christ died for our sins according to Scriptures, and that He was buried, and He was raised on the third day according to Scriptures” (*1 Corinthians* 15:3b-4). The gospel has the power to

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The Gospel

enter into the hard hearts of servants of sin and lead them to Jesus for redemption so “they may live in the Spirit according to the will of God” (*1 Peter* 4:6b).

God gives eternal redemption only to those who are willing to appeal to Jesus through the gospel message for redemption. Jesus promises they will become “fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel” (*Ephesians* 3:6b).

Questions

The gospel is a vital message to everyone.

John 16:14; Galatians 1:11b, 12b; Luke 24:44b-45, John 14:26; 2 Timothy 3:16a; 2 Thessalonians 2:14;

- 1) What is the gospel?
- 2) Why is it so important?
- 3) Is the gospel important in your life today?

The gospel is how servants of sin are called to God.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 Romans 16:26b, 16:25a, 1:16a

- 1) Is the gospel a very restrictive way of receiving salvation?
- 2) How does the gospel save anyone?

The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:3b-4

- 1) The gospel is divine knowledge about Jesus, but is knowledge alone enough to save?

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Questions

The Gospel

The gospel is the power of God.

Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 4:6; Ephesians 3:6b

- 1) The gospel is like the most explosive power ever created, but how?
- 2) Is the gospel powerful in your life?
- 3) Why does the gospel have power in your life?
- 4) How does the gospel radiate spiritual energy in your life?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

The Lord's call

God calls all peoples worldwide, regardless of their sin debt to God, through the gospel message of Jesus Christ. In *First Corinthians* Paul noted: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1:9). God never leaves a person out because He has predetermined his eternal destination. God knows everyone's eternal destiny, but it's not because of His determination. God has chosen His people "from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2 *Thessalonians* 2:13b). God predetermined from before creation the Lord's entrance into His creation at just the right time to offer His body as a sacrifice in order to secure the cost of redeeming sin debt, once for all time. Only the life of an innocent sinless man would meet the demands of sin debt redemption. His people are those who have freely chosen to appeal to God through Jesus, "and it was for this He called you through our gospel" (2 *Thessalonians* 2:14a). New Covenant saints are predetermined because of the predetermination of Jesus.

Every servant of sin is offered the same uncoerced opportunity to accept or reject God's grace of salvation offered through the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, only those who are willing to respond to the gospel with belief, faith, and obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus are allowed to enter into His covenant. The servant must agree to the conditions of the covenant before he is able to enter into the covenant. The called of God are only those redeemed by Jesus according to the will of God the Father through a singular response of belief and faith which results in an obedient appeal to Jesus Christ for redemption.

Once a person hears the gospel he must make a choice. He can respond according to the will of God, reject it, substitute it for another faith or religion, or just not care one way or the other. The one thing impossible to do however is to retire the debt of sin by one's own efforts regardless of how good and loving his works may appear. Sin debt is a spiritual debt and requires a spiritual payment--death. The only thing sin owes its laborer is death, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). This is why the gospel, even though one must respond physically, is a blessing "by the grace of Christ," because He alone is able to satisfy the payment of any sin debt to God (*Galatians* 1:6b). And He does so without cost, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23b). The slave of sin is not able to pay for his freedom. It's impossible.

The purpose of the Lord's call is redemption, any servant of sin may become His servant, but he must be willing, "to follow in His steps" (1 *Peter*)

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The Lord's call

2:21b). Redemption fulfills the prophetic words of Moses quoted by Peter, "you shall be holy, for I am holy," an unrighteous slave of sin must be made holy by Jesus and remain pure from sin in Him (*1 Peter* 1:16b). And there is only one way for this to happen, through the Lord's gospel call found only in the inspired word of God.

Questions

The Lord call is freely offered to everyone.

John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 1:9

- 1) Do you feel too sinful to receive the Lord's call?
- 2) Is the Lord personally calling you?
- 3) How is the Lord calling you?
- 4) Do you think the Lord continues to call you even after your conversion?

God does not exclude any person because of predetermined spiritual status.

2 Thessalonians 2:13b, 2:14a; John 3:16

- 1) Do you believe some people will never accept God's offer of salvation because it is their destiny to die in sin?
- 2) Likewise, do you believe some people will not have any other choice than to accept the Lord's call?
- 3) Is Jesus calling out to anyone with any sin to accept His gospel?
- 4) How do you feel about your destiny?

The Lord's call demands a choice.

Romans 6:32a; Galatians 1:6b; Romans 6:23b; 1 Peter 2:21b; 1 Peter 1:16b

- 1) If you heard the gospel would you feel more accountable to God?

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Section Two: God Speaks To His People

Questions

The Lord's call

- 2) Is the gospel call offering a choice between accepting sin or righteousness?
- 3) How would you feel if someone told you about the gospel?
- 4) How did you consider the gospel the first time you heard it preached or shared?

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Section Three: Expectations

A New Covenant

God gave the first covenant to Moses. As time passed He began to reveal the spiritual details of a coming covenant designed to restore His adulterous and divided Israel. The Spirit inspired *Jeremiah* to write: "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'" (31:31). Within this new covenant God "will put My law within them, and on their heart" (31:33b), He "will be their God" (31:33b), He will consider them to "be My people" (31:33b), "and they will all be holy before His presence because He "will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (31:34b).

Those who are covenanted with God in the New Covenant "shall all know Me" (31:34a). He will no longer be the God of a nation of people who choose to reject His presence and will. All will be united in their worship. In *Romans* Paul quoted Isaiah speaking about the mystery, its revelation to the world, and how it would be revealed in the New Covenant, "The deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (11:26b-27).

The covenant, put into effect by the death of Jesus Christ is unique in its ability to restore direct fellowship between God and His people. Those included in His covenant are one people who without exception are faithful only to Him. In the New Covenant priests are no longer necessary to mediate between the people and God because of the restored fellowship among the covenanted. His people are sinless and are themselves priests. Peter wrote, "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood" (*1 Peter* 2:9a). All are serving under Jesus Christ who is the high priest of His body of believers, "For it is fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (*Hebrews* 7:26).

The moment Jesus died on the cross the first covenant became obsolete, replaced by the New Covenant. The writer of *Hebrews* revealed, "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the covenant, even Jesus our Lord" (13:20). He spoke about how Jesus finalized the New Covenant with the bloody sacrifice of His innocent life. Earlier he said, "For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives" (9:16-17).

Yet even though Jesus is no longer physically alive He is very much alive spiritually. He now lives in heaven as king and high priest over the saints

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A New Covenant

covenanted with Him in the New Covenant which He authored. And with the coming of the new, the old covenant of Moses “He has made obsolete ... ready to disappear” (*Hebrews* 8:13).

The writer of *Hebrews* also spoke of Jesus as the “guarantee of a better covenant” (7:22b), “the mediator of a new covenant” (12:24a), and “the mediator of a better covenant” (9:15a). When *Luke* wrote about the last supper he quoted Jesus prophesying, “this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (22:20b). The significance of the Lord’s Supper reveals the importance of His covenant. In order to begin the covenant, its author, the Lord had to die. The eternal future of all mankind rested on the back of one man, Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant is unique in the world. There is no other religion through which personal fellowship from God or with any other god is assured. Those who choose to covenant with God the Father through Jesus Christ are one with Him. For by the “blood of the covenant” all of God’s children are “sanctified,” made holy and live in His presence, and separated from slavery to sin and the world with its death (*Hebrews* 10:29b).

Questions

The new covenant will be with Israel.

Jeremiah 31:31, 33, 34b

1) Is the covenant made with the physical nation of Israel or Christians?

2) Is the new covenant in effect now or is it something coming later?

Those covenanted with God are His people.

1) Do you believe all new covenant Christians are citizens of Israel?

His people will be holy.

1) If you are a Christian are you holy?

2) Do you feel holy?

3) Do you live life holy?

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Questions

A New Covenant

His people will be sinless.

- 1) Is sinlessness the same as holiness?
- 2) What does sinless mean to you?
- 3) Does being sinless affect your life?

A major blessing of the covenant is the forgiveness of sins.
Romans 11:26-27b; Isaiah 27:9a

- 1) How does the new covenant offer forgiveness of sins?
- 2) Does forgiveness make a big difference in your life?
- 3) How do you feel about agreeing to a spiritual contact with God?

The covenant restores direct fellowship with God.

- 1) How does a new covenant believer have fellowship with God?
- 2) What is fellowship?
- 3) Is fellowship the same thing as a relationship? Find Scriptural references which help define fellowship and relationship.
- 4) How do you fellowship with God?
- 5) How do you fellowship with the body of Christ?

Priests are no longer needed to intercede for God's people.
1 Peter 2:9a

- 1) Why are formal appointed priests no longer needed in the new covenant?

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Questions

A New Covenant

2) Are there still priests serving Jesus?

The high priest is Jesus Christ.
Hebrews 7:26

- 1) The new covenant high priest is Jesus what does this mean to you
- 2) Does this understanding change how you serve Jesus in any way?

Jesus inaugurated the new covenant with His death.
Hebrews 13:20, 9:16-17

- 1) Do you believe Jesus created and put the new covenant into effect?
- 2) Why is the new covenant important to you today?
- 3) Is the covenant important in everyday life?
- 4) Is the covenant up close and personal to you?

The old covenant given to Moses is obsolete.
Hebrews 8:13

- 1) How does the end of the old covenant affect the physical nation of Israel?
- 2) What purpose do the laws and instructions written by Moses have in my life today?

Jesus is both the guarantee and mediator of the new covenant.
Hebrews 7:22b, 12:24a, 9:15a

- 1) Do the words guarantee and mediator mean anything to you?
- 2) Do you feel more assured in your covenant with God the Father because it is through Jesus Christ?

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A New Covenant

- 3) Does God give you the freedom to default on His covenant with you?
- 4) What are you doing to maintain the integrity of your pledge to covenant with Jesus?

The Lord's Supper is a weekly reminder of the necessity of the Lord's death, burial, resurrection and blood which inaugurated His covenant.
Luke 22:20b, 10:29b; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- 1) Does the supper remind you of your covenant with Jesus?
- 2) What does the covenant mean to you?
- 3) How does your covenant with Jesus affect your interrelationships among believers who are also covenanted with Jesus?
- 4) Do you think fellowship with one another makes a difference in how you covenant with Jesus?
- 5) What is the Lord's body?
- 6) Do you think one another love is connected to how you covenant with God?
- 7) Do you think helping to maintain unity in the Lord's body is important to your covenant with Jesus?

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Section Three: Expectations

The Law of Faith

Believing in God's existence, worshipping Him with all of the heart, following all of the traditions correctly, and piousness towards the Lord within the human experience will never ensure anyone's place in heaven. The only thing human effort is able to secure concerning eternal life is false expectations leading to hope in false assumptions. Belief in Jesus Christ and God the Father must be spiritually realized through faith motivated obedience developed from hearing the word of God which is patterned after Abraham's example. Faith is so important because it is the physical expression of a heart filled with "assurance of things hope for, the conviction of things not seen" (*Hebrews 11:1b*). The gospel is able to lead those who truly trust God at His word. The gospel is not dependent upon physical evidence of His work to assure anyone of the integrity of His work.

Only those who have a responsive faith in God through Jesus are considered as righteous by God. Paul stated in his letter to the *Galatians*, only "those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer" (3:9b). Righteousness is only given to those willing to apply belief and faith motivated obedience to the will of God through Jesus Christ.

Belief and faith motivated obedience is proven to God through ones confession of Jesus as Lord. Confession is realized when it leads the servant to obey the will of his confessed Lord and Master Jesus. The confirmation of belief, faith, confession, and repentance must involve baptism in order to receive the unseen blessings and promises of God through Jesus necessary for salvation. When obedience begins to realize itself through the servant's response to the Lord's will then repentance is proven in his life. Throughout the initial process of redemption the servant of sin agrees to serve Jesus as Lord and Master. This is his confession. Once he becomes a servant of the Lord he will remain so for as long as he maintains his faith and confession in Jesus – his Master.

The servant's entire response to the Lord's gospel call is dependent upon believing what He has said and proving his belief through faith in the integrity of God's word to fulfill His promises. Speaking of a "law of faith" Paul wrote, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (*Romans 3:27b-28*).

Extra Biblical legal or religious requirements and tradition have the same effect upon ones salvation in faith; they are impotent, and hinder faith in God's word, because they are all based upon sight, human effort and wisdom. Anyone can develop a sense of security from established religious expectations of how to

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serve God, many of the Jewish people did, but it's a false security. Even though faith may be exemplified and noteworthy through good works and piety in the physical realm, it is only realized when expectations and fulfillment are focused upon the unseen spiritual realm. Faith is fully dependent upon the grace of God and the integrity of His word as the servant practices it within the physical experience.

Without divinely directed faith it is not possible to serve God even if the servant is working for His will with all of his might. The writer of *Hebrews* stated this fact very clearly: "and without faith it is impossible to please Him" (11:6a). Faith is established by works motivated by the servant's desire to serve God. Faith led by the grace of God is exemplified by its response and will always find its focus in the glorification of God. Faith is only developed through the word of God: "So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (*Romans* 10:17).

When Paul mentioned the reality of a "law of faith" (*Romans* 3:27b) he revealed the inadequacy of any other law for salvation. The Law of Moses, instinctual moral law, manmade laws, religions, and traditions are completely unable to justify any person. Law in and of itself cannot affect one's legal standing before God, unless the servant is able to obey the law perfectly, never committing a transgression against Him in the first place. No one except Jesus has or ever will choose to accomplish such a demanding spiritual task. Only faith in God's ability to do what He has promised through Jesus Christ is considered by God as righteousness.

Abraham exemplified this spiritual fact, "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of the faith that are sons of Abraham" (*Galatians* 3:6-7). The law of faith is a requirement because without faith righteousness is impossible and without righteousness salvation cannot take place. When a person responds to God's will he must do so with physical actions motivated by faith, not legal obligation, in the unseen will and promises of God.

Questions

Faith in the faith which Jesus introduced is "assurance of things hoped for".
Hebrews 11:1b

- 1) What does assurance mean to you?

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The Law of Faith

- 2) Why is assurance important?
- 3) How do you develop and mature assurance?

Faith is “conviction of things not seen”
Hebrews 11:1b

- 1) What is conviction?
- 2) How do you consider spiritual realities which you cannot sense?

The integrity of the gospel is not dependent upon any type of physical evidence.

- 1) How does physical evidence connect with faith?
- 2) Why do you think God places so much importance on faith?
- 3) How convicted are you concerning the complete integrity of God’s word?

Paul used Abraham’s faith to illustrate new covenant faith.
Galatians 3:6-9

- 1) How does faith work in an imperfect life?
- 2) How are you able to express faith?
- 3) What happens to your faith when things go wrong?
- 4) What happens to your faith when you make bad decisions?
- 5) What happens when decisions based upon faith in God’s will do not work out as planned?

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Questions

The Law of Faith

Paul considered Abraham's response to God's as works of belief and faith.
James 2:14-26

- 1) Have you ever considered the link between belief and faith?
- 2) Paul used – having “believed” with the same meaning as expressed faith, what does this mean to you?
- 3) Do you think belief is fulfilled by works in the same way as faith?
- 4) How do you exercise the unity of belief and faith in your life?

The works of faith and belief prove the servant's confession.
Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 2:18; Philippians 2:12-16; James 1:22-25; 1 Peter 3:8-18

- 1) To confess Jesus is to acknowledge Him as Lord and Master, how does Abraham like faith prove your confession?
- 2) Belief and faith similar to Abraham's is almost always expressed through daily and often mundane lifestyle choices. Are you comfortable with how you make lifestyle choices?
- 3) Is proving your faith the same as working for your salvation?
- 4) How are you proving your belief and faith?

The works of faith and belief prove the servant's repentance.

- 1) Repentance is essentially the process of relearning what the world has taught.
- 2) Are you willing to relearn life?
- 3) Are you willing to separate your new life in Christ from your old life in the world?

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There is a distinct difference between belief and faith and the works of law.
Romans 3:27b-28

- 1) What motivates how you to respond to a life circumstance?
- 2) As a Christian do you feel compelled to react a certain way because of a tradition, ritual, or opinion of Scripture?
- 3) Is obeying the gospel a work of law?
- 4) Which is a work of law: belief, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, or walk of life in Christ?
- 5) How does the Law of Moses affect you today?
- 6) Do you think there is any difference between obeying law and obeying obedience and righteousness?

False security is often built upon a foundation of religious ritual, traditions, and inferred or implied commands.

- 1) Where does your faith feel more secure: in how you serve or why you serve God?
- 2) Do you feel more spiritually secure if your faith is tried?
- 3) Do you need to confirm your faith in order to feel faith?
- 4) How important are traditions, rituals, and human interpretations of Scripture to your faith?
- 5) Are you comfortable with your faith?
- 6) Do you ever doubt your faith?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Law of Faith

It is impossible to accomplish God's will without faith.

Hebrews 11:6a, Romans 3:27b

- 1) How do you balance the feelings of inadequate faith and comfortable growing faith?
- 2) How does patience and maturing in faith connect?
- 3) What part does faith play in your everyday decisions and choices?
- 4) How does Scripture and faith connect?

The true "sons of Abraham" are those who practice faith as he did.

Galatians 3:6-7

- 1) What is so special about imitating Abraham's faith?
- 2) What do you think motivated Abraham's belief and faith?
- 3) What motivates your belief and faith in Jesus?
- 4) Is it hard for you to think faith when making simple lifestyle choices?
- 5) How does faith connect with panic decisions?
- 6) Is regular bible study important to build faith?
- 7) Can faith be developed through interrelationships with other Christians?
- 8) Where does faith come from?
- 9) How does fellowship with God develop faith?
- 10) How do you express spiritual fellowship with Jesus in a physical environment?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Law of Faith

Without practicing Abraham like faith it is impossible to receive righteousness.

- 1) What does righteousness mean to you?
- 2) What is the spiritual state of righteousness?
- 3) Why do you think God simply wants a natural unhindered response to His will, much like a child to his parents?
- 4) Abraham obeyed God even though he often did not understand the bigger picture, can you?
- 5) How do you think faith and the state of righteousness are connected?
- 6) How do you think faith and the works of God's standard of righteousness are connected?

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Section Three: Expectations

The Law of the Spirit of God

God's laws demonstrate a notable fact everyone needs to understand regardless of whether they desire to serve Him. God does not change; His will concerning the New Covenant is sure and cannot be changed. The writer of *Hebrews* revealed: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings" (13:8-9a). In order to experience freedom from slavery to sin the servant must appeal to God's mercy through Jesus Christ for redemption. This is the only way to receive freedom from the oppression of sin and Satan. It is a spiritual law. It cannot be changed by any human effort.

Sin debt to God is spiritual; it cannot be paid off through physical effort. Paul revealed in *Romans* what a slave of sin really thinks in his mind, "the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so" (8:7b). The law of God has everything to do with His righteousness and the holiness which He gives to those who have demonstrated their faith in His word through Jesus Christ. In order to maintain righteousness the believer must choose to live a holy life. The law points out the black and white nature of fellowship with God and His family of saints in Christ. A slave of sin cannot fellowship with Him because of his unholiness, only a forgiven and holy servant is honored with the blessing of fellowship.

There is an unchangeable requirement to receive God's grace of salvation. An absolute requirement of righteousness is God's gift of the Holy Spirit to a newly created believer in order to receive life, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (*Romans* 8:2). The law may be understood as: only the Spirit gives present life which leads directly to eternal life, but sin results in present death and leads to eternal death.

In his gospel letter *John* quoted Jesus prophesying: "He who believes in Me, as the scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (7:38). John then explained the meaning of the prophesy, "but this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive" (7:39a). The indwelling presence of the Spirit is the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord's prophecy. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Galatians*: "in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" resulting in assured righteousness (3:14). The servant's righteousness is dependent upon having received the indwelling presence of the Spirit. The Spirit's presence is dependent upon the realization of belief and faith in God's word and having received righteousness through Jesus.

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Section Three: Expectations

The Law of the Spirit of God

Fulfilling the “law of the Spirit of life” is an absolute requirement for any servant of sin appealing to God for his freedom. He must be willing to believe in Jesus and then express his belief and faith through obedience just as Abraham did. His confession is fulfilled by his willingness to follow the New Covenant stipulations written by Jesus Christ, agreed upon at the time of his purchase. In order to seal his righteousness, the gift of the Holy Spirit must be given to him. This is the only way that he will receive life as opposed to remaining in the spiritual reality “of sin and death” (*Romans 8:2b*).

Questions

God never changes; His word and law will never change.
Hebrews 13:8-9a

- 1) Is God dependable?
- 2) Is God predictable?
- 3) What happens in your heart if bad things are happening and you cannot feel your experience with God?
- 4) Do you need to experience God in order to know He is working in your life?
- 5) How does the need to experience God in the physical realm reconcile with faith?
- 6) Does God work in lives the same today as He did thousands of years ago?

The very exclusive way to enter into covenant with Jesus Christ will never change.
Acts 4:11-12

- 1) Do you think Jesus really means what He said even though it will cost the eternal life of countless numbers of people?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Law of the Spirit of God

- 2) Do you think God's compassion and love will allow for alternate ways to receive salvation?
- 3) Do you believe God's compassion will allow for such things as deathbed conversion without baptism? What about other alternate ways to receive salvation?
- 4) Do you believe God will allow someone to skip parts of the gospel response and receive salvation? (belief, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, life in faith)
- 5) Do you believe people who never hear the gospel will be saved?
- 6) Do you believe very young unbaptized children are saved?
- 7) How do you feel about people who are mentally incapable of making decisions about the gospel?

The law "of the Spirit of life" reveals the irreversible nature of two distinctly different spiritual realities, life and death.

Romans 8:2

- 1) What is spiritual life?
- 2) What is spiritual death?
- 3) What part in life and death does the Spirit have?
- 4) Why is learning about the work of the Spirit in redemption important?

The law irreversibly separates two opposing groups of people, the holy and the unholy.

- 1) Who is unholy?
- 2) Who is holy?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Law of the Spirit of God

- 3) Are there partially holy people?
- 4) Why do you think God draws such a distinctive line between the holy and unholy people?
- 5) Which group are you in?
- 6) Why do you feel this way?
- 7) Do you know for certain which group you are in?
- 8) Are you assuming God will change His gospel out of His love for your eternal fate?

Only the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is able to free prisoners of sin.
John 7:38-39a; Galatians 3:14

- 1) Do you feel free?
- 2) How does the Spirit free prisoners from the dungeon of sin?

A servant cannot be righteous or faithful to Jesus if he has not received the indwelling presence of the Spirit.
Romans 8:9-10; John 14:21, 23-24

- 1) What is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) Is the internal presence of the Spirit the same as the gifts which He gave to first century Christians?
- 3) Does faith allow you to feel the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 4) Do you have to have the indwelling presence of the Spirit in order to live?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Law of the Spirit of God

- 5) How do you know when you have received the indwelling presence of the Spirit?
- 6) Does obedience to the gospel play a part in receiving the Spirit?
- 7) What does receiving the Spirit have to do with God's love?
- 8) What connection does God's love have with the gospel?
- 9) How does your definition of love compare with God's?

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Section Three: Expectations

The Commandment

Unlike the first covenant with its hundreds of laws and stipulations, there is one basic commandment in the New Covenant authored by Jesus Christ and put into effect by His death, “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” (1 John 3:23). Within its two parts, Jesus tried to communicate the vital importance of belief and faith in His expressed will. Both responses are heart motivated expressions of a servant’s confession—Jesus alone is his Lord God and Master. Only those who are willing to believe in His deity, human life, human death, human burial, His resurrection, and ascension back into heaven will be allowed to covenant with Him.

Along with this His believers must be willing to give Him glory by loving His body of believers--fellow-servants in Christ, without any conditions attached. This assures the oneness of fellowship with God the Father and His family of saints in Jesus. The covenant describes the love of God, how He loves mankind, and how His children are to love Him and His body of believers in return, for the body is Jesus, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fill all in all” (Ephesians 1:23). In order to love Jesus the servant must love His body of believers. Brotherly love is Jesus love.

This commandment reveals a basic understanding of who He is, what He is, and what He has accomplished. In order to covenant with God the servant must be willing to maintain his initial commitment to: belief, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and continued obedience from the moment of redemption to death in Christ. This requirement fulfills *Jeremiah’s* prophetic vision of God’s people in the New Covenant, “they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (31:34b).

The servant’s continuance of obedience to God the Father through Jesus Christ is only possible if he is willing to commit to his belief, faith, and confession in Jesus until death.

When a slave of sin initially obeys this commandment he will become a participant in the laws of the Spirit and of faith, as a result of his forgiveness he is considered righteous, and is given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit by the grace of God. The commandment is not only required for the servant’s initial redemption but as counsel throughout the rest of his spiritual life in Christ. The commandment counsels how to develop assurance of initial completion of redemption and continued fellowship according to His will.

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The Commandment

In the next verse *John* wrote: “And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us” (3:24). The Lord’s will requires knowledge based faith, dependent entirely upon the servant’s active belief in the integrity of His word. Faith results from belief; together they will lead the servant of sin to become a freed believer in Christ. Once purchased the servant becomes a bond-servant to Jesus by his covenant with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

The believer’s knowledge of God in turn leads to His expectations of how a believer is expected to express his love towards Him. The practice of Godly love can only take place by the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit. The servant cannot love according to God’s expectations if he does not have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Anyone can mimic this type of spiritual love but only the believer has the Spirit which confirms his love as genuine. The love of a true believer is realized by faith in the grace of God.

In his gospel *John* quoted Jesus stating: “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). This one statement by Jesus described how the commandment to love functions in the life of His servants. Love is fulfilled through obedient worship and glorification of God the Father through Jesus Christ, which in turn is expressed through love towards the body of Christ. Loving each other in the Lord’s body is the same as loving, worshipping, and glorifying Jesus.

The opposite is true as well and results in unintended personal consequences; the servant who dislikes a fellow servant is demonstrating immature love towards Jesus, for all servants are one with Jesus. The Lord’s servant needs to carefully consider how he or she practices fellowship with fellow servants. A fellow servant is as capable of choosing to persecute another servant in Christ just as severely as a servant of sin may choose. It must be remembered, Jesus takes the care of His servants very seriously.

While on his way to Damascus Paul had a short interview with Jesus about how he chose to treat His body of believers. He told Paul about a very important aspect of fellowship; if someone chooses to mistreat one of His servants he has chosen to mistreat Jesus Christ – God: “‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who art thou Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’” (*Acts* 9:4b-5). This is a universal facet of fellowship – any servant who chooses to harm a servant of the Lord is unintentionally trying to harm the Lord.

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Section Three: Expectations

The Commandment

This one commandment to believe “in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another” expresses the seriousness of the Lord’s expectations for His servant’s complete respect for His authority and will which His name represents. *Matthew* quoted Jesus stating: “all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (28:18b). Jesus has absolute authority over life and death. Just as He warned His disciples, He is warning all to respectfully fear the authority of His name, “But I will warn you whom to fear; fear the one who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him” (*Luke* 12:5). Love is an expression of fear towards God. Love is fulfilled by observing the commandment’s of the Lord. Obedience which results from belief and faith is the servant’s way to express love towards his Lord and Master Jesus Christ and His body of believers.

Questions

In the new Covenant there is one basic, two-part commandment.

1 John 3:23; John 6:28-29

- 1) How do I reconcile a commandment with new covenant grace and faith?
- 2) How do you tend to react to this commandment: serving God in order to prevent apostasy or serving God according to the guidelines of the commandment in order to accomplish His will as best as possible?

The commandment focuses the Lord’s servant upon Him, not works, in order to perfectly obey the commandment.

Ephesians 1:23

- 1) Does the command to believe in Jesus focus upon your response to believe or on serving Jesus?
- 2) Is there a difference in motivation if the focus is upon what you are doing to respond to the gospel verses what Jesus is asking of you?
- 3) If the commandment is the expressed will of Jesus concerning how to receive salvation is the response a work of law or faith?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Commandment

- 4) Which part of the gospel response for salvation is a work or by faith: belief, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, life in Christ?
- 5) What does believing in Jesus mean to you?
- 6) Is believing “in the name of His Son Jesus Christ” a work of law since it is a commandment?
- 7) Since believing requires a physical response for proof is belief a work of law?
- 9) How do you express belief in Jesus?
- 10) Is belief connected to faith in any way?

In order to obey His command the Lord’s servant must remain committed to his confession which in turn fulfills prophetic vision.

Romans 10:8-10

- 1) What is a confession?
- 2) Why do you think Paul linked a servant’s confession – Jesus is Lord and Master, to belief?
- 3) Why do you think Paul linked both confession and belief with faith?
- 4) Why do you think Paul linked belief, confession, and faith with the gospel message?
- 5) Do you believe responding to the gospel message is connected to the Lord’s commandment to believe in His name?
- 6) Does this mean responding to the gospel call of God is a law or responding with faith to Master Jesus Christ?
- 7) What is the difference in motivation between faith and law?

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The Commandment

In order to enter into the new covenant a believer must express belief and faith. Hebrews 9:11-17; 8:10-13; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; Romans 11:26-27; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

- 1) What is a covenant? Try to draft the covenant as you see it in your life.
- 2) Do you know of any other covenant people make which includes God? (Hint: man and wife)
- 3) What does believing in Jesus have to do with entering into a covenant with Him?
- 4) Do you feel like a contracted bond-servant of the Lord Jesus your Master?
- 5) Does the fact of being a covenanted bond-servant of the Lord Jesus change how you practice your service to Him?
- 6) As a Christian you have entered into a covenant contract to serve Jesus. Is this an act of faith or law?

In order to enter into covenant with Jesus a believer must receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:7-11; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 6:16b-18; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30

- 1) What is your spiritual state of being if you do not have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How do you know for certain you have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit is the believer's assurance of his covenant with God.

1 John 3:24; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

- 1) How do you describe assurance?

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Questions

The Commandment

- 2) How does a believer feel assured?
- 3) How is assurance with faith experienced in the invisible and unsensed work of God?
- 4) Do you feel doubt if no physical evidence of salvation is available?
- 5) Do you ever feel the desire to do something which tries your faith in order to assure yourself of your faith?
- 6) What does comfortable faith feel like?
- 7) How does contented faith grow?

The Spirit is given to only those who respond with love towards God by practicing His commandment to believe in Jesus.
John 14:21, 23-24, 5:10

- 1) How is God's love different from human expectations of love?
- 2) If God expects a physical expression of love to fulfill His will how does this include faith?
- 3) Jesus said belief, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, and life in faith are all contained in His commandment to love God His Father through Himself. Are you willing to love God this way? Which part can be left out?
- 4) Who determines what is important for salvation in His commandment?

The commandment to believe is essentially a commandment to love Jesus and His body of believers – who are Jesus.
Acts 9:4b-5; Ephesians 4:6; John 15:12-15

- 1) What is one another love?

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Section Three: Expectations

Questions

The Commandment

- 2) How does this commandment to obey the Lord's new covenant faith require fellow believers to love one another?
- 3) Is one another love connected with practicing love towards Jesus?
- 4) What are the Lord's expectations of interrelationships amongst His body?
- 5) How do you feel about expressing Godly love towards a brother or sister whom you don't particularly care for?
- 6) Do you practice love towards brethren who are weak, practicing sin, or outside of your comfort zone?
- 7) Would you be willing to risk your life for a brother or sister who doesn't like you?
- 8) Is risking your life for a brother or sister the same as risking your life for Jesus?
- 9) Do you think relationships with fellow Christian's determine your relationship with Jesus?
- 10) Are you able to fellowship with God (your participation in a partnership with God) if you do not fellowship with other believers?
- 11) Is assembly with other Christians important to you?

The commandment to "love one another" is essentially a commandment to love Jesus.

1 John 3:23

- 1) Why do you think Jesus needed to command one another love?
- 2) How do you define one another love?

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The Commandment

- 3) Is one another love an expression of love towards an invisible God?
- 4) What do you think you need to feel when expressing love towards Jesus?

In Christ the expression of love fulfills His commandment to “believe” and “love one another” and recognizes His authority.

Matthew 28:18b; Luke 12:5; 1 John 3:23-24

- 1) Is one another love an expression of faith?
- 2) How important is it to express faith through one another love?
- 3) Is one another love a work in order to satisfy the requirements of law or is it something far greater?

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Section Three: Expectations

The Royal Law

The second part of the Lord's two part commandment stated, "and love one another just as He commanded us" (*James 3:23b*). This commandment carries just as much spiritual authority as believing in Jesus. It is inseparably linked with faith. All purchased servants are in the body of Christ. They all work together for a singular cause – giving glory to Jesus which in turn glorifies God the Father. Love of God is expressed through belief and faith in His will--the commandments authored by Jesus, "he who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me, and he who loves Me, shall be loved by My Father" (*John 14:21a*).

There are at least two basic ways in which to respond to God in love according to His will:

- 1) The believer must be willing to faithfully obey His commandments through Jesus Christ.
- 2) The believer must faithfully express Godly love, which imitates the love of Christ towards His human creation and is especially focused upon fellow-believers. Neither response is able to stand on its own; both must be as one love response to God through Jesus Christ.

In *James*, the author helps to define who God is speaking of when He said, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (*2:8b*). He spoke specifically about fellow believers in Christ being neglected. A bond-servant's "neighbor" is his fellow bond-servant in Christ. The one "royal law" is God's absolute requirement for all of His children to express love towards one another in faith motivated Spirit-led ways. To love according to the will of God is not natural. It is not based upon the feelings of heart even though the heart plays a critical part in its practice. Godly love is a chosen act of obeying the Lord's will.

Paul described the how-to's of inter-body love in the partnership of fellowship in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*, "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, and does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (*13:4-7*). Love is at the heart of fellowship within the body of Christ. Love is not easy because the Spirit is retraining the servant how to live in righteousness according to the righteous standard of God.

God is not trying to say His redeemed children are to ignore the needs of His children lost in sin, but their number one priority is to express love for one another. Love and fellowship must not be separated in the body of Christ. The

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Section Three: Expectations

The Royal Law

Lord offers at least four different ways to interrelate with servants of sin who live under Satan's authority in the world:

1) In his letter to *Galatians* Paul tried to encourage his brethren with these words, "so then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men" (6:10).

2) Paul made a very special effort to relate to those he focused upon for salvation, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 *Corinthians* 9:22). Paul allowed himself to enter into the lives of those needing to hear the gospel, yet he did so while maintaining the integrity of his faith in Jesus. He never compromised his witness, values, or identity.

3) Paul mentioned in his letter to *Titus*, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men" (3:1-2). The integrity of one's witness depends upon perception. The servants of the world do not understand a servant of Christ. But they do know enough to understand whether or not they have enough apparent evidence to degrade the grace of God and the faithful in Christ. The believer's lifestyle, politics, obedience to contemporary political circumstances, one another fellowship amongst brethren, and kindness to the lost, speak volumes to the unsaved about the vast difference between a servant of sin and a servant of Christ.

4) In his *first* letter *Peter* encouraged his brethren to "Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king" (2:17). In doing so he made a clear distinction between fellowship amongst fellow servants of Christ and interrelationships with servants of sin. The interaction is far different. The brethren are encouraged to "love one another", but to get along and treat nonbelievers and authority with respect especially in regard to teaching the gospel (1 *John* 3:23b).

A servant of the Lord loves his fellow servant differently than a servant of the world. He works with Him to accomplish His work on earth which in turn glorifies Him. Those who choose to serve sin fellowship with the world and its leader Satan. Fellowship between two believers is a spiritual partnership unique to Christ and is motivated by the Lord's definition of love. It is not based upon emotion and is not relative to any physical circumstances. The Lord's love consistently offers self-giving concern for another believer and "showing consideration for all men" (*Titus* 3:2b).

Love is the one attitude all believers must learn throughout their lifetime. Love is not a natural activity, because it's not based upon emotion, or the world's

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The Royal Law

understanding and practice of love, even though it often involves emotion. For example, only by Godly love is the Lord's servant able to love his enemy as counseled by Jesus, "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (*Matthew 5:44*). Upon death, belief and faith end with sight, hope finds its fulfillment, only love endures into eternity, "But now abide in faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (*I Corinthians 13:13*). What the believer learns during his lifetime of interactions among his brethren and the people of the world will remain with him in eternity.

Questions

Love is basically the Lord's command to anyone choosing to serve Him.
James 3:23b; John 14:21a

- 1) How can love be an expression of faith if it is a command?
- 2) Do you feel as if loving Jesus is a legal requirement instead of by faith?
- 3) How do you integrate faith into a commandment?

The believer's neighbor is his fellow servant in Christ.
James 2:8b

- 1) Who is your "neighbor"?
- 2) From a spiritual point of view who is living close to you?
- 3) Is a servant of the Lord a spiritual neighbor with a servant of sin and Satan?
- 4) A Christian lives in a different spiritual realm and kingdom than servants of sin. Is a servant of sin and Satan a neighbor of a holy servant of the Lord's?

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Questions

The Royal Law

Godly love is not necessarily based upon emotions.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- 1) Even though love involves emotions do you depend upon emotion to determine which Christian you are willing to love?
- 2) How do you determine who to love?
- 3) Must you feel love before you are able to practice one another love?

Interrelationships with people of the world require Godly love but the nature of love is fundamentally different.

Galatians 6:10; 1 Corinthians 9:22; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 3:23b

- 1) God expects His people to serve Him as His servant in a foreign and often hostile spiritual realm given over to Satan. How do you express Godly love within the world?
- 2) Is a Christian able to fellowship with a nonbeliever?
- 3) Is a Christian able to practice one another love with nonbeliever's?
- 4) Is a Christian able to practice loving interrelationships among nonbeliever's?

Godly love must be learned, it is not natural.

Matthew 5:44; 1 Corinthians 13:13

- 1) Learning how to express God-like love in fellowship is not easy, are you willing to learn?
- 2) How do you learn how to love an unlovable brother or sister in Christ?
- 3) How does freedom to choose whom to practice one another love towards connect with the Lord's commandment to love one another?

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Questions

The Royal Law

- 4) Are you willing to practice what you learn about one another love?
- 5) Does your practice of love express how much you are willing to love Jesus?
- 6) What connection does one another love have with practicing love towards Jesus?

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Section Three: Expectations

His Sacrifice for Sin

Jesus willingly allowed the Jewish leaders to bring Him before Roman authorities for judgment. Paul wrote in *Ephesians*: “Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (5:2b).

As the physical side of the Lord’s ministry drew to a close, dramatic changes began take place in the nation of Israel and its covenant with God. When Jesus allowed the Roman authorities to nail His body to a cross for certain death, His bloody sacrifice set a new age in motion.

He accomplished what the Law could not, “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (*Hebrews* 9:13-14). The self-giving sacrifice of Jesus upon His cross is vital for any person appealing “to God for a good conscience” (*1 Peter* 3:21b).

A “good conscience” is a conscience completely cleansed of sin memory, it’s innocent. This is so important because the conscience bears witness of transgressions against any law--the Law of Moses, one’s own instinctual moral law, or any human law. Paul wrote: “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 ... in that day the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them” (*Romans* 2:12, 15). Everyone has the basic “knowledge of good and evil” (*Genesis* 2:17a).

The writer of *Hebrews* noted: “For it is fitting that we should have a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (7:26-27).

No one forced Jesus to die on a Roman cross. He offered Himself as a sacrificial lamb in order to secure the one and only satisfactory payment for the curse of sin, an innocent and sinless death. Only God could do this because only God in the flesh had the faith and discipline to accomplish such a daunting task. God resurrected Jesus and He returned to heaven as the permanent high priest of His body and temple of believers. Only God is able to do this. As a result of His resurrection Jesus is able to use His sacrifice as a satisfactory redemption payment for whoever chooses to appeal to Him for purchase.

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His Sacrifice for Sin

Thus, by His sacrificial death, all believers in Christ who choose to prove their belief and faith through obedience to His New Covenant will experience sanctification as a result of His sacrifice. When a servant is purchased by Jesus he is separated from the world and sin, he is made holy and becomes the Lord's bond-servant. In *Hebrews* the writer revealed: "'Behold, I have come to do Thy will.' He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (10:9-10).

When Jesus redeems a servant of sin, his sin debt to God is forgiven as a result of the purchase. The resurrected servant is recreated in Christ. The purchase takes place when the servant is "united with Him" in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:5a). He enters into the water of baptism as a dead servant of sin. He dies with Jesus. He is buried with Jesus. He is resurrected a new creature with Jesus. He experiences his rebirth with Jesus. Even though His body and old self remain the same, he is a new person spiritually. His spirit is recreated, thus his conscience is new as well. He emerges from the water a new spiritual babe, innocent and holy in Christ.

Ezekiel once prophesied, "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (12:19-20). A child of God is sinless because he is a newly created life form. He is spiritually circumcised from his old flesh. Except for his physical body and old self, the servant has returned to the same spiritual condition with which he entered in to the world at birth – innocent and holy with a clear conscience.

The moment a slave of sin is sanctified he is freed from his debt to sin and becomes holy which separates him from anyone enslaved to sin. God sets him apart from the world; he is no longer a slave of sin, he is the Lord's servant: "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (*Colossians* 1:13-14). The former servant of sin is able to enter into the presence of God through Jesus because of his righteousness.

As a result of his newfound spiritual cleanliness, he is pure and holy in the sight of God. The former servant of sin is a redeemed servant of God through Jesus Christ, his new owner. Thus, he is separated from Satan's dominion in the physical world. As a servant of Christ he serves righteousness and obedience. He is with Christ in His spiritual kingdom. This is why *Peter* told his brethren in his

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His Sacrifice for Sin

first letter they are “aliens and strangers” while still living in the familiar setting of the world (2:11a).

A little over seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, *Isaiah* prophetically spoke of the sacrificial death of God in the flesh: “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering ... As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. He poured Himself out to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors” (53:10a, 11, 12b).

No other faith or religion in the world promises what Jesus is freely offering to any person--a way to release sin debt with a satisfactory payment, a sinless death. Why would God do such a thing for those who choose to reject Him? The answer is revealed in the character of God, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (*John* 3:16a).

Questions

Jesus willingly offered Himself to mankind to save mankind.
Ephesians 5:2b

- 1) Are you willing to learn love according to the Lord’s standard?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus decided to love you with His death?
- 3) What did you feel about Jesus when you found out He chose to offer His human life up as a sacrifice in order to give your life?

Jesus accomplished what no other sacrifice, tradition, or law could do--cleanse the conscience.

Hebrews 9:13-14; 1 Peter 3:21b; Romans 2:12, 15; Genesis 2:17

- 1) What is your conscience?
- 2) Why is your conscience so important?

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His Sacrifice for Sin

- 3) Do you believe your conscience is so corrupted with sin no force is able to cleanse it back to innocence?
- 4) As a Christian do you feel as if your conscience is still corrupt?
- 5) Even though you still feel guilt from the past sin and conscience, do you believe you are holy and have an innocent conscience?
- 6) When you feel guilt from past sin, what is causing it to bother you?

The sacrifice which Jesus offered will never take place again.
Hebrews 7:26-27

- 1) Do you think Jesus will need to return in order to offer His human life again?
- 2) Do you think Jesus succeeded or failed in His mission on earth?
- 3) How does His sacrifice personally affect you?
- 4) Does His sacrifice make a difference in how you choose to serve Him?

His sacrifice enabled the New Covenant to begin.
Hebrews 10:9

- 1) Is His covenant important to you?
- 2) How is His covenant and expressing love to God related?
- 3) How does His covenant affect your behavior and service as a servant?
- 4) What does a covenant do?
- 5) Is His covenant an important part of your salvation experience?
- 6) When you share in the Lord's Supper what do you think about?

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Questions

His Sacrifice for Sin

His sacrifice offers a servant of sin sanctification.
Hebrews 10:10; Romans 6:5a

- 1) What is the state of sanctification?
- 2) Do you feel separated from slavery to sin?
- 3) Do you feel separated from Satan's authority?
- 4) Do you feel like a citizen of the Lord's kingdom?
- 5) Do you feel holy?
- 6) Do you feel righteous?
- 7) Do you feel your conscience is innocent?
- 8) Do you feel you are a part of the Lord's body?
- 9) How do you know for certain you can correctly feel unseen spiritual realities?
- 10) How do you know for certain the Lord's promises are fulfilled?
- 11) How is the apparent necessity to feel spiritual realities connected to faith?
- 12) Does Jesus require His servant to physically sense his sanctification?

By the power of His sacrifice Jesus recreates people.
Ezekiel 12:19-20

- 1) From what state of being are you recreated?
- 2) How did God recreate you?
- 3) What part of you did the Spirit recreate?

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His Sacrifice for Sin

- 4) Is recreation the same as being born again?
- 5) Do you feel recreated?
- 6) How do you know for certain you are recreated?

His sacrifice frees people from the dark dungeon of sin.
Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 2:11a

- 1) Even though everyone experiences the newfound desire to repent from evil activities, are you able to feel freedom from the bondage of sin?
- 2) How did bondage to sin feel?
- 3) If you are able to feel sin or freedom from sin, how do you feel a spiritual reality?
- 4) Can you trust your heart to feel correctly?
- 5) Can you trust your mind to think and make spiritual decisions which are independent of God's counsel?
- 6) How do you feel with a spiritual heart what you have last experienced in early childhood--innocence? Are you able to clearly remember how you thought as a child?
- 7) Do you think your old physical heart is able to mislead you spiritually?
- 8) Do you think your feelings are able to mislead you?
- 9) Are all physical indications of spiritual phenomenon from God?
- 10) If you cannot feel freedom from sin, how do you know you are free?

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Questions

His Sacrifice for Sin

Only His sacrifice is able to justify the guilt of sin.

Isaiah 53:10a, 11, 12b

- 1) Are there any other ways other than Jesus which are able to free you from your bondage to sin?
- 2) Why must you be recreated in order for God to consider you justified of all sin?
- 3) Is there any other way to justify your sin debt to God?

Jesus offered His sacrifice out of love for His mankind.

John 3:16a, 12:23-26

- 1) How much do you think Jesus loves you?
- 2) Are you willing to respond to Him with the same self-giving love?
- 3) What does Jesus mean when He said you must be willing to loose you life in order to love Him?

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A Ransom for a Slave

With His death Jesus finalized the payment necessary to redeem or buy back a slave of sin bound to his debt of sin and spiritual death, "For even the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (*Mark 10:45*). Jesus came to His creation to fulfill this purpose and the long awaited promise.

He needed to offer His innocent sinless life as a spiritual payment in order to satisfy a sinner's spiritual debt to God--sin. The Law of Moses, any type of sacrifice, religious ceremony, moral uprightness, personal piety, service for mankind, faith to a religion, or obedience to any law, are incapable of doing this. "The wages of sin is death" and sustains the continuance of death for the debtor (*Romans 6:23a*). "But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord", the substitutionary death of an innocent sinless person (*Romans 6:23b*). Jesus came to offer "life" by offering His sinless and innocent body to death. After His resurrection, since He is God, he is able to spiritually unite His death, burial, and resurrection with the dead slave of sin.

By the power of the Spirit a servant of sin is spiritually "united" with the Lord's death (*Romans 6:5a*). This is how God creates the rebirth of a human being. Sin is so powerful spiritual rebirth is the only way for a servant of sin to receive freedom from its death hold. The debt must be eliminated and the curse of law must be satisfied. In order for this to happen the servant must submit to spiritually die with Jesus, "For he who has died is freed from sin" (*Romans 6:7*). Sin and its associated death remain attached to the old body and self but the newly resurrected spirit is just like an innocent baby – free from liability to sin. Paul spoke of this dual reality in *Romans*, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (*8:10*).

Only Jesus is able to fulfill the demands of sin in order to offer the necessary spiritual payment. And He can do this for all time. After Jesus died God the Father resurrected Him three days later. He returned to heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father, and use His innocent death to offer the only ransom payment able to give the servant life.

Paul stated in his *first* letter to *Timothy*: "for there is one God, and one mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (*2:5-6a*). Only God is able to use death in this manner. But in order to acquire the satisfactory payment God had to enter into the human

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A Ransom for a Slave

experience – completely human, live a sinless life, and allow the bloody sacrificial offering of His body.

Questions

The Lord entered into His creation in order to “give His life a ransom”.
Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:3-6;

- 1) What does the word ransom mean to you?
- 2) God ransomed the Hebrew people from Egypt, how does this real life event illustrate what is taking place spiritually?
- 3) Do you feel ransomed?
- 4) How do you know you are ransomed?

Sin causes death in this present life and determines eternal existence.
Romans 6:23a; Matthew 8:22, 22:32; Luke 15:32; John 5:21-25; Acts 10:42-43;
Ephesians 2:1-5, 5:14; 1 Peter 4:6

- 1) How are you dead when you are alive?
- 2) Is the death spoken of spiritual or physical?
- 3) How do you know you are spiritually dead?
- 4) How do you know you are spiritually alive?
- 5) Are you able to feel either spiritual condition?
- 6) Why does Jesus need to ransom a spiritually dead servant of sin?

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Questions

A Ransom for a Slave

The Lord's gift of life is the only way to escape an otherwise inescapable present spiritual reality and eternal destiny separated from God.

Romans 3:32b

- 1) Do you believe there are other religious paths which accomplish the same thing as the Lord's ransom?
- 2) Do you think the Lord's ransom makes salvation too exclusive and sectarian?
- 3) Do you think there are other ways to go to heaven other than through Jesus?
- 4) What happens to all of the people who disagree with Jesus?
- 5) When you teach the gospel in its entirety and receive rejection who is the person rejecting?

The ransom takes place when a servant of sin is spiritually united by faith with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.

Romans 6:5a, 6:7

- 1) Do you think baptism is just as important for salvation as belief, faith, confession, and repentance?
- 2) How is a servant of sin united with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection?
- 3) How do belief, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and a life of faith, work together as a united response to the Lord's offer to ransom a servant of sin?

The Lord's ransom effectively separates the servant's old life of death—his flesh, from his new life.

Romans 6:6

- 1) How is the Lord's ransom offered to you?
- 2) How do you accept His offer of ransom?

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Questions

A Ransom for a Slave

- 3) Is your response to receive His ransom a work to earn His ransom or a submission to His will?
- 4) Why do you think belief, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism all involve physical responses which are interconnected with each other?
- 5) Does your new life in Christ feel separated from your old life in sin?
- 6) What are you doing to remain separate from your old flesh and its desires?
- 7) What are you doing to encourage a brother or sister to grow in Christ?

No slave of sin is excluded from the Lord's offer to free him.

1 Timothy 2:5-6a

- 1) Do you think there are certain predetermined people who will never accept the Lord's offer for redemption?
- 2) Why do you think people reject Jesus?
- 3) Do you feel your life is so badly damaged by sin it is impossible for Jesus to ransom your life?
- 4) Do you ever think about returning to serve sin?

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Section Three: Expectations

Propitiation for Sin

When Jesus offered up His innocent life as a once for all sacrifice, His death satisfied the demands of, “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us” (*Colossians* 2:14a). Every servant of sin who appeals to God for redemption will be purchased by the grace of God because of his belief and faith in the power of the Jesus Christ to fulfill what He has promised. Paul said, “being justified” is “a gift of His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as propitiation in His blood through faith” (*Romans* 3:24-25a).

In order to satisfy the demands of “the certificate of debt” – the curse of death, Jesus offered His human body. This is what propitiation is all about, the satisfaction of sin debt, one death for another. Jesus is able to spiritually join any servant of sin with His death, burial, and resurrection. This takes place when a servant of sin is “united” with Jesus within the water of baptism.

Spiritual death begins the moment an innocent child chooses to commit his first sin. He loses his blamelessness and holiness as a result of establishing a single debt entry of sin. When a person loses his holiness or righteousness, God is no longer able to allow Him to fellowship in His holy presence. To restore lost fellowship, the servant’s growing debt of sin must be completely erased as if the sin debt never occurred in the first place. There is only one way for this to happen. The old servant must become a newly created servant completely separated from his old body, life, debt, self, conscience, and accountability to law.

The sacrifice Jesus allowed to take place is God’s expression of love towards His fallen people. Regardless of never ending rebellion against His righteousness He still loves the people He created. *John* wrote in his *first* letter: “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (4:10).

By the grace of God anyone is able to respond with belief and faith motivated obedience to His revealed will. The writer of *Hebrews* noted this about God’s love towards His people: “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (2:17). When the writer mentions “of the people” he means any person in bondage to sin who appeals to Jesus for redemption, throughout “the whole world” (1 *John* 2:2b).

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Questions

Propitiation for Sin

Every servant of sin is enslaved to sin because of a spiritual “certificate of debt” – his list of sins against God.

Colossians 2:14a; John 8:34; Romans 5:18; James 2:10

- 1) How many sins does it take to create a debt of sin to God?
- 2) Is there such a thing as a list of sins too long for forgiveness?
- 3) How does a person free himself from sin?

A servant’s justification from his guilt is a gift of God’s grace because it required the Lord’s sacrifice and is freely offered to anyone.

Romans 3:24

- 1) What do you think justification means?
- 2) Why do think Jesus had to sacrifice His innocent human body in order to offer a way to free a sinner from his debt of sin to God?

The Lord’s innocent death, His burial, and resurrection satisfy all of the spiritual demands of recreating an innocent new spirit in a servant.

Romans 3:25a

- 1) Jesus offered His life to free you from sin, are you willing to offer yours to Him to serve Him?
- 2) What is the connection between justification and propitiation?
- 3) What is propitiation?

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Propitiation for Sin

The Lord's "propitiation for the sins of the people" is an expression of how much God loves His people.

1 John 4:10; 2:2b

- 1) How did Jesus satisfy the spiritual demands of owing a debt of sin to God His Father?
- 2) Why do you think death is so important in the path to life?
- 3) Are you willing to love Jesus according to His will?

In order to satisfy the demand of guilt – an innocent death, Jesus had to enter into His creation fully human.

Hebrews 2:17

- 1) Is the power of sin and its guilt great enough to affect your eternal destiny? Does guilt demand justice?
- 2) Does guilt demand accountability to God?
- 3) Jesus said He lived as human as everyone else, do you believe this?
- 4) Do you think Jesus had extra-human powers from God before His ministry began?
- 5) Why do you think Jesus had to live and die as a human being?
- 6) What do you think the connection is between the Lord's humanity and His work of propitiation for humanity?

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Redemption

In order for a slave of sin to receive freedom from his captivity to sin; he must be purchased with a spiritual payment. Redemption is the process of buying a slave of sin; Jesus uses the ransom payment of His innocent sinless death to purchase back what originally belonged to Him. *Titus* wrote: “for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men ... Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession” (2:11, 13b-14).

Redemption is offered by Jesus at the cost of His life. He died while still in a state of innocence and holiness thus meeting the cost requirement of sin debt – an innocent death. Sin debt requires an innocent death to satisfy its curse of death. Jesus had to die in innocence because this is the only way He could unite a servant of sin with His death, burial, and resurrection into life. It is not possible for anyone dead in sin to do this. Life requires innocence and holiness.

All sinners have to die to satisfy the debt. But God offered an alternate death. If Jesus sinned even once He could not have sacrificed His life as an offering because He would have separated His human life from God. Mission failed. The Lord had no other choice in life; He had to maintain His innocence in order to die sinless.

Jesus did not have the same choices offered to mankind. He did not have the choice to sin even though He possessed the same freedom, nature, lust, and experienced the same temptations as a common human being. John wrote in his *Revelation*, “And they sang a new song, ‘Worthy art thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’” (5:9).

The redemption God provides for every person is through His grace, freedom cannot be acquired from any other source. No one is able to die and resurrect himself from death. Only God the Father is capable of this. He resurrected the Lord’s body from death and gave Him His new spiritual body to complete His resurrection. The human part of Jesus did not do this.

New life is freely offered and given exclusively by Jesus. Paul wrote: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace” (*Ephesians* 1:7). In other words, nothing humanly possible will aid or substitute for what God is freely offering to mankind.

Redemption is strictly a God to mankind offer only He is able to fulfill. This is why salvation is a gift of grace even though belief and faith must be

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Redemption

demonstrated through obedience. Obedience, which includes baptism, proves the validity of the servant's confession of the deity of Jesus and commitment to repent. Once redemption is received, it must be maintained through a life of committed faith in Christ until physical death. Even though redemption is a free offer from Jesus, the servant of sin must willingly allow Jesus to purchase him into His grace of redemption. This requires his active participation in the process of salvation. The servant must agree to covenant with Jesus. Redemption is a marriage ceremony and covenant signing; the two become one for life. Only spiritual adultery will cause a divorce and forfeit of the Lord's New Covenant blessings.

The servant must agree to the Lord's covenant purchase agreement and serve Him as His slave according to the stipulations of the New Covenant. Only God is able to offer redemption from the spiritual debt of sin, all the slave is able to do is serve His will for the rest of his life. *Matthew* recorded the disciples asking Jesus, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus answered, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (19:25b, 26b).

Salvation cannot be found through any other means, regardless of a person's motivations to do good deeds on the behalf of humanity or pioussness towards God. Peter bluntly stated to his Jewish brethren – good God fearing men, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:13). Redemption is through Jesus or no one, not the Holy Spirit, not God the Father, or any other religion or faith, "no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (*John* 14:6b).

Questions

Redemption is the spiritual process of reuniting a servant of sin with God.
Titus 2:11-14

- 1) What is Jesus redeeming a sinner with?
- 2) Do you think Jesus is able to purify your spirit?
- 3) What do you think spiritual purity is?
- 4) Is spiritual purity holiness?

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Redemption

5) How does spiritual purity set a person apart for Jesus?

6) If Jesus redeemed you, does He own you?

Jesus is the only person who ever chose to completely obey God His Father and remain innocent and sinless, which enabled only Him with the ability to redeem any servant of sin.

Revelation 5:9

1) Is Jesus the only person to have never transgressed against a law?

2) Is redemption the same as purchasing a servant from sin?

3) If Jesus purchased you, does it mean He owns you?

4) If Jesus owns you does this mean you are His servant?

5) If Jesus is your Lord and Master how are you responding to His will?

6) If Jesus owns you, how are you choosing to serve Him?

7) Do you feel you are in a different spiritual kingdom?

8) Do you feel like a priest?

9) Do you feel like a ruler?

10) How do you know for sure you are redeemed?

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Questions

Redemption

His sacrifice made redemption possible; this is why redemption is by the grace of God.

Ephesians 1:7; Matthew 19:25b, 26b; Exodus 12:13, 21-22; 1 Chronicles 17:21; Hebrews 9:11-22

- 1) How does His grace connect with the physical response required by belief and faith?
- 2) What do you think the Exodus from Egypt illustrates about the importance of blood and freedom?
- 3) Is there anything you could do to earn the freedom Jesus offers?
- 4) What happens to people who live extraordinary lives of religious service who have not responded to the Lord's gospel according to His expressed will?
- 5) Can a person think he is serving Jesus while still serving sin?

Salvation is only possible by redemption and redemption is only possible through Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:13; John 14:6b

- 1) Does this mean only Jesus is able to offer redemption?
- 2) What is the Lord trying to tell people about other faiths?
- 3) How important is the gospel in relation to redemption?

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The Grace of Redemption

The Lord's offer to freely give redemption to any person is much different from God's grace of benevolent general care for humanity and the rest of His creation, "for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (*Matthew* 5:45). His benevolent grace cannot save anyone even though it sustains life and reveals His reality. However, God may use this type of grace to show a servant of sin the way to salvation.

Jesus died on the cross because He loves people. No one ever asked for redemption. If Jesus hadn't introduced an alternative death for sin into the human experience the blessing would be impossible to imagine. The writer of *Hebrews* said: "But we do not see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (2:9).

Redemptive grace is strictly an act of love on the part of man's creator to His people. Jesus is the very expression of God's love towards His people, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (*Titus* 2:11). In order to fully understand redemptive grace one needs to study Jesus. Not only is Jesus the manifestation of God's grace He is the realization of the truth of God's grace in His world, "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (*John* 1:17b).

Love is the nature and motivation of redemptive grace. Grace is God's loving favor towards His people regardless of their rebellion in sin towards Him. He desires for all people to enter into heaven.

A slave of sin needs to listen to the gospel message and approach Jesus for his purchase according to His New Covenant. He is incapable of doing anything other than to believe in who Jesus is, and faithfully obey the instructions given by Jesus in order for the grace of redemption to take place. The only physical requirement placed upon a slave of sin is his belief, faith, confession, commitment to repent and obedience. Obedience includes baptism and continued submission to the stipulations found in the covenant Jesus authored, to which the slave agrees. His redemption is something only God is able to accomplish. Paul stated in his letter to the *Romans*, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (3:23-24).

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The Grace of Redemption

In *Ephesians*, Paul stressed: “by grace you have been saved” (2:8a). His grace demonstrates His never ending love towards His creation. God initiates His process of salvation by providing His grace through Jesus Christ. He expects a response from any servant of sin desiring His grace of redemption. But the response must be motivated by belief in the deity of Jesus and the integrity of His word. He must willingly express a responsive belief and faith in the unseen work of God as promised in His word. However, his response is not a deliberate effort to please Him or some required religious ritual in order to receive divine approval and the grace of salvation.

Grace must be accompanied with belief, faith, confession, repentant obedience, baptism, and a Spirit led life of continued repentance, spiritual growth, and ending life in faith. Grace alone cannot save anyone. Grace alone is the offer of salvation. His offer must be joined with a response. Redemptive grace joins with the servant the moment he is redeemed. Grace is of God and all of His redeemed are partnered with God the Father in the body of Christ, who is God. Redemptive grace is fully realized when the servant receives the grace of salvation.

In *Romans* Paul mentioned how God’s grace is a vital part of His overall plan of salvation: “therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into His grace in which we stand” (5:1-2a). Paul described the grace of life as at least a five part blessing:

1) A slave of sin is introduced “by faith into His grace”. His grace of redemption is a spiritual state of being, entered into according to God’s stated will. Belief and faith must be involved because His promises and grace of salvation cannot be perceived in the physical realm. The servant must confess the deity of the Lord Jesus. In order to honor the confession Jesus must be obeyed as Master. Belief and faith can only be realized in life spiritually, even though they must be physically manifested; first by the slave of sin and then by the purchased slave “for obedience” and “of righteousness” (*Romans* 6:16a, 18b).

2) Faith is developed only from believing in “the word of Christ” (*Romans* 10:17b). God tells people what the unseen is, how He works, what His promises are, and His expectations according to the New Covenant. Then it’s up to them how they are willing to respond. The attitude of faith God looks for is “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (*Hebrews* 11:1b). This is one reason why faith cannot be based upon works of the flesh—physical works are seen.

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The Grace of Redemption

Even though faith must be expressed through works, the motivation behind faith separates a response of faith from works to earn grace. Faith is based entirely upon one's belief in the word of God concerning His invisible works. For example, the slave of sin expresses belief and faith during his baptism because the redemption taking place and the reception of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit cannot be perceived by any human sense. If it could then it would not be based upon faith but sight.

3) A slave of sin is "justified by faith" (*Romans* 5:1a). This takes place as a result of obeying the Lord's directions concerning how He redeems a servant of sin. The act of redemption and freedom from the slavery of sin is spiritual and cannot be perceived by human sense, therefore the whole process of salvation from the spiritual side is based and dependent upon the belief, faith, and obedience of the one appealing to God for His grace of salvation. This is why belief and faith must be realized through a physical response to His word. The servant's answer to His free offer demonstrates his acceptance of God's grace.

The whole spiritual process of salvation other than one's physical response is imperceptible and the only reliable source of information regarding the process is Scripture—by God's grace. Justification not only describes the forgiveness of sin debt, but also involves the complete absence of any record of debt. The justified servant has a newly recreated and resurrected spirit which is innocent and holy. The new servant spirit is like a newborn baby—no record of sin exists because sin cannot be inherited. This spiritual experience is based and dependent upon belief and faith in the Lord's word and promises. The whole process is a gift of His grace. It cannot be caused by anything else.

The process of redemption is based entirely upon trusting God's word and expressing hope in His promises. This is why obedience to the Lord's New Covenant will, which includes baptism, is not a work to earn God's favor. It is a work of faith in the unseen grace of God as He fulfills His promises.

Without faith in the promises being fulfilled by the power of God within the water of baptism God's grace of redemption becomes meaningless and justification will not be given. Confident assured faith ensures the peace of knowing for certain God does what He promises, even though unseen, and will result in an eternity in heaven. The servant's faith assures him concerning the unseen promises of God's grace of life. He doesn't depend upon feeling saved; he is fully assured of his fellowship with God the Father because of his faith in His Word. Faith transcends feelings and physical perceptions of salvation.

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Section Three: Expectations

The Grace of Redemption

4. "We stand" (*Romans* 5:2b) secure and strong in the redemptive grace of God through Jesus Christ. Once a slave of sin is purchased and transferred into His kingdom his eternal security remains protected for as long as he chooses to remain His bond-servant. There is absolutely no satanic force strong enough to separate a servant of God in Christ from his loving embrace in Christ. The only force strong enough is the law of one's freedom of choice, "if God is for us, who is against us" (*Romans* 8:31b). The "who" refers only to the flesh and the freedom of choice to obey its desire to regain control over the saint's life, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (*Romans* 8:6). "Peace and life" are blessings of the redemptive grace of God.

Questions

The Lord's grace of redemption is different from His grace of taking care of His people.

Matthew 5:45

- 1) Do you believe God took care of you before becoming His child?
- 2) How do you feel about God taking care of evil people just as well or apparently better than someone who is serving Him?
- 3) Do you think God has complete control over the earth even though bad things happen?
- 4) How different do you think His grace of redemption is in contrast to His grace of taking care of His creation?
- 5) Is there any way for a person to sidestep His grace of redemption in order to receive redemption?

The grace of redemption is His offer of salvation.

Hebrews 2:9; Titus 2:11

- 1) Why is salvation a blessing of grace?

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The Grace of Redemption

- 2) If Jesus did not explain and create redemption by His death could salvation have taken place by any other means?
- 3) If God did not mention salvation do you think you would have ever thought of its possibility?
- 4) What is grace?
- 5) Is grace a free gift to mankind?
- 6) Why do you think God is offering redemption to anyone who hates Him?
- 7) Are you able to substitute a very benevolent life for grace in order to receive salvation?

The grace of redemption is only “realized through Jesus Christ”.
John 1:17b; Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:8a

- 1) Do you think Jesus is being overly restrictive?
- 2) Is it unloving for God to restrict how a person must return to Him for redemption?
- 3) How do you feel about Jesus offering salvation to you?

Even though the grace of redemption is a free offer it must be united with a belief and faith response.
Romans 5:1-2a

- 1) If grace is free and cannot be earned how you feel about the need to respond to God with belief and faith which must be realized through works?
- 2) Is God’s grace of salvation conditional?
- 3) What is very important about a servant’s response of belief and faith?

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Section Three: Expectations

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The Grace of Redemption

- 4) Why is attitude towards grace so important?
- 5) Why is a sinner's acceptance of grace so important?
- 6) How is responding with God-like love connected to God's grace of redemption?
- 7) How does a sinner learn how to approach Jesus on His terms and conditions?

The grace of redemption must be entered into by faith.
Ephesians 2:8-10

- 1) In order to receive God's grace of salvation how must faith be acted out in response to His offer of salvation?
- 2) Why is faith such an important part of a sinners response to His grace of salvation?

Faith is only developed from hearing and believing "the word of Christ".
Romans 10:17

- 1) Are you able to develop faith by talking to and being with Christians?
- 2) How are faith and belief connected to the heart of an unbeliever?
- 3) How important is communicating the word of God to those enslaved to sin?
- 4) Who is responsible for preaching and sharing the gospel to the lost?

Faith is both assurance and conviction in the integrity of the Lord's word.
Hebrews 11:1

- 1) Why is integrity of God's word so important?
- 2) Is it hard to feel assured of something which you are not able to sense?

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The Grace of Redemption

- 3) If you could sense God's grace of salvation in any tangible way how would your sense affect faith?
- 4) Are you able to feel redemption?

A servant of sin must receive the grace of redemption as a result of his faith in the invisible work of God.

- 1) What happens to faith if a servant is able to feel or see his redemption?
- 2) Is sensing spiritual realities such as salvation compatible with faith and belief?

A servant of sin is justified when he is redeemed by Jesus, but there is no physical evidence of the Lord's work – it's all by faith.
Romans 5:1

- 1) Are you able to feel innocent?
- 2) Are you able to feel a clear conscience?
- 3) Are you able to feel a new heart?
- 4) Are you able to feel recreated?

The only physical evidence of the grace of redemption taking place is the servant's response to the Lord's counsel concerning how to receive His grace.

- 1) Why is a servant's response to God's grace of redemption physical evidence of His redemption?
- 2) How does a sinner's response to the gospel witness the redemptive grace of God?

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The Grace of Redemption

Once a servant of sin enters into the grace of redemption and is freed from his bondage to sin he is assured of his freedom, unless he chooses to return.

Romans 5:2b, 8:31b, 8:6

- 1) How is a servant assured of something he cannot physically sense?
- 2) Do you feel secure in God's grace of redemption?
- 3) How does assurance connect with the integrity of God's word?
- 4) After receiving the God's grace of salvation do you think belief and faith must be acted out in order to confirm His grace?
- 5) How is faith and assurance in God's grace of redemption integrated into normal life?
- 6) What is the difference between choosing to enter into circumstances which require belief and faith in contrast to allowing the Spirit to lead life in His subtle ways?
- 7) Do you think a perception of what belief and faith should be interferes with the Spirit's work?
- 8) Do you think your heart and mind can interfere with the Spirit's work?
- 9) How do you know if your heart and mind are leading you correctly?

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Calling on God

Jesus once said, “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (*John* 3:16b). Even though Jesus directly referred to the Jewish people He also spoke about the pressing spiritual needs of the Gentiles. He did not speak to a certain predestined to salvation group of people—He spoke to everyone. What Jesus revealed over two thousand years ago is not out of date. People are still enslaved to sin. Servants of sin are still spiritually dead—separated from fellowship with God the Father. Everyone has the same way to accept the Lord’s offer, which is His call to anyone willing to repent and return to fellowship with God His Father—through Jesus Christ.

God continually calls out to all people because He is trying to save everyone from certain self-destruction. However, only those willing to respond to His call will receive the blessings of His grace of redemption through Jesus Christ. In *Romans* Paul quoted a prophecy written by Joel: “For whoever will call upon the Lord will be saved” (10:13). The “whoever” is not a divinely predetermined people predestined to respond to His call, but those to whom God foresaw calling upon Jesus for redemption from their bondage to sin, out of free will. God predestined redemption, but not the redeemed. The redeemed are predestined because the predestined redeemer offered the opportunity to join with His predetermined destiny.

Just as there is but one Word with the power to save or lead a slave of sin to Jesus, there is but one call on God to receive His grace of redemption through Jesus Christ. In his *first* letter *Peter* described the response of calling upon God’s grace as “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (3:21b). Spiritual renewal can only happen by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, sins must be forgiven and all accountability to sin within the conscience cleared. The spirit and self of a man, his life force and who he is, must be recreated and renewed in order to return to fellowship with God. In order to achieve this miraculous spiritual task God must cleanse the unholy servant of all accountability to his debt of sin. Only those reborn into innocence are able to receive reconciliation with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

All servants of sin “show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them” (*Romans* 2:15). Even though Paul primarily addressed Jewish confidence in the Law of Moses, God holds both the Gentiles and the Jews accountable to an instinctual moral law just as binding and powerful. All have the instinctual “knowledge of good and evil” (*Genesis* 2:17a). When a servant of

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sin calls on God for forgiveness and cleansing he is making a plea to God for his justification.

God searches all hearts, thus, when a slave of sin approaches Him for redemption, He knows what motivates his belief and hears his prayers. He knows the extent of a servant's faith and looks for proof of his conviction, the sincerity of his confession, and his willingness to prove his confession and repentance through obedience to the Lord Jesus.

God has an intense interest in the heart of His servant. David addressed his people concerning the building of a new temple and quoted what God told him concerning the highly anticipated project. God would not allow him to direct the construction, this would be left up to his son Solomon next in line to the throne, "As for you Solomon know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever" (*1 Chronicles 28:9*).

The servant of sin must be willing to search his heart to discover his sincerity to God. Is he willing to confess Jesus as Lord, Master, and Savior? Is he willing to fulfill his confession by obeying Jesus and His covenant? Is he willing to give himself to God's word concerning the unseen process of salvation taking place through belief and faith motivated obedience? Is he willing to serve Lord Jesus for the rest of his life? Even though no one is able to determine his spiritual path from beginning to end, he must choose to begin his spiritual journey by calling on God's mercy and grace according to his belief and faith according to His expressed will through Jesus.

To call on God requires a willingness to apply a singular response of belief, faith, confession of the Lordship of Jesus, and a commitment to obedience - repentance, baptism, and continuing in faith for the rest of life. A redeemed servant devotes himself every day to serving his Lord's will.

Questions

No one is excluded from God's call for salvation.

John 3:16

1) Do you think people are predestined by God to eternity in either Heaven or Hell?

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- 2) Can a servant be so wicked and evil God will never allow him to repent?
- 3) Is God calling all people or just some of the best?

The only people who die in sin are those who choose to die separated from God.
Romans 10:13

- 1) Is salvation strictly an issue of a servant's freedom of choosing whom to serve?
- 2) What are the two spiritual choices of service does God offer to every person?
- 3) How do you feel about your closest relative or friend choosing to end life in slavery to sin?
- 4) Do you believe God allows people to alter His plan of salvation in order for deathbed conversions to take place?
- 5) Are there any circumstances in life or near death which justify altering God's word?
- 6) What is most important: a servant's desire to save a lost loved one by any means or obeying God's will concerning his salvation?

Calling on God is a heartfelt appeal for a cleansed conscience.
First Peter 3:21b; Romans 2:15; Genesis 2:17a

- 1) How does a servant of sin appeal to God to receive a new conscience?
- 2) What is a person's conscience?
- 3) Why is the conscience so important?

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4) How does a servant of sin who is in open rebellion against God plead to Him for anything?

Calling of God is plea to Him for justification.

1) Does a plea for forgiveness require faith and belief in the integrity of God's word?

2) A plea requires a self-realization of spiritual helplessness are you ready to accept your helplessness?

3) Do you feel helpless?

4) How is a slave of sin helpless to change his eternal destiny?

What a servant does physically as he calls upon God is not near as important as why.

1 Chronicles 28:9

1) Why is motivation more important than the response?

2) Why must both response and motivation conform to God's will?

3) If what a servant is thinking in his heart is so important why is a physical response necessary?

4) Does motivation link the works of belief and faith with the servant's heart?

Calling upon God is confessing Jesus as Lord and Master.

1) Does motivation play an important part of a servant's confession of Jesus as Lord?

2) Does confession require the servant to serve the Lord's will?

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- 3) If you confess Jesus as Lord and Master what does this mean?
- 4) What happens to a servant's confession if he decides he does not have to do what his Master is asking of him for salvation and service?

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Seeking God with Prayer

Very little is mentioned about prayer and how it works within the process of salvation. However, prayer is a very important spiritual tool because it helps a servant of sin to focus on Jesus. Prayer sends a message to God about what the sinner thinks he believes is in his heart. In (*Psalms* 145:18-19) David wrote: “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth, He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.” David offered insights concerning the attitude of heart God looks for in those seeking His help. He mentioned at least two vital truths concerning an appeal to God:

1) Prayer is conditional, the one praying must “call upon Him in truth,” and the only way to do this is to hear or read the word of God and follow the counsel of the Spirit.

2) The one praying must develop “fear,” which is to respect Him as Lord God. Fear helps him to see his position as a created and fallen servant which in turn may lead him to honor God his Creator and Lord--Master. He needs to recognize and decide who he desires to serve, sin and the god of this world – Satan, or God the Father through Jesus Christ. No one owns his life, God his creator owns him. No one controls destiny on his own. Yet God gives everyone the basic freedom to choose whom he wishes to serve during his lifetime and throughout eternity. Prayer helps the servant to work through his intentions with life.

In (*Psalms* 10:17), David spoke of the importance of humility, it's another condition: “O Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble; Thou wilt strengthen their heart, Thou wilt incline Thine ear.” God will not honor an attitude of self-righteousness or self-anything. A servant of sin must realize his position of utter helplessness and hopelessness outside of Christ. God is counseling him to appeal to Jesus for redemption by prayer with an attitude of humility. All he can do in the process of his salvation is to believe in Jesus, allow belief to grow into active faith, and obediently follow His counsel.

When combined with Scripture, prayer helps a servant of sin realize there are no other options available by which he is able to receive freedom from his debt to sin and its curse of death. Salvation cannot result from anything he is able to accomplish on his own. A servant is able to influence his physical death but is powerless to resurrect himself back into life, either physically or spiritually. Only Jesus is able to transform a servant of sin into a servant of righteousness.

In his gospel letter, *Matthew* recorded Jesus stating: “And everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive” (21:22). Prayer played a very

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important part in the process of salvation before the new covenant took place. The vital element of prayer is one's attitude motivating the prayer. His mind-set helps him to focus his heart on Jesus, through whom prayer is received by God the Father. Believing in Jesus is an essential condition of the new covenant and the overall plan of salvation. Belief and faith in the work of God--His unseen blessing of salvation, labor to create an effective prayer. One must confidently believe God is answering prayer because he may never physically experience the answer even though God has answered.

God listens and answers the prayers of those who believe He is doing what He has promised. Prayer preps a servant of sin for salvation because it helps to build a foundation of belief and faith. This may in turn develop into a confession of Jesus as Lord leading to repentance in conformance to His will.

God answers prayer because of the lifestyle and attitude which is motivated by the prayer. Prayer is important to God. Prayer is the revelation of one's heart. It reveals belief and faith not only to God but to the one seeking God. Belief and faith determine whether the prayer is a self-deception of self-righteousness, legal obligation, an obligation of guilt, physical fear, or an unassuming revelation of one's humble acknowledgment of his moral and spiritual imperfection before a righteous God.

God purposely places every person in a specific locale, at a particular time, for a precise reason: "that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each of us" (*Acts 17:27*). Sin fogs up God's reality. A slave of sin lives in what may appear as a sea of continually thickening fog which decreases his spiritual vision as the effects of sin gradually harden his heart. All the while his inability to see truth allows his corrupt heart and Satan to deceptively lead him to believe his limited spiritual sight is normal. But the effects of sin and the acceptance of life as normal cannot alter the true intentions of God or His love for mankind.

Paul tried to communicate to the people of Athens, who worshipped many different gods, God is never far away. They made the critical mistake of searching for a distant God, believing their physical efforts to please Him would appease Him. The deceptions of sin, lust, a corrupt heart, and Satan take advantage of the unseen work and nature of God to deceive captives into believing God is far away and must be approached by diligent human effort through religion, god's, or whatever.

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Paul advised them to make radical changes. God is not far away. Instead of worshipping His perceived likeness, they needed to begin their approach through belief in His unseen existence and faithfully search for Him through prayer and listening to the gospel. They needed to begin relying on the counsel of God found in Scripture instead of the perceptions and traditions from other people just as deceived as themselves. Jesus once said to the Pharisees: “if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (*Matthew 15:14b*).

Many earnestly seek for His grace but simply do not know how. Prayer helps to break down the distance between God and the seeker by focusing his eyes to see His light and presence through belief and faith.

Take a look at Paul before his redemption. When Jesus approached Saul, prayer did not play a significant role in the course of salvation. The Lord initiated his salvation as he traveled to Damascus. After his encounter with Jesus, the Lord asked: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me” (*Acts 9:4-5*). He told him to go to Damascus for further instructions, “but arise, and enter the city, and it shall be told to you what you must do” (9:6).

While in Damascus he waited for instructions concerning what he needed to do next. Luke also mentioned how Ananias played a role in his conversion, “and the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying’” (9:11).

Saul could not have prayed for His salvation according to the New Covenant in Christ Jesus because he had no way of knowing anything about the covenant. In fact he ignorantly fought against the covenant as a false religion. Very likely as he fought Jesus he prayed to God in the context of what he had learned as a Pharisee, praying for the destruction of the Way – the Lord’s new and growing body of believer’s. Saul had developed into a very devout and righteous Pharisee, a chosen son of God, living according to the Law, a true son of God. Or so he felt. But his heart, sin, lust, and Satan deceptively misled him to fight against the very God whom he thought he worshipped and loved.

The Lord gave the job of teaching the gospel to Saul to Ananias. During the time between arriving in Damascus and the arrival of Ananias, Saul needed to collect his thoughts about Jesus, what He had told him about the Way and the new faith he so passionately tried to destroy. His encounter with Jesus humbled him and instilled a new sense of fear toward God. He began to understand the true identity of Jesus, and it must have greatly frightened him. He may have begun to understand who he really served – Satan.

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When Ananias met Saul he found him in a state of complete helpless bewilderment before God. Within the time span of a few moments during an otherwise uneventful trip to Damascus Saul's entire life turned upside down after Jesus enlightened him concerning his true status before God--an enemy of God. Through prayer, and in most likely great fear, he humbly prepared his heart to accept whatever came next.

Saul readied himself to hear the true will of God with an attitude of respect, fear, and humble obedience. Even though his prayer could not have focused on New Covenant salvation it prepared his heart to hear the gospel with a willingness to believe and place his faith in what he heard.

His prayer could not have played a part in the actual pathway to salvation. He did not know what to believe in, he did not know how to act out his faith because he couldn't have faith in an unknown faith. He didn't know how to confess Jesus. He didn't know what he needed to do in order to be considered as repentant. Prayer is simply not the same as a spiritual death united with Jesus. Prayer is not a burial with Jesus. Prayer is not a resurrection into a new life with Jesus. Prayer cannot effect his spiritual circumcision. Sin requires a death and prayer cannot substitute dying with Jesus.

Luke mentioned Cornelius as another example of prayer in context with the salvation process of the New Covenant. Cornelius habitually prayed "to God continually" (*Acts* 10:2b). Luke highlighted his attitude as "a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people, and prayed to God continually" (10:2). Cornelius practiced righteousness without self-righteousness as best he could under the counsel and stipulations of the Law of Moses. However, he didn't realize Jesus had replaced the Law of Moses with the New Covenant at the moment of His death.

God still considered Cornelius in bondage to sin, despite his righteous life and attitude towards Him. Like Saul he didn't understand who he served – sin and Satan. After all, the Law could not do anything about sin debt once it became established. The writer of *Hebrews* noted, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (10:4). His prayers to God could not have any influence upon his debt of sin either or the way in which sin is forgiven through redemption. Like Saul he didn't know anything about salvation in the New Covenant. He could not place belief and faith in Jesus or in His redemption because of his complete ignorance of both.

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Cornelius believed in God and expressed faith through how he worshipped Him as the Jewish people had taught him. He greatly feared God and desired with all of his heart to serve Him according to His will. However, he did not believe in Jesus, and he could not express his faith to God the Father through Jesus, even though he had faith in God as directed by the Law of Moses.

God considered him as a servant of sin regardless of his righteous appearance, just as Saul appeared righteous to all who knew him even as he lived in bondage to sin. Both Saul and Cornelius more than likely felt righteous before God and served Him accordingly. However, they had a major problem--the impossibility of directly worshipping God the Father. *John* recorded Jesus revealing this to His disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (14:6b). The moment John baptized Jesus spiritual access to God the Father made a dramatic change. From then on God the Father only recognized those who chose to serve Jesus as Lord. Prayer directly to God immediately ended. People could pray all they wanted but God only listens to prayers in the Lord's name.

God will not directly save anyone who prays to Him for salvation. He will however, lead anyone searching for Him to saints able to teach the gospel in order to learn how to respond according to the will of Christ. Once a servant of sin hears the Lord's gospel he receives the opportunity to choose to believe and express faith to God through obedience to the New Covenant of Christ or to continue in his current spiritual path. Even though prayer may lead a servant of sin to the Lord to receive salvation it does not play an active part in the servant's initial response to receive salvation. He is required to respond with belief, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, and serving Jesus as Lord and Master.

Cornelius needed to hear about Jesus and how to worship God the Father through Him. For this purpose, God sent Peter to preach to him, his family, and friends, the gospel so they could have the opportunity to respond to His grace of salvation.

Cornelius sent three men to bring Peter to his home: "And they said, 'Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you'" (*Acts*10:22).

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Cornelius could not be saved by Jesus until he heard the gospel. He needed to hear the gospel message, believe it, and then respond to the will of his Lord by belief and faith motivated obedience. However, Paul and Cornelius' response did not include prayer. In fact prayer is never brought up anywhere in Scripture as a part of the rebirth experience with Jesus.

As the story progressed, Peter began his first official gospel sermon to the Gentiles by revealing an important fact about the connection between prayer and salvation, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God" (*Acts 10:31*). Cornelius' prayers did not play an active part of the salvation process in the sense he needed to pray for forgiveness in order to fulfill his belief and faith. However, his prayers did function to catch God's attention. Peter's gospel sermon led Cornelius, his family, and friends through the course of redemption. They chose the right spiritual path by obeying the gospel and exercised their new found belief and faith with a confession, commitment to repent, and submission to baptism. It is spiritually impossible for prayer to substitute any part of a servant's response to Jesus for salvation.

Luke reinforced his example when he quoted Peter: "but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (*Acts 10:35*). In this short statement Peter revealed what God had in mind when He mentioned "fear" and "does what is right." He referred specifically to the Gentile's heart motivated physical response to the gospel message.

Even though many people may practice what is perceived as fearing God and serving His will they are sometimes misled into a false-righteousness and assurance of salvation. "Fear" and "right" express how salvation must be realized according to God's will through belief and faith. Both aspects of response – heart and physical, are realized when the slave of sin begins to fulfill his vow to repentance and confession. He honors the word of Jesus when he submits to baptism, and continued obedience to His will. This is how he proves his fear of the Lord. Prayer is not a viable substitute for baptism. Nor is baptism simply a post salvation ritual. Prayer cannot physically prove a servant's fear of God, but it is able to motivate his fear to serve His will.

Prayer helped to guide Cornelius and Saul to accept a radically new and different way to worship God the Father. It helped to prepare their hearts to humbly offer themselves to serve Him in the same way through Jesus Christ according to His new covenant despite radically differing spiritual influences between the two people. However, prayer never played an active part of the actual process of salvation necessary for redemption to take place.

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Seeking God with Prayer

Questions

Almost nothing is mentioned about prayer and its connection with salvation.

- 1) Why do you feel prayer is important to salvation?
- 2) Why do you think prayer is never mentioned in connection with salvation?

Prayer sends a message to God concerning a servant's desire for salvation.

Psalms 145:18-19

- 1) Do you believe prayer communicates to God your desire to receive forgiveness?
- 2) Why is the servant's attitude and motivation so important when he prays to God for salvation?

God respects the prayers of those who "fear" Him.

Psalms 25:14, 33:6-19, 34:4-8, 111:10-112:2; Acts 10:1-4

- 1) What does it mean to "fear" God?
- 2) What does "fear" have to do with motivation and attitude?
- 3) Is fear a feeling or more of an attitude towards God which motivates action?

Prayer helps to reveal the servant's attitude of self towards God.

Psalms 10:17

- 1) Why is it important to reveal attitude and heart to God?
- 2) Does a servant's prayer help him to realize the importance of what he is revealing to God?

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Seeking God with Prayer

Prayer emphasizes the importance of believing in Jesus.

Matthew 21:22

- 1) Is believing in God important for prayer?
- 2) Can a person pray to God even if he doesn't believe in Him?

Prayer helps a servant of sin to realize his need to "seek" God.

Acts 17:27; Matthew 15:14b

- 1) How does prayer affect your hearts' feeling towards God?
- 2) Does prayer help you realize your need to search out for God?
- 3) How does your prayer "seek" God?

Saul's conversion helps to reveal insights about the importance of prayer as salvation is taking place.

Acts 9:4-5, 9:6, 11

- 1) How do you think Saul's prayer to God helped to prepare His mind and heart for salvation?
- 2) Do you think Saul had any idea of what Ananias would say to him?
- 3) What part in His salvation did prayer play?
- 4) What part in your salvation does prayer play?

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Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Seeking God with Prayer

Prayer helped prepare Saul's heart to prepare for and accept dramatic changes in his beliefs and life.

1) Prayer offered Saul the ability to reflect about deep seated inner feelings, emotions, and predetermined concepts about God. Does prayer do the same for you?

Other than helping to prepare his heart to accept Jesus, his prayer did not play an important part in salvation.

- 1) Did Saul pray for salvation?
- 2) Do you think he understood what new covenant salvation involved?
- 3) Did Saul receive salvation as a result of his prayers?
- 4) What do you feel about linking prayer with salvation?
- 5) Do you think Saul served sin and Satan while He thought he served God?
- 6) If he didn't serve Satan why did he need saved?

Cornelius habitually prayed to God, yet his prayers did not save him or anyone in his family.

Acts 10:2

- 1) While Cornelius prayed his very sincere prayers to God did he serve sin and Satan?
- 2) Do you think Cornelius prayed to God very much?
- 3) Was he sincere in his prayers?
- 4) Is any slave of sin who is sincere in his prayers any different?

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Questions

Seeking God with Prayer

God still considered Cornelius in bondage to sin despite his prayers and righteous life.

- 1) Do you really believe Cornelius served sin and Satan?
- 2) How could someone serve God so righteously and yet in spiritual reality be hostile and committing evil towards God?
- 3) Are you able to think you believe in Jesus while still serving sin and Satan?
- 4) How can you tell if you are being deceived about your salvation?

Neither Saul nor Cornelius understood the new covenant and the radical spiritual changes which took place when Jesus died.

Hebrews 10:4

- 1) Do you think spiritual ignorance plays a part in spiritual deception?
- 2) Can a servant be completely self-assured of salvation and yet remain enslaved to sin and Satan?
- 3) Do you know anyone who has fallen victim to this deception?
- 4) What are you doing to help open his or her eyes?
- 5) Do you think all faiths which worship God the Father through Jesus are okay?
- 6) Is your heart a reliable determining factor to judge whether or not you are saved?
- 7) How do you know the difference between deception and truth?
- 8) Can you feel salvation?

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Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

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Seeking God with Prayer

It is not possible to bridge the spiritual gap which sin causes by prayer alone. Prayer cannot replace or be included in the Lord's intended spiritual path to salvation—belief, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, life of faith.

John 14:6b

1) Do you feel prayer is able to replace any of the intended parts of salvation if the intentions are good?

Even though prayer is important, a servant's confession of Jesus as Lord and Master does not require prayer in order for salvation to take place.

1) Can you find a Scripture in the context of the new covenant where God assures salvation with a prayer?

2) Did Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John write in the context of pre-new covenant spiritual conditions or new covenant?

In Cornelius' case prayer caught the attention of God. He then led Peter to his house to teach him the gospel. He still needed to respond according to the Lord's will.

Acts 10:22, 31, 35

1) Do you believe prayer will help lead you to Jesus as it did with Saul and Cornelius?

2) Do you believe prayer will help to prepare your heart and mind to accept Jesus as Lord and Master?

3) Is prayer a necessary step in your path to salvation?

4) Is prayer a vital step in your path to salvation?

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Believing in God

In order to receive God's offer of redemption according to His will, a slave of sin must believe in the deity of Jesus with all of His heart. If he is willing to do this he may be ready to serve Jesus as Lord and Master. Jesus stated, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me" (*John* 12:44b).

The Lord is setting parameters around belief in God. To believe in God the Father in the new covenant age a slave of sin must first believe in Jesus Christ. No one is able to worship God without worshipping Jesus as God, Savior, and Lord.

In order to believe Jesus is Lord, a slave of sin must first hear the gospel and accept it as truth. Then, the belief must be confirmed through a demonstrated willingness to serve Him as Lord, Master, and God.

Paul stated in *Romans*: he is, "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (1:16a). The gospel is defined by Jesus, who He is, what He has accomplished, and His continuing work within the human experience. In this short statement Paul clearly revealed an important truth about believing, a servant who believes is one who has submitted his life to serve Jesus. A believer is one who serves Jesus as Lord. However a servant of sin is perfectly capable of believing in Jesus while remaining in his unsaved condition.

Belief is required by God and is demonstrated through a response. Just as faith is proven by works of obedience belief must be proven as well. As a result of expressing belief and faith through obedience, the two responses merge into a singular response to the will of God through Jesus. In *John's* gospel letter, he recorded a question from a crowd of followers: "what shall we do, that we may work the works of God" (6:28b).

The people could not have anticipated the answer. Jesus told them believing in God has changed since He began His ministry. No one has favored status before God, even those who are chosen as a result of being Jewish, Abraham's descendant, physically circumcised, or under the Law. He told them, "this is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (*John* 6:29b). In order to believe the Lord Jesus, God's people must serve Him as their divine Master, which is affirmed by their unconditional worship of Him. This in turn confirmed their belief in God the Father. Belief and worship cannot be separated.

Jesus began revealing a major spiritual change the moment He started His ministry. In order to remain believers in God, the Jews needed to willingly place

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Believing in God

their faith in God's prophetic word concerning Him as well as His own teachings regarding His divine identity. The people needed to realize the words spoken by Jesus came from His Father in heaven--God: "but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (*John 8:11b*). To believe what Jesus taught meant the Jews had to accept relearning the true will of God in order to serve Him accordingly.

Jesus redefined believing by linking it to the necessity of one's willingness to accept Him as Lord God--Master. In order to serve the Lord Jesus, a slave must be willing to humbly obey whatever His Lord asks of him. Thus faith-motivated confession, repentance, and obedience to what He taught as truth is proof of belief in Jesus his Master. Upon this foundation belief becomes a work of faith resulting in heart led obedience according to the will of Christ. Which in the new covenant involves the united response of repentance, confession, baptism, and a Spirit led life until physical death.

In his letter to the *Romans* Paul wrote: "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (10:9-10). Belief must accompany faith, obedience, and the New Covenant will of Jesus Christ before resulting in righteousness. When belief, faith, and obedience to His will is demonstrated God the Father reckons the response as righteous.

When a servant of sin is justified by the sacrificial blood of Jesus he is considered holy, as patterned after Abraham's response: "Even so, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham. So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer" (*Galatians 3:6-7, 9*). Salvation based upon belief and faith is the same unchangeable response to the Lord's will. Belief and faith are fulfilled in the spiritual realm which cannot be physically sensed even though they must be acted out in physical life. The reality of salvation is based upon the servant's belief in the integrity of God's word and promises. Belief, just like faith is proven by works of obedience.

When a servant of sin hears the words of God concerning the deity of Jesus, His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of back into heaven, he is offered a choice by the grace of God to either remain a slave of sin or appeal to Jesus for redemption. If he truly believes the gospel of Christ, then he will be ready to prove the sincerity of his belief to God through his newfound desire to faithfully obey Jesus Christ as His Lord, Savior, and Master.

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Believing in God

To believe in Jesus is to believe in God His Father.
John 12:44b

- 1) Why did Jesus say this?
- 2) Does this apply to you?

Believing in God the Father is conditional.

- 1) Does this Scripture mean only those who worship Jesus are able to serve God?
Is God the same as God the Father?
- 2) Do you feel this is too restrictive?
- 3) How do you feel about all of the world's religions which worship God, not Jesus?

Believing in Jesus is conditional upon a response to His Gospel.
Romans 1:16

- 1) What is the difference between believing in the existence of Jesus and believing in Him as a servant trying to serve Him?
- 2) Are you able to believe in Jesus without being saved?
- 3) Is belief inseparable from faith?
- 4) Do both belief and faith require responsive works according to the will of God in order to prove their sincerity?

A servant of sin is capable of believing he is serving Jesus.

- 1) Do you think your heart can deceive you into believing you are saved when in actuality you are not?

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Believing in God

- 2) How can you feel a spiritual reality such as salvation?
- 3) Do you feel saved?
- 4) Do you feel the necessity to have a sign or some spiritual experience in order to feel assured of your salvation?
- 5) Are you being led by faith if you feel physical experiences are necessary to prove your faith?
- 6) How is a servant assured his belief is connected to salvation?

Believing in Jesus is the same as having faith in Him; both require faith led works to prove the heart of the believer.

John 6:28b, 29b

- 1) Do you think that belief requires works to validate its reality?
- 2) Why is attitude and motivation so important when belief is expressed in a responsive work?
- 3) Is a servant able to respond to the Lord Jesus without doing anything physical?

Belief and worship cannot be separated.

- 1) Do you think belief is worship?
- 2) How is your belief worship?

Believing what Jesus taught is believing what His Father taught Him.

John 8:11b

- 1) Do you believe believing in Jesus is believing in God the Father?
- 2) What if you do not believe in Jesus, can you still believe in God the Father?

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Believing in God

Belief, faith, and confession of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be separated.
Romans 10:9-10

- 1) Why is true belief inseparable from confessing the Lord's deity?
- 2) What does a confession communicate to God the Father?

Belief and faith in Jesus are essentially the same response to His call.
Galatians 3:6-7, 9

- 1) How are belief and faith so similar?
- 2) Do both belief and faith require a physical response to the Lord's will?

A servant of sin can believe in Jesus but if he does not respond to His call with belief and faith he cannot receive righteousness.

- 1) How is the blessing of God's gift of righteousness linked to the works of belief and faith?
- 2) Why do belief and faith require works of obedience?
- 3) Are works of obedience the same as working to earn salvation?
- 4) What must you do in order to receive salvation?

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Faith in God

Faith and belief are like two inseparable twin brothers working side by side. A servant of sin cannot believe in God without faith or develop faith without belief. A united effort of belief and faith must motivate him to fulfill His will through Jesus Christ. What he believes and faith expressing his belief cannot exist separately and only originate, "from hearing the word of Christ" (*Romans* 10:17). A servant is not "hearing" the "word of Christ" if he is not willing to express submission to Him as Lord.

Paul wrote to the *Galatians*, "But the scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (3:22). Faith and belief in the Lordship of Jesus work together. Both are proven by works motivated by a desire to serve God the Father through Jesus Christ according to His revealed will in the New Covenant scriptures. *James* noted Abraham's example, (*Genesis* 15:6), "and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness ... You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone" (2:23b-24). Faith cannot be realized without works but the works must not be motivated by law.

God determined Abraham's belief and faith by his physical response to His will. He considered his answer to His call as holy and used him as an example of how belief and faith work together to motivate an obedient response resulting in New Covenant justification through Jesus Christ. This is how righteousness is given to the faithful believer in Christ; it is determined by his response. Righteousness is a gift of God's grace which is utterly dependent upon the servant's choice to serve the Lord's will. In the New Covenant righteousness is only given to a newly reborn servant, one who has died and has experienced a spiritual resurrection with Jesus. Only a recreated spirit is holy, innocent, and sinless.

Faith is a heart-felt and driven desire to obey God; it is developed by an ever growing sense of the truth found in His word. Faith is such an important part of a response to God's will because it physically expresses the servant's heart. He is fully convinced, committed, and reliant upon the unseen work of God as He fulfills His unseen promises. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," because the work of God throughout the lifelong experience of salvation is spiritual and cannot be sensed (*Hebrews* 11:1).

If the work of God in salvation could be seen by one's senses then it would no longer be based upon His invisible promises. What is seen cannot substitute for what is not seen by faith. The unseen is believed because it is revealed

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through the words of Jesus. The Spirit inspired the writer of *Hebrews* to note: "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (11:6). When sight is asked for by the servant to confirm his belief and faith, he is unintentionally asking for God to nullify his belief and faith.

Faith is proven to God through the works of obedience. God tasked the apostles to truthfully teach the message of faith in the faith established by Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Romans*: "Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His names sake" (1:4b-5). In *Acts* Peter mentioned "many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (6:7b).

A few chapters later, Paul wrote: "Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction" (*Romans* 3:22). Regardless of the servant's background, God will always honor his belief and faith in Jesus Christ. He fulfills His word with His gift of reckoned righteousness as a result of the servant's justification by the sacrificial blood of Christ when the Spirit unites him with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. Once the servant is made holy again God is able to give him the promised gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Paul also mentioned in his letter to the *Galatians*: "in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (3:14b). The spiritual course leading to the servant's reception of the Spirit fulfills his faith resulting in salvation. The work of faith is the servant's response to the Lord's New Covenant faith.

In order to receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit a servant of sin must first receive forgiveness. The Lord clearly expressed His New Covenant will through Peter during his very first sermon of the New Covenant age, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Acts* 2:38). Jesus revealed this is the only way for the faithful to receive the Spirit. The only way faith is validated as true is by the presence of the indwelling presence of the Spirit. The blessing of the Spirit will continue in the life of a servant of the Lord Jesus for as long as he remains faithful to His Master.

Faith and belief prove the true intent of a seeker of God. Faith is fulfilled because the unseen promises given by God are always realized through His endless grace. Paul noted in his letter to the *Ephesians*, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God" (2:8). Just

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like its brother – belief, faith in God the Father according to the New Covenant in Christ cannot be realized through the self-righteousness of any type of work in order to earn the grace of righteousness. Baptism is not a work because the spiritual work of God which takes place while the servant is submersed is completely based upon belief and faith. Even though water is used to witness the spiritual events taking place, it cannot affect any part of the miracle taking place.

At first it may sound confusing, a servant of sin cannot be saved through works, yet belief and faith cannot be realized without works. The difference lies in what is motivating the work performed in His name: faith with human effort to appease and win His approval, or faith in the integrity of His word and promises to accomplish His will. The realization of the works of belief and faith are the result of God's grace of salvation through Jesus. God's grace made the focus of belief and faith possible – Jesus Christ. Outside of God's grace belief and faith do not mean anything. Grace saves by virtue of its gift Jesus Christ. The redeeming sacrifice of the Lord's physical life is what saves; redemption cannot be received outside of His grace. Grace is God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ; faith is the required response to receive His grace.

Even though God's grace of redemption in Christ Jesus is proven and realized by works of belief and faith motivated obedience, just as Abraham demonstrated, God still looks at the heart. He is looking at what motivates the works of belief and faith to see whether the work is a response of submissive love towards the Lord and Master Jesus Christ or a self-righteous endeavor to appear pious before the Lord.

Questions

Faith and belief are inseparable and both develop from the Lord's word.
Romans 10:17

- 1) Do you think faith is developed from other sources along with Scripture?
- 2) How are you working with God to develop you faith?
- 3) How do you know you have faith?
- 4) Do you ever try to test your faith level?

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- 5) Is the practice of faith often as subtle and routine as everyday life?
- 6) Do you ever try to confirm your faith by doing things which you assume requires faith?

If a servant of sin refuses to respond to the Lord's word then he is not hearing the Lord with belief and faith.

- 1) Does it take faith to respond to the gospel?
- 2) Why is faith so important for those who desire to obey the gospel in order to receive salvation?
- 3) How does a servant of sin who is hostile against God express faith in Him?

To practice faith in Jesus is the same as practicing belief in Jesus.
Galatians 3:22; Romans 3:22; John 6:28-29

- 1) Do you think there is a major difference in how a servant responds with either faith or belief?
- 2) Is faith true if the servant is not willing to obey Jesus as Master?
- 3) How do you know if you are obeying Jesus as Master?

Both belief and faith are works motivated by a desire to serve the will of the Lord.
James 2:23b-24

- 1) If a servant feels he is obeying Jesus simply because he is told to do His will, how will his attitude affect his faith in Jesus?
- 2) What motivates your faith response to Jesus?

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The practice of both faith and belief are physical expressions which originate from the heart.

- 1) Is a servant of sin able to express faith in Jesus without a physical response to His will?
- 2) How important is the content of a Christian's heart?
- 3) What are you putting in your heart?
- 4) What happens when what you put into your heart comes out, whether good or bad?
- 5) Do you ever take time to assess what is in your heart and how it develops into real life experiences?

The works of belief and faith will express a physical picture of a servant's true feelings towards the Lord.

Hebrews 11:1

- 1) Is your belief and faith in Jesus an honest reflection of what you feel in your heart?
- 2) Is your heart an honest reflection of what you confess – Jesus as Lord?
- 3) Are you willing to serve Jesus as your Master?
- 4) What does serving Jesus as Master mean to you?
- 5) Who is your true master: Jesus, your heart, or flesh?
- 6) How do you compromise the desires of your flesh and worldly circumstances with the Lord's will?
- 7) What is the Lord's will for His servant's in general?

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If the servant does not express faith motivated worship then he cannot please or obey God.

Hebrews 11:6; Romans 1:4b-5, 6:7b

- 1) How would you describe faith motivated worship?
- 2) How does law, tradition, and ritual affect motivation?
- 3) Do you think that there are other ways in which a servant can please or obey God?
- 4) Why do you think God is so concerned about motivation – the reasons why you do what you do for Him?

The Lord only gives the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit “through faith” which links faith with belief, confession, repentance, baptism, and a life of service to Jesus.

Galatians 3:14b; Acts 2:38

- 1) Can a servant leave out faith, or belief, or confession, or repentance, or baptism, or a life of faith and still be considered as expressing faith in His will?
- 2) When does a servant receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit by faith?
- 3) Which must take place first: receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit or receiving the forgiveness of sins?

Both faith and salvation are gifts of God’s grace.

Ephesians 2:8

- 1) How do you think God offers His grace of salvation in Jesus?
- 2) How do the faith motivated works required for a salvation response work with God’s grace which is a free and unearned?

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3) How would you describe your motivation to respond to the Lord's grace of salvation?

Without grace faith would be impossible to receive from the word and salvation an inconceivable dream.

- 1) Before learning from God's word about sin did you ever think of yourself as a slave to sin and Satan?
- 2) Why is God's grace so important?
- 3) How does His grace fit into your life?
- 4) Do you feel like a servant?
- 5) How do you act like the Lord's servant?
- 6) What does Jesus require of His servant?

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Obedience to God

An innocent child loses his freedom and position as a child in God's family when he commits his first sin. He becomes enslaved by spiritual debt resulting in the curse of spiritual death which is spiritual separation from His personal presence. The moment a person sins, he is transferred from God's kingdom of holiness to Satan's domain of unrighteousness to begin his life as a slave of sin. In his gospel *John* quoted Jesus revealing: "everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin" (8:34b).

When a slave of sin is purchased by Christ, he is allowed to fellowship with God again, "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (*Colossians* 1:13-14). Jesus may have had this in mind when He stated, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (*John* 8:36). For the sinner is freed from his debt to sin, the curse of death, the spiritual penalties of transgressing any law, and Satan's dominion.

There is nothing a slave of sin is able to do about his imprisonment in sin other than approaching Jesus to appeal to Him for redemption. In order for redemption to take place the slave must first hear the gospel message, believe in what he hears about His deity, life, death, burial, resurrection, and develop faith in God's promise of salvation through Jesus. The spiritual journey continues as he pledges in his heart to agree to His covenant of ownership and lifelong obedience to his new Master.

Paul wrote these final words to his brethren in his letter to the *Romans*: "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandments of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith" (16:25-26).

A slave of sin must be willing to prove his newfound belief and faith through obedience to the will of Christ as documented in His covenant regardless of whether he fully understands it or not. This requires belief in His word and faith in the Lord's integrity to do what He has promised. The servant must be willing to place full trust in God's word. The promises in the Lord's covenant will truly take place despite his inability to sense redemption taking place. In this way obedience proves the sincerity of his belief, faith, confession, and commitment to repent. Jesus must become his Lord and Master.

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His response must not imply he is trying to earn God's favor. Trying to gain God's favor through self-righteousness or piety cannot lead to salvation. He must be purchased by Jesus at the cost of and with His sacrificial death. A servant of sin has no other choice in his position. He is like a seed which must be planted before it is able to emerge into a new life. Otherwise it will remain separated from its intended life. He is either an obedient forced slave of sin or a freed and Spirit led obedient bond-servant to God through Jesus Christ. There are no other spiritual choices. There are no other spiritual solutions to a slave's sin problem.

Paul reminded his readers about choices in His letter to the *Romans*: "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves of obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness. But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (6:16-18). Just a few of the points which he brought up are:

- 1) Every person becomes a slave of sin the moment he chooses to obey sin.
- 2) Which master to serve is a matter of one's freedom of choice.
- 3) There are two masters to choose to serve, but only one or the other – "sin" or Jesus "resulting in righteousness".
- 4) By the grace of God every servant is offered the freedom to obey Scripture and receive freedom "from sin".
- 5) A servant of sin must first be freed from sin before he is able to become an obedient servant "of righteousness".

Questions

The moment an innocent child chooses to transgress against one internal moral law he becomes a servant of sin.

John 8:34b; Romans 2:14-16; Isaiah 24:5-6

- 1) How do you know you are guilty of transgressing against God's moral law of good and evil?
- 2) Are you able to feel sin?

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- 3) Are you able to feel your spiritual slavery to sin?
- 4) Are you able to feel your service to Satan?
- 5) Are you able to feel your hostility towards God?
- 6) Are you able to feel your evil deeds?
- 7) Do you feel guilty?
- 8) Do you feel your conscience and heart working together to condemn you?
- 9) Do you believe you are openly hostile against God by choice?

A servant of sin cannot live within the Lord's holy kingdom so he is immediately transferred to the worldly "domain of darkness" the first time he sins.

Colossians 1:13-14; John 8:34

- 1) If you are not saved how do you feel about spiritually living under the authority of Satan?
- 2) How do you feel about being a willing servant to Satan?

Freedom involves much more than the servant's forgiveness of sins.

- 1) What do you think happens when Jesus frees a servant from his bondage to sin?
- 2) What do you think spiritual freedom involves?

The manifestation of the mystery – Jesus Christ and universal salvation, is the message which will lead a servant of sin to obedience.

Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:3-6

- 1) Do you think the mystery is fully revealed?

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- 2) What is the revealed mystery?
- 3) How does this information and knowledge help your spiritual life?
- 4) How does spiritual insight from the Holy Spirit and the word of God help your ability to obey the Lord's will?

Obedience is an expression of belief and faith.

- 1) How is obedience expressed?
- 2) Is a servant obedient to whomever he serves?
- 3) What is the connection between confessing Jesus as Lord and serving Him as Master?
- 4) Is obedience a work?
- 5) How do you think the works of obedience work with the Lord's gift of grace?
- 6) Why does grace demand a physical response?
- 7) Are you willing to express belief and faith in Jesus through obedience?
- 8) Does obedience mean Jesus is your Master?
- 9) Are you able to serve Jesus without obeying His will?

Every servant of sin has two spiritual choices: either continue to serve sin and Satan or serve obedience, righteousness and Jesus.

Romans 6:16-18

- 1) Does grace allow for a servant's freedom to choose whom to serve?

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Obedience to God

- 2) Why do you think God allows so much freedom to determine spiritual destiny?
- 3) Do you think God is being fair to you by offering you the freedom of choice?
- 4) How are you using your freedom of choice in your service?

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Confessing the Lord God

A vital part of proving a servant's newfound belief and growing faith is a verbal acknowledgment recognizing his sincerity to serve Jesus Christ as Lord God and Master. This is so important because he is a slave and he must choose to serve one of two spiritual masters--sin and god Satan or God the Father through Jesus Christ. During His ministry, Jesus emphasized the importance of a personal confession of belief and faith. *Matthew* recorded Jesus speaking about the attitude of those who desire to serve Him as disciples. He mentioned the importance of confession: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (10:32).

Confession of belief in His deity is a critical response. He links this one expression of belief and faith with salvation itself because the confession is the servant's verbal commitment to serve Jesus as his spiritual Master. Confession is a work of belief, faith, and obedience, and it comes straight from the heart. In the next verse, Jesus mentioned what happens to those who refuse to confess His deity, "But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (10:33). In other words regardless of how godly a person may be, Jesus will tell God His Father He does not know him.

When a slave of sin chooses to confess Jesus as his Lord he is taking an essential step in his redemption and spiritual freedom. When he confesses his acknowledgment of the Lord's deity he is committing himself to serve Jesus as Master which in turn proves his belief and faith by obeying His will. A servant's confession exposes the true intentions of his heart. In *Romans*, Paul wrote: "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (10:9-10).

One's confession is an outward revelation of what is beginning to develop within his heart. And in turn, his heart will motivate his response to God's will through his obedience to the Lord's covenant. Even though a slave of sin cannot serve God as a saint until he is redeemed and recreated in the born again experience; confession signals his intent and desire to change masters and to renew his fellowship with God. When a servant verbally acknowledges Jesus as Lord and Master, he is demonstrating to God his spiritual insight and growing awareness of a personal understanding and acceptance of God's will in Christ Jesus.

This part of the process of salvation "results" in righteousness and salvation. Righteousness is only reckoned by God to those who are willing to

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express their belief and faith through obedience to the will of God as Abraham did. Righteousness becomes a reality in the servant's life when he is justified by Jesus. Salvation is the result of obedience to the New Covenant gospel and stipulations. Overall, one's confession is an essential part of a chain of spiritual events leading up to redemption. Confession acknowledges Jesus as the servant's Master and his redemption by Jesus confirms his confession.

Questions

Jesus emphasized the importance of verbally confessing His identity – God.
Matthew 10:32, 33

- 1) Why do you think it is so important to confess Jesus verbally?
- 2) How does your heart affect your confession?
- 3) When you confess Jesus, what are you confessing?

To confess Jesus as Lord, is to say Jesus is Master.

- 1) If you choose to confess Jesus as your God and Lord, does this mean you are saying He is your Master?
- 2) Does confessing Jesus as Master mean you are obligating your obedience to Him?
- 3) What does obedience to Jesus as Lord and Master mean to you?
- 4) If you are choosing to serve Jesus how do you continue to serve your flesh and its lust?

A valid confession requires obedient faith and belief to His will as Master.
Romans 10:9-10

- 1) What happens to your confession if you are not willing to fulfill your confession to serve the Lord's will?

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- 2) What is motivating your confession?
- 3) Is your confession a work of belief and faith?

A true confession will result in righteousness and salvation.

- 1) How does your confession of Jesus as Lord and Master lead you to repentance?
- 2) How is your confession connected to your everyday life of serving Jesus as Master?

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Another essential step a servant of sin must take in the process of redemption in Christ is a committed willingness to prove his belief, faith, obedience, and confession through a demonstrated desire to change his life. The servant's confession recognizes Jesus as Master and repentance proves the sincerity of his heart. He must express his newfound attitude towards sin and willingness to relearn how to live life according to the will of God the Father, instead of self, sin, and the world. This is not a confession even though it proves its honesty.

Repentance is a heart motivated commitment which a servant of sin must make in order to physically demonstrate to God the Father his desire to serve Him through Jesus Christ. It realizes the integrity of his belief, faith, confession, and commitment to obey the Lord's new covenant will. Repentance honors Jesus as Lord God, Savior, and Master. Belief, faith, repentance, and confession are all proven by the servant's willingness to respond to the Lord's New Covenant will by works of obedience.

In the last chapter of *Luke*, the author recorded some of the Lord's last words to His eleven disciples before He ascended back into heaven. Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (24:45b). After which He began to explain one of the reasons why He had to do what He did while on earth, "thus, it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (24:45b, 47).

The importance of repentance cannot be understated. In order for Jesus to purchase a servant of sin, the servant must demonstrate a willingness to obey the will of Jesus as expressed within His new covenant. If he is not willing to do this, then he will not be willing to begin living the rest of his life serving Jesus. Repentance results from and is motivated by belief, faith, obedience, and confession. Active repentance proves to God a slave of sin is willing to stop serving sin, self, and Satan. He is ready to serve God the Father through Jesus.

Active repentance is manifested through Spirit led obedience. It begins within the life of a slave of sin and continues as he grows in spiritual maturity after his purchase and transfer into the Lord's kingdom. However, it cannot be initially fulfilled until the servant of sin is freed from his debt in order to serve Jesus as Lord. A servant of sin is not repentant if he does not respond to the stipulations of new covenant salvation. Repentance highlights how the word of

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God is performing its work within the heart, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (*Hebrews 4:12*).

Repentance is a decision. When a servant of sin hears the gospel message, God is offering two choices:

1) The first is continued hatred of the light, motivated by the servant's dread of exposure and his love of life as a slave of sin. Jesus spoke about this early in His ministry, "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed" (*John 3:20*). Repentance is a change of heart caused by the word of God as it exposes sin in all of its naked wickedness, revealing its evil deception. Repentance allows the Spirit to expose and treat open infected wounds containing unattended spiritual rot in order to heal the servant's life according to the standard of God's righteousness.

The requirement to repent involves the servant's willingness to accept self-revelation of his evil and a life lived for the fulfillment of personal lust and self. Most people do not want to accept this spiritual reality. Repentance demands recognition of what needs changed in life and a willingness to proceed according to the will of God by the Spirit's counsel. Most servants of sin are not ready to commit to such a radical lifestyle change and self revelation of evil. They are willing to mourn getting caught for committing sin but not for the sin itself, "the sorrow of the world produces death" (*2 Corinthians 7:10b*).

2) The second is belief and faith leading to repentance as a result of a heartfelt mourning for a life dead in sin, evil, and useless to God. This takes place as the servant begins to understand his true position before God's presence. The word of God is beginning to have an effect upon the servant's heart. Even though from a physical point of view his life may be perceived as saintly, perhaps he even worships God the Father through Jesus. But before God the Father he is a rebellious child who refuses to serve Him to His glory. In the next verse, Jesus noted, "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (*John 3:21*). The truly repentant servant glorifies God through his Spirit led change of masters.

When a slave of sin begins to recognize the futility and vanity of life in Satan's dominion, he will become more and more aware of his freedom, ability, and desire to choose the right path of repentance. Repentance is a natural outcome of the merging forces of belief, faith, obedience, and confession. When a

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slave of sin is willing to accept Jesus as Lord and Master his response proves his repentance.

In his *second* letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul wrote: "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God" (7:9a). The result of repentance is one's physical expression of a heart desire to serve Jesus. Repentance is a physical confession of an indisputable heartfelt sorrow for a life of hatred and hostility towards God's righteousness.

When Jesus redeems a slave of sin, He expects His new bond-servant to serve Him with a convicted heart and mind, and express a willingness to allow the Spirit to lead him through a lifetime of repentance and renewal. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Romans*: "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" (12:2). The servant must learn how to be righteous according to the righteous standard of God. Without continual repentance the learning process is hindered and the work of the Spirit is slowed down or even halted. He must embrace continual change in order to progress repentance and maturity in Christ.

Repentance is a vital part of one's sacrificial service to God. Even though God gives a resurrected spirit righteousness and considers him sanctified, the new bond-servant must still spend the rest of his physical life perfecting the righteous standard of God as a way of life in his holiness. Spiritually the servant is holy and separated from the world, but for the rest of his life he must learn how to replace the ways of his old unholy lifestyle and thoughts with the Spirit led values of righteousness. He does not become more holy or sanctified. He cannot be more spiritually separated from the world. But he is learning how to live according to God's standard of righteousness of holiness.

The Spirit's counsel is vital because the servant does not have any idea what righteous living is all about. The Spirit transferred him to the Lord's kingdom and everything is new. "Sorrow according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret" which motivates him to continually grow and mature his new life of righteousness (2 *Corinthians* 7:10a). Repentance after the servant's initial rebirth is essentially involves relearning how to live life. He knows how to live death. The hard part of repentance is unlearning the ways of death and replacing unholy lifestyle and worship decisions with righteous ones.

Thus, for the Spirit to work in the life of a redeemed bond-servant of Christ, he must be willing to prove his ongoing commitment to repentance by

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allowing the Spirit to lead his life, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16-25). This is a spiritual fight which will last until physical death. Repentance is a very real spiritual struggle to remain alive in Christ as the flesh tries with all of its might to draw the spirit and mind back into its unholy lifestyle, “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

Repentance is a gradual lifelong process in which the servant learns to change his lifestyles, thoughts, and behaviors, and idiosyncrasies to conform to the Spirit’s work in his new life.

Repentance is a work of regeneration throughout the life of the servant. Its work will enter into the perfection of eternal life in ways completely incomprehensible.

Questions

Repentance is essential in order for a servant to receive forgiveness.
Luke 24:45b

- 1) What is repentance?
- 2) Do you think repentance is the result of applied belief, faith, and confession?
- 3) Is repentance a physical work?
- 4) Is repentance a mental work?
- 5) Why do you think repentance is so important?
- 6) How is repentance connected with your confession?
- 7) How does faith work with repentance?
- 8) After serving sin and Satan for so long, do you think changing how your respond to your new Lord’s will could be difficult?
- 9) Is the brotherhood of fellowship responsible to help a new infant Christian to grow and mature?

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Belief, faith, and confession of the Lord Jesus Christ can only be realized through obedience to the Lord's will. Repentance is confirmed through obedience to the Lord's will.

- 1) Can repentance be expressed any other way other than through the works of obedience?
- 2) What is motivating you to change your life?
- 3) How do you handle serious spiritual issues which may be beyond your spiritual maturity level to handle?
- 4) Is repentance working for your salvation since it is a work?

Repentance is a physical expression of how effective the word of God is in the heart.

Hebrews 4:12; John 3:20

- 1) Do you feel God's word is important to follow as you learn how to repent?
- 2) How do you know how to repent according to the Lord's will?
- 3) How do you know if you have repented enough?
- 4) What does your willingness to repent indicate about the inner workings of your heart?

Repentance exposes a servant's true feelings towards sin and who he desires to serve or worship.

John 3:20; Romans 12:1-2

- 1) What do you think a sin is in the Lord's eye?
- 2) How do you truly feel about a transgression?

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3) How do you know if you are transgressing against the Lord's will?

Repentance expresses the servant's attitude towards sin.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

1) Do you have a genuine desire to change behavior and motivations?

2) Do you still enjoy worldly activities which may conflict with Christian values?

3) How do your Christian values affect other Christians?

4) What motivates you to serve the Lord's will?

5) How do you consider the gray areas of good and evil?

Repentance is the practice of truth.

John 3:21

1) Is repentance a work?

2) What kind of work is repentance, one based upon faith and freedom or rules and commands?

3) Do you make a concerted effort to daily change behaviors which conflict with the Lord's will?

4) How do you know if your behavior decisions are in conflict with the Lord's will?

5) How do you know if your changes are according to His will?

6) How do you make decisions to repent: by your heart, Scripture, fellowship and its associated counsel, or a combination of the three? What are some other ways?

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Repentance is the servant's expression of belief, faith, confession, and obedience of Jesus as Lord.

- 1) How do these three major parts of the gospel response – belief, faith, and confession, play a part of your decisions to repent?
- 2) How does repentance help to fulfill your confession of Jesus as Lord and Master?
- 3) You are a servant of your Master Jesus Christ; does repentance help you serve Him better?

Repentance is an expression of spiritual change which begins in the heart and flows into everyday choices and decisions throughout the life of the Lord's servant.

Romans 12:2; Genesis 8:21; Numbers 15:39; Psalms 7:10, 14:1-3, 24:4-5, 51:10; Matthew 5:8; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 6:30-31, Psalm 7:9b, 33:13-15, 53:1-3, 69:32-33, 73; Ecclesiastes 8:11-13; Psalms 86:12, 90:8-12, 93:14-15, 119, 139:23-24; Proverbs 2:10-11, 3:1-8, 4:4-7,13, 14:33a, 15:28a, 17:3, 21:2-3, 24:11-12, 27:19, 28:26; Ecclesiastes 3:11, 10:2; Matthew 12:34-35, 13:14-16, 15:17-18,22:37; Mark 7:20-23, 12:30, 33; Luke 16:15, 12:34; Acts 1:24, 12:32, 8:34-38, 15:7-9; Romans 6:16-18, 8:26-27, 10:8-10; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16; 1 Corinthians 4:4-5; Romans 2:12-16; Revelation 2:23b; Ephesians 1:18-23, 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; Hebrews 3:7-11, 4:12-13, 10:22; 1 Peter 3:13-15; 1 John 3:16-24; Jeremiah 17:5, 7, 9-10, 20:12, 24:6-7, 32:37-40; Ezekiel 11:17-20, 36:8-15, 22-29,31-33; Hebrews 10:16-17, 22, 8:8-13

- 1) How does repentance reflect what is happening in your heart?
- 2) Do you desire to change but find it exceedingly difficult?
- 3) Are you ready to allow the Spirit to lead you life?
- 4) How do you allow the Spirit to lead your life before you become the Lord's servant?

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- 5) How does He lead your life after you become His servant?
- 6) Are you allowing the flesh to dominate your life in Christ?
- 7) What is more important: to allow the Spirit or your heart to guide your decisions?
- 8) How do you know your heart is correct?
- 9) The Spirit lives with you, do you ever consider the Spirit knowing all of your thoughts?

Repentance is an expression of the servant's willingness to allow the Spirit to lead his life.

Galatians 5:16-25

- 1) To ask for a visible presence of the Spirit's work is counter to faith. Do you ever doubt the Spirit's leadership?
- 2) Jesus said the Spirit is leading all of His children. Is there a reason why you may be asking for the presence of the Spirit in order to change your thoughts, heart and life?
- 3) Who is at fault if your life lacks Spirit leadership?
- 4) What is lacking if you do not know you have the presence of the Spirit?
- 5) Did Jesus promise all of His children Spirit leadership?
- 6) Do you follow the Spirit's counsel?
- 7) How do you know what His counsel is for your life?
- 8) If you feel lacking in Spirit leadership, what is motivating your life and thought patterns?

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- 9) What does the Spirit have to do with repentance?
- 10) Can a Christian become rebellious to His Master?
- 11) How does rebellion affect the work of the Spirit?
- 12) How does rebellion affect the Spirit personally?

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Baptism is a word describing the process in which a dirty, bacteria laden, grimy unusable eating utensil is submerged in a wash basin with strong soap. It is scrubbed of its filth and sanitized in order for reuse. The utensil is renewed to its original purpose from a state of uselessness caused by filth. The word baptism used in Scripture does not mean sprinkling, nor is it pouring, these uses come from well intentioned rationalizations and purpose, but do not properly fulfill the meaning of the word. Neither alternate meaning, if applied to the cleansing process is able to completely clean anything other than loose surface grime. It is impossible to completely cleanse anything by sprinkling or pouring water on a part of the spoiled utensil.

A cooking pot cannot submerge itself, cleanse itself of filth, or self-emerge on its own. The dish or pot must be thoroughly washed of its filth by a person who has complete control over the cleansing process. What is being washed is essentially at the mercy of the grace of the one who is choosing to do the washing. He is not compelled to wash it; he could just as easily throw it away and replace it with a new one. But God prefers to wash the filth from what He has created – to restore a human being to his originally intended sparkling clean perfection.

Within the water of baptism a recreation of the spirit, self, and conscience take place by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a vital step in the process of salvation. Up to this point in time the process of appealing to God for salvation involved belief in the deity of Jesus a growing faith, and a willingness to repent. Obedience motivated from the heart is how the appeal is acted out in life. All three develop from the servant's confession concerning the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ. His confessed awareness of the deity of Jesus and desire to serve Him as Master will begin to mature an acute awareness of the importance of physically expressing his repentance from serving sin and Satan to Jesus.

In order for obedience to begin its fulfillment, the servant of sin must submit to being submerged in the water of baptism. All of the parts of his appeal are a physical and spiritual response to an unbreakable chain of spiritual stipulations leading to redemption and righteousness. Up to baptism the servant's response involves only his initial reaction to God's offer of salvation in Jesus. Within the water of baptism the Spirit responds with His miraculous work of uniting the servant's spirit with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Within the water the servant receives his spiritual circumcision and the gift of the indwelling presence of the Spirit. God's spiritual work of redeeming and sealing the submissive servant takes place within the water.

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Matthew recorded Jesus speaking to His disciples just before His ascension about the importance of baptism. While trying to make His disciples aware of its indispensability in the process of salvation He stated: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (28:19). Jesus did not say discipleship comes before baptism. A servant of sin can be a learner or disciple of Jesus but he is not His saved disciple until he chooses to become His holy servant of righteousness. A saved disciple is a Christian. A servant of sin becomes the Lord's disciple as a result of completely fulfilling the spiritual process revealed by the new covenant which leads to his recreation.

The baptism Jesus demands is based upon belief and faith in the name of the One God, He alone has the authority and ability to accomplish what He is promising. Oneness with God involves baptism: "There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called in on hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (*Ephesians* 4:4-6).

The spiritual miracle taking place within the water of baptism is the unseen work of God as He fulfills His promises. The servant's belief in His description of what is taking place as well as his faith to submit to His will is his fulfillment of belief, faith, confession, repentance, and obedience. This is why redemption is according to the grace of God. He freely offers His miraculous work to the one who is willing to act upon his appeal for salvation according to His word, new covenant, promises, and grace. As a result God performs His work of giving new life to the dead servant. Without the grace of God life would be meaningless or even unknown.

In the water of baptism a rebirth experience takes place. Water is the medium within which God chose to recreate the spirit and self of a slave of sin who is spiritually dead. Redemption is fulfilled by recreation. Recreation is the method by which the Lord's purchases a dead servant. The cost of the recreation required the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The water of baptism is God's birthing womb within which a new life is born into a new and wondrous spiritual world. Just as the water in a mother's womb is separate from the developing baby the water in baptism is separate from the servant. It has its purpose; it facilitates the creation of the new child.

The development of a human baby is a type of what takes place within the water of baptism. In order for the child to enter into existence a human effort must take place. But the development of the child is the work of God. *Job* once

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wrote: “Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same one fashion us in the womb” (31:15). Hundreds of years later *David* wrote concerning his formation in his mother’s womb: “For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well” (*Psalms* 139:13-14).

When a slave of sin is completely immersed in the water of baptism, he is much like a forming baby immersed in its mother’s womb – a new creation. In the water of baptism, the Spirit recreates the dead spirit and self of a slave of sin into a completely new spiritual life form. His old spirit dies in with Christ, it is buried with Christ, it is resurrected into a new life with Christ, and it continues to live in Christ. This is why the new servant is spiritually holy--righteous and sanctified. In Christ he becomes one with God Himself. The physical water of baptism witnesses the miraculous work of the Spirit; a witness dependent upon belief and faith in the unseen work of God.

Paul revealed in his letter to the *Romans*, “For if we become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (6:5). When Jesus died on the cross, His death destroyed His human body. His burial for the next three days witnessed the reality of His death, and God gave Him a new spiritual body when the Spirit resurrected Him back into life. His resurrection witnessed the power of God over death and His ability to give life to any servant dead in sin.

The newly created spirit is now cleansed by virtue of its resurrection, into a new life. The former servant of sin re-enters life in God’s presence with a cleansed new conscience and self by virtue of a new spirit. His new spirit, self, and conscience are separated by death from the old self, corrupted conscience, and the physical body – a spiritual circumcision has taken place.

The bloody sacrifice of Jesus is able to redeem any spirit dead in sin. His redemption effectively ends any record of sin debt owed to God. The newly reborn servant of Jesus re-emerges from the water a new spiritual creation. He is innocent, holy, righteous, sanctified, justified, and a servant of the Lord.

His death with Christ effectively ends his accountability to the moral law from which his transgressions led to his debt of sin – the law of “good and evil”. Thus he will no longer be spiritually accountable to the binding force of any law creating sin debt and the curse of breaking a law – spiritual death. This is why the Lord’s servant can sin and yet remain sinless. As long as he remains in Christ he is not spiritually accountable to the legal forces of law.

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Baptism is strictly a faith response to God's will. Paul stated in *Galatians*, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:26). What happens within the water of baptism takes place as a result of belief and faith in the integrity of God's word concerning what is taking place. Or in other words, if the servant believes he is already redeemed before he enters the water of baptism, he cannot believe nor have faith in the process of redemption taking place while he is submerged under the water. It is either one belief or the other; it cannot be both at the same time. A servant cannot be baptized for re-creation if he considers himself already recreated. Any other reason besides the servant's rebirth in unity with Jesus will render the response as a faithless ritual.

Faith is the expectation of the fulfillment of God's will by the unseen work of the Holy Spirit. Faith is the assurance of His ability to fulfill what He has promised. If the process of salvation taking place within baptism could be sensed, then it would not be based upon belief and faith.

If salvation is believed to have already taken place there isn't anything in which to place faith. If the servant believes he is already forgiven before baptism then he cannot experience death, burial, and resurrection in unity with Jesus within the water of baptism. For only a recreated spirit is free from sin. If he believes he is recreated before baptism it is impossible to believe or have faith in what is promised to take place within the water. The power of the spiritual miracle is lost and Jesus does not get the glory associated with the servant's rebirth. If the servant believes he is saved from sin before he is united with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection within the water of baptism then belief and faith in the miracle of rebirth with Jesus is nonexistent.

In *Colossians* Paul wrote: "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (2:12). He revealed the importance of faith in the spiritual death, burial, and resurrection taking place within the water of baptism. The work of the Spirit within baptism is not only a unifying experience with Christ; His work is the focus of belief and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Denying the death, burial, and resurrection experience with Christ in baptism denies the power of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in the process of salvation.

Within the water of baptism the slave of sin is redeemed by Jesus in an integrated spiritual experience. It cannot be explained in any other terms other than it is a spiritual miracle taking place. When a slave of sin dies and is reborn he enters into the body of Christ because he is in complete oneness with Christ as

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Jesus is with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. He is made righteous because the re-creation of redemption left him justified of all sin debt to God. There is no longer any record of sin because the spirit, self, and conscience are new and innocent. In Christ the newly created spirit is holy, righteous, innocent, and sinless even though he must live in a body corrupted by sin.

Baptism is a unified physical-spiritual expression of belief, faith, confession, repentance, and obedience to the will of God through Jesus Christ. The person being baptized is completely dependent upon the integrity of the word of God. He only knows what is taking place as a result of his belief in His word. He is willingly immersed into the water as a result of his faith in the word of God. He is utterly dependent upon what God promised to take place in the water regardless of physical perception. Within the water of baptism God returns a dead servant to life.

Questions

Baptism is a word which describes the process involved with cleaning a filthy container or utensil – which includes the spiritual side of the human body

- 1) Do you think the baptism related to salvation refers to either sprinkling or pouring water on a person?
- 2) Is the baptism described in Scripture sprinkling or pouring?
- 3) Is baptism immersion only?
- 4) Is it okay with God to compromise immersion with sprinkling or pouring?
- 5) Do you think a person of faith who received baptism by sprinkling, pouring, or as a baby, has received salvation?
- 6) Do you think God will change His word for the sake of human convenience or theology?

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Belief, faith, confession, obedience, baptism, and repentance are all physical expressions which a servant must demonstrate before God.

Acts 2:38, 22:16; Galatians 3:22-29; Colossians 2:9-14; Romans 6

- 1) Do you think God allows servants of sin to omit baptism in their conversion to become the Lord's servants?
- 2) Is baptism any more of a work than belief, faith, repentance, or confession?
- 3) How is baptism a work if it must be submitted to in faith?
- 4) Why is baptism a work of faith?
- 5) Are you working for your salvation when baptized?
- 6) Is what takes place within the water of baptism a work of God's grace or your work?
- 7) Are you able to perform any of the spiritual miracles promised in baptism in order to work the work of baptism?
- 8) What is the focus of belief, faith, and baptism: the work of being immersed or the promises of the Lord concerning what is taking place during the baptism?

The servant of sin must be baptized before he is able to serve Jesus as His disciple.

Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-13

- 1) Do you believe a servant of sin must be baptized in order to become united with Christ?
- 2) How does a servant of sin become united with Christ?
- 3) What is the difference between learning about Jesus and learning about Him as His disciple?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Baptism

4) If the Lord saved you before your immersion why is baptism required in order to become united with Jesus, forgiveness, the reception of the Holy Spirit, and spiritual circumcision? When do you become the Lord's disciple?

What takes place within the water of baptism is by divine authority.
Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 10:13; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 John 3:23

- 1) Do you think Jesus has the authority to recreate you spirit?
- 2) Does a servant of sin have the ability to recreate his spirit into a new life?
- 3) Why must baptism be submitted too under the authority of the name of Jesus Christ?
- 4) What does Jesus have to do with baptism?

There is but one type of baptism involved in salvation.
Ephesians 4:4-6

- 1) Do you think there are many different baptisms for different reasons today?
- 2) Which baptism is the Spirit speaking about concerning redemption:
 - a) "let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38b).
 - b) "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16b).
 - c) "into what then were you baptized? And they said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance" ... And when they hear this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 19:3-5).
 - d) "He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit". (John 1:33b)
 - e) "for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Baptism

There is one type of baptism related with the gift's given by the Holy Spirit which only occurred during the first century.

Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-13, 17-21; John 15:26-27, 16:5-11; Acts 10:44-48, 11:4-18

- 1) Do you think the gifts which the Spirit gave during the first century redeemed anyone from their sins?
- 2) Are you able to name at least one other type of baptism related to salvation?
- 3) Did both servants of sin and servants of the Lord receive gifts from the Holy Spirit?

What takes place within the water is strictly by the grace of God and is dependent upon belief and faith in the integrity of His word.

Galatians 3:26; Acts 2:37-47

- 1) How is baptism connected with repentance?
- 2) How is baptism connected with confessing Jesus as Lord?
- 3) How is baptism connected with forgiveness?
- 4) How is baptism connected with believing in Jesus?
- 5) How is baptism connected with faith?
- 6) How is baptism connected to grace?
- 7) Is God's grace dependent upon faith?
- 8) Are you able to see or feel His grace at work?
- 9) If you could see or feel grace would grace be by faith?
- 10) Why is the integrity of Scripture so important?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Baptism

A baby forming in the womb is a physical example of what is taking place within the water of baptism. It demands the unity of physical effort with the grace of God's miraculous work.

Job 31:15; Psalms 139:13-14

- 1) Do you think God's grace is involved with the development of a baby in his mothers' womb?
- 2) Is a baby a new and separate life from his mother?

God also likens the rebirth of a servant to a seed planted and emerging into a new and separate life.

John 12:24-26

- 1) Is the new birth which takes place within the water of baptism similar to a planted seed? If so how?
- 2) Have you ever thought of yourself as a growing seed with a new and different life?
- 3) What type of new fruit are you producing?
- 4) Is the seed of your fruit suitable for planting?

The recreation experienced when the Lord redeems a servant of sin is likened to the recreation of a dead servant's physical body.

1 Corinthians 15:35:44

- 1) Do you believe God is able to recreate a body?
- 2) Do you think God is able to recreate a spirit from death?
- 3) Is your theology restricting God in your life?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Baptism

A servant of sin must spiritually die and be resurrected with Christ in order for God to consider him righteous.

Romans 6:5; Revelation 20:6

- 1) Why do you think God places such importance to a servant's death, burial, and resurrection in order to become His servant?
- 2) Do you feel like you have died?
- 3) Do you feel resurrected?
- 4) Do you feel like a newly born creation?
- 5) If you could how would faith be affected?
- 6) How do you know for certain God has recreated your spirit and life?

If a servant believes he is saved before he experiences baptism then the baptism is merely a ritual, regardless how it is rationalized.

Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:6-11; Colossians 2:9-14

- 1) Do you believe you received salvation before you received baptism?
- 2) When does Scripture reveal forgiveness of sins taking place?
- 3) If you are saved before baptism why do you need to experience baptism?
- 4) Does requirement of baptism make you angry and defensive?
- 5) What do you believe the spiritual purpose of baptism is: joining the church, how a sinner receives his new life, a confirmation of salvation and faith which has already taken place, any other reason?

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Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Baptism

Within the water of baptism a servant of sin receives the forgiveness of his sins.
Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:6-11; Colossians 2:9-14

- 1) If you are saved before baptism how did God forgive you of your sins?
- 2) Are you able to feel the forgiveness of your sins?
- 3) If you are not able to feel forgiveness, how do you know you are forgiven?
- 4) If you are able to feel forgiveness is forgiveness by faith in the work of God?
- 5) How do you receive spiritual circumcision before baptism?
- 7) Are you able to feel your spiritual circumcision?
- 8) If you are promised forgiveness of your sins before baptism are there two different ways to receive salvation?
- 9) How are you able to become united with Christ in baptism again if you are already united with Him?
- 7) Is belief, faith, repentance and confession the means of forgiveness or the foundation of what takes place within baptism?

Baptism is a choice of how belief and faith is practiced.
Colossians 2:12;

- 1) Does God force anyone to receive baptism?
- 2) Do you feel forced to receive baptism as a work to earn salvation?
- 3) Do you think baptism is a command or part of the Lord's instruction concerning how to receive redemption?

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Section Four: Appealing to God for Redemption

Questions

Baptism

4) How do you distinguish the difference of motivations to observe a new covenant command: all commands require a work in order to earn God's favor or all commands clarify the new covenant stipulations for salvation in order to obey God's will correctly?

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Section Five: God's Work

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Death

The first thing taking place in God's birthing womb of baptism is the spiritual separation of a servant's old self and spirit from his new life. Paul described this part of the new birth as the removal of the "old self" and "body of sin" (*Romans* 6:6). Earlier he wrote: "How shall we who died to sin still live in it" (6:2b). Spiritual death effectively separates the servant's old life in sin from his new life of righteousness. This is the function of death; it separates one spiritual or physical reality from another.

Spiritual death also releases the newly created servant from spiritual accountability to any law binding him to sin. Paul described what happens by comparing it to a married spouse who dies. The one who remains alive is no longer bound to the marriage covenant, "the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives" (*Romans* 7:1b). The marriage covenant ends upon death. Death separates the living survivor from the legal aspects of the Law and covenant of marriage. Even though Paul told this to those worshipping God under the Law of Moses, it also applies to the instinctual moral law given to everyone. This law is just as binding. He goes on to say, "we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we might serve in the newness of the Spirit" (7:6). The power of law makes a dramatic change as well. Its curse of death for a transgression is no longer effective for as long as the servant remains faithful to Jesus. Instead law functions as a guide working with the Spirit to enable the servant to grow in his ability to serve Christ righteously.

Spiritual death is used by God to prepare the now free servant for his recreation in Christ. He died in unity with Christ in order for the Spirit to prepare him for his first resurrection. In the next verse, Paul raised another question which demanded an affirmative answer from his readers, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death" (6:3).

The spiritual death taking place within the water of baptism unites the servant's spirit with the death of Christ. The servant is not united with His punishment but with the death resulting from the punishment. The Lord's death is not His punishment, even though the punishment caused His death. The Lord's death is not the cross even though the cross caused His death. The servant's spirit is united only with the death of Jesus. What take place is likened to a planted seed, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (*John* 12:24).

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Death

When this spiritual death experience begins to take place a transaction is being realized. The innocent and sinless sacrificial death suffered by Jesus on the cross satisfies the death requirement of sin, "For he who has died is freed from sin" (*Romans 6:7*). How? Sin causes unholiness which compels God to separate the sinner from His holy presence. This is spiritual death. The spiritual condition will last into eternity if the servant does not appeal for forgiveness. His death with Jesus separates his recreated spirit from his old life, self, conscience, sin, body, and the curse of law. Everything connected with sin and its record of debt is separated by death. Spiritual death with Christ sets the stage for rebirth. The spiritual death experience with Jesus is the redemption payment. The Lord's physical death enabled the spiritual death to take place.

Death with Jesus takes place when His death and the spirit of the slave of sin spiritually unite in the water of baptism, "we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death" (*Romans 6:5a*). While united with Jesus, the innocent and sinless death of Jesus is recognized by God as a satisfactory substitutionary death for the spiritual death demanded by the curse of sin's accumulated debt. The death earned by sin must be received in full and the death experience with Christ satisfies this payment, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Romans 6:23*). Spiritual death is followed by a spiritual burial in unity with Christ.

Questions

The renewing work of the Spirit must begin with death, which is the death of the old spirit (not body) and separation of self and flesh from the new creation.

Romans 6:6, 6:2b

- 1) If you believe you have received salvation before baptism or without being baptized at all, how did you experience spiritual death?
- 2) Do you experience spiritual death during your immersion?
- 3) Are you able to feel your death?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Death

- 4) How is death accomplished by faith if you are unable to physically feel the experience?
- 5) How do you visualize spiritual death?

When the servant dies "united with Him" in spiritual death, his old spirit, self, flesh, conscience, and accountability to law is effectively separated from his soon to come new life.

Romans 6:5a, 6; Galatians 2:11; Hebrews 10:22; John 12:23-26

- 1) Since Jesus compared His death, burial, and resurrection to an emerging seed do you think He is referring to the servant being planted alongside of Him?
- 2) How is a servant of sin planted like a seed in unity with Jesus before he is baptized?
- 3) Do you think being "united with Him" begins when the seed (old spirit of the servant of sin) ends life in order to emerge into new life?
- 4) What part of your life is the seed, your spirit or your flesh?
- 5) What part of your life is the emerging new plant, your spirit or your flesh?
- 6) Does "united with Him" take place outside of the baptism experience?

Spiritual death releases the servant from the legally binding statutes of the moral law of "good and evil", and any other law which would cause accountability to God's justice.

Romans 7:1b, 6, 2:12-16; Isaiah 24:5-6

- 1) What does freedom from accountability to law mean to you?
- 2) Why do you think this is an important part of you separation from your old life?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Death

- 3) What part do spiritual laws play in a Christian's life?
- 4) Do you still feel urges to transgress God's moral law?
- 5) Do you believe the law of "good and evil" is still embedded within your being?

Spiritual death changes the purpose of law from accountability to counselor.

- 1) How do you feel about not being legally accountable to law?
- 2) How are you allowing law and commandments to guide you through life?
- 3) How do you observe new covenant commands?
- 4) Are you able to identify any specific commands?
- 5) Do you feel as if you are sinning if you do not live up to a command?
- 6) Do you think baptism is a work of law?

Spiritual death – the death of the spirit, takes place within the water of baptism.
Romans 6:3, 7-8; Romans 8:5-10

- 1) What do you think dies within the water of baptism?
- 2) What happens to the old flesh after baptism?
- 3) Do you feel changed in any way?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Death

Jesus said a servant must lose his life in order to receive life. He compared the process with the death, burial, and emergence of a planted seed.

John 12:24

- 1) Is a seed able to emerge into a plant if it is not planted?
- 2) Does a seed die, shed its old shell, and emerge, before it is planted?
- 3) How would you describe the rebirth of a planted seed?
- 4) Is a planted seed different from what emerges from its death?
- 5) Is the seed reborn into a new life?
- 6) Is the new plant separated from the life experienced by the seed and its parent plant?

A seed must first die and separate from the old before it is able to begin the growth process necessary to begin producing fruit.

- 1) What would happen to a seed if it didn't allow the new infant plant to emerge from its shell?

In order for a slave of sin to receive his new life he must first be "freed from sin".
Romans 6:7

- 1) Why is freedom from sin so important?
- 2) What is the bondage of sin?
- 3) What does Jesus mean when He speaks of freedom, is it spiritual or physical?
- 4) Are you able to feel the freedom?
- 5) How do you know what spiritual freedom feels like?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Death

6) How do you reconcile the perceived ability to sense spiritual realities in contrast with faith in God's word concerning the same realities?

When Jesus is "united" with the servant in death His innocent death becomes a satisfactory substitutionary death or propitiation for the servant.

Romans 6:8, 3:21-28, 6:6

- 1) Why do you think death is so important?
- 2) Why do you think being spiritually "united" with His death is so important?
- 3) Do you think you are able to feel this death?
- 4) What is the basic purpose of death both physically and spiritually?
- 5) How do you know for certain God has separated your old life by death from your new life?
- 6) Do you think being crucified with Jesus is the same as experiencing death with Him?
- 7) Does Scripture mention baptism as a confirmation of spiritual death which has already taken place?

The Scripture "for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" either refers to being spiritually baptized by the Spirit or being immersed into water and the Spirit performs the work of uniting the believer in unity with Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:13a; Acts 11:18

- 1) If the Holy Spirit spiritually baptized you, how do you know if you experienced Spirit baptism? If signs confirmed your baptism, how are signs compatible with faith in the unseen work of God?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Death

- 2) If you felt the Spirit working in His baptism how do you know if it is the Spirit of God who gave you the feeling?
- 3) Is a person who receives baptism by the Spirit saved before the experience or after?
- 5) How does a servant of sin know when he receives the forgiveness of sins?
- 6) If all servants are "baptized into one body", in what spiritual position are those who believe they are saved before receiving baptism?
- 7) Does "baptized into one body" mean baptism is only used when someone needs to join a group of Christians in a church?
- 8) If it is the Spirit who performs the work of uniting a servant of sin with Jesus, then what is the difference between the work of the Spirit within a baptism into water and the work of the Spirit performing a spiritual baptism without water?
- 9) What does Scripture reveal about the Spirit's work with a servant of sin the moment he is immersed in baptism?

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Burial

As a result of the death, the dead spirit and self are buried in unity with the dead body of Christ. Paul revealed this in *Romans*: "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death" (6:4a). One's spiritual burial is not the same as His physical burial either. The Lord's friends buried Him but His burial involved a lot more than simply placing His body within an enclosed cave. Even though most of the spiritual details are left out of His burial, its significance is powerful enough to require every servant who dies with Him to experience spiritual burial with Him. The spiritual burial experience somehow evidences the reality of the death of the old spirit, self, conscience, separation from the binding effects of moral law, and the debt of sin resulting from transgressions against God's righteousness.

Redemption is effected in the form of a death and burial with Jesus by the power of the Spirit. His physical death has the spiritual power to purchase the servant's life by allowing him to spiritually die in unity with His death and burial. This begins the Lord's preparation for the next step of the redemption process, a resurrection from spiritual death to emerge a recreated-born again son of God.

Questions

After death the spirit is buried, and united with Jesus in a new life, just like a seed.

Romans 6:4a

- 1) Is there a prebaptism way, without being immersed into water, to become united with Jesus in His death and burial?
- 2) What do you think is buried with Jesus: your flesh or spirit?
- 3) Why do you think Jesus had to be buried?
- 4) Do you think the Lord's burial had anything to do with the burial taking place in baptism?
- 5) How does a burial relate to a planted seed?

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Burial

- 6) Do you think the burial is explained by what happens to a seed in the ground?
- 7) Does Scripture mention baptism as a confirmation of a spiritual burial which has already taken place?

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Circumcision

In between the servant's burial and resurrection a new spiritual state of being is created. A spiritual circumcision has taken place separating "the body of the flesh", by death, from the soon resurrected new spirit by the power of the Holy Spirit (*Colossians* 2:11). The newly created spirit will arise from the grave with Jesus, separated from his old body, his hard heart, accountability to instinctual law, and sin debt to God. *Ezekiel* foretold of this hundreds of years earlier: "I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh ... they shall be My people, and I shall be their God" (11:17-20).

In the new covenant: "circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit" (*Romans* 2:29). Spiritual circumcision is a cutting away of the hard heart of flesh in order for the Spirit to give the dead servant a newly created heart.

His being as a slave of sin is spiritually separated from his recreated spirit, self, and heart. Paul later revealed, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (8:10). God the Father considers a servant of sin who responds with belief, faith, and obedience in Him righteous as exemplified by Abraham, "even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham. So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham" (*Galatians* 3:6, 7, 9). In the new covenant righteousness is given by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Righteousness is the holiness received upon the death of his old spirit, self, and conscience. Righteousness describes the spiritual state of the newly recreated spirit. He is holy, pure, and innocent – a new born child.

Spiritual circumcision also sets the cleansed spirit apart as a son of Abraham through the spiritual side of the promised seed. The spiritual side of the seed referred to the Messiah and His saints, the true spiritual heirs of Abraham. Even though the physical side of the seed included all people born into Israel, God only included those who remained faithful to Him alone in His family of saint's and heirs of the spiritual side of the promised seed. Only the recreated and reborn children of Christ become spiritual children of Abraham. They are sealed by their spiritual circumcision as citizens of His spiritual kingdom of promise. In *Galatians* Paul revealed: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:29). The spiritual servant of Christ is now ready to receive his new spirit and life.

Fulfillment of belief, faith, confession, repentance, and obedience, depend upon the servant's spiritual circumcision, "when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh" (*Colossians* 2:13a). Death is

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Circumcision

always associated with uncircumcision and is the spiritual opposite of life and spiritual circumcision.

Paul tried to remind his brethren in Christ concerning the vital importance of spiritual circumcision performed by the Spirit. Every one of the believers became servants of God as a result of having fulfilled their faith. God considered these believers faithful as a result of being "baptized into Christ" only because they had faith in the invisible and unfelt spiritual promises being fulfilled in the water of baptism (*Galatians 3:27a*). A slave of sin is spiritually circumcised while submerged within the water because his spiritual death with Jesus results in the separation of new from old.

It is not the water performing the miraculous work taking place; it is the work of the Spirit. The slave of sin is counted as righteous by God as a result of His demonstrated belief and faith in the Lord's invisible work of redemption. The servant receives holiness and spiritual circumcision "through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (*Colossians 2:12b*). No one is able to receive a spiritual circumcision without being "buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him" (*2:12a*).

Spiritual circumcision also spiritually identifies a New Covenant believer in Christ, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh" (*Philippians 3:3*). A servant cannot be with Christ in His body if he is not spiritually circumcised, nor is he able to "worship in the Spirit". Remember what Jesus said early in His ministry: "God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (*John 4:24*).

Questions

With the death of the old spirit a separation has begun to take place. The old flesh and self are now completely separated from the new living life about to emerge.

Colossians 2:11; (Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Ezekiel 11:17-20); Romans 6:6a; Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4, 9:25-26; Romans 2:28-29; Philippians 3:2-3;

- 1) What begins to take place when a new plant emerges?
- 2) Did non-physical circumcision exist before Christ began His church?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Circumcision

- 3) How did spiritual circumcision in pre-Christian history connect with Abraham's spiritual heirs?
- 4) What did non-physical circumcision accomplish before His death?
- 5) Does pre-Christian circumcision illustrate the importance of separation from sin, amoral, idolatrous lifestyle, and attitudes towards God's standard of righteousness?
- 6) How does pre-Christian spiritual circumcision clarify the purpose of Christian spiritual circumcision?
- 7) In the new covenant how is a servant spiritually circumcised?
- 8) During what part of a servant's gospel response does Scripture mention spiritual circumcision taking place?
- 9) Do you think spiritual circumcision is necessary?
- 10) Are you able to feel it taking place?

The death of the servant's spirit effectively separates his old heart and self from his new. This is a spiritual circumcision.

Romans 2:29, 8:10

- 1) Do you feel separated from your old life?
- 2) If Jesus said your old self and heart are circumcised from the new do you still feel affected by the old self and heart?
- 3) Do you try to live a circumcised lifestyle?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Circumcision

Spiritual death, burial, and circumcision are steps involved in being given righteousness (made holy). The series of spiritual miracles taking place are completely dependent upon belief and faith in the integrity of God's word. Galatians 3:6, 7, 9

- 1) Why do you believe belief and faith are so important?
- 2) If you can feel what God is doing why is faith necessary?
- 3) Do you think what is taking place within the water of baptism is a series of spiritual miracles?
- 4) When does spiritual circumcision take place?
- 5) Does Scripture mention baptism as a confirmation of spiritual circumcision which has already taken place?

When a servant is spiritually circumcised he is no longer considered as spiritually dead.
Colossians 2:13

- 1) What is "uncircumcision of the flesh"?
- 2) Is spiritual circumcision necessary for salvation to take place?
- 3) How does spiritual circumcision lead to life?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Circumcision

The spiritual death, burial, and circumcision within the water of baptism cannot be a necessary ritual of some sort for the already forgiven. It is a real spiritual event taking place which is entirely dependent upon the belief and faith of the one being baptized.

Colossians 2:12b

- 1) Do you think a servant is able to enter into the water of baptism already spiritually circumcised for the purpose of receiving his spiritual circumcision?
- 2) If your heart feels salvation how do you know if it is telling you the truth?
- 3) How do you know what salvation feels like?
- 4) How do you know what feeling saved feels like?
- 5) What is God's Scriptural standard for feeling salvation?
- 6) How do your feelings reconcile with baptism?
- 7) What does spiritual circumcision feel like?

Spiritual circumcision cannot take place in any other environment than within the water of baptism. The servant must be first "buried with Him".

Colossians 2:12a

- 1) Do you believe Paul correctly describes what is taking place in the water of baptism?
- 2) Where did Paul learn about baptism?
- 3) Where did Peter learn about baptism?
- 4) When do you think Scripture states forgiveness takes place?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Spiritual Circumcision

A Christian is spiritually identified by his spiritual circumcision.

Philippians 3:3

- 1) What is the difference between true and untrue circumcised people?
- 2) What do you think meant when he mentioned the "true circumcision"?

Only the spiritually circumcised are able to worship God in "spirit and truth".

John 4:24; Philippians 3:3

- 1) Are you able to worship Jesus according to His Father's will if you are not spiritually circumcised?
- 2) How do you spiritually worship God?
- 3) How are you guided in worship: by the Spirit, your heart, feelings, or a combination of all three?

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Resurrection

The final step of the redemption process taking place within the water of baptism occurs when the Holy Spirit recreates a new spirit and self in Christ. In *Ephesians* Paul wrote: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (2:10a). The body of death is now fully separated from the newly resurrected spirit and the new spiritual life form emerges from the water as a babe in Christ no longer enslaved to sin or spiritually accountable to any law. The curse has been satisfied and the debt is released due to spiritual death. Just as the resurrected body of Jesus differed from His dead and buried body so is the resurrected spirit from what died with Christ.

A few verses earlier Paul wrote, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgression, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) (2:4-5). The whole process of redemption takes place by the power of God. He fulfills His promises. Within baptism the servant is simply a passive participant in the rebirthing process other than his belief, faith, and obedience in the process taking place.

His response is his commitment to repentance and proves the sincerity of his confession of Jesus as Lord, Savior, and Master. His submission to the spiritual death, burial, and resurrection is fulfilled within the water of baptism by the unseen work of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote: "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (*Romans* 6:5). This is the reason why the newly recreated son of God is "alive together with Him" (*Colossians* 2:13b). He became one with Jesus, belongs to Jesus, and his life is dependent upon Jesus. He is one with Jesus in death and in life. He will grow with Jesus as a seed emerges from the transition of death and begins its new life in rich well cared for soil.

In *Romans* Paul noted: "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall live with Him" (6:8). He reminded his brethren of the spiritual miracle which took place when Christ recreated them into life and the assurance of faith in the grace of God by performing what He promised.

The spiritual experience of rebirth is only realized in baptism, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (*Colossians* 2:12b). This is why the servant's spiritual resurrection in the water of baptism is effected by the grace of God. But, his spiritual resurrection must also be realized by the belief and faith motivated obedience of the servant being given new life by the power of God. The grace of God assures His promised work in the water

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Section Five: God's Work

Spiritual Resurrection

of baptism. Faith assures the servant he has experienced what God has promised even though it is unseen. Remember, without faith in His work, "it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (*Hebrews 11:6b*).

The resurrection experienced in baptism is the new bond-servant's first resurrection. John revealed in *Revelation*, "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (20:6). In these few words the Lord assured His children they have a very real reason for their joy about their new position in Christ:

- 1) God considers these "blessed," happy people as "holy," they are righteous, purified of all sin, and sanctified in Christ.
- 2) The first resurrection experienced with Christ in baptism assures the servant, if he remains faithful, he will remain holy to God.
- 3) Holiness in Christ assures the servant promised life, replacing the promised death reserved for every person who has not experienced his first resurrection with Christ in baptism.
- 4) Every holy saint in Christ is also a priest serving God the Father under their high priest Jesus Christ.
- 5) All of the children resurrected with Christ forever rule with Him in ways humanly impossible to imagine.
- 6) The blessings revealed by Jesus to John are realized the moment the newly recreated child emerges into life with Christ in unity with His resurrection. The very first blessing of his new life is the gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

The second and final resurrection is experienced the moment Christ returns, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (*1 Corinthians 15:52*). This is the moment when the recreated son of God receives his new body, either after his physical death or as he witnesses Jesus returning to His earth.

When a servant emerges from God's watery womb of baptism he is a brand new creation in Christ, newly reborn. Even though the body remains dead in its corruption of sin and lust and remains the same physically, the spirit, self, conscience, and heart is recreated, new, spiritually circumcised, and holy; He is now God's new child in Christ. He is a spiritual baby, newly formed, ready to

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Spiritual Resurrection

begin spiritual growth, forming his new life, and restoring his soul into a maturing and useful servant of God in Christ.

Even though the new spirit must still live in the old sin corrupted physical body, it is spiritually separated from the body. The body becomes a useful instrument used by the new spirit to accomplish the will of God within the world. This is basically the reason why a believer experiences so much trouble with temptation. His flesh, old self, and physical memories remain the same in their death and corruption, "And if Christ is on you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (*Romans 8:10*).

Even though the old flesh is dying it still desires the same fulfillments of sin. It is the responsibility of the recreated spirit with his new heart to follow the counsel of the Holy Spirit in order to compel the flesh to conform to the New Covenant and new life in Christ as he learns to conform to God's standard of righteousness.

The newly created spirit is now part of the flow of the promise and will receive its rewards during life and after the death of his body--forever.

Questions

The final step of the servant's recreation is his resurrection.
Ephesians 2:10

- 1) Do you feel recreated?
- 2) By what standard do you feel recreated?
- 3) If you cannot feel recreated how do you know you are recreated?

The spiritual miracle which takes place within the water of baptism is by the grace of God. A man cannot spiritually recreate himself or anyone else, it is an impossible task.
Ephesians 2:4-5

- 1) What is recreated in the water by the power of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How is a servant recreated before baptism?

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Questions

Spiritual Resurrection

The spiritual resurrection is the spiritual emergence of a new creation "united with Him ... in the likeness of His resurrection".

Romans 6:5

- 1) Do you feel resurrected?
- 2) How does Scripture describe the feelings of recreation?
- 3) How do you know the Spirit resurrected you from death?
- 4) What is spiritual resurrection?

All of His resurrected are given life with Jesus.

Colossians 2:12b

- 1) Do you think the resurrection points out the importance of spiritual death, and burial?
- 2) How does the resurrection lead to life?

When a recreated servant is raised with Christ his sins are forgiven, his new spirit is innocent.

Colossians 2:13b; Romans 6:4, 13

- 1) Do you feel new?
- 2) How do you know you are new?
- 3) If you feel new by what spiritual standard are you comparing what you feel in order to confirm what you feel?
- 4) Do you believe you experienced newness before your baptism, how do you know for sure?
- 5) Is there more than one way to experience the path to newness?

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Questions

Spiritual Resurrection

The resurrection experienced within baptism is the servant's first resurrection.
Revelation 20:6

- 1) What happens to those who do not experience their first resurrection?
- 2) When does the first resurrection take place?
- 3) How do you know it took place in your life?
- 4) Are your feelings of freedom able to confirm the spiritual reality of your first resurrection?

The spirit is resurrected into life with Christ, but he must still live within the old body.

Romans 8:10

- 1) Does your old flesh still bother you?
- 2) How do you fight off the desires of your old self?
- 3) What do you do when old memories and sin guilt come into mind?
- 4) Do you allow the Spirit to counsel you through spiritual growth pains?
- 5) Do you allow compromise for the sake of retaining worldly links?

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Section Five: God's Work

The Gift of Righteousness

God gives righteousness to New Covenant sons of God for the same reason He gave it before Jesus died. He witnesses the servant's fulfilled belief, faith, and obedience; and considers it as righteousness. However, there are at least two major differences concerning the gift prior to and after the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection:

1) Preceding the Lord's death--belief, faith, and obedience focused exclusively upon God the Holy One. Worship focused upon a faith motivated but physical response to the Lord's will. God considered the servant's faith as righteous based upon his motives, self-circumcision of heart, and how he chose to apply his belief, faith, and obedience, and self-circumcision of heart, according to His will.

God mentioned Abraham as an example of how to serve. Paul noted this in *Romans*: "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness ... faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness" (4:3b, 9b). God considered Abraham's spiritual and physical response to His will as righteous and holy.

God also made spiritual circumcision an indispensable part of righteousness before the death of Jesus. His servant spiritually circumcised himself as a result of His moral obedience to God's will. This circumcision is not physical and involves females, it's brought about by faith motivated obedience to the moral aspects of the Law and the instinctual law of "good and evil". Jeremiah quoted the Lord admonishing Israel to repent and restore their spiritual circumcision: "Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among the thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart ... lest My wrath go forth like a fire" (4:3b, 4a).

2) Following the Lord's resurrection, worship changed from an indirect faith response through priests to direct spiritual fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ. In Christ worship changed to spiritual and oneness with God the Father. Early in His ministry Jesus foretold of this great change of worship styles, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" (*John* 4:23).

Yet despite this radical change God still considered one's faith as holy and righteous because of his obedience. However, the application of the servant's response to God changed. He only considers the faith of those who choose to express their belief, faith, and obedience through Jesus Christ as righteousness. Remember what Jesus stated very clearly: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father; but through Me" (*John* 14:6b).

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Section Five: God's Work

The Gift of Righteousness

The righteousness or holiness which God the Father recognizes through Jesus is given to any servant who chooses to express his belief, faith, and obedience to Him through Jesus. Faith motivated obedience must include the servant's confession, commitment to repentance and submission to baptism. The servant must become one with Jesus by experiencing a spiritual death, burial, circumcision, and resurrection before God will consider him as holy and pure. God looks at the purity of the new creature in Christ and considers him as righteous because he is holy in Christ.

In his letter to the *Romans* Paul wrote: "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (4:5). The entire process of salvation in Christ Jesus is based upon the combined effort of the servant's faith motivated response to His will and the unseen work of God's grace of redemption. This is a major reason why ritual baptism cannot spiritually purify the servant who already believes he is saved.

Paul made a clear distinction between righteousness given by grace and receiving righteousness as a result of earning it from perceived righteous works as directed by the Law of Moses, tradition, morals, practicing piety, or ritual offerings of any type. He wrote: "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (*Galatians* 3:6-7, 26-27, 29).

Abraham did not strive to earn his righteousness. He couldn't. He had to receive it as a gift of God's grace. But he had to believe God's word and in order to fulfill his belief he needed to do God's will by realizing the obedience of faith.

Paul described how righteousness is given in the New Covenant, noting it's still God's recognition of obedient belief and faith in the expressed will of God. God considers the servant righteous because of his belief, faith, and submission to the expressed will of God the Father, exclusively through Jesus Christ according to His covenant. The servant of sin must be redeemed by Christ "united with Him in the likeness of His death" before he will be considered a faithful believer (*Romans* 6:5a). A servant of sin cannot be righteous until Christ recreates him into holiness. The only way sin debt is satisfied is by payment of death. Before God the Father will consider a servant righteous he must submit to spiritually becoming one with the death of Jesus Christ. The Lord's death satisfies the requirement of holiness and provides the means of recreation.

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Section Five: God's Work

The Gift of Righteousness

A servant of sin is made holy by Christ according to an eternal standard of righteousness—God's nature. God rewards the believer's faith as he experiences his spiritual rebirth in with Christ. He is "reckoned as righteousness" by God as a result of having proven his faith through obedience to the will of Jesus Christ (*Romans* 4:5). Without a working belief and faith in the unseen spiritual work of God taking place before, during, and after baptism, righteousness cannot be received or maintained.

This is an important reason why baptism must be entered into with faith. The servant enters into the process of redemption in order to experience his new birth. Even though someone may say he feels righteous, if he does not respond according to new covenant stipulations in Christ he will not be righteous according to the revealed word of God. No servant is able to physically sense or understand righteousness—it's a spiritual reality. If he feels saved in his heart he is deceiving himself. Only God's word is able to tell him he is saved. There is no other source for this type of spiritual information and assurance.

Without belief and faith repentance is empty, confession is a misconception, and baptism becomes a gutted and meaningless ritual—a perception of deception, "you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness" (6:16).

James noted in his letter, "was not Abraham our father justified by works ... faith was working with his works, as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness'" (2:21a, 22a, 23b). Thus, belief and faith are only recognized by God as sincere when He has "reckoned faith as righteousness."

In *Romans* Paul stated: "those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (5:17b). In this scripture Paul revealed at least four more insights about righteousness:

1) The work of faith, considered by God as obedience to the new covenant will of Jesus Christ, is how a slave of sin receives "the abundance of grace." The grace of redemption is a gift which God gives exclusively to those who receive righteousness. The gift of righteousness is a gift of God's grace. Righteousness is holiness and the only way a servant is able to receive holiness is by being recreated in Christ.

2) Only those who receive the "gift of righteousness" receive eternal life. Eternal life is given solely through Jesus Christ.

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Section Five: God's Work

The Gift of Righteousness

3) The work of faith is a work of belief, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (*John 6:29b*). Works of belief are the same as works of faith--confession, repentance, obedience, and baptism. When combined as a common response to God's grace of redemption belief and faith they result in receiving righteousness before God. Faith is a gift of God's grace because it must originate from His word, which is a gift. The whole process of salvation is freely given by Jesus by His grace: His life, the Word, faith, righteousness, and life. The servant's response must be unified with God's grace of redemption in order to result in righteousness.

4) Every servant who is raised with Christ experiences his "first resurrection". As a result of his new position in Christ he is free from the power of the "second death" and is anointed by God as one of His priests, "priests of God". Another promise received is the spiritual position of reigning "with Him for a thousand years" which is forever. Paul spoke of this when he said "reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (*Revelation 20:6*). All of the Lord's righteous saints are sons of the eternal King, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ" (*Romans 8:16-17a*).

When a slave of sin is saved by the grace of God, he is receiving righteousness reckoned to him by God as a result of his belief and faith in the miracle of redemption in Christ. Redemption is freely given when any servant of sin receives a new life which is his rebirth, by the power of the Holy Spirit through Christ Jesus. Paul noted this in his letter to the *Ephesians*: "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God ... For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (2:5, 8, 10a).

After God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and the New Covenant replaced the first covenant, belief, faith, confession, repentance, and obedience still focused on God, but the focus of worship changed to Jesus Christ in order to serve God the Father, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (*John 14:6*).

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

The Gift of Righteousness

The blessing of righteousness is always given for the same response to God's will, belief and faith as patterned by Abraham.

Romans 4:3b, 9

- 1) Are you righteous?
- 2) What is being righteous?
- 3) Do you feel righteous?
- 4) What are some similarities between how God gives righteousness in the new covenant in contrast to pre-Christian ages?
- 5) Why do you think belief and faith are so important?
- 6) How do grace, belief, and faith link with obedience to the Lord's will?

Spiritual circumcision is also a vital part of the blessing of righteousness. It is also patterned after pre-Christian circumcision of the heart.

Jeremiah 4:3b, 4a

- 1) Do you believe spiritual circumcision is linked to righteousness?

Even though Jesus changed how worship is offered to God the necessity for righteousness has not changed.

John 4:23

- 1) Why is righteousness so important to God?
- 2) What is the spiritual state of righteousness?
- 3) Are you holy and sinless?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

The Gift of Righteousness

Righteousness is only given through Jesus.

John 14:6b

- 1) Why can't you receive righteousness the same way as Abraham did?
- 2) How did the new covenant change the way righteousness is given?
- 3) If you must express works of faith, belief, obedience, confession, repentance, baptism, and live a life of faith in Christ, how is it given by grace?
- 4) Abraham received righteousness because of his belief and faith motivated obedient works. How did God's grace connect with his works?

Everything which takes place to receive righteousness is based upon faith in the Lord's word.

Romans 4:5

- 1) Why is faith so important to receiving righteousness?
- 2) If faith and belief are always expressed through works in response to God's will, how is righteousness given by His grace?
- 3) How did you express your faith and belief in order to receive righteousness?

The righteous have demonstrated both belief and faith in Jesus, received a new life in baptism, are "clothed with Christ ... belong to Christ", are God's children and "Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise".

Galatians 3:6-7, 26-27, 29; Romans 6:5a, 8:16-17a

- 1) How do you become a righteous heir of God?
- 2) When is a servant an heir?
- 3) Is it important for you to express belief and faith in what takes place within the water of baptism in order to receive righteousness?

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Questions

The Gift of Righteousness

4) How do "clothed", "belong", "children", "Abraham's offspring", and "heirs", link with righteousness?

Righteousness cannot be received by obeying law, tradition, or any type of religious ritual. It is only given when the servant chooses to demonstrate his belief and faith in response to the Lord's gospel.

Romans 4:5

1) If Abraham simply said, "I believe in you God" would God have considered him as righteous?

2) How is righteousness given in the new covenant?

3) What is motivating you to express your confession of Jesus as Lord and Master?

4) How does confession and righteousness link together?

Righteousness is a spiritual state of being; it cannot be sensed or felt in the servant's heart. If he could feel it holiness would not be based upon faith.

1) Are you able to feel your righteousness?

2) How do you know for certain you are righteous?

The works of belief and faith prove the servant's confession, obedience, and repentance, and life in Christ. As with Abraham, God reckons the servant as righteous because of his complete response even if it is imperfect.

James 2:21a, 22a, 23b; Acts 26:19; Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:14-16

1) Abraham had his difficulties with sin just like everyone else. What stood out in his life and response to God's will?

2) Why do you think it is important to study the cycles of sin and repentance experienced by the righteous saints who lived in the pre-Christian ages?

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Questions

The Gift of Righteousness

- 3) Do you need to prove your faith and belief through works?
- 4) What are works?
- 5) Which is more important: the works or what is motivating the works?
- 6) Is it possible to confess obedience to the Lord Jesus – Master without works?
- 7) Is repentance possible without works?
- 8) How are the works of repentance linked with righteousness?
- 9) How do you express works of obedience to your Master?

Righteousness is a gift of grace even though the servant must prove his heart through physical obedience.

Romans 5:17b; John 6:29b; Ephesians 2:5, 8,10a

- 1) If God already knows your heart why do you think He considers the works of belief and faith so important?
- 2) If the gift of righteousness from God demands a response of obedient belief, faith, and works, how does grace fit in the response to His will?
- 3) How does God's grace and works work together in unity?
- 4) Why is your motivation so important?

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Section Five: God's Work

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

Sometime, either while still submerged in the water, or as the newly created servant arises out of the water, the new son of God is given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to live within his body. In his first gospel sermon, the Spirit inspired Peter to preach, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Acts 2:38*). While leaving out many of the details concerning what took place within the water of baptism Peter highlighted at last five important points:

- 1) God the Father requires a slave of sin to obediently submit to submersion into baptism before He will honor his commitment to repent. Different Greek words are not used in this verse describe sprinkling or pouring water on someone.
- 2) The miracle of redemption taking place within the water of baptism must be accomplished under the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. This is a confession of His deity and power to give new life.
- 3) The servant's debt of sin is separated from his new spirit when he dies in unity with Jesus, resulting in complete forgiveness and justification.
- 4) The "gift of the Holy Spirit" is received only after the slave of sin spiritually dies with Jesus, is buried, and resurrected by the power of God. His newly created spirit is pure and righteous as a newborn. The moment God considers the servant spiritually circumcised and righteous He is able to give the servant the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 5) Jesus determines whether or not a servant of sin chooses to believe Peter's Spirit led sermon according to how he responded by faith and belief motivated obedience to Spirit inspired instructions. Luke later commented about those who responded to Peter's sermon by noting the blessing received upon having submitted to the Spirit's instructions:
 - a) "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (*Acts 2:40b*), salvation separated the saved from the rest of the people still trapped in bondage to sin.
 - b) "Those who had received his word were baptized" (*Acts 2:41a*), all saved had submitted to baptism. The response proved their reception of God's will.
 - c) "There were added that day about three thousand souls" (*Acts 2:41b*), to the body of Christ – His church.
 - d) "All those who had believed were together" (*Acts 2:44a*), Jesus only recognized the people who responded to the Spirit as having believed His word. Anyone can believe in Jesus, but only those who receive His word according to His new covenant will become believers.

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The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

e) "The Lord was adding to their number day by day" (*Acts 2:47b*), the Spirit repeated the same redemptive scenario resulting in more additions to the Lord's body of believer's.

f) "Those who were being saved" (*Acts 2:47b*), the Spirit only considered those who submitted to Peter's sermon and received His presence as saved from sin and righteous.

Later, Paul wrote to the *Ephesians*: "in Him, you also after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (1:13). He noted at least three other vitally important facts about the process of salvation revealed by the Spirit:

1) Only those who responded to what Christ promised to accomplish within the water of baptism with belief and faith motivated obedience are included with those who listened "to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation".

2) Only those baptized "for the forgiveness of your sins" are considered as "having also believed".

3) Those baptized in Christ became believers because they submitted to their baptism under the authority of His name in order to "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The internal presence of the Spirit is God the Father's assurance of a completed process of salvation resulting in righteousness. Only a new recreated spirit and self with a new conscience and Spirit circumcised heart is innocent of all sin. Everything which God promises and performs in the servant's initial experience with salvation is unseen and cannot be physically perceived by any means, this is why belief and faith are so important for assurance.

Paul noted the importance of the gift of the Spirit: "sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance" (*Ephesians 1:14a*). He also mentioned in his letter to the *Galatians* how a servant must be "clothed with Christ" before he is considered as one of "Abraham's offspring ... heirs according to promise". This promise can only take place after the servant is "baptized into Christ" (3:27, 29). Thus, the promised inheritance is assured to only those who have received the gift of the indwelling presence of the Spirit.

In his *second* letter to the *Corinthians* Paul told his fellow-Christians, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" (1:21-22). This revelation along with (*Ephesians 1:13b, 14a*), "you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance", reveals two major reasons why God gives the Holy Spirit to His newly born children:

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Section Five: God's Work

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

1) He is a seal assuring the adoption of all His righteous children in Christ Jesus.

2) His presence is a part of the promised inheritance.

The Holy Spirit is an anointing from God the Father in recognition of the servant's response to the will of Christ and his recreation in Christ. The servant is now holy and righteous.

He now belongs to God the Father in Jesus Christ and He wants His servant to develop full assurance of this new spiritual reality and identity. His presence also assures the servant of other blessings, the most obvious being: he is one with God Himself because he is now a temple of God. His presence reveals to the servant his new spiritual position in the Lord's kingdom – His church.

In his letter to the *Galatians* Paul revealed: "in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" in His unseen work (3:14b). Later in the same chapter he said, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:26). The indwelling presence of the Spirit is given only to the faithful, those who have chosen to respond to the gospel according to the Lord's new covenant.

John recorded Jesus teaching His disciples: "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). Those who have received the indwelling presence of God love God. The indwelling presence of the Spirit is proof of God's acceptance of the servant's response of love towards his Master – Jesus Christ. Love is expressed towards God the Father when belief and faith bear fruit through obedience to the words of Christ. The result is an act of love towards Him through Jesus Christ. The unbroken chain of belief, faith, confession, obedience, baptism, and fulfilled repentance is the only way God allows a servant of sin to express love towards Him and the focus of his response must be exclusively through Jesus.

God is promising to every person enslaved of sin not only freedom from the bondage of sin but His personal presence as well, thus fully restoring broken fellowship. In His parable about a wayward son, Jesus described in physical terms what is taking place on a spiritual level, "But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (*Luke* 15:32).

1) The father's family included two son's living in fellowship before one chose to leave.

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Section Five: God's Work

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

2. The son decided to leave his family and fellowship in order to serve his lust and the world. This is when the father considered him as dead because he became separated from his family – spiritually a slave of sin and servant of Satan.

3) When the son recognized his bondage to sin he decided to repent by returning to his family. Thus the father restored him to full fellowship and considered him as living – spiritually a born again servant is innocent of all sin, justified, and holy.

God restores broken family fellowship when the servant chooses to return home by embracing his Father's love. As a result of the fulfillment of his obedience to his father's will the formerly wayward servant fulfills the initial stage of his commitment to repent and his confession to honor his father.

In his letter to the *Ephesians* Paul noted how the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is one with Jesus Christ. All of God's children are "strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (3:16b-17a). Remember God is One, if the servant is indwelled by the presence of the Spirit; the Spirit is one with God the Father and Jesus Christ. This fulfills the Lord's promise: "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" (*John* 14:23b). When the Holy Spirit indwells the newly redeemed and righteous saint the new son of God becomes one with God as well, fully restoring his fellowship with God.

Questions

The Indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is given to the servant as soon as he is receives righteousness and is spiritually resurrected.

Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13-14

- 1) How is a servant resurrected by God?
- 2) When is a servant resurrected?
- 3) What does a servant's resurrection have to do with righteousness?
- 4) Are you resurrected?
- 5) Do you have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

- 6) How do you know, are you able to feel His presence?
- 8) Do you depend upon physical manifestations of His presence in order to maintain faith in His presence?
- 9) How are faith and feelings reconciled?

The Holy Spirit is only given to those who have believed in the Lord's gospel.
Ephesians 1:13; Acts 2:44a

- 1) What does it mean to have believed in the Lord's gospel in contrast to believing the Lord's gospel?
- 2) Is a servant able to believe in Jesus and yet not be a believer?
- 3) How do you know for sure you have believed in the Lord's gospel?
- 4) Is what you feel in your heart about believing in the Lord as dependable as the Scriptural description of a believer?

The seal of the Holy Spirit assures the saint of his salvation.
1 John 4:13-15, 5:10a; 1 Corinthians 1:21-22

- 1) Do you feel assured?
- 2) How does faith and hope link with assurance?
- 3) Why do you have an expectation of assurance?
- 4) Is the heart of a servant of sin able to lead him to believe he is saved while in fact his spiritual state of being has not changed from serving sin?
- 5) Why do you feel assured?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit "as a pledge of our inheritance" is a partial heavenly gift of the inheritance reserved in heaven for His saints.

Ephesians 1:14a; Galatians 3:27, 29

- 1) Are you presently enjoying a part of your inheritance?
- 2) How do you treat your inheritance?
- 3) What do you think your inheritance is in heaven?
- 4) Do you live life knowing God lives within your body?
- 5) How does knowing God lives in you affect your thoughts, motivations, lifestyle, and relationship decisions?
- 6) How does the indwelling presence of the Spirit affect your attitude towards one another love and unity among the Lord's body?
- 7) Does the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit identify the Lord's church?

Only the Lord's children are "sealed" and have received the "pledge" of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

- 1) Does this Scriptural insight offer you assurance of your salvation?
- 2) What do you think God means by giving you the Spirit as a seal?

Even though a servant must believe, confess, repent, and be baptized, the Spirit is still received by faith. The entire response is an act of belief and faith by the grace of God.

Galatians 3:14a, 3:26

- 1) How do you think faith should be expressed?
- 2) How do you know for certain the Holy Spirit lives within you?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

Only those who have demonstrated love towards Jesus receive the indwelling presence of God.

John 14:23, 21

- 1) How does a servant of sin express love towards Jesus?
- 2) If love is expressed through obedience and works of faith how is grace involved in salvation?
- 3) If love is expressed through a response to the Lord's new covenant stipulations how is love linked with grace?
- 4) Why do you think God described how to love Him as obedience?
- 5) Can you think of some pre-Christian examples of how saints expressed love towards God? What are you learning from their life examples?
- 6) What motivates your love towards God?
- 7) Is why you choose to serve Him as important as serving Him because He must be your Master?
- 8) Why do you serve Jesus?

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is only promised to those who have "believed in Him".

John 7:38-39

- 1) What did Jesus say about believing?
- 2) Do you think His definition of belief offended the people who listened to Him?
- 3) Can you believe someone is capable of serving God and yet still be a servant of sin?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

The Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

- 4) Are there other ways to receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 5) What did Jesus mean when He said "believe".
- 6) How did you believe in Jesus?

To ask for the Holy Spirit means the servant is willing to respond with love towards the Lord and His gospel in order to receive the Spirit as promised.
Luke 11:13

- 1) Have you ever asked for the presence of the Spirit?
- 2) What did you expect when you asked for the Spirit?
- 3) How do you know when you receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit?
- 4) Do you think love and works work together with grace?
- 5) How does asking Jesus for the Spirit and obedience to the gospel connect?
- 6) Why do you think asking for the Spirit and prayer are never mentioned as a means for salvation in the new covenant?

A servant does not belong to Jesus if he does not have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9

- 1) If a servant is not serving Jesus then who is he serving?
- 2) How do you know for certain whom you are serving?
- 3) Are you able to feel the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, how do you discern His presence by faith?
- 4) How do you know for certain the hope of assurance?

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Section Five: God's Work

Recreated

Only a redeemed son of God is able to honestly proclaim God has given him a new life. Paul wrote, "for by grace you have been saved through faith ... for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (*Ephesians* 2:8a, 10b). The work of God is dependent upon belief and faith in His power to perform the miraculous work of creation within the water of baptism by the work of the Holy Spirit. Very early in His ministry Jesus foretold of this new spiritual blessing of His soon to come new covenant, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (*John* 3:5).

When the Spirit recreates a servant's spirit in His watery womb of baptism, a uniquely Christian experience has taken place. In his *second* letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul stated: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come" (5:17). He is not only redeemed back into the family of God, he is a brand new creation as well, holy, innocent, and without sin debt. He is righteous because he is spiritually pure of all sin. He is justified because the new babe is innocent of all sin, he did not inherit the sin of his past life. He is a new babe in a new spiritual land.

He is truly reborn into a new spiritual world. Spiritually, he no longer lives in the old world dominated by the authority of Satan and sin. Even though his body remains dead because of sin, his heart is circumcised because the Spirit recreated his spirit. The new heart, self, innocent conscience, and spirit are spiritually separated from the death of a body still enslaved to lust, sin and death. The new spirit is in fellowship with God and lives in a new spiritual nation and kingdom.

The renewal of his dead physical body cannot take place until its own experience with death, burial, and resurrection. This takes place after the servant physically dies in faith. Upon death he will experience his second resurrection. His first resurrection occurred when the Spirit resurrected his spirit with Jesus Christ within the water of baptism. The Spirit inspired Paul to reveal how the second resurrection will take place: "So also is the resurrection from the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body. The first man is from the earth; the second man is from heaven" (*1 Corinthians* 15:42, 47). Always keep in mind, death is only a transition from one state of being to another, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (*Hebrews* 9:27).

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Section Five: God's Work

Recreated

A believer is blessed by two recreations taking place in his life:

- 1) His spirit: when he experiences his death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus.
- 2) His body: when his physical death causes him to enter into the spiritual world to await his new spiritual body.

Questions

When the servant is resurrected with Jesus he receives a living spirit free and innocent of sin. His recreation is a gift of grace given to those who have responded to the Lord with love and faith in His gospel.

Ephesians 2:8a, 10b

- 1) If new life is a gift of grace, why do you think the works required by the gospel are so important?
- 2) Do you feel recreated and new?
- 3) How do you know for certain you are new?
- 4) Are you living life in newness?
- 5) Why is new so important?

The newly created spirit is considered by God as "born again".

John 3:5; 1 John 5:1-5, 10a, 11-12

- 1) Do you feel as if you entered a new and living world?
- 2) Do you feel the newness of life?
- 3) How do you know for certain you are no longer living in the dominion of Satan but in the Lord's kingdom? Are you able to feel the difference of environments?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Recreated

4) What do you think the Lord expects of His newborn child?

5) What is your ultimate purpose as the Lord's servant?

A servant is "born again" only by the power of the Holy Spirit.
John 3:3b, 8b; Galatians 4:28-29

1) When the Lord resurrected your spirit did you feel "new"?

2) In what spiritual environment did you experience your resurrection and new birth?

3) How is a servant reborn?

4) Does baptism play an important part in a servant's rebirth?

5) How does prayer and rebirth connect?

6) Why is baptism important?

7) Is baptism overemphasized in the rebirth of a servant?

8) Which response is more important in how a new creation is created: belief, faith, confession repentance, baptism, or a life of faith in Christ?

Every Christians is a "new creation".
2 Corinthians 5:17

1) If you are no longer a servant of sin and of the world then where are you spiritually?

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Section Five: God's Work

Regeneration

Regeneration is another term describing what is taking place within the water of baptism. This is the creative process which God uses to recreate a person dead in sin into a new life – his first resurrection, his new spiritual birth. *Titus* wrote, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (3:5). Salvation is initially experienced when a slave of sin enters into his death, burial, and resurrection in unity with Christ. The Holy Spirit recreates him into a new life as a freed bond-servant. *John* quoted Jesus foretelling, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (3:7). Salvation continues on through the servant's new life as he strives to serve God the Father through faith.

What takes place within the water of baptism is a spiritual cleansing only God is able to accomplish. Regeneration is a spiritual miracle. The servant of sin experiences a complete spiritual change of identity when purchased by Jesus. He literally begins a new spiritual life. This is what Jesus spoke of when He foretold of the absolute necessity of being born again. As a result of his new spirit and heart he has a cleansed conscience and a new self ready to learn how to live as a son of God.

Since the whole experience is spiritual it is invisible to all human sense; thus its reality is based entirely upon belief and faith in the promises and faithfulness of God. The servant's fellowship with God the Father is dependent upon the persistence of his confession through his readiness to continually realize his belief and faith in the integrity and power of his Lord's word and promises.

Questions

A number of miracles take place within the water of baptism which includes the recreation of the dead spirit by resurrection and his regeneration into a completely new life and lifestyle.

Titus 3:5

- 1) Does your emergence into a new and separate life remind you of how similar you are to a seed?
- 2) What happens to the original seed?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

Regeneration

- 3) What happens to the new plant?
- 4) Is the new plant completely separate from its old existence?
- 5) Does the new plant have to live in the same environment?
- 6) Are you able to honestly say your life is dramatically different from the old one which the Spirit left behind to rot?
- 7) Are you willing to learn how to live in the new life and creation which God has given to you?

The new servant receives a new identity – he is a son of God, he serves a different Master – Jesus.

Romans 8:13-18; Galatians 4:3-7; 3:29; Hebrews 2:12-13

- 1) If Jesus is your new Master then how do you serve: new life, old life, or a little of each?
- 2) Why must you be willing to relearn how to serve your new Master?
- 3) Is assembly (at church) the only time which you serve Jesus?
- 4) Are you able to partially serve your old master and yet confess your new Master?

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Section Five: God's Work

A New Self

Another part of the servant's recreation by the power of God is the new self. His new self is who he is and is developed through his experiences in life. Upon rebirth he is a new born babe in Christ. This is why it is so important for the new son of God to allow the Spirit to counsel him through life. He is, as a new baby in desperate need to understand the will of God and must learn to focus upon the Word of God in order to grow in a lifestyle of faith. Even though he received righteousness upon his recreation and is holy before God his Father, he needs to relearn how to live life according to God's standard of righteousness. He needs to recognize the often subtle differences between good and evil. This growth process will be evident for the rest of his life and will last throughout eternity.

The Lord's command to "love one another" (1 John 3:23b) highlights the importance of fellowship within the Christian community to help each other to grow and mature into fruitful sons of God. Fellowship protects all believers, helps build vital inter-relationships, and offers a secure and loving setting in which to learn and grow a faith motivated lifestyle and worship. In the body of Christ there are no mature adults in Christ, only children who have achieved differing levels of spiritual development in maturity according to the Lord's perfect standard of righteousness. Within this spiritual environment all are equally saved, righteous, and sanctified servants.

The old self, conscience, heart, and dead body are irreversibly corrupted by sin, this is why they must be separated or circumcised from the new by the Spirit. Paul explained in his letter to the *Romans*, "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (6:6). The new life is still attached to the dead body but death is no longer the dominate force of the servant's existence. Spiritual death is a crucifixion from the servant's old life. The servant is united with the Lord's death and His resurrection.

The body, along with all of its desires of lust retains the sin corrupted old self and uncircumcised heart of stone. Over time, as sin satisfied the lusts of the flesh, the original self began to identity with desires of the flesh. The flesh, its hard sin corrupted heart, old self, and sin corrupted conscience, are dead in sin. As a result, they are completely incompatible with the new life. Thus the servant's old existence is separated from his new life in Christ by death, new life, and the Spirit.

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Section Five: God's Work

A New Self

Paul stated in his letter to the *Ephesians*, "That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit" (4:22). He revealed a raging inner conflict within the body of every recreated son of God. Even though the servant possesses a recreated spirit, self, conscience, and Spirit circumcised heart, he and the Holy Spirit must live in a body which is increasingly being corrupted by sin. The old body tries to corrupt the new self just as it did with its original self as it pursues the satisfaction of its lust for evil.

This is why it is so critically important for the new self to allow the Spirit to lead and counsel. The new son of God must relearn everything relating to the righteous standard of God. He must learn the ways of righteousness and take control over the flesh. The only way this is possible is by the guidance of the Spirit through the word of Christ.

The world cannot offer this education and experience. Learning how to live according to God's righteousness is a matter of spiritual life or death. If the babe lives in an environment where he only drinks milk and is never weaned to the regular food of Scriptural knowledge he runs a very real risk of allowing the flesh to dominate his new life. Any servant of Christ who remains a perpetual spiritual babe dramatically increases his risk level to committing spiritual adultery with the world. Spiritual ignorance may affect his attitude and lifestyle choices which could cause him to fall away from fellowship with his brothers and sisters in Christ, upset the Holy Spirit, and distance him from Jesus, and God the Father.

When the Spirit crucified the old self with Christ it died. Not in the sense of complete inaction, it is completely separated from the new life recreated by God. His recreation separated sin and death from the new life in Christ leaving a new and innocent conscience. God created a new self, a new "I", a baby self ready for his training in the new way of righteousness.

The new self is being restored to God's original intent. Since it's learning how to live righteously, beginning as a baby, it is heavily influenced by the behaviors of the body and physical circumstances. All believers must focus upon allowing the Spirit to lead them along life. Spiritual education, fellowship, positive inter-relationships, and life in Christ, are of utmost importance. In fact it is a matter of spiritual life or death for many. God's sheep need feed, protection, and security in order to grow. Jesus promises His loving care but His sheep must also take care of their personal spiritual lives as well as each other in order to

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Section Five: God's Work

A New Self

facilitate His promises. This is what loving self and one another in Christ is all about.

Just before His ascension back into heaven Jesus "said to Simon Peter, 'Tend My lambs ... Shepherd My sheep ... Tend My sheep'" (*John* 21:15b, 16b, 17b). In a confusing way, to John anyway, Jesus spoke of the absolute necessity of taking care of His sheep, His believers. He knew if after conversion they received nothing but spiritual neglect what would eventually happen. Sheep have to be fed, protected, and nurtured. This is the only way for a new self to develop in a child of God. He must be placed in an environment of physical and spiritual love which focuses on spiritual growth.

Remember, "So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (*Romans* 10:17) Fellowship and love for one another will facilitate faith but faith itself can only develop from the word of God. All of the love which fellowship is able to offer cannot substitute even one word of Scripture. His sheep must be fed with Scripture and fellowship in order to develop in righteousness.

A redeemed child of God, even though he is still attached to his sin corrupted flesh, is no longer controlled by the various lusts naturally occurring in the flesh. But he will be influenced by them. In fact the Spirit gives him the power to dominate over the evil desire of the flesh. The believer is now able to live his life relearning righteousness, while in a state of righteousness and sanctification, led by the Holy Spirit. In other words, even though the newly born son of God is holy and righteous, a saint; he still needs to learn how to live a life of righteousness in order to separate his new life from the old.

Spiritually, he does not become more holy or more set apart from the world and Satan because the Spirit has already transferred him to the Lord's kingdom. He is holy, righteous, and sanctified; but he needs to grow and mature in his ability to think and practice the righteous will of God as the Spirit counsels him through the word of God. This is how he grows in righteous living, which is living according to the righteous standard of God's will. This is how he maintains his sanctification, his separation from slavery to sin and the dominion of Satan — the world.

The new spirit is developing its new self and must dominate and control the still rebellious flesh and its old self by allowing the Spirit to counsel him. He must learn to follow His guidance. The flesh and its old nature (the old self) will still try to influence the new self and spirit back into its old ways of serving sin. There will be a constant battle of spirit, self, flesh, and memories from a

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Section Five: God's Work

A New Self

corrupted conscience, and thoughts of the mind, until physical death finally separates the recreated self and spirit from the body of living death.

In order to finish life in faith, Jesus counsels His children to allow Him to teach and guide them throughout the rest of their lives. In his letter to the *Colossians*, Paul mentioned the importance of learning how to control the old self and the flesh, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above ... set your minds on the things above ... For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ. Therefore consider the members of your body as dead ... you laid aside the old with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (3:1a, 2a, 3, 5a, 9b-10).

Questions

The newly born again servant is holy, innocent, owns a cleansed conscience and heart, and his new self is entirely different from his old self.

Romans 6:6; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21, 2:9; Revelation 20:6; Colossians 1:19-23

- 1) What is new about your new self?
- 2) Do you feel holy?
- 3) Do you feel innocent of all sin?
- 4) Do you feel a completely clear conscience?
- 5) Do you feel a renewed and new heart?
- 6) How do you know for sure if what you feel is correct?
- 7) What is the connection between feelings and faith?
- 8) What is the difference between the old and the new?
- 9) Are you expressing the difference in your new lifestyle and worship?
- 10) How do you live your identity – holiness?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

A New Self

The new self must immediately begin to dominate the flesh and its desires to sin.
Ephesians 4:22; Romans 8:5-8, 12-18

- 1) How are you handling the transition from unholiness to righteousness?
- 2) Do you feel the nudges of the flesh overwhelming the new desires of your heart?
- 3) Are you allowing the Spirit to lead your life through the often very difficult beginning stages of Christian maturity?
- 4) Why do you think God considers all new Christians as newborn babies?
- 5) Do you think it is important to be weaned off of the milk of the word and onto solid food of in-depth study of God's will?
- 6) Why do you think the power game which the flesh plays in your life is such a critical influence which constantly needs dominated by Spirit leadership?
- 7) Is understanding the knowledge of "good and evil" which God placed in your heart important?
- 8) Why do you think Spirit leadership is so important in the endless battle of temptations and purpose?

The new self must learn the radically different lifestyle of righteousness.
Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 12:6-11; 1 John 2:25-29

- 1) Has your life changed much since your rebirth?
- 2) Does your lifestyle evidence your new life in Christ?
- 3) How do you relearn what you spent a lifetime learning?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

A New Self

- 4) How do you relate to servants of sin and Satan?
- 5) How do you remain separate from the world while living in the world?

The new self must allow the Spirit to counsel his spiritual growth in how to live righteously.

Galatians 5:16-25

- 1) Why is Spirit leadership, counsel, and prayer such an important part of a Christians new life?
- 2) How does a God focused Spirit led life differ from a world focused life?
- 3) Do you think the difference is important?
- 4) How do you rationalize compromises between your old life and service to Christ?
- 5) To what degree of abstaining from worldly influences and pleasures is the Lord asking in order to keep from compromising His standard of righteous living?

Life for the new self is one of continual renewal.

Colossians 3:1a, 2a, 3, 5a, 9b-10; Romans 12:2

- 1) Do you think renewal ever ends in physical life?
- 2) How is renewal connected to worship?
- 3) How is renewal connected to how you love God?
- 4) Why is renewal important to you?
- 5) Does the world influence your thoughts and choices?

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Section Five: God's Work

Questions

A New Self

- 6) How do you aggressively engage worldly and fleshly thoughts and desires?
- 7) Are you ever successful?
- 8) Do you find yourself looking to the left, to the right, or backwards with fondness and desire?
- 9) What are the key points of your success stories?
- 10) What do you think causes your failures?
- 11) Why are spiritual failures important to spiritual growth?
- 12) What lessons do you learn from spiritual setbacks?
- 13) What do you think God is looking for when you consider your thoughts and decisions?
- 14) Is what you place within your heart from the world important to understand?
- 15) What information should dominate in your heart?
- 16) Do you think renewal is an important part of worship?
- 17) Is renewal an expression of love towards Jesus?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Reconciliation with God

Before the initial blessings of salvation are received, a slave of sin is an enemy of God and openly hostile to His presence and reality. Hostility can occur even if the servant is very religious and tries to serve God. He could even try to serve God through Jesus Christ and yet be in sin. The servant is in bondage to sin and lives under the authority of Satan, he is a son "of disobedience" (*Ephesians* 2:2b). He lives in the worldwide family of the rebellious walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air" (2:2a).

Paul also adds another shocking revelation, "of the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience" (2:2b). This last statement may refer to a general likeness of lifestyle in common with everyone else held in the bondage of sin. But it could also indicate an even more alarming insight into the spiritual world in which sinful humanity finds itself intertwined; an actual evil spirit directly affecting every servant of sin.

In his letter to the *Romans*, Paul reminded his brethren of their past hostility towards God. Most of the Jewish people worshiped God with all of their heart and lived very religious lives. Despite their faith in God, He still considered them outside of His grace of salvation and this spiritual state included Paul before his conversion. He wrote: "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (5:10-11).

Jesus came into His world to offer freedom and restored fellowship with God the Father. Paul revealed: "For it is the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (*Colossians* 1:19-20a). When someone exercises his freedom to approach Jesus for purchase he is responding to God's gospel call. After having developed enough belief and faith to lead him into obedience to God the Father through Jesus Christ he joins with Christ and is reconciled to God. He is no longer His enemy but a friend. In *Second Corinthians* Paul wrote: "now all 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" (5:18-19a).

When a spirit is resurrected with Jesus, he becomes God's bond-servant and child. At this point in time the now former enemy is reconciled to God. Through Christ he is made holy and pure; and the hostility of rebellion and sin

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Reconciliation with God

has ended. Upon his purchase by Jesus the new bond-servant is given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, he is restored to direct fellowship with God, and he becomes His personal friend.

Questions

All servants of sin are disobedient to God.

Ephesians 2:1-3

- 1) While serving sin did you ever consider yourself as hostile to God?
- 2) Did you ever consider how you served the will of Satan?
- 3) Did you think you lived a good God approved lifestyle?

All servants of sin are enemies against God.

Romans 5:10-11; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13, 21-22; Ephesians 2:1-3

- 1) Did you feel like an enemy who actively fought against God?
- 2) How did your awareness of spiritual reality affect your heart just as you thought about and decided to serve Jesus as Lord?

All servants of sin follow Satan's influence.

Ephesians 2:2a

- 1) How did it feel to serve Satan?
- 2) Did you enjoy your lifestyle and the freedom of expression offered?
- 3) Were you aware of your spiritual state of being?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Questions

Reconciliation with God

All servants of sin have "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience".

Ephesians 2:2b

- 1) Are you aware of the fact a very real evil spirit either existed to influence your thoughts and life or may have even indwelt your body while you served sin and Satan?
- 2) Did you ever consider yourself being led by the intent of the world or the possibility of being indwelt by a fallen spirit?

All servants of sin live with an overwhelming desire to fulfill the lust of their flesh and mind.

Ephesians 2:3; 1 John 2:15-16; James 1:12-15

- 1) How did your fleshly desires affect your life?
- 2) Did you enjoy life as you wished?

All servants of sin "walk, in the futility of their mind".

Ephesians 2:1-3, 4:17-19; Colossians 1:21; Romans 1:21-22; Proverbs 16:9, 17:20a; Ecclesiastes 7:4; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Romans 1:24, 26, 28, 8:5-7

- 1) Do you think servants of sin realize the true state of their being?

All servants of sin commit "evil deeds".

Colossians 1:21

- 1) What deed would you consider as evil?
- 2) How do you know what is evil in the sight of God?
- 3) Did you ever think of your lifestyle decisions as evil in the sight of God?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Questions

Reconciliation with God

All servants of sin commit "idolatry".

Colossians 3:5; Genesis 8:21

- 1) Can an idol be more than a carved figure of something?
- 2) What are some of your priorities which are more important to you than being led by the Spirit?
- 3) Did you ever consider yourself as worshipping other god's.

All servants of sin have an "evil conscience".

Hebrews 10:22

- 1) Did you ever feel your conscience as evil?
- 2) Does your past experiences of evil ever affect you life in holiness?
- 3) Does evil in the Lord's eyes ever appear as evil in human eyes?

All servants of sin have a hard heart.

Ephesians 4:18; Romans 1:21-24

- 1) Did you ever come to realize on your own the degree of hardness of your heart?
- 2) Are you able to feel a hard heart on your own?
- 3) What are some major differences between your old hard heart and your newly recreated heart?

Jesus came to restore fellowship with God His Father.

Colossians 1:19-20a

- 1) What does fellowship with God mean to you?

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Questions

Reconciliation with God

- 2) What is fellowship with God?
- 3) How do you practice fellowship with God?
- 4) Do you see the difference reconciliation has brought into your lifestyle?
- 5) Do you believe you are reconciled with God despite all of the evil in your past life?
- 6) How does reconciliation connect with assurance?
- 7) What do you think about working with God to fulfill His will on earth?
- 8) Is fellowship based solely upon emotions?
- 9) Is fellowship with God the same as a relationship with Him? How do you define each term?

Reconciliation describes a spiritual state of being when sin is forgiven.
2 Corinthians 5:18-19

- 1) Can a servant who has not had his sins forgiven be a friend of God because he is a very good person and worships God and Jesus?
- 2) What is your "ministry of reconciliation"?
- 3) What ministry do you feel Jesus has committed you for?
- 4) Is ministry connected to purpose?

Reconciliation restores friendship and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.
John 15:14-15, 14:21, 23-24, 15:9-10

- 1) What did Jesus say about the connection between friendship, obeying commandments, and love towards God through Jesus Christ?

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- 2) Is friendship between God and His servant based upon how you choose to love Him?
- 3) Is love determined by how you feel towards God?
- 4) How would you describe the connection between friendship with God and expressing love according to His will?
- 5) How do you love God in your everyday routine life?
- 6) How do you practice friendship with God every day?
- 7) How is reconciliation connected with fellowship among the Lord's body of believers?
- 8) What is the connection between expressing love towards God and one another love?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Justification

For as long as a person is indebted to sin he is also under God's righteous condemnation. After all, it's not God's fault he chose to sin in the first place. Nor, is it God's fault when he becomes established and comfortable enjoying his life in Satan's dominion. Sin is entirely the result of obedience to the lust of the flesh which in turn leads to the satisfaction of temptations, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (*James 1:14-15*).

In his letter to the *Romans*, Paul wrote, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men" (5:18). He reminded his brethren how the spiritual force of sin entered into the world through Adam and Eve and spread to every person, Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (5:12). No one is ever compelled to sin or receives accountability to sin from others. Everyone freely chooses to sin once they are mature enough to understand the "knowledge of good and evil."

This basic moral knowledge is an instinct. One's lust of the flesh, moral instinct, and God's visible witness of His presence through His creation all combine as one force to assure accountability for lifestyle choices. Unfortunately, every person chooses to transgress at least one moral code written in his heart, leaving him guilty of sin against God because the standard of righteousness belongs to God.

God's standard of righteousness demands holiness, complete moral purity--innocence. This is a state of being first given at birth. Once the child grows to the point of understanding the difference between his instinctual feelings of good and evil he will choose to sin. Transgressing against God is in his nature, "by nature children of wrath" (*Ephesians 2:3b*). But as Jesus demonstrated, the nature is not overwhelming but one which can be controlled by faith in God's will. Once sin enters into the life of the child he is enslaved to sin. As a servant of sin he also serves Satan and is an enemy of God. Innocence and righteousness are lost and impossible to regain by any personal effort to live a good life.

Jesus had to come to His creation in order to provide a new choice for all of mankind, the choice of redemption and legal freedom from all transgressions against God. Paul wrote in *Romans*, "He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (4:25). As a result of

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His sacrifice, Jesus is able to purchase one's debt of sin to God with His satisfactory payment, a perfect sinless death. The redemption payment is made by uniting the servant with His death, burial, and resurrection. Everyone is offered the same opportunity to enter into this spiritual experience.

Upon redemption, the servant is justified before God the Father. The recreated, reborn spirit has regained his innocence and righteousness before God. This is why justification refers to someone who used to have a record of sin, but is now completely free of any debt of sin to God--complete innocence. Paul wrote: "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (*Romans 5:9-10*).

This is the reason why the blessing of justification is only available by the grace of God. God does not require any form of payment for the blessing of rebirth and freedom from sin's bondage. All a servant of sin is able to offer is himself in humble service to God his creator. He is only able to respond as a slave. It is impossible for him to earn anything. All the new bond-servant of Christ needs to do is to faithfully honor the conditions of purchase written within the new covenant until he physically dies.

When the servant of sin is spiritually united with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, his history of transgression is separated from his new life. His new conscience no longer holds any memory of sin; he is no longer accountable to the curse of law, and hostility against God's righteousness ends. When he is raised with Christ he becomes a new person by the power of the Spirit. Everything associated with sin spiritually died with Christ, the old flesh, self, conscience, and heart. The new creation is completely separated from his old life. Justification is "a gift of His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (*Romans 3:24b*).

Even though a slave of sin cannot do anything to physically earn his justification he must respond to God's gospel call with belief, faith, confession of His Lordship, commit to repentance, faith motivated obedience, and baptism, in order to receive the gift of justification. His response proves his sincerity of service to Jesus. If the servant does not die with Jesus he cannot be separated by death from his old life and resurrected into a new life as a justified servant of the Lord. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Galatians*, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith that are sons of Abraham" (*3:6b-7*).

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If the servant is guided by faith in the unseen work of God, his work of obedience will not be motivated by the desire to gain God's favor. His response to God is spiritual and is an appeal through faith led obedience to His will rather than through the perceived goodness and piety of his own work. A spiritual response through belief and faith fulfills the Lord's new covenant expectations, "God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (*John 4:24*).

The faith which motivates a response to obey the will of God is not in the method of salvation but in God's promises of what is taking place spiritually during the initial steps of salvation and afterwards. This is why the whole unseen progression of salvation depends upon faith. In his letter to the *Romans*, Paul wrote: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into His grace in which we stand" (5:1-2a). The response of the slave of sin is determined by his belief and faith motivated obedience, how salvation is realized is a gift of God's grace. Both His grace and the servant's response must come together in unity in order for salvation to take place.

God's children are considered as sinless before His presence, "And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin" (*1 John 3:5*). It is not because His servant's live a life of perfection. They continue to live in a hostile world dominated by the powers of darkness, influences of temptation, and personal lust from the dead flesh. A son of God has to faithfully rely upon the promise of continuous holiness in Jesus because of the hostile nature of his environment. His promises are the servant's assurance of continued justification even when he gives in and allows his flesh to sin.

Even though the servant is holy he still sins. However, he remains sinless because: "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (*1 John 2:2*). However, His propitiation only remains in effect for as long as the servant chooses to remain faithful to God in Christ and proves it with his life.

John also noted: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him" (1:8, 3:6). When Jesus defends His children before His Father when they sin He is not defending them from a legal sin debt. He is pleading on the behalf of a holy child of God. The legal aspect of spiritual debt does not take effect because he is no longer accountable to the curse of the instinctual moral law of "good and evil."

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He may break the law but he is not guilty of transgressing against the law because he is no longer legally bound to its penalty. His death with Christ separated him from accountability to legal indebtedness from the law. But if he chooses to deny the deity of Christ then his sin will be counted against him, thus returning him to his former state of being of accountability and separation.

Not only does death with Jesus initially justify the servant, his innocence will continue for as long as he strives to faithfully serve God until his natural death. This does not mean the servant becomes more holy or righteous, justified, or sanctified, as life in Christ progresses in maturity. It does mean he will grow in conformity to His standard of righteousness and learn how to separate his physical life from the world as the Spirit leads him through life; he progressively matures in the righteousness of life emulating Christ.

Paul illustrated the spiritual realities of the servant's new spiritual life by quoting prophecy written hundreds of years earlier, "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore come out of their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty" (2 *Corinthians* 6:16-18).

Questions

Sin "brings forth death".

James 1:14-15; Romans 6:23; James 1:13-15

- 1) What dies when a person first sins?
- 2) What is spiritual death?
- 3) Did you experience spiritual death?
- 4) Are you able to physically sense spiritual death?
- 5) Outside of Scripture is anyone able to recognize his spiritual death?

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Justification

- 6) Are you able to love God while spiritually dead?
- 7) Are you able to have friendship with God while spiritually dead?

Sin is accountable to God.

Colossians 2:14; Acts 17:24-31; Romans 2:9-16, 1:18-22; Ecclesiastes 3:14, 3:11; Acts 17:24-31

- 1) Do you feel accountable to God?
- 2) Do you feel owned by God?
- 3) Why should you be accountable for sin?
- 4) Sin is a transgression, but what or who's will are you transgressing?
- 5) Is sin a free choice?

One sin by Adam and Eve began the universal destruction of sin. "One act of righteousness" by Jesus Christ allowed God to offer justification to all mankind.
Romans 5:18

- 1) Do you think sin has the power to destroy?
- 2) Is sin destroying you?
- 3) As a saved believer is sin dominating your life?
- 4) What do you think justification means to you?
- 5) What do you think of justification?
- 6) After a servant is justified does God still keep a record of his past sin life?
- 7) Why do you need justification?

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Justification

- 8) How do you think God erases all record of sin and its associated debt?
- 9) Do you continually need God to justify you from sin against Him?

The Lord's death, burial, and resurrection is the means by which justification is offered.

Romans 4:25, 5:9-10

- 1) What must take place in your life in order for your justification to take place?
- 2) Does Scripture describe how God justifies a servant of sin?
- 3) Do you feel free from sin?

A servant of sin is only considered by God as justified when his innocence is restored.

1 John 3:5; Romans 2:15-16; Matthew 18:3-4

- 1) What is so important about a clear conscience and innocence like a child?
- 2) What is so spiritually special about a child before he sins?
- 3) Why are saved believers compared to children?

Justification is only given as a gift of God's grace.

Romans 3:24b

- 1) Is motivation an important part of a servant's response to God?
- 2) If a servant of sin is trying to serve God's will in order to be perfect does he have the right attitude?
- 3) Which is more important serving the Lord's covenant for the sake of the covenant and spiritual perfection or serving His covenant for the sake of serving Jesus in order to glorify Him?

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- 4) Belief, faith, repentance, confession, and obedience, all demand responsive works to fulfill the Lord's will. Is this type of unified response earning His grace?
- 5) If justification requires a belief and faith works response how is it by grace?
- 6) Are you able to clear all record of sin on your own?

Justification and righteousness are dependent upon one another. No one is righteous unless he is justified of all sin and no one is justified if he is not considered righteous by God. Both require a physical response even though both are gifts of His grace.

Galatians 3:6b-7; Romans 5:1-2a

- 1) Does a working response to the Lord's will mean you are working to earn your salvation?
- 2) What type of attitude is God searching for in a servant who is trying to respond to His grace of salvation?
- 3) How do you think grace is linked to a working response?
- 4) Why do you think God required Abraham to obey His will by a working faith in order to receive the gift of righteousness?
- 5) Does God require a different type of response in the new covenant age?

Justification is a constant spiritual state of being despite sin because the Lord's servant is no longer accountable to law.

1 John 1:7-2:2, 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Romans 7:1-6, 6:20-7:2

- 1) How do you remain justified despite the fact you continue to sin?
- 2) What do you think John meant when he said all Christian's sin while at the same time all Christians are not sinners?

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- 3) Are you still spiritually accountable to any type of law? In what ways?
- 4) What is the danger of being held accountable to law?
- 5) Does freedom from sin debt give you the freedom to sin any time for any reason?
- 6) How do you live out your justification?
- 7) Is it very difficult to live a justified life for Jesus?
- 8) Are you trying to live a justified life?
- 9) How do you think your lifestyle choices glorify Jesus?
- 10) When a stranger sees your life does he glorify Jesus?

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When Jesus purchases a slave of sin, he becomes God's bond-servant and is transferred to His kingdom. The new creation in Christ is considered righteous by God, he is justified. He is holy, pure, and innocent of sin. He is spiritually circumcised from his old flesh and heart. His new self and spirit are sanctified, separated from his old self and flesh by death with Jesus. Because of his transfer to the kingdom belonging to Jesus he is separated from the world and the dominion of Satan.

He is holy before God. He is His servant, he belongs to Him. He is God's saint because he lives in spiritual perfection "clothed ... with Christ", even though he still lives in his old body of sin (*Galatians 3:27b*). He is not a saint because of what he has done or accomplished but as a result of God having considered his belief, faith, and obedience as righteousness because of his holiness and oneness with Jesus Christ. Outside of oneness with Christ righteousness is impossible to achieve or receive.

Sanctification is similar to righteousness and justification. All three refer to the holiness of a child of God, just different aspects of the same blessing. Once sin debt is forgiven it cannot be more forgiven, there is nothing left to forgive—the newborn servant is innocent. The newly created spirit of the servant cannot become a better and improved creation. He's perfect. He does not mature into a more purified innocence. He is a new creation sanctified and righteous in Christ.

Yet as a child of God he progresses to mature in the lifestyle of righteousness by gradually growing in his spiritual maturity by living ever more closely to the holy standards of God's righteousness while on earth. As he matures in life according to the Spirit's counsel he will progress to mature in the fruit of righteousness by taking on more and more of the true righteous nature of God as counseled by the Holy Spirit.

Even though he may mature in holy living he does not become more holy, he is already a new creation. He is pure; he does not become more pure than his original purity in Christ after his resurrection. And even though he learns how to separate his new life from the world in terms of spiritual maturity, he is not more separate in the sense he is progressively transferred farther and farther away from sin and the dominion of Satan by Jesus. From a spiritual point of view he cannot become more separate than he is already separated.

His transfer is complete; he is a citizen of the kingdom of God, "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (*Revelation 1:6a*). He is either enslaved to sin or justified. He is either in one kingdom or the other. God has transferred the new born son from Satan's dominion into His kingdom and

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he does not progressively become more of a son of God in Christ. The faithful servant is a holy sanctified son of God regardless of his maturity level, piousness, church office, or any other religious achievement.

The writer of *Hebrews* had this to say about Jesus, "we have been sanctified through the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (10:10b). Once a servant is freed he is considered righteousness. As a result of being holy the newly created saint is transferred over to the kingdom which Jesus both owns and rules. However, this does not mean the servant cannot freely choose to return to his old life, dominion, kingdom, and lord. He is righteous, separate from the world because he no longer serves sin under the dominion of Satan. He is a saint in God only because of his new birth in Christ.

In *Acts* Luke recorded Jesus revealing to Saul his upcoming mission to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (26:18). Jesus brought to light at least three vitally important aspects of sanctification:

- 1) Every sanctified servant is freed from all sin debt to God, which required his recreation in unity with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- 2) Those sanctified are included in the promise through Jesus Christ. They are co-heirs of the inheritance of the promise as a result of their oneness with the "seed"--Jesus Christ. In order for this to take place the servant must be recreated, spiritually circumcised by the Spirit, and "clothed ... with Christ".
- 3) Sanctification is a spiritual gift of God's grace and is only given to those who are considered as righteous by God.

In *Ephesians* Paul offered more insight: "For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household" (2:18-19). A saint is a servant of God, indwelled with the Spirit, and set apart from the world through Jesus Christ. While serving sin the servant is a stranger and an alien to the kingdom belonging to Jesus. As a saint he is a stranger and alien to the dominion of Satan. He is now "of God's household" which is built "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the corner stone" (2:20).

The "household" is a spiritual structure sitting upon a spiritual foundation and its cornerstone is Jesus. The spiritual structure is a living spiritual building, "growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21b). This temple is a living

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"dwelling of God in the Spirit" (2:22b) made up of all the sanctified saints who "are of God's household" (2:19b) the living temple of Jesus Christ. All are as one living entity in God, for each one is a temple of God, "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 *Corinthians* 6:19a).

In *Hebrews* the writer revealed: "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren ... I and the children whom God has given Me" (2:11, 13b). Only the sanctified are God's children and all of God's children are sanctified. Jesus sanctified His church through the bloody sacrifice of His body. The Lord sanctifies His church by cleansing "her by the washing of water with the word" (*Ephesians* 5:26b). The washing is His work of purification by which He makes His church of sanctified saints "holy and blameless," which in turn separates His church from the world (5:27b). The cleansing takes place when the slave of sin is united with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in the water of baptism.

In 2 *Thessalonians* Paul offered more insight into the process of God sanctifying His church, "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through the gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:13b-14). Sanctification is not a mysterious spiritual process or ritual. The servant of sin is miraculously recreated by the power of the Holy Spirit when he is united with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, "so is every one who is born of the Spirit" (*John* 3:8b).

The process leading to sanctification begins with hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. When belief develops into faith, the desire to obey the gospel message will begin to take root. When a slave of sin submits to God's plan of redemption through Jesus, He promises to give him the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He is now sealed by the Spirit, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive", and belongs to God the Father through Jesus Christ, he is sanctified from his old self, body, sin and Satan's dominion in the world (*John* 14:17a).

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Sanctification means the servant is completely separated from his old life in sin, he is holy, he belongs to Christ.

Galatians 3:27b; 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18; John 15:18-20, 16:33, 17:6,11,13-23; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, 2:12, 3:18-20, 5:9-11, 6:2, 7:30-31; 2 Corinthians 1:12, 7:9-11; Galatians 6:14; Ephesians 2:1-5, 12-13; 6:10-18; Philippians 2:12-16; Colossians 2:8, 20-23; 1 Timothy 1:15, 3:3-6, 17-19; 2 Timothy 4:10; James 1:27, 4:1-10; 1 Peter 5:6-11; 2 Peter 1:4, 2:20-22; 1 John 2:15-17, 3:1, 13, 4:1-6,15-17, 5:4-5, 5:19; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13; 2 John 6-11; Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

- 1) Why do you think it is so important to live separate from the world while living in the world?
- 2) All saved believers are holy – sanctified, and live a sanctified life – separated from the ways of sin. How do you live separated from the world?
- 3) Do you enjoy being separated from the world?
- 4) Which influence is the greatest in your life: the world influencing your lifestyle choices or your lifestyle choices and ministry influencing the lives of the lost?
- 5) Do you enjoy blending the unholiness of the world with the holiness of being God's child?
- 6) Why does God want His children separated from the world?
- 7) Is the world a spiritually dangerous place for a child of God? Why?
- 8) What parts of the world experience is God warning about?

Justification, righteousness, and sanctification are dependent upon one another.

- 1) How is your sanctification linked with your justification and righteousness?

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- 2) Do you feel separated from the world?
- 3) Are you trying to live separated from the world?
- 4) How do you think God wants you to live sanctified in an unholy and fallen world?
- 5) How do you connect with servants of sin while at the same time separating yourself from the sin which they consider as normal behavior standards?

Even though the Lord's servant is spiritually separated from sin, he still needs to learn how to live life separated from sin – in holiness.

Galatians 5:16-25; Romans 8:12-25; 1 John 2:15-17; Ephesians 4:17-5:21

- 1) What are you doing to learn how to live in a state of sanctification?
- 2) How do you learn how to live a sanctified life?
- 3) Who is your spiritual guide to a sanctified life?
- 4) Do you ever allow the flesh to dominate your thoughts and decisions?
- 5) How do you control your lust and thoughts of unrighteous behavior?
- 6) What do you do to take control over you worldly lust?
- 7) Is there such a thing as good righteous lust?
- 8) Are you able to identify your weakest areas of life?
- 9) Are you willing to allow a brother or sister help you control a lust motivated behavior

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Sanctification is a blessing from Jesus.

Hebrews 10:10b

- 1) How did Jesus separate you from slavery to sin and Satan?
- 2) How did you come to realize your true spiritual state of being?

Sanctification is a state of being belonging exclusively to a saint.

Ephesians 1:1, 13-14, 18

- 1) Are you a saint?
- 2) Is a saint the same as a sanctified child of God?
- 3) Do you feel like a saint?
- 4) Do you feel holy?
- 5) Do you live a holy life?
- 6) How do you live a holy life?

Since the spiritual state of sanctification is unseen it is received and practiced by faith in the Lord's word.

Acts 26:18

- 1) What did Jesus say to Paul about being sanctified?
- 2) Why is sanctification by faith?
- 3) What do faith motivated works have to do with holiness?
- 4) Do you understand the spiritual state from which you came?

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A sanctified saint is one who has received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:18, 1:1

- 1) How do you feel about God living inside of your body?
- 2) Do you ever think about the Holy Spirit experiencing everything you experience and think?
- 3) Does the presence of God affect your standards of behavior and thought patterns?
- 4) Does God's presence affect your attitude towards continued repentance?
- 5) Does His presence help you develop the discipline for regular Bible study and fellowship?
- 6) Do you want to learn how the Spirit helps you make holy life decisions and choices?
- 7) How do you learn the counsel of the Spirit?

The Lord's sanctified saint belongs to God's "household".

Ephesians 2:19b

- 1) What is God's "household"?
- 2) Why is practicing sanctification so important for a saint living in God's house?
- 3) Who else is in His house?
- 4) What is His house?
- 5) Does God live in this house?

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The Lord's "household" is His ever growing temple.

Ephesians 2:21-22

- 1) How does insight about the "household" of God affect your lifestyle decisions?
- 2) How important are you in the temple of God?

Sanctification is a work of the Spirit; this is another reason why faith in God's word is so vital.

2 Thessalonians 2:13b-14; John 3:8b

- 1) Why do you think sanctification requires both the Holy Spirit and a working response from the saint?
- 2) What are you doing to work with the Spirit?
- 3) Do you ever need to call for the Spirit to help you?
- 4) Is the Spirit always with you?
- 5) If you feel a lack of Spirit who is really lacking?

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Renewal

Renewal is the Spirit led life process in Christ of an active faithful bond-servant. A new life begins after being born again in Christ. From this beginning point, God must take a babe in Christ and teach him how to serve Him. The Spirit must counsel him to learn how to live life in restored fellowship, first experienced in the Garden of Eden and then lost. Paul spoke about the steady growth of spiritual maturity in his letter to the *Colossians*: "put on a new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the one who created him" (3:10). Paul offered at least three points of insight into what God accomplishes in the lives of His children as they progressively grow in spiritual maturity:

- 1) Renewal involves the gradual removal of the influences of the old self, heart, flesh, and lust, along with the worldly lifestyle they encourage.
- 2) Renewal involves filling the void left when spiritual death ended the servant's lifestyle of sin; replacing it with the new Spirit led lifestyle. The renewal process is focused upon replacing worldly knowledge and lifestyle with "true knowledge" and righteous lifestyle according to God's standard of righteousness and knowledge.
- 3) As a result of his continuing renewal the son of God becomes steadily more mature according to God's holy standard of righteousness. Through life he progressively becomes more like Jesus.

Paul also spoke of this in his letter to the *Romans* when he encouraged his brethren: "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" (12:2). He offered insight concerning how to live a new life in Christ. Renewal is a critical factor in the lifelong process of transformation. The servant's renewed lifestyle is a witness of his new Spirit led life, God's will, and his service to glorify Him. In this sense the Lord's servant lives to glorify His Lord. This is his new purpose in life.

The renewal process taking place within the mind and heart of a new believer in Christ is directly reflected by learning the word of God, Spirit led thoughts, speech, lifestyle, worship, positive fellowship with brethren, and interrelationships with the lost. His new life witnesses the sincerity of his transformation according to the will of God. Renewal is a vital part of any believer's "holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" and is a critical facet of the servant's continual worship (12:1b).

Spiritual renewal is a slow lifelong process of training the newly born spirit and self to think and live as a child of God and fills his heart with the goodness of God. As a new babe in Christ he entered into a spiritual classroom

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Renewal

led by the Spirit where all previous lessons learned and remembered by his flesh must be left behind with his old dead self, flesh, and conscience. New spiritual lessons must be learned as he allows the Spirit to lead him into a physically unnatural but holy lifestyle and mindset. Sustained renewal must be led by the Spirit or it will fail God's test – proving "what the will of God is" (12:2b).

In his *second* letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul wrote: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (4:16). The body dies a little bit every day as time marches on. However, time is a believer's friend because each new day brings forth new life experiences propelling spiritual growth and wisdom onward, enabling him to serve God better with each passing moment. The body will eventually die, and the recreated spirit and soul of God's child will return to his home in heaven with a lifetime of spiritual growth experiences, awaiting the eventual resurrection of his body.

Questions

Renewal is the lifelong process of learning and applying how to serve God the Father in holiness.

Colossians 3:9b-10; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14; 2 Timothy 3; Romans 10:17

- 1) What are you doing to lay "aside the old self"?
- 2) Who is responsible for the discipline of renewal, you, the Spirit, or both?
- 3) What is Jesus trying to tell His children about knowledge?
- 4) Do you think learning God's knowledge is important?
- 5) Do you want to mature in the word?

Is discernment between "good and evil" possible if you do not strive to learn what they are?

- 1) Why is it so important to be able to confidently discern the often subtle differences between good and evil?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Questions

Renewal

- 2) Are there other ways to learn God's will outside of Scripture?
- 3) Do you think God is too narrow minded for a modern Christian to live a modern life?
- 4) How do you develop faith?

Renewal involves the mind and heart and enables the servant to "prove what the will of God is" in his new life.

Romans 12:2

- 1) Why is renewal so important?
- 2) How would you identify renewal in your life?
- 3) If God gave you a new heart, conscience, self and spirit why is it so important to learn how to live in your new world?
- 4) Do you understand the new world in which you live?
- 5) Is living in righteousness and sanctification different than living in unholiness?
- 6) Does the dominion of Satan offer different standards of living than the Lord's kingdom?

Renewal is the gradual change of how a servant thinks and what he values as important.

- 1) How long does it take to complete the renewal process?
- 2) Bible study is a vitally important part of a sanctified life in Christ, do you study Scripture regularly?
- 3) Why do you think God wants you to learn about Him and how to serve Him?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Questions

Renewal

Renewal witnesses the Spirit's work in the life of the Lord's servant.
2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

- 1) How does renewal witness the work of the Spirit?
- 2) How does renewal glorify Jesus?
- 3) Is growth in Scriptural knowledge aided by the Spirit?

Renewal is a vital part of a servant's "holy sacrifice" and "spiritual service of worship".
Romans 12:1

- 1) Are you able to offer yourself to the Lord's service if you do not know what He expects from you?
- 2) What do you think Jesus meant when He said your life is your worship?
- 3) Is your life a micro-theocracy?
- 4) Would you know how to worship Jesus if you chose to disregard the counsel of the Spirit?

Renewal will last into eternity.
2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

- 1) Do you think your spiritual knowledge will die with your physical body?
- 2) What will you take into eternity?
- 3) How do you think Scriptural knowledge will affect your eternal blessings?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

A Holy Spirit Seal

During the first gospel sermon of the New Covenant age, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many in his audience asked in honest distress what they could do in response, "What shall we do" (*Acts 2:37b*). Peter demanded a simple two part response: "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*2:38*).

1) They needed to express repentance; choosing to demonstrate their commitment to change from the Law to salvation in Christ and His new covenant. In order to express repentance the servant needed to submit to baptism under the authority of Jesus Christ--God.

2) Those who responded proved their sincerity to the commitment they made to repent by submitting to baptism. This response to God fulfilled their initial submission to their newfound belief in Christ, commitment to repent, and faith in the integrity of God's word. Baptism and repentance cannot be separated from any other facet of salvation.

Peter also noted at least three vitally important facts about receiving the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit:

1) The people who responded confessed the Lordship of Jesus and His control over the spiritual blessings taking place within baptism. It is affected only by His authority and power. This acknowledgement required belief motivated faith in His authority to fulfill His promises.

2) Sin is forgiven only as a result of the servant's death, burial, and resurrection in unity with Christ, thus receiving his spiritual circumcision, while immersed within the water of baptism.

3) The recreated servant receives the promised "gift of the Holy Spirit" only after the Lord recreates his spirit, returning him to a state of innocent, sinless purity.

When the one being baptized receives the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, he is assured of his presence by faith in the integrity of the word of God. The Lord has transferred him from Satan's dominion to His kingdom of righteousness. In *Colossians* Paul reminded his brethren in Christ, "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (*1:13*).

Many years earlier Jesus spoke of the Spirit when told His disciples, "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" (*John 14:23b*). With this statement Jesus revealed a vital condition for receiving the Spirit. The servant of

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A Holy Spirit Seal

sin must be willing to demonstrate his newfound belief and faith in the Lord according to His will, "he who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me" (*John 14:21a*).

Jesus also disclosed the new covenant meaning of believing in Him as a condition for receiving the indwelling presence of the Spirit: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (*John 7:38-39*). A servant is only considered a believer when he has received the "gift of the Holy Spirit". A believer is one who has received the indwelling presence of the Spirit. Before this he may believe in the Lord but he is not a forgiven believer.

Just before His death He told His disciples about the very exclusive nature of the gift of the Spirit: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides in you, and will be in you" (*John 14:16-17*). Jesus clearly foretold at least six very important spiritual facts:

- 1) The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is not given to any servant who is still of the world. This means only those who are cleansed by rebirth and transferred into His kingdom will receive the gift.
- 2) This experience is based entirely upon the confession of belief and faith in the integrity of His word and Lordship. He is fulfilling His promise and the servant will receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Only those who are willing to "keep" His word are considered by God the Father as loving Jesus.
- 4) A servant of sin must become a believer before God the Father will recognize him as loving Jesus.
- 5) The Spirit is only given to those who express love towards Jesus by obeying His will.
- 6) A servant must first receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit before God the Father will consider him as knowing Him. In order to know God the servant must be in fellowship with Him through Jesus Christ.

The promised presence of the Holy Spirit is God's seal and pledge of the servant's faith in the unseen fulfillment of God's redemptive promises in Christ. The indwelling presence of the Spirit is God's assurance he truly loves and knows Jesus. For only God knows his heart and the Spirit is God.

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A Holy Spirit Seal

The Lord only considered those who responded to Peter's sermon as having "received His word", "had believed", "added", or "saved" (2:41a, 41b, 44a, 47b). Thus these saints fulfilled the foretold of requirement of how to love God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Later, in his letter to the *Ephesians* Paul wrote: "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (1:13). A saved believer is one who has responded to the Lord with faith, repentance, confession of His deity and Lordship, and baptism. He is a servant who follows up his confession and love with a continued service recognizing Him as Lord and Master.

The seal of the Holy Spirit is a mark of divine ownership. God now owns the former slave of sin. The servant has demonstrated his commitment to serve God the Father through Jesus Christ, his new Lord and Master. Paul revealed in his *second* letter to the *Corinthians*: "He who establishes us with you is Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" (1:21-22).

The inner presence of the Holy Spirit also seals the believer "for the day of redemption" (*Ephesians* 4:30b). Paul tried to both warn and encourage his brethren as he revealed their need to treasure the inner presence of the Spirit by how they chose to live and think according to the Lord's standard of righteousness. If they remain holy in God until they died, then the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit assured their continued redemption. This is a never changing spiritual blessing from Jesus.

Questions

The gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is received within baptism.
Acts 2:38b

- 1) Who do you think is making this promise: Peter or the Holy Spirit?
- 2) Why do you think the Spirit is mentioned only after the servant receives forgiveness?
- 3) Did the Spirit really mean forgiveness is received sometime while immersed in the water of baptism?

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Questions

A Holy Spirit Seal

- 4) Do you think there is more than one way to receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit, other than being immersed in the water of baptism?
- 5) Is the person receiving the Spirit able to feel His presence?
- 6) How is the invisible and unsensed presence of the Spirit linked with belief and faith?
- 7) If you are able to feel the presence of the Spirit is He then present by faith?

The indwelling presence of the Spirit is only given to those who have received forgiveness by recreation.

- 1) When does a servant of sin receive forgiveness?
- 2) When does a servant receive the "gift of the Holy Spirit"?

The indwelling presence of the Spirit is dependent upon faith; He is unseen and cannot be physically experienced.

Hebrews 11:1, 6; Romans 8:25; 2 Corinthians 5:5-7

- 1) Are sight and faith compatible?
- 2) If you are able to feel the presence of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, how do you know for certain it is God?
- 3) How do you know what the Holy Spirit feels like? What standard of measurement are you using to determine the accuracy of your feelings?
- 4) Why do you think it is so important to depend upon the integrity of God's word concerning the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

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Questions

A Holy Spirit Seal

The internal presence of the Spirit is only given to those who choose to express love towards God the Father through Jesus Christ.

John 14:23b, 21a

- 1) How does God define love towards Him?
- 2) What do you think commands have to do with receiving the indwelling presence of the Spirit?
- 3) How do belief, faith, confession, repentance, baptism, and a life of faith, connect with expressing love towards God?
- 4) Is the Spirit received because of works performed in order to satisfy the requirement to love God as best as possible?
- 5) Is the Spirit received because His new covenant stipulations are obeyed because of belief, faith, confessing Jesus as Lord and Master, the desire to repent, and obediently serve His will?
- 6) In the last two questions what is the difference in motivation?

The presence of the Spirit is only given to those who have expressed belief in Jesus Christ.

John 7:38-39; Acts 2:44a

- 1) What do you think belief involves?
- 2) Can there be a difference between believing Jesus and "had believed" in Him?

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Questions

A Holy Spirit Seal

The presence of the Spirit is only given to those whom God has transferred from the dominion of Satan (the world), to the Lord's kingdom (the church).

John 14:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14; Galatians 3:26-27, 29; Colossians 1:13-14; Acts 26:18-20; Revelation 1:5-6

- 1) What must take place when a servant of sin is transferred to the Lord's kingdom?
- 2) How is he transferred?
- 3) When is he transferred?

The seal of the Spirit is a mark of divine witness; the servant belongs to God.
2 Corinthians 1:21-22

- 1) Are you completely confident the Spirit lives in you?
- 2) Are you assured of God's presence even though you cannot physically experience the indwelling presence of the Spirit?
- 3) How do you know for sure if the Spirit lives in you?
- 4) How does knowing God lives in you affect your motivation to serve His will in everyday life?

The inner presence of the Spirit seals the servant "for the day of redemption".
Ephesians 4:30b

- 1) Do you ever doubt your promised eternal destiny?
- 2) If so what do you think motivates your doubt?
- 3) How do you develop the faith necessary to overwhelm feelings which may be coming from your old flesh and self?

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Questions

A Holy Spirit Seal

- 4) What does assurance mean to you?
- 5) Are you completely assured of your eternal redemption?
- 6) How does assurance affect your daily life and its choices and decisions?

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A Holy Spirit Pledge

The Holy Spirit pledge is a blessing resulting from receiving God's gift of the Holy Spirit. His indwelling presence is a partial blessing of the servant's promised inheritance which he will receive because of his signature on the contractual agreement known as the new covenant. The pledge assures His children they are presently receiving part of the blessings of God's presence, promise, and fulfillment of prophecy because of their redemption.

The pledge is God the Father's promise of the servant's inclusion into the flow of the promise, its spiritual blessings, and hope of eternal life. His presence means the servant is presently enjoying the blessing of eternal promises.

The inner presence of the Holy Spirit directly links the new servant with the promised divine inheritance. The pledge of the Spirit's presence is a down payment of the inheritance promised to the Lord's children. He will receive the blessings of the promise in the future; however he is presently enjoying spiritual blessings from the promise during his physical life as well.

Paul wrote in his *second* letter to the *Corinthians*: "Now He who established us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" (1:21-22). If the covenant is not broken by the new bond-servant/son, then all of the future blessings and promises of the eternal inheritance in Christ will be received in part during life and in full after physical life ends with death. Paul repeated this assurance of God's promise in (5:5): "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge." The ultimate purpose God prepares His children for is eternal glory in the spiritual promised land of the promise--eternal fellowship with God restored to its original intent, which will never end.

Questions

The indwelling presence of the Spirit is a partial and present blessing of the promised eternal inheritance which every servant will receive upon death.
Romans 8:13-17

- 1) Have you ever thought about the fact you have received a part of your promised inheritance?
- 2) Does the inheritance affect you degree of assurance in any way?

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Questions

A Holy Spirit Pledge

3) Do you think your lifestyle attitudes, motivations, and choices in this life will affect life in heaven? How about right now?

The pledge of the Spirit comes directly from God the Father.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:1-7; Ephesians 1:13-14, (Galatians 3:27-29)

1) If you cannot feel the Spirit's presence do you ever doubt His work in your life?

2) If you do not feel you are being Spirit led who is at fault?

3) If you do not feel the Church is not Spirit led who is at fault?

4) What is the special purpose reserved only for those who have the indwelling presence of the Spirit?

5) How does the pledge affect your life in Christ?

6) How must the gospel be believed in order to receive God's pledge?

7) What do you think the inheritance has to do with being an "heir" and "offspring" of Abraham?

8) How is the Lord's servant a relative of Abraham?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Children of God

With all of the different religions in the world today many people are led to believe in numerous ways leading to adoption into the Lord's family. Unfortunately the belief is a deception. A servant of sin must be willing to submit to redemption by Jesus according to His new covenant before God the Father will adopt him back into His family of righteous saints. He must be born again in unity with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and considered by God the Father as spiritually circumcised. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Galatians*, "for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For you all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (3:26-27, 29).

Paul reminded his fellow believers of their spiritual roots in Christ Jesus. Jesus ended faith in all law or any form of traditional religion when He unified faith in God with faith in Himself. God's sons are only those who have demonstrated their "faith in Christ Jesus."

His sons are those who are obedient to the Lord's will through the gospel. They submitted to baptism and allowed their immersion within the water. As a dirty vessel the servant enters into the spiritual cleansing power of God. The faith realized in God is in His power to recreate a dead servant of sin into a living and fruitful new born child of the Lord Jesus.

Entering into Christ is also accompanied with entering into the promise by becoming a spiritual son of Abraham through Jesus; the anticipated seed heir of Abraham. Since Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise of the seed those who "belong to Christ" are enabled to share with Him the promised blessings to the seed, "'your seed,' that is, Christ" (3:29a, 3:16b).

Paul wrote in his letter to the *Romans*: "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants" (9:8). No one, regardless of whether he is able to claim verifiable physical descendency back to Abraham, a servant of the Law, or physically circumcised, is able to enter into the promise any other way than through faith in Jesus.

He also noted: "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ" (8:16-17). Only those who are united with Christ are allowed to enter into the spiritual promise, made exclusively to the faithful saints of old and to the

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Children of God

seed of the promise--Jesus Christ. Only the faithful saints in Christ are given the right to inherit the blessings of the promise as children of God the Father.

In *Hebrews*, the author reminded his readers of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me" (2:13b). Just a few verses earlier he said this prophecy is continually being fulfilled in the spiritual lives of anyone sanctified in Christ, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (2:11). Only those who are sanctified, set apart from their old flesh and the world, and righteous through faith in Christ, are considered by God the Father as His children. No one else is considered.

In 2 *Corinthians*, Paul quoted prophecy revealing the connection between a child of God and the true temple of God. He wrote: "for we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people ... And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me'" (6:16-18). God's children are individually, as well as collectively, a temple of God.

They are recognized as His children as a result of their recreation, spiritual circumcision, and having received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, all of God's children are individually a temple of God, while at the same time collectively a greater temple--the body of Christ, one in Christ, one with the Holy Spirit, and one with God the Father, "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (*Ephesians* 2:20b-21). God's children are the fulfillment of many prophetic visions concerning the complete restoration of the kingdom of David, Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple.

Questions

A servant is only able to become a child of God by "faith in Christ Jesus".
Galatians 3:26

- 1) Why do you think Paul mentions baptism as such an important part of fulfilling faith in order to receive salvation?
- 2) How does baptism and being a child of God connect?
- 3) Are you able to sense any of the spiritual promises taking place?

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Questions

Children of God

- 4) How do you know if God is doing what He said He will do in baptism?
- 5) How do you know for sure you are a child of God?
- 6) By what standard are you secure in your assurance?
- 7) How is a servant a child?
- 8) Why is a child His servant?
- 9) Are you a child of God before baptism?

Only the "sons of God" receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit.
Galatians 4:3-7; Romans 8:14-17

- 1) Who are the exclusive people who receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) What does being a child of God mean to you?
- 3) If you are a son of God what does your identity mean to you?
- 4) Who is offered a spiritual inheritance from God?
- 5) Who "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"?
- 6) If a person does not have this witness where does he stand spiritually?

All "sons of God" are legally adopted back into His family.
Galatians 4:5

- 1) Why must a child of God be adopted back into His family?
- 2) Does this mean he once belonged to His family?

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Questions

Children of God

- 3) How could a child be born a sinner and still be in God's family?
- 4) If God had to orphan a child due to sin does this mean the child inherited his sin or chose to sin?
- 5) If a very young child dies before he is able to choose to commit a sin does he go to heaven as a child of God?
- 6) Do you think it is cruel for God to separate Himself from children who choose to sin?
- 7) Can you think of a parable by Jesus which refers to just such a separation and return?
- 8) How does Israel's repeated cycles of sin and repentance connect with being born in innocence, choosing to sin, and God's offer to redeem His wayward child back into His family of saints?

Only the Lord's children are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ".
Romans 8:16-17

- 1) Do you think God is being a bit too restrictive about His promise?
- 2) Do His restrictions bother you?
- 3) Do you feel God has made exceptions to His word in the case of your loved ones who have died?
- 4) Do you think God is hard hearted if only His children are heirs?
- 5) Do you think God accepts alternate ways to receive redemption? For example: conversions before baptism, deathbed conversions without baptism, good moral people who have not had the opportunity to hear the gospel.

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Questions

Children of God

- 6) Is God fair and loving concerning who His children are? Are your perceptions of fairness and love accurate? What standard of fairness and love are you using?
- 7) Who has the last word concerning what God has the right to do, God or you?

Only the Lord's children are "children of the promise".
Romans 9:8a; Genesis 3:15

- 1) What about all of the other religions in the world who worship God?
- 2) What does "children of promise" mean to you?
- 3) When, where, and why did this statement about the promised restoration of mankind originate?

Only the Lord's children are "regarded as descendants" of Abraham.
Romans 9:8b; Galatians 3:16, 29

- 1) How can a child of God who is not physically related to Abraham be considered His descendant?
- 2) How is God considering His Child a descendant?
- 3) Do you think there is a difference between the physical nation of Israel and the Lord's spiritual nation of Israel – His saints?
- 4) Is the heir-line spiritual rather than physical?

The children of God are the Lord's "brethren".
Hebrews 11b-13; Acts 9:4-6

- 1) What does the term "brethren" mean to you?
- 2) In spiritual terms which is more important: your physical brethren (relatives) in the world or spiritual brethren in the Lord?

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Questions

A Holy Spirit Seal

- 3) How do you practice love towards your brother in Christ?
- 4) Are you unified with your brother in Christ despite differences?
- 5) If a fellow servant is also considered by God as your brother does this affect your attitude towards him? How do your feelings of family transfer to the church?
- 6) If every servant is united with Christ does this mean every servant is united with each other as well?
- 7) Do you believe this statement: How you treat your brother in Christ is how you treat Christ?
- 7) Do you determine your relationship with Christ by your relationships with fellow Christians?

The children of God are "the temple of the living God".
2 Corinthians 6:16b-18; 1 Corinthians 6:17, 18-19

- 1) How did God make you a temple?
- 2) What are Christian temples of?
- 3) Do you ever think about being a holy temple of God when doing everyday activities? How about what you put into your heart, your thoughts, attitudes, and motivations?
- 4) .Is your body a sacred place for God?
- 5) Does knowing you are a temple affect your attitude and motivation to serve Jesus?
- 6) What kind of message do you think God is trying to send to His children regarding what He thinks of them?

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His Chosen People

All of God's children are His chosen people. John wrote in his *Revelation*: "He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful" (17:14b). These are the remnant from the world who heard the gospel, believed, developed faith, and chose to respond with obedience to the will of God just as Abraham did during his life. These are the chosen. Not because they are irresistibly chosen regardless of free will, but simply as a result of free will. They are the new covenant remnant of Israel who is included in the promise, because they are adopted into the family of the seed--Christ Jesus. They are the chosen of God as a result of their willingness to allow Jesus to purchase their lives from slavery to sin and its curse of death.

Paul wrote in his letter to the *Ephesians*: "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him ... He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself ... in Him we have redemption" (1:4a, 5a, 7a). All servants of sin are free to choose whom to serve, no one is predetermined outside of his own will to accept or reject the Lord's offer of redemption. The freedom to choose adoption "through Jesus Christ" is what God predetermined to take place within the human experience.

All are free to choose to appeal to God for redemption through Jesus Christ when they are blessed with the opportunity to hear the gospel message. God chose all of His faithful in Christ beforehand because He had predetermined redemption through Jesus Christ from before creation. God knew before creation whose belief, faith, and obedience through Jesus would be considered as righteousness. He knew before man ever stepped foot on the ground who would choose to die in faith before the death of Jesus. He knew who would be qualified to enter into the spiritual flow of the promise and when. He easily predetermined from before creation who would fellowship with Him in eternity. He witnessed their lives as saints before the Lord's death and after His resurrection until His second coming.

When a servant of sin becomes a bond-servant of Christ he has freely joined with Him in His predestined destiny strictly as a result of having heard the preplanned gospel and responded to it according to God's predetermined covenant in Christ. In Christ the servant is united with His predestined destiny making his destiny predestined. God revealed His plan for the promised restoration of mankind soon after Adam and Eve first sinned. Speaking to the serpent God foretold: "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel" (*Genesis 3:15b*). Thousands of years later the seed of the

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His Chosen People

promise—Jesus Christ, fulfilled the prophecy of the promise. Thus God predestined the prophecy as well as its fulfillment.

In 2 *Thessalonians*, Paul offered more insight into what chosen referred to when he described the process of becoming chosen. Salvation is freely offered by God through the gospel of Christ, “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (2:13b). One becomes sanctified by the work of the Spirit in unity with Jesus. A slave of sin can only be restored to holiness when God considers his belief and faith as righteous.

The servant's conversion process is initiated by the response offered to God when he expresses “faith in the truth” (2:13b). Paul goes on to explain what he means by the truth: “He called you through our gospel” (2:14a). This is not a spiritual calling and response which is independent from free will, an irresistible feeling placed within the heart of a servant of sin. It is the direct result of a rational understanding of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. And if a servant desires freedom in Christ the gospel reveals how to receive his liberty.

Any servant chosen by God has first chosen to respond to God's predestined will through His predestined Son, Jesus Christ. He has received the predestined indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He is included in the predestined flow of the promise. He immediately receives a part of his predestined blessings of the promise. He will receive after his death his predestined body in the likeness of Jesus. He will receive his predestined reward. He will receive a place in his predestined eternal future in heaven. It's all predestined because God has already seen how our physical future proceeds into eternity.

“Faith in the truth” describes the spiritual changes taking place within a slave's heart (2:13b). Upon hearing the word of God, if it is truly believed, he will begin to develop “assurance” and “conviction” in the unseen promises of the word of God (*Hebrews* 11:1). However, neither belief nor faith will save if they are not worked out as a response accepting God's grace according to the new covenant will of Jesus Christ. The slave of sin must be willing to exercise the freedom of belief and faith through obedience to what God the Father is asking of him through Jesus. He must be willing to confess Jesus as Lord and Master. He must be willing to commit his life to continued repentance by allowing the Spirit to lead him along the unseen path of God's grace to his final salvation upon death in faith.

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The offer of redemption is within a covenant between the servant and Jesus. Jesus promises to purchase him from his slavery to sin and place him in service to Himself. Thus he chooses to covenant with God who in turn chooses him to serve Him through Jesus Christ. When a slave of sin practices "faith in the truth" his faith is realized through his obedience of love (2:13b). This places his spiritual signature on a covenant contract with God the Father, promising he will serve Him only, and only through Jesus Christ. The servant is depending upon belief and faith in the truth of God's word because he is not able to physically experience any of the salvation promises. He is only able to witness his own response.

His physical response is in turn God's witness to the world. His children are able to glorify Him through their response to His will through Jesus Christ. John quoted Jesus praying towards the end of His ministry, he stated the importance of the believer's response to His will when He said: "I do not 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 are in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me" (*John 17:20-23*).

A short time earlier as His last supper with His disciples began to unfold He stressed the vital importance of love, unity, witness to the world, and working together to glorify God through Himself. He told the twelve disciples, "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" (*John 13:34-35*). His chosen are distinguished from the world by their response to the Lord's commandment – expressing love towards one another which in turn expresses love towards Jesus because one another is the body of Christ. His chosen glorify God the Father through Jesus by obeying this commandment. Love according to the Lord's will is the binding force of unity.

Through the witnessing power of love the body of Christ – the chosen remnant are able to fulfill His will to deliver the message of Christ to the world. In *Ephesians* Paul explained how the mystery of Christ is being revealed to both the world and the spiritual realm. To the world the gospel is still hidden by misunderstanding and spiritual blindness. The gospel must be revealed by the

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chosen who are purposed by Jesus to fulfill His will. The chosen are the only ones who are able to understand His will because they are Spirit led, "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).

The body of Christ – the chosen, are to imitate Paul's mission to the world which in turn witnesses the mystery of salvation to spiritual beings belonging to Satan and to Jesus, "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was 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" (3:8-12). God's chosen people are immensely important to His eternal plan for His creation. His predestined plan for mankind fulfills His predestined purpose for His entire creation. The witness with which the chosen enlighten the world fulfills "His predestined purpose" for all of His creation both physical and spiritual.

In his *first* letter *Peter* described the chosen in Christ who have responded with "faith in the truth," as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession ... a people of God" (2:9a, 10a). When a slave of sin is purchased by Jesus he becomes His servant. He is born again, he is given a new position in life with a new life, he is placed in a new nation foreign to the world, and he becomes God's personal possession and witness of His purpose for His creation and glory. He is a slave who has rationally regained his senses through the truth of God's word and chose to accept His offer of grace through Jesus Christ for his redemption.

Questions

Any servant who is united with Jesus is one of His "chosen and faithful".
Revelation 17:14b

- 1) Do you feel special?
- 2) Are you special in God's eyes?

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- 3) What do you think God is talking about when He refers to His chosen?
- 4) Who are His chosen?
- 5) Does chosen mean He predetermined your salvation or you accepted His predetermined plan for your salvation?
- 6) How does being chosen by God affect your interrelationships with fellow chosen servants of the Lord?

God knew who His chosen would be from before the creation of the world.
Ephesians 1:4

- 1) How did God know this?
- 2) Did His knowledge somehow predetermine a servant's choice to serve Jesus rather than sin?

The chosen are those whom God has adopted through Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 1:4-5

- 1) How is a servant of sin adopted into God's family?
- 2) Are you adapting to your new family environment?

The adopted are predestined because God only predestined the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. No Jesus – no predestination.
Ephesians 1:5

- 1) Do you feel as if fate predetermined your decision to serve Jesus?
- 2) Do you believe God may have sent people and circumstances into your life experience to help lead you to Jesus for salvation?

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- 3) What is the fundamental difference between predetermined salvation and salvation by choice?
- 4) Is God's offer to give salvation the same as predetermining salvation?
- 5) Do you think God honors freedom of choice more than choosing your destiny in an unnoticed way?
- 6) Why do you think God honors freedom of choice so highly?
- 7) How do you think freedom of choice affected your decision to serve Jesus rather than continuing to serve sin?

The chosen are only those who "have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses".
Ephesians 1:7

- 1) How is a servant of sin chosen?
- 2) Is freedom of choice involved?
- 3) Is a physical response required?
- 4) What must every servant of sin do in response to the Lord's offer of salvation and His new covenant stipulations for salvation in order to receive salvation?
- 5) Is a physical response the same as trying to earn salvation?

The chosen are those whom God has given "salvation through sanctification by the Spirit".
2 Thessalonians 2:13b

- 1) Why does a servant need sanctification?
- 2) What is sanctification?

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- 3) What does the Spirit do to give sanctification?
- 4) What is the connection between sanctification and holiness?
- 5) What is the connection between sanctification and being separate from the world?
- 6) How does a sanctified servant serve Jesus?

The chosen are those who have expressed "faith in the truth".
2 Thessalonians 2:13b

- 1) How do you express "faith in the truth"?
- 2) How do you know what the truth is about salvation with so many different approaches to God available?
- 3) Is working out faith the same as working for salvation?
- 4) What is the difference?
- 5) How do you know if you are responding according to God's will?
- 6) Who leads your work: the Spirit or your heart? Which can you trust?

The chosen are those whom God has "called ... through our gospel".
2 Thessalonians 2:14a

- 1) What is the Gospel?
- 2) How is a servant of sin called by the gospel?
- 3) Does this require a free thought out choice?
- 4) What is the choice based upon?

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- 5) How are faith and the gospel connected?
- 6) There are many variations of how to respond to the gospel available, how do you know which to trust?

The Lord's chosen are "a chosen race, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession ... a people of God".

1 Peter 2:9a, 10a

- 1) Sanctification means God's people are holy and separate from the people who chose to serve sin and Satan. Do you feel as if you are part of a newly created race of people?
- 2) What race of people are you in Christ?
- 3) What nation are you?
- 4) What kind of spiritual place is God referring to?
- 5) Is God revealing a present blessing or about something which will take place in the future?
- 6) Do you live life as a special possession of God--His person?
- 7) Are you getting a better sense of who you are in Christ?
- 8) Is your new awareness affecting your attitude towards your fellow servant, how you choose to serve Jesus, and your interrelationships in the world?

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The people God chose before He even created the world are those He knew would be faithful until they die. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Ephesians*, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him, in love" (1:4).

Since the dawn of creation God has had a plan for His mankind, offering His wayward children a way to return to Him. A servant of sin is made "holy and blameless" by the power of Jesus to purchase him from the bondage of his debt of sin to God and the curse of law – both have the power to enslave the transgressor (1:4b). Upon his recreation in Christ he is freed from his bondage to sin and the binding spiritual effects of law. He is holy, as a result of the unseen promises of God. The Lord considers his belief and faith as righteous because he is holy.

"In love" (1:4b) describes how a servant of sin appeals to God for his salvation as well as maintains it in Christ. A servant's expression of love to God is a contemplated response to the will of God the Father motivated by his desire to become one with God the Father through Jesus. As a result he is one body in Christ with all of the Lord's other servants. The Spirit unifies the servant with Jesus, God the Father, and one another. Since all saints are the body of Jesus, all saints are one in Christ. Godly love is based upon the word of truth rather than the heart even though the heart is involved. It is Spirit led, not heart led.

In his gospel *John* quoted Jesus stating, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to Him" (14:21). The love response required by God is a decision based upon belief in the words of Jesus Christ and faith motivated obedience to His will. Love towards God fulfills the servant's freedom to pursue and appeal for his destiny in Christ.

John wrote in *Revelation*: "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (20:6). His holy people are righteous and sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit. Their recreation in Christ is their "first resurrection." They will live with Him forever as promised.

God's holy people are completely pure and righteous while their physical life is slowly restored from the shattered ruins of sin. The holy chosen of God are honored by God the Father to have personal fellowship with Him, they are His friends, and know Him. His holy people are one in Christ Jesus by the indwelling

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presence of the Holy Spirit. They are spiritually pure, righteous, sanctified, and only serve God their creator. The holy ones in Christ Jesus are, according to the writer of *Hebrews*, "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven ... righteous men made perfect" (*Hebrews* 12:23).

Questions

Every chosen child of God is "holy and blameless".
Ephesians 1:4

- 1) What does holiness mean to you?
- 2) How do you live life as the Lord's holy servant?
- 3) Do you feel holy?
- 4) How do you know for sure you are holy?

Every servant who has experienced "the first resurrection" is holy.
Revelation 20:6

- 1) How do you know if you experienced "the first resurrection"?
- 2) What is the "first resurrection"?
- 3) Why is it so important?
- 4) Does it make a difference in your life to have this knowledge?

Every servant who is holy will not experience eternal separation from God.
Revelation 20:6

- 1) How do you explain eternal separation from God?
- 2) Why is knowing about your holiness important to you?
- 3) How does holiness connect with assurance?

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4) Does this understanding of assurance affect your everyday life?

Every servant who is holy is a priest "of God and of Christ".
Revelation 20:6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9

1) Do you feel like a priest?

2) Do you act like a priest?

3) How do you think a new covenant priest should act?

4) What do you learn from pre-Christian priests about how to serve Jesus as one of His priests?

5) Do you think the Lord's is expecting His children to serve Him as priests?

6) Is a new covenant priest only on duty during church on Sunday?

7) How do you interrelate, practice fellowship, and one another love, with your fellow priests?

8) Is the service of one priest more important than another?

Every servant who is holy "will reign with Him" forever.
Revelation 20:6; Romans 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:10-13; Revelation 5:9-10

1) Do you feel like a ruler?

2) What do think you rule over?

3) Do you believe you are a ruler with Christ?

4) Do you act like a ruler?

5) Are you confident in Christ?

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- 6) Who is the looser in the battle between Satan and Jesus?
- 7) If you are a ruler, do you ever lower yourself to the ways of the ruled?
- 8) If you are a ruler, who do you allow to influence your service to Jesus: the world or the Spirit?
- 9) Does this knowledge affect you interrelationships amongst other brethren who are fellow rulers?

The holy people of God are the church – “holy and blameless” .
Ephesians 5:25-27

- 1) What is the Lord's church?
- 2) Who is His church? How do you determine who is His body of believers? Is it important to know who is who?
- 3) Do you feel connected with a brother and sister as one body in Christ?
- 4) How does this connection affect you interrelationships with fellow members of the church – the Lord's body of believers?
- 5) Does your relationship with fellow brethren determine your relationship with Jesus?
- 6) What does fellowship with Jesus and His body mean to you? How do they connect?
- 7) Even though different assemblies of brethren are physically administratively separated, they are still united as one in the body of Christ. Do you fellowship and practice one another love towards fellow believers in another assembly as if they are in your chosen assembly?
- 8) How do you recognize a fellow holy person?

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9) Is everyone who worships God through Jesus Christ holy?

10) Are all churches united as one in Christ?

The holy people of God are "holy brethren".
Hebrews 3:1a

1) What does the word "brethren" mean to you?

2) Do you think your position as a holy brother or sister obligates you to reconsider how you may feel towards a fellow member in the Lord's body?

3) Is there a connection between neighbor and brother?

4) Are you any better than any other member of the Lord's body?

5) Do you feel your position of service places you above fellow servants? Why do you think of yourself as more special?

6) Do you think hypocrisy in the Lord's body involves voicing love for Jesus while expressing dislike for one of His body members?

7) How do you distinguish the difference between perceived hypocrisy and immaturity in Christ? How do you define hypocrisy?

8) What does the Lord require of you if you recognize what you may consider hypocrisy in another brother or sister in Christ?

9) What does the identity of brethren have to do with unity and love?

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Even though the people of God are holy, they must learn how to think and live holy, looking to Jesus as their ultimate role model of holiness.

1 Peter 1:14-16

- 1) Do you allow the world to define your holiness or do you try to influence the world with your holiness?
- 2) How do you live holy?
- 3) Do you have a guide other than Jesus?
- 4) What is your standard for holiness?
- 5) How is God's standard of holiness and righteousness communicated to you?
- 6) Who is God's counselor of holiness?
- 7) Why is living holiness so important?
- 8) How does your holiness glorify Jesus?

The people of God are a "holy priesthood" in the temple of God—His "spiritual house".

1 Peter 2:5

- 1) Do you think a holy life within the spiritual conflict of the world and your own self will affect your ability to serve as the Lord's priest?
- 2) What is the Lord's house?
- 3) What is His temple?

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Servant's of God

Even though all of God's children are freed from their bondage to sin when Jesus redeemed them, they are still servants, only now to God through Jesus. All of God's children are covenanted bond-servants. In *Acts* Luke recorded the brethren praying: "grant that thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with confidence" (4:29). A bond-servant is a former slave of sin who purposefully sought God to redeem him from his old master, sin. He freely chose to covenant with God the Father for his freedom through Jesus Christ. Once redeemed the purchased servant changes ownership from sin to Jesus.

Bond-slavery is quite different from slavery to sin. It is a desired service and one which can be reversed, if the slave desires to return to his old life serving sin. God freely allows him to break his covenant with Him, but only if he alone chooses to, based upon his lifestyle, heart, and attitude towards his confession—Jesus God his Master.

The conditions and blessings of service to God are written in the New Covenant and must be agreed upon by the servant's continuance of his confession to continue service in faith. In his *second* letter, *Peter* warned his fellow-bond-servants of the ease of returning to sin: "For if they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state is worse than the first" (2:20).

Paul noted in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*: "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (4:1). Even though he spoke of himself and his fellow apostles, the reference applies to all of God's children. A bond-servant of God serves with no expectation of payment for his services other than his basic life needs. The humility involved in his service to God through Jesus Christ is reflected in a parable spoken by Jesus, "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'we are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done'" (*Luke* 17:10).

His life of service to Christ is recorded in his own heart and will determine his future inheritance in heaven, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 *Corinthians* 5:10). Serving God through Jesus may be difficult at times, but its spiritual rewards, both present and in eternity, far outweigh any physical hardships.

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All of God's children are bond-servants.

Acts 4:29

- 1) What is a bond-servant?
- 2) How do does a slave of sin become a bond-servant belonging to Jesus?
- 3) How does a bond-servant serve his master?
- 4) What does Lord mean to you?
- 5) Are all servants equal to Jesus? Are some more holy and sanctified than others?
- 6) Do you think Jesus favors some servants over others because of what they accomplish?
- 7) Why is it so important for the Lord's flock to remain united in love?
- 8) How are the Lord's bond-servants connected to each other?
- 9) Why are one another love and unity so important within the lord's body and as a witness to the world?

All bond-servant's of Christ are "servants of Christ", He is their lord and Master.

1 Corinthians 4:1

- 1) Does Master have anything to do with Jesus being Lord?
- 2) How is a child of God still a servant of the Lord Jesus?
- 3) Do you serve Jesus more on Sunday then on the rest of the week?

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The Lord's bond-servant does not expect wages for what he does, even though he is greatly blessed and rewarded.

Luke 17:10; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

- 1) Do you think Jesus owes you anything for what you do for Him?
- 2) What motivates your service to Jesus?
- 3) Is your service to Jesus connected to serving one another?
- 4) Do you expect spiritual blessings in return for your service?
- 5) How do you think Jesus blesses you for your service?
- 6) Do you think your works of service will affect your eternal inheritance?
- 7) What motivates the work you do for the Lord?
- 8) What motivates your compromises with the world?

Every servant will be eventually rewarded for all of his service.

2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, 3:14, 9:16-18; Colossians 3:18-25; Hebrews 10:35-38, 11:24-28; 2 John 1:6-8; Revelation 22:12

- 1) Do you think God will judge your service fairly?
- 2) Even though the labor of one brother or sister may affect the labor of a fellow saint, does every saint receive rewards for his personal labor?
- 3) If a servant chooses to minimize his service how does this affect his eternal reward.
- 4) How did Paul feel rewarded for preaching the gospel from free will?

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- 5) How does God reward His saints for their work in and among the people of the world, and family interrelationships?
- 6) What does your reward have to do with you promised inheritance?
- 7) How does spiritual confidence and endurance connect with a reward?
- 8) Is a saint able to lose his reward by deigning the deity of Jesus?
- 9) When will the Lord's saints receive their full reward?

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A bond-servant of God is joined to a body of people who are all bond-servants in one body--Christ. The body of Christ is not a human institution or organized group of people worshipping God. Even though the body of Christ may appear as a worldly organization it is not. They are not a religion even though they may practice religion through servant service to one another, witnessing to the world, and when assembling together. Together they serve Jesus according to His New Covenant, yet His covenant is not obeyed as a legal requirement for salvation, but through faith in the grace of His covenant.

Spiritually, all of God's children regardless of who, what, or where they live, are all one in Christ the very same way as Jesus is in His Father, or a man and wife are one. The unity is not a relationship but a collective fellowship with Jesus, which includes His body of saints, in which personal relationships develop and grow. Together all of His people are in partnership with the one God, they are one with God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and with Jesus Christ. Their work is to glorify Him through their service and witness to one another and the world.

In his *gospel* letter, *John* quoted Jesus proclaiming: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd" (10:16). Jesus foretold to the Jewish people of the soon to come joining of Gentiles with Jewish believers as one body in Christ. For the first time since before the fall of Adam and Eve when sin began to separate mankind from each other and from God's presence, direct fellowship with God is restored in Christ and His united body of believers.

Paul wrote in his letter to the *Ephesians*: "for He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall ... and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross" (2:14, 16a). He spoke of restored peace amongst greatly differing peoples resulting from the oneness of the Lord's body. Within His body all unique ethnic identities such as Jew and Greek are meaningless. Boundaries which cause division are broken down and peace is restored.

Paul boldly proclaimed to his Jewish brethren, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Galatians* 3:28). The power of recreation and unity in Christ utterly defeat the forces of the world with its death, division, and hatred. God is the great equalizer of all people. He lifted up a woman as a person equally as important and purposeful as a man and declared a slave is just as important to Him as a king. Nationality is of no concern, skin color, and other unique features are irrelevant. He loudly affirmed how Jesus fulfilled the

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promise enabling all peoples to equally share in the blessings of God. His gospel levels mountains separating humanity from God and fills in deep valleys of division caused by sin.

Despite the physical diversity among God's children, on a spiritual level every servant is an intricate part of one perfect body whose head is Jesus Christ. All have chosen to believe, grow in faith, and serve the same God through one Lord--Jesus Christ. All worship God through Jesus Christ in a singular way and for a singular reason: "God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" – to glorify Him (*John 4:24*).

All are in Christ by the power of one Spirit: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (*1 Corinthians 12:13*). All live by the same word of God: "beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (*Jude 3*). All of His people are led by the same indwelling presence and counsel of the Holy Spirit: "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit" (*Galatians 5:25*). And all are a part of the promise and waiting for their complete inheritance in heaven: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (*Galatians 3:29*).

The body of Christ is not a fellowship of hundreds of differing and often conflicting faiths. Regardless of how or what people believe about God and the body of Christ, their opinions and worship will never be powerful enough to influence the predestined plan of God through Jesus Christ. His body of believers all belong together in a marriage contract of love with Jesus. His body of believers is His bride. They are as one entity.

When a slave of sin is purchased by Jesus and transferred into His kingdom he becomes part of a body of believers who are physically wildly varied worldwide. But spiritually they are a body of one, bound in a covenant with Jesus, similar to a marriage covenant which binds a man and woman together as a single entity, "we are members of His body" (*Ephesians 5:30b*). The body of Christ and personal identity in Christ is just as much a spiritual miracle as the redemption making it possible.

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All of the Lord's children are "one flock with one shepherd".

John 10:16

- 1) In relation to the body of Christ what does "one" mean to you?
- 2) How do interrelationships among brethren connect to "one"?
- 3) If every servant is one in Christ, what happens if you treat a fellow servant with disrespect?
- 4) Do you think there are different degrees of one another love?
- 5) Do you love one brother or sister in Christ better than another?
- 6) Do you find yourself expressing favoritism among brothers and sisters in Christ?
- 7) Are you critical to the point of denying fellowship with saints who do not think as you do?
- 8) How do you love Jesus?
- 9) Do you express favoritism amongst the Lord's saints??
- 10) Do you practice cliquishness by only fellowshiping with select brethren who think like you do?

The "one flock" is "one body" of individuals from all over the world.

Ephesians 2:14

- 1) Do you believe racial or ethnic differences add or subtract to a fellow saint?
- 2) Do you feel prejudice towards a fellow saint because of differences? Since all saints are one with Christ, does this mean you feel prejudice against Jesus as well and with the same intensity?

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- 3) Are you equal with any other saint?
- 4) How do you think Jesus views you as one of His sheep?
- 5) Are all assemblies of the Lord's saints one in Christ?
- 6) How do you know the difference between true sheep and false sheep who may believe they are serving Jesus?
- 7) How do you know the difference between true sheep and sheep who are still serving sin?
- 8) How does your congregation practice one another love and unity with fellow congregations of the Lord's saints?

People in Christ are not identified as His servant's by race, nationality, social status, gender, or anything else. All are "one in Christ".
Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Colossians 3:11

- 1) Do you identify yourself and your relationships with different brethren differently according to worldly standards? What is the Lord's standard for one another love and unity?
- 2) How do you think worldly standards for interrelationships help or hinder your Christian witness of one another love and unity within your fellowship?
- 3) What are some of the Lord's standard's for interrelationships among all of the differing people in His universal body of saints?

In Christ every individual is equally important regardless of what they do for the Lord.

Romans 12:1-16

- 1) Do you feel better because of what you do for Jesus through your Christian interrelationships?

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Section Six: In God's Presence

Questions

The People of God

- 2) Is your work more important to Jesus than His other laborers?
- 3) Do you differentiate yourself from fellow brethren concerning service rank or work?

In Christ every individual worships God the same way even though cultural differences may vary style.

John 4:24

- 1) Do cultural traditions adversely affect worship and service to Jesus and one another?
- 2) What cultural traditions connect best with your service of one another love, unity, and evangelism?
- 3) Could you list the cultural values which aid your service to Jesus?
- 4) Could you list the cultural values which hinder you service to Jesus?
- 5) Which do you practice?
- 6) What causes you to compromise your service to Jesus?
- 7) Are you doing anything about your compromises?

All of the people of God are of "one body" and are indwelled with "one Spirit".
1 Corinthians 12:13-27

- 1) Do you believe you are equal with every fellow saint in your local body of believers as well as in other assemblies?
- 2) Are you practicing what you believe?
- 3) How do you offer service to fellow saints whom you do not like or do not like you?

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- 4) Do these statements concerning fellow brethren: "I do not like so and so", "he or she is just a mean person", "that person is weird", "I do not like his race", he is too much of a Bible thumper for me", or "God will take care of his illness or problem without my personal help", compromise your service to Jesus?
- 5) Do you realize your judgments of one another are judgments of Jesus, for all saints are His body members?
- 6) Do you think God answers prayer about illness and other important personal concerns through His children?
- 7) If a brother or sister offers to help you do you treat the person and counsel as if Jesus sent him to you?
- 8) Do the vast interpersonal differences God arranges in His countless assemblies of saints have a purpose?

All of the people of God share in the "common salvation" of one faith.
Jude 3

- 1) What is the Lord's common faith?
- 2) What is the Lord's "common salvation"?
- 3) Does this mean there are many acceptable ways to receive salvation?
- 4) Does this mean there are a few acceptable ways to receive salvation?
- 5) Does this mean there are only two acceptable ways to receive salvation?
- 6) Does this mean there is but one way acceptable way to receive salvation?
- 7) Does faith in God and the way to salvation differ in different cultures and races?

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The People of God

All of the people of God are led by the same Spirit for the same ultimate purpose – to glorify Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:12, 14, 17-20

- 1) What are your thoughts about purpose?
- 2) What is purpose?
- 3) What is your personal purpose as a servant?
- 4) Do you feel your purpose is lost?
- 5) As you serve what has purpose?
- 6) How does fellowship with Jesus have purpose in your life?
- 7) How is fellowship with Jesus expressed in your life?
- 8) Do all interrelationships among brethren have purpose?
- 9) Is one another love considered as a purpose?
- 10) Is body unity purpose?
- 11) Is evangelism purpose?
- 12) Is a life of faith in Christ purpose?
- 13) Is body service purpose?
- 14) Is faith led and faith motivated lifestyle choices in life purpose?
- 15) How do you identify purpose in your life?

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The People of God

- 16) You are the Lord's servant or slave, how does this spiritual knowledge affect your purpose?
- 17) Do your attitude and lifestyle decisions glorify God the Father through Jesus?
- 18) Are you making a determined effort to follow the counsel of the Spirit to guide your repentance?
- 19) Does purpose require lifestyle and attitude changes?

All of the people of God are "Abraham's offspring".
Galatians 3:29; Romans 4:13, 16

- 1) How do you think you are related to Abraham?
- 2) Does being related to Abraham mean anything to you?
- 3) What relationship do you have with fellow saints who are also related to Abraham?
- 4) Does being spiritually related to Abraham mean all saints are spiritual brothers and sisters?

All of the people of God are "heirs according to promise".
Galatians 3:29; Genesis 3:15

- 1) What is the promise?
- 2) Who fulfilled the promise?
- 3) What does being an heir mean to you?

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Questions

The People of God

All of the people of God are His body – the church.
Ephesians 5:30, 32

- 1) Do all saints serve Jesus equally even though their service may be different?
- 2) Is His body the same as the church?
- 3) Do you feel married to Christ?
- 4) What kind of spouse are you?
- 5) Do you ever have thoughts of spiritual adultery?
- 6) What is spiritual adultery against Jesus?
- 7) Are you helping your marriage or hindering it one way or another?
- 8) How do you contribute to the marriage?
- 9) Are you able to build the marriage if you do not fellowship and build interrelationships with the rest of His bride?
- 10) Is building a relationship with a brother or sister in Christ how a saint practices a relationship with Jesus?
- 11) What do you think Jesus thinks when one brother or sister dislikes or refuses to fellowship a fellow brother or sister?
- 12) Do you ever consider your practice of love towards a brother or sister as how you are treating Jesus?

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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 indwelt 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).

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Mind in Christ

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 re-teach each other about knowing the Lord because of continued compromise with the world. 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.

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Mind in Christ

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*).

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.

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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.

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.

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Mind in Christ

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.

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

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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. 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

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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 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?

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- 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?

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?

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Questions

Mind in Christ

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?

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?

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- 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?

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?

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- 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?

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?

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Mind in Christ

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”?
- 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?

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Mind in Christ

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?
- 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?

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Questions

Mind in Christ

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?
- 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?

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Mind in Christ

- 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?

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?

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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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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

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through His apostles and new covenant writers during the first century. Specifically, God's hidden purpose for the new covenant age in Christ revealed, "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

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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.

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

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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.

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.

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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?

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?

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- 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?
- 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?

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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?
- 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?

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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 you 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?

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?

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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?
- 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?

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- 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

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experience with Jesus 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

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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).

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

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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. 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.

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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. 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

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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 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).

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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 salvation. A believer's choices as he expresses 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 Gentile 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.

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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.

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

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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 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?

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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?

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?

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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?

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?

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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?

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2) What do you think determines parameters for your expression of personal freedoms?

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?

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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?
- 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?

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- 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?
- 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?

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- 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?

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?

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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?
- 5) Is imitation the same as envying another servant's 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?

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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) What does total assurance feel like?
- 6) 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,

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A Mission Statement

if accomplished in faith, it is according to the purposed mission of the Lord and gives Him glory.

Questions

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?

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Questions

A Mission Statement

- 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?
- 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?

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A Mission Statement

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?
- 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 do the Lord's most powerful witnesses: unity and one another love, connect 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

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prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (*Romans 12:1-2*).

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"

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(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. 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

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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 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?

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Questions

Ministry

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?

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?

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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?

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?

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- 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?
- 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?

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- 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?
- 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?

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- 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?
- 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

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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 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.

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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 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?

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Ambassador of God

- 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?
- 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?

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Questions

Ambassador of God

4) What is holiness?

5) Are you holy?

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?

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Questions

Ambassador of God

- 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?

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?

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- 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?
- 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?

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Questions

Ambassador of God

9) Who gets the glory of your light?

10) As an ambassador do you ever find yourself representing yourself more than Jesus?

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?

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Section Eight: With God

Holy Spirit--Prayer Intercessor

Even though a child of God the Father may continually pray to Him through Jesus Christ, it does not mean he has an intimate and true understanding of his heart. He may think he knows, but often he is only fooling himself. His past experiences in sin and its corruption, along with daily confrontations with the lust of his flesh and temptation will often cloud the reality of the true state of his mind. God has given him a new heart, self, and conscience, but the lust of his flesh for sin, old self, and old heart with its memories, work diligently to cloud and corrupt any perception of spiritual need.

However, these influences cannot affect the Holy Spirit. He is continually communicating with the servant's recreated spirit and intimately understands his needs, heart, and true desires. Paul offered insight into this very special blessing of God in *Romans*: "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (8:26).

With this intimate knowledge the Spirit is able to pray to God directly on the servant's behalf, communicating his true needs to God the Father. The Spirit is one with Jesus--God, "And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (*Romans* 8:27). Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus are working in and with God's child to intercede on his behalf. Nothing escapes God notice. There is nothing Jesus misses. Thus God is able to personally care for His children in ways inconceivable to the human mind.

Questions

No believer fully understands his heart and spiritual needs.

- 1) Do you think you understand everything in your heart?
- 2) Are you able to pray for your true spiritual needs?
- 3) What do you think the Spirit is praying about?

The Spirit intimately understands the personal weaknesses the Lord's servant.
Romans 8:26; *1 Corinthians* 2:16

- 1) How do you know if He is praying for you?

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Holy Spirit--Prayer Intercessor

- 2) Does it make a difference to you if whether or not you are able to feel His presence and work in your life?
- 3) Does the knowledge of what the Spirit is doing help motivate you to learn His counsel?
- 4) How is the knowledge of what the Spirit is doing in your life linked to faith?
- 5) How are feelings of what the Spirit is doing in your life linked to faith?
- 6) How do you learn how to serve Jesus according to the Spirit's counsel?

The Spirit is able to pray to God the Father for needs which are very misunderstood.

Romans 8:26

- 1) Why do you think your heart is so difficult to understand?
- 2) Is there a reason why you should be very careful about listening to your heart's counsel?

The prayers of the Spirit cannot be physically sensed; they are understood to take place by faith in the word of God.

Romans 8:26

- 1) Are you able to feel the Spirit praying for you?
- 2) How does faith connect with the unseen work of the Spirit?

Both the Spirit and Jesus are working together to intercede, pleading to God the Father on the servant's behalf.

Romans 8:27

- 1) Why do you think Spirit involvement is so important?
- 2) Are you still inclined to sin even though you are justified and innocent?

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Holy Spirit--Prayer Intercessor

3) How do you decrease your inclination to sin? Is it possible to decrease your desire to sin?

Jesus cares for His people in ways which are inconceivable.

1) Can you think of any other ways Jesus cares for you which are often misunderstood?

2) Why is faith so important in your life?

3) Does faith need to fulfill dramatic expectations in order to build confidence in its reality in your life?

4) Why is often unnoticed and subtle faith so important in everyday life?

5) Is your spiritual confidence in the Lord's care dependent upon the outcome of expectations of perceived faith?

6) What happens to your faith when expectations of your perceived faith led decisions fail?

7) How do failed expectations of faith affect your faith?

8) Why are the unseen and unfelt works of the Lord often the most important guides to confident and assured faith in His care for you?

9) How important is Spirit led counsel and prayer to you?

10) Are you willing to express your confidence and faith in the Spirit's counsel and prayers when you make lifestyle decisions?

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In Jesus

Unity begins the moment of redemption. In the name of Jesus Christ the servant is spiritually “united with Him in the likeness of His death” (*Romans* 6:5a). He is then “buried with Him” (6:4a). After this he is resurrected with Him “in the likeness of His resurrection” (6:5b). At this point in spiritual time the newly recreated naked babe is “clothed” with Christ (*Galatians* 5:27b). He is also spiritually “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands” by the Holy Spirit (*Colossians* 2:11a).

When Jesus purchases a slave of sin, he is not just another purchased bond-servant among countless others; he becomes one with Christ in spirit. Paul revealed this spiritual fact in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*, “But the one who joins himself with Christ is one spirit with Him” (6:17). Not only this, he becomes one with all the Lord’s other bond-servants because all are equally united in Christ.

In his letter to the *Romans*, Paul described this unique unity as a living olive tree whose root is Jesus. Its branches are all believers, both natural--Jewish and unnatural--Gentile. All of the branches are one single spiritual organism ending the distinction between Jew and Gentile. All are equal fruit bearing branches. Each is equally sustained by the same root – Jesus.

Speaking about believing Gentiles he revealed, “you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree” (11:24a). The pruning process begins when an unbelieving Gentile--a wild branch, hears the gospel message and chooses to believe and apply his newfound faith in Jesus through obedience to the gospel. It is described as pruning the Gentile from his wild tree--the world and sin, and grafting it into the Lord’s holy tree – His kingdom, to begin his new life. As a result he is one with Christ and with the tree as a whole. He is completely separated from the wild tree and its root of the world and Satan.

Paul also mentioned how the Jewish people are restored to God the Father through Jesus. Many refused to believe in Jesus and their unbelief caused God to prune them off of the tree separating them from the life giving presence of Christ and the Father, “some of the branches were broken off ... they were broken off for their unbelief” (11:17a, 20a). But if any choose to believe in God the Father through Jesus Christ; He promises to graft them back into the tree, “how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree” (11:24b).

The Jews severed from the Lord’s tree are piled up in a spiritual brush heap. They along with the unbelieving Gentiles all await judgment for unbelief

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in Jesus, "And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed" (*Acts 3:23*).

Both groups are grafted into one tree whose life is sustained through its singular root system which is Christ, "it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you" (*11:18b*).

Paul also spoke of the unique unity between Jew, Gentile, and Jesus in his letter to the *Ephesians*. He revealed: "but now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one ... and might reconcile them both in one body through the cross" (*2:13-14, 16a*). Concerning this spiritual fact, Paul also noted in his first letter to the *Corinthians*, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, and we were made to drink of one Spirit" (*12:13*).

With these statements Paul helped bring into focus the unique connection between people in Christ. Jewish and Gentile people do not change their ethnic, racial, geographic, social status, and cultural identity; yet spiritually they are the same. Jesus introduced a spiritual reality completely foreign to both parties. He revolutionized faith in God with the uniqueness of salvation and His unified body of believers.

In his letter to the *Ephesians*, Paul spoke about the restoration experience made available to all of mankind through God's plan of salvation in Christ Jesus, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (*4:4-6*). Not only is the body of Christ one with itself and Jesus, but also with the Lord's work of salvation, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. Every part of the body is intimately connected with the Lord's identity and purpose for His creation.

In this one statement the Spirit revealed how everything holy is in God. Jesus owns only the servants whom He has purchased the same way, under the same conditions, and covenant stipulations. The singular body of Christ is collectively all individual assemblies of believer's. The Holy Spirit lives in the assembly, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (*1 Corinthians 3:16*). And He dwells in each individual member of the body as well, "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (*6:19a*).

The believer directs his belief, faith, and obedience to the Father through one Master, the Lord Jesus who owns them by virtue of both creation and

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redemption. Even though his work is an individual endeavor to glorify God, he is also working in unison with all of his fellow servants both locally and worldwide to accomplish the Lord's will on earth and in His kingdom.

Redemption takes place when the slave of sin is immersed in "one baptism". Within which his recreation with Jesus by the power of the Spirit according to His covenant takes place. The servant's belief and faith in the unseen work of the Spirit by the authority of one God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, becomes his motivation for continued repentance in order to submit to the Lord's expectations for his ultimate redemption and sanctification. Neither outcome is sealed until physical death; he is free to choose to return to his old master. The new bond-servant of Christ emerges into his new world in Christ, His body of believers, God His Father, and the Holy Spirit. All work together to assure the outcome of life.

Unlike the world, which thrives on its division, the work of Christ is unified in all respects. There is but one body of believers and only they are in Christ Jesus. All of His believers are sealed in the Lord's body by a single Spirit who is one with Jesus and God the Father. The plan of redemption does not offer multitudes of differing ways to reach heaven; it offers only one expectation of faith and hope exclusively through Jesus.

Jesus is the one Lord, the one Master, and the one King. There are no other ways to serve God the Father. Jesus died just once in order to redeem anyone who chooses to desire to serve God the Father through Him. The faith is singular; there are not multiple paths to heaven. There is only one way for redemption to take place--through Jesus according to the guidelines of the faith He established in His new covenant.

There are not multiple reasons for baptism or multiple ways by which it is administered. Belief, faith, confession, repentance, obedience, baptism, and a life of continual committed faith motivated obedience to the will of God through Jesus Christ work together. They assure the believer's finalization of redemption upon death. These are all facets of oneness in God the Father and the servant must serve Jesus in order to serve the Father. All have different functions in the process of salvation but all are one.

Jesus is also unified with His believers in marriage. Paul mentioned this in his letter to the *Ephesians*. In marriage a spiritual unity takes place when a man and woman covenant in marriage. The Spirit inspired Paul to use human marriage as a physical example of the Lord's spiritual marriage with His body of

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believers, the church--the "members of His body" (5:30b). In marriage individuals are one even as they retain their individuality.

Jesus "is the head of the church ... Savior of the body ... the church is subject to Christ ... Christ also loved the church ... gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory ... that she should be holy and blameless ... nourishes and cherishes it ... because we are members of His body" (5:22-30). Jesus and His body of believers, the true church, is a spiritual marriage; just as the prophet Moses stated in a prophetic vision: "the two shall become one flesh" (5:31b).

In one of His final recorded prayers Jesus mentioned the importance of being one with Himself. In doing so He described the complete unity He has with His Father including those who belong to Him, "I do not ask on 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 may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" (*John 17:20-21*).

With this statement Jesus revealed insight about the mystery of restored fellowship with His children. He also revealed how the oneness of His body is a vital part of evangelism to the world:

1) A common undivided love within the body is a witness of His body, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (*John 13:34-35*).

2) The common bond within the body of Christ is a witness of Jesus. This affects both individual congregations and the body as a whole worldwide, "I do not 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" (*John 17:20-21*). The single and most powerful witness the church has in the world is the unique nature of love in a singular body of very diverse individuals. No other physical witness is as powerful as this.

Body unity and evangelism work hand in hand with Christ. Jesus revealed the vast power of His body and its subtle ability to penetrate the darkness of the world when it is witnessed in the human experience by the children of the Lord. With the gospel message and the grace of Christ the children of God witness to the world His mercy in an understandable way. The Lord's body is in itself a fundamental part of witnessing the gospel message.

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When the world witnesses the church it sees Jesus in the flesh. The body of Christ is the glory of God on earth. God designed it to glorify Jesus to all of mankind. The church is the Lord's physical presence on earth.

In *Colossians*, Paul described how the body of Christ works on a spiritual level, "the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God" (2:19b). The human body is made up of countless individual parts, each having its own particular work. Together they work as one functioning body. The body of Christ works the same way.

From a physical point of view many may look at the body of Christ and see a sickly diseased entity hardly functioning let alone glorifying God. It is however, far different than what the perceptions of deception lead the world to believe. Even though the body is made up of imperfect human beings who often loose personal battles with sin, spiritually it is holy, pure, and perfect in God's eyes, they are His children. They are Jesus. And the world often perceives Jesus as weak.

However, the greater the imperfections the greater the witness of why the unity of imperfect human beings exist in the first place – Jesus Christ. And when they do function as one despite their often time radical differences, the uniqueness of their unity is enough to draw attention; God is in control and the body of Christ functions as one because of His grace. The uniqueness of the body is in how it glorifies God in physical weakness.

Body unity and its witness is much like what Paul spoke of in his *second* letter to the *Corinthians*. He asked God for relief from a physical hindrance which he assumed severely affected his ministry. But as is often the case, what one perceives as right in the physical sense often is counterproductive spiritually in Christ. Jesus personally answered Paul's prayer, "and He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'" (12:9a). After this Paul quickly realized how his physical point of view incorrectly motivated his prayer. He needed to refocus to the Lord's will instead of his, "most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (12:9b).

The power of the body of Christ is found in its apparent weakness, even though the Lord's body is holy and one in the eyes of God the world often perceives it entirely different. However, the power of weakness lies in its ability to glorify Jesus. A strong self sufficient and efficient body may easily be

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perceived from a worldly point of view as well run human organization – it's strong and able to get things done on its own.

Yet, as is often the case, what is seen is often not the true picture. Perceived strength does not necessarily give God the glory. But if in obvious weakness the body of Christ works together as one to further His kingdom it witnesses an extraordinary work which is obviously Spirit led and glorifies Jesus.

A well functioning body of believers in various degrees of maturity glorifies God. The focus of its witness is Christ, not themselves and what they have accomplished. They realize they are only servants. In which case, a successful assembly of believers may be perceived as weak, but in spiritual reality exceptionally strong in God's eyes.

It is expected for the world to misunderstand the strengths and weaknesses of the church. But sometime the church misunderstands its self in Christ as well. When John wrote about the seven churches in his *Revelation* chapters *two* and *three* he revealed how perceptions of strength and attitude towards Jesus often collide with spiritual reality.

From a spiritual point of view God sees inner perfection expressed through the weakness of sin damaged flesh. Weakness glorifies God in the darkness of the world for its witness is not in its own strength or in the collective strength of the body of believers, but in the strength of God through Jesus Christ. The world may try to copy it but it cannot achieve it on its own. It cannot fool God.

The power of the Lord's church lies in the love and unity of imperfect people serving Jesus, not wealth, status, grandiose buildings, or the perception of a great human endeavor. Weakness glorifies Jesus, not greatness. Love and oneness within the body of Christ is its greatest witness to the world, not strength. Regardless of the size of the congregation, the power of its weakness is what glorifies God.

The broken and damaged people who are the body of Christ are the strength of Christ. Size, wealth, and strength, are never mentioned as witnesses to the world of God's grace within the body of Christ. They are only prized by the world. They do not shift spiritual focus upon Christ. The purpose of the body and its individual members is to glorify Jesus. All of its work falls within this singular focus.

Everything concerning the body of Christ, from the words of the gospel to His return to earth has one purpose in Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ glorifies God through the witness of restored

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fellowship. The church is a restored Garden of Eden where death no longer exists and all personally fellowship with God.

In *1 Corinthians* Paul wrote about the uniqueness of the Lord's body as he introduced his letter: "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" (1:2). These are the people whom God recognizes as belonging exclusively to Him. They are the Lord's body, the Fathers assembly, and temples within which the Holy Spirit dwells. God is fellowshiping with His people once again.

Questions

Unity with Jesus begins the moment a servant is "united with Him in the likeness of His death", burial, and "resurrection".

Romans 6:4-5

- 1) What do you think "united with Him" means?
- 2) Do you feel like a newly emerged plant?
- 3) What does this newness mean to you?
- 4) Do you feel renewed and reborn?

Unity begins when the naked spiritual babe is "clothed with Christ".

Galatians 5:27b

- 1) Do you feel "clothed with Christ"?
- 2) How do you know you are covered with Jesus?
- 3) Do you feel less vulnerable?
- 4) How do you feel as one with Jesus?

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Questions

In Jesus

Unity begins when the babe is spiritually circumcised from his old flesh and self.
Colossians 2:11

- 1) Why do you think it is so important for spiritual circumcision to take place?
- 2) How does circumcision help unite you to Jesus?
- 3) Do you feel circumcised?
- 4) Do you act circumcised?
- 5) Unity begins the moment you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13-14, 3:14-19
- 6) How does the indwelling presence of the Spirit affect your attitude of unity with Jesus?
- 7) If you are unified with Jesus, how are you unified with your brothers and sisters in Christ who worship in different congregations?

Unity with Jesus means the servant is one with Jesus.
1 Corinthians 6:17

- 1) Do you feel one with Jesus?
- 2) How do you know your feelings are correct?
- 3) How do you become one with Jesus?
- 4) What is unity with Jesus?
- 5) Are you sure you are one with Jesus?
- 6) How do you know for sure you are one with Jesus?

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Questions

In Jesus

Unity with Jesus means all servants are united with each other as one body.
Ephesians 5:23-27, 30

- 1) Is your brother or sister in Christ closer to you than your own relatives in the flesh?
- 2) If your family, relatives, or close friends are not in Christ, where are they?
- 3) Do you act like they are more important than Christ?
- 4) Are your lost loved ones a ministry field for you?
- 5) What happens to your fellowship with Jesus if you cannot get along with your brothers or sisters in Christ?
- 6) Is fellowship with brethren the same as fellowship with Jesus?
- 7) Can you think of any other ways to build a relationship with Jesus other than through His body?
- 8) What is a spiritual relationship with Jesus?
- 9) How important is fellowship amongst brethren?
- 10) How do you fellowship with God?
- 11) Is your unity with the Lord's body sustainable if you refuse to personally fellowship and express one another love?
- 12) Is going to church without personal fellowship possible?
- 13) Is skipping Sunday fellowship of the assembly spiritually healthy?
- 14) What is your responsibility to those who are physically unable to fellowship when the body of Christ is gathered together?

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Questions

In Jesus

- 15) How do you practice one another love if you do not fellowship?
- 16) Do you think skipping fellowship on purpose encourages disunity among the Lord's brethren in your assembly?
- 17) How is one another love connected to fellowship with one another unity and unity with Jesus?

The Lord's body is a living spiritual organism fed by Jesus.

Romans 11:17, 20, 24, 18b; Colossians 1:18, 2:19b; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:16

- 1) If each servant is a part of a living body how important is your service to the body?
- 2) Do you think the human body is a physical example of how the body of Christ functions?
- 3) What happens with your body if one part begins to fight another?
- 4) What does your body focus on when one part of your body hurts or is hurt?
- 5) What does your body focus on when any part of your body experiences a positive moment?
- 6) What happens when every part works in harmony with each other?
- 7) If the body is Jesus what part of the body is He?

The Lord's body united in fellowship both Jews and Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:13-14, 16a; 1 Corinthians 12:13

- 1) How important is fellowship to you?
- 2) How do prejudices affect your fellowship?

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Questions

In Jesus

- 3) Are there certain people whom you will not fellowship with?
- 4) If you do not like a certain person in the Lord's body what are you saying to Jesus?
- 5) If you ask God for help in your prayers and a brother or sister offers to help, is God answering your prayers?
- 6) How do you react, even if you think their help is unreasonable?
- 7) How do fellowship, mutual respect, and love affect unity?
- 8) How does one another love and unity affect the Lord's witness to the world?
- 9) Does the Lord think you are better, more important, or more human, than any other part of His body of believers?

The unity found within the Lord's body is uniquely like the oneness of God.
Ephesians 4:4-6

- 1) How do you think the unity of the Lord's body is like the unity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?
- 2) Do you feel as close to God as God is to Himself?
- 3) How do you know you are close to God?
- 4) If you are one with Jesus does this mean you are one with God the Father and the Holy Spirit?

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Questions

In Jesus

Marriage between a man and wife is a physical likeness of the spiritual marriage between Jesus and His servant's.

Ephesians 5:22-31

- 1) How does marriage offer a physical example of the unity which takes place on a spiritual level?
- 2) How is a man and wife one?
- 3) If you are married do you feel one with your spouse? Why? What influences help or hinder the unity?
- 4) How are the influences which affect marriage unity similar to the influences which affect unity in the Lord's body?

The unity between Jesus and His servant's serves to witness Jesus.

John 17:20-21

- 1) How is your fellowship with Jesus witnessing Jesus?
- 2) How does your fellowship with other brethren witnessing Jesus?
- 3) How does your participation in body unity and one another love affect body unity and its unity with Jesus?
- 4) How does unity with Jesus affect your lifestyle motivations?

The unity of love within His body serves to witness Jesus.

John 13:34-35

- 1) How does love help to unify fellowship?
- 2) How does love witness Jesus?

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Questions

In Jesus

- 3) Do you practice love towards all of your brothers and sisters equally and without prejudice? Do you have a tendency to practice cliquishness?
- 4) How does your practice of one another love affect body unity in your assembly?
- 5) Even though every assembly is autonomous how should they practice one another love and unity in the Lord's universal body?
- 6) If you are not striving to build unity what is your excuse?
- 7) If you do not serve Jesus with love what is your excuse?

Body unity and love are the most powerful witnesses of the Lord within the world.

John 17:15-21, 13:34-35

- 1) Why do you think love and unity are such important witnesses?
- 2) Does your practice of one another love witness your unity with Jesus?
- 3) Does the unity of your assembly witness the love of God the Father and Jesus to the world?
- 4) How does one another love affect assembly unity?
- 5) How does assembly unity affect your one another love?
- 6) What kind of love is God referring to: primarily emotion motivated heartfelt love or unconditional care and heartfelt motivated love which consider the needs of another brother or sister more important than yours?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

In Jesus

The body of Christ is Christ, what the body witnesses about Jesus is what the world will perceive about Jesus.

- 1) How does the world see your assembly?
- 2) Does it matter how the world sees you?
- 3) What is more important: the ritual of church or how you choose to live church?
- 4) Is church a Sunday activity or every moment of your life?
- 5) Does your worship reflect who you are in Christ?
- 6) Why is it so important to assemble together like the Christians did in the first century?
- 7) Why is it so important to follow first century examples of assembly?
- 8) Why did the first century Christians find assembly so important?

Unity glorifies Jesus and the power of God in the lives of broken people made perfect as one people.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27, 6:17-20, 2:16-17

- 1) How does the love and unity of a diverse and broken people glorify Jesus to the world?
- 2) How does human weakness glorify God?
- 3) How do you love your fellow broken servant in Christ?
- 4) Do you recognize the service which Jesus is leading you into?
- 5) Do you prioritize the practice of one another love?

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Questions

In Jesus

- 6) Are you allowing the Spirit to lead you?
- 7) Do you keep asking for the Spirit to come to you for leadership even though He is already in you waiting for you to accept His leadership?
- 8) Why do you keep asking for the Spirit to come to your assembly when He is already in your assembly?
- 9) What is your asking of the Spirit communicating to God?
- 10) Are you asking yourself how to follow the Spirit's counsel to love one another despite your differences?

The uniqueness of unity in Christ is made apparent by the diversity of strong, weak, and greatly differing body parts.

Isaiah 11:1-10

- 1) What do you think one another love and unity among highly diverse members of an assembly communicates to the world?
- 2) Are there more effective ways for the body of Christ to witness Jesus to the world than one another love and body unity?
- 3) What is more important: taking care of the needs of the world or the immediate assembly and the church as a whole then others?
- 4) What did the first century Christians do to help each other?
- 5) How did their unity witness Jesus?

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A Temple of Saints

Upon redemption every newly born creation in Christ is given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Even though the physical body is still corrupted in sin, continues to lust for sin, and will die, the Spirit of God fellowships with the recreated spirit and new self.

Paul noted this important spiritual reality in his letter to the *Romans*: “However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness” (8:9-10). It may seem hard to believe that a holy God is able to live in a body still corrupted with sin. But it’s not the body that God is unified with; it is the newly created spirit and the new self with its clean conscience.

All saints are holy living temples of God. He has restored fellowship with His people, the remnant, thus fulfilling prophecy of restoration with His people. *Ezekiel* foretold of this time when he wrote, “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will now that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst” (37:26-28).

Jesus also foretold of the coming Holy Spirit during His last days with His disciples, “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” (*John* 14:23). He referred to any person choosing to love Him enough to serve God the Father through Him rather than himself, sin, and Satan. Jesus also explained how love according to God’s definition concerned ones expression of heart through his commitment to a lifelong service to Him as His servant. Jesus defined love towards God as spiritual service to God the Father through Him.

When a servant of sin chooses to receive God’s grace of redemption through Jesus then and only then will he receive God’s indwelling presence--the Holy Spirit, uniting him with God in holy fellowship. Jesus spoke of this new spiritual reality when He promised His eleven disciples the indwelling presence of the Spirit: “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you” (*John* 14:16-17).

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A Temple of Saints

Later, after His resurrection He fulfilled the second part of this promise when He personally gave His then eleven apostles the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (*John 20:22b*). As a result they became the very first building blocks in His spiritual temple.

It is most important for God's children to understand the significance of their new lives in Christ as holy living temples of a holy God. In *1 Corinthians* Paul explained why a righteous lifestyle is so essential. He stated: "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" (6:19-20).

Paul reminded his readers why they have the Spirit living within their bodies; Jesus redeemed them with His death, burial, and resurrection. God considered His people righteous as a result of their response and the Spirit's power to recreate them in Christ. God seals the newly created child by giving him the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Acts 2:38b*).

The Lord is trying to communicate to His children their incomprehensible value. When God gives His newly purchased servant the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit He is restoring personal fellowship with His new child of faith. He walks with His children, He talks to them, the Holy Spirit prays to God the Father on their behalf, the Spirit teaches His children the meaning of scripture, and counsels how to live a righteous life. He aids the Lord's servants in countless unknown ways until death brings them face to face with Jesus. God's children are, in a spiritual sense, walking hand in hand with Jesus, one another, the Spirit, and God the Father.

The believer is the fulfillment of the Lord's prophetic look at the coming restoration of the temple. Early in His ministry as He spoke to a woman in Samaria, places of worship came into the conversation. With this Jesus told her about a coming time when worship would no longer be confined to a specific location such as the mountain which she referred to or Jerusalem. He said, Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth" (*John 4:21, 23a*).

Upon the resurrection of Jesus the hour arrived. The reestablishment of the Lord's temple began with Peter's first sermon during Pentecost. The

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Section Eight: With God

A Temple of Saints

individual believer's body is a temple. The Lord's body is a temple. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer; therefore God dwells in His temple.

Questions

Every born again servant has received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 8:9-10, 1 John 5:4-5, 8, 10a

- 1) What does the description: born again mean?
- 2) How does a servant receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit?
- 3) Why is the indwelling presence of the Spirit so important?
- 4) Are you able to feel His presence?

Prophecy foretold of God living in His "sanctuary" amongst His people.
Ezekiel 37:26-28, 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18

- 1) Is a servant who has received the indwelling presence of the Spirit a living "sanctuary" of God?
- 2) How does God live among His people?
- 3) Are you living your life with the ever present knowledge of being a personal house of God?
- 4) If you need to change or repent, how do you begin?

Jesus foretold how God will live with those who choose to love Him.
John 14:23

- 1) How do you love God?
- 2) How do you have a relationship with your Master?
- 3) How do you define and practice a relationship with God?

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- 4) Are you trying to conform to the expectations of God's standard of righteousness?
- 5) How do you learn how to live according to the Lord's will?
- 6) How do you learn how to love Jesus?
- 7) Do you love Jesus the same way as you have learned how to love?
- 8) What do love and relationship have to do with being a living temple of God?

Jesus promised the initial fulfillment of His prophecy to His eleven disciples.
John 14:16-17

- 1) Is any person able to receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit if he is still serving sin?
- 2) What is one of the purposes for which the Spirit would accomplish in the lives and ministry of the Lord's eleven disciples?
- 3) How is the Spirit leading you?

After His resurrection Jesus gave His promised gift to the eleven apostles.
John 20:22

- 1) How did the eleven apostles receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit?
- 2) Can the Spirit be given in this manner again?

The gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is a promise to every servant who is faithful to Jesus.

Galatians 3:14b; Ephesians 1:13-14; John 7:38-39

- 1) Why is faith so important when the indwelling presence of the Spirit is involved?
- 2) Are you able to feel His presence?

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- 3) If you could sense His presence would it be by faith?
- 4) Do you trust the integrity of God's word enough to never doubt His promise to give the Spirit?

Every servant who submits to baptism in order to experience his rebirth is given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38, 2216

- 1) Why do you think the Spirit is a gift received only after sin is forgiven within the water of baptism?
- 2) Who is baptized for forgiveness: a servant of sin or a servant of Jesus?
- 3) What does the "gift of the Holy Spirit" have to do with the forgiveness of sins?
- 4) When are sins forgiven?
- 5) How are sins forgiven?
- 6) Why does the Spirit say sins are forgiven within the water of baptism?

Every servant who is indwelt with the Holy Spirit is a "temple of the Holy Spirit".

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- 1) What is your first reaction concerning the spiritual reality of being a personal house of God?
- 2) Does this mean Christians do not need to assemble and worship together on Sundays?
- 3) Do you live your life in honor of His presence?
- 4) Are your thoughts honoring His presence?

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- 5) Has the fact of God dwelling in you lost its significance because of life?
- 6) If you need to search for the Spirit who is missing: the Spirit or you?
- 7) Is there a reason why you ask for the Spirit when He is living in you?
- 8) Is proof of His presence compatible with faith and hope?

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit unifies the Lord's child with God the Father in personal fellowship.

John 14:23; Galatians 2:20

- 1) What does fellowship with God mean to you?
- 2) How does working with God to fulfill His will on earth feel?
- 3) Do you ever feel as if you are just wandering and looking for something which you cannot find?
- 4) How does the Spirit help you find your missing purpose?

All saints are temples of God fulfilling the Lord's prophecy concerning the location of the restored temple of God.

John 4:21

- 1) Do you feel like a holy temple of God?
- 2) Do you visualize the temple in physical terms or spiritual?
- 3) How do you visualize a living temple which involves the entire earth and all of its nations?

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Section Eight: With God

Priest's of God through Christ

Every temple of God must have a priest and the human temple of the Holy Spirit is no exception. Every redeemed saint in Christ Jesus is a priest of the Lord's temple and works as one with all of the Lord's body of priests. All serve the one high priest, Jesus Christ. John wrote in his *Revelation*: "to Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (1:5b-6a).

In his *first* letter, *Peter* offered more insight into the spiritual blessings and responsibilities Jesus gives to His saints: "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (2:5). A few verses later he continues to describe the greatness of a child of God: "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (2:9a).

The spiritual picture Peter paints is of a holy people chosen by God through Jesus Christ. They are individual temples serving together in God's presence, but they are also part of a much larger spiritual structure. All are individual spiritual building blocks set in place by Jesus as He builds His own greater temple. The individual temples of the greater temple of Christ are also the spiritual nation of Israel as well, and a holy race set apart from the world and its ruler. The priests, their temple, and Israel, are all sanctified. Because of their righteousness and holy state His saints are separate from the darkness of the world which is in bondage to sin and the leadership of Satan.

The priests of God the Father are a very special people to Him. Each one of His servants offers spiritual sacrifices to Him through Jesus Christ. Paul described their unique sacrificial system: "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice to God, which is your spiritual service to God" (*Romans* 12:1). The sacrifices rising up to the throne room of God are heartfelt works of faith offered up every moment by countless saints striving to give glory to the God who saved them from certain spiritual death.

New covenant worship is fundamentally different from any prior way of worshipping God. The nature of spiritual worship helps to fulfill and clarifies prophecy concerning the emergence of a restored king, kingdom, Israel, Jerusalem, temple, priesthood, high priest, and fellowship with God. The church completes everything foreshadowed before the Lord's resurrection.

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Priest's of God through Christ

Every saint is a priest in the Lord's temple.

Revelation 1:5b-6a; 1 Peter 2:5, 9a

- 1) Do you feel like a priest?
- 2) What is a priest?
- 3) Does the Lord's priest the same way as many religious priests in the world?

Every priest sacrifices his own self to God.

Romans 12:1

- 1) Are you trying to offer sacrifices?
- 2) How do you offer sacrifices to God?
- 3) How do you intercede for others who are not the Lord's priests?
- 4) Are you able to identify your sacrifices?

The sacrifice offered by each priest imitates the sacrifices of their High Priest—
Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:1-2

- 1) How is Jesus your model for sacrifice?
- 2) Do you study Jesus in order to understand what and why He did what He did?

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Section Eight: With God

A Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple Of God

The Lord began rebuilding His temple the moment the Spirit resurrected Him from the grave. During His ministry He foretold of building two temple structures. Both required His quickly approaching death, burial, and resurrection:

1) The resurrection of His own body, “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (*John 2:19*).

2) Jesus quoted a prophecy written by David: “The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (*Luke 20:17*). The cornerstone describes His position in the new temple of the new spiritual state of Israel within the new spiritual kingdom of Christ. The temple is in the process of being built around Him.

Jesus described Himself as being the main building block upon which every block – the “living stones” of God, receive their structural support (*1 Peter 2:5a*). God is in heaven as well as on earth living in each one of His individual holy temples, all of whom are individual building blocks built around and supported by the main cornerstone.

The temple of God is on earth while at the same time reaching into heaven itself. It’s physical, yet spiritual. It’s on earth and in heaven. For God the Father is sitting in His throne room in heaven with Jesus at His right side, while at the same time God is living in each of His saints in the temple Jesus is building which is His body of saints.

Paul further described the spiritual process of building God’s temple in his letter to the *Ephesians*: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom also you are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (*2:19-22*).

Paul tried to describe how God is rebuilding His new spiritual temple. The temple of God will never be a physical building again; it is spiritual just as the new covenant church is spiritual. Its foundation is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”, the word which the Spirit inspired them to preach and write (*Ephesians 2:20a*).

The most important structural stone is the resurrected Christ. The structure is in the process of being built. As more slaves of sin are redeemed by Christ the more living building blocks are added to the walls of the temple. The

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structure is inhabited by the living God. The temple lives for Him, He lives in it, intimately knows every part every part of it, and He is unified with every part, it is the body of Christ – the church.

In *First Corinthians* Paul stated every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (6:19-20). And the church as a whole is a temple of the Holy Spirit, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are” (3:16-17). Both temples are the same even though different. One is the human body while the other is the body of Christ. All of the Lord’s saints are one yet individual parts of the whole.

In *Revelation*, John also revealed insight about this wondrous new temple: “behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them” (21:3b). How? It’s spiritual, just as Jesus foretold. All of the saints are living temples of God, living building blocks in the larger temple in which God dwells. Thus the temple includes earth and heaven in one spiritual structure being built by Jesus.

The writer of *Hebrews* noted this about the cornerstone – Jesus: “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation” (9:11). This is the “true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (8:2b). The restored temple of God is not a physical structure nor will it ever be it is spiritual in every way just as Jesus foretold.

Paul added some more insight into the structure in his *second* letter to the *Corinthians* when he quoted from the prophets: “for we are the temple of the living God; ... I will dwell in them ... walk among them ... be their God ... they shall be My people ... separate ... I will be a Father to you ... you shall be sons daughters to Me” (6:16a, 16b, 17a, 18a). Paul described a spiritual structure with these quotations of prophecy written by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Hosea.

The body of Christ in the new covenant is the fulfillment of these prophetic visions of the restoration of the temple. The saints are all indwelt with the presence of God--the Holy Spirit, and are pictured as building blocks in God’s greater temple dwelling with the Lord in personal fellowship. Heaven is truly reaching to earth.

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

The Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple of God

Jesus foretold of rebuilding the temple of His body.

John 2:19

- 1) Why do you think Jesus referred to His body as a temple?
- 2) Did the Spirit live in Jesus?

Jesus foretold of rebuilding the temple of God.

Luke 20:17

- 1) What is the temple of God?
- 2) Did Jesus build it spiritually or is it a future physical dwelling place on earth?
- 3) If Jesus built the temple of God, what does it look like?

Jesus is the cornerstone in the restored and rebuilt spiritual temple of God.

Ephesians 2:19-22

- 1) What is a cornerstone?
- 2) Is Jesus a cornerstone in a spiritual structure?
- 3) If His temple is spiritual then how is it built?
- 4) If He is the cornerstone what are the other stones of the structure?
- 5) How is its foundation built?
- 6) Are you a part of His temple?
- 7) Do you feel like you are an important part of something very big and grand beyond imagination?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

The Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple of God

Jesus foretold of His position in the restored temple of God.

Matthew 21:42

- 1) How did the builders reject the stone?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus referred to Himself as a “chief corner stone”?

Jesus also said the new temple will be located in the Lord’s restored kingdom which will no longer include the physical nation of Israel.

Matthew 21:43; John 4:21-24

- 1) Is the physical state of Israel still in the Lord’s kingdom?
- 2) Who did Jesus refer to if not the physical state of Israel?
- 3) Is there another Israel in which the temple rests?
- 4) Where is the kingdom where the temple rests?
- 5) Who lives in His kingdom?
- 6) Are His kingdom, Israel, Jerusalem, temple, and saints united as one in Christ?
- 7) What is the purpose of His spiritual temple and kingdom?

There is only one way to become a part of the Lord’s temple – through Jesus.

Acts 4:11-12; John 14:6

- 1) Can you worship God and yet be excluded from His temple?
- 2) How do you become a part of the Lord’s temple?
- 3) What is the connection between the gospel, the Holy Spirit, and the temple?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

The Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple of God

4) What do belief, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism have in common with the temple?

The temple is a “spiritual house” for a “holy priesthood”.

1 Peter 2:4-8

1) How is a Christian a temple of the Spirit and part of a greater temple which the Lord is building?

2) What are the construction blocks of the Lord’s new temple?

3) Do you feel you are a part of the Lord’s temple?

4) Do you live life as if you are a part of the Lord’s temple?

5) Does your purpose in life connect to the temple purpose?

The foundation of the temple is the Spirit inspired teachings of the Apostles.

Ephesians 2:20a

1) What is the purpose of a strong foundation?

2) Is the foundation completed?

3) How is the new covenant word of God connected with the foundation?

Every stone in the new temple is a saint.

Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5

1) Do you feel like a part of the Lord’s greater temple?

2) What is the Lord’s temple?

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Questions

The Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple of God

- 3) If every saint is a building block in the Lord's temple, how does this knowledge affect your attitude towards fellow brothers and sisters?
- 4) How does your practice of love and unity affect the structural integrity of the Lord's temple?
- 5) How hard of rock are you?
- 6) Is your surface smooth, polished and gleaming as the Son?
- 7) What does your surface and interior feel and look like?
- 8) Is the integrity of your stone important to the structure?

Every individual saint is a temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- 1) Are you able to visualize how each stone in the Lord's temple is also a temple?
- 2) How clean do you keep your temple?
- 3) How do you practice righteousness and sacrificial services in your temple?

All of the saints together are the "temple of God".

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

- 1) Who is a saint?
- 2) Are only saints in His temple?
- 3) How is the temple of God manifested on earth?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

The Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple of God

The temple of God is the church – the body of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23-27, 29

- 1) If you are the physical manifestation of the Lord's temple how do you live out your position?
- 2) Do you think the temple is the church?
- 3) How does the church connect with the temple?
- 4) Who is the Lord's church?
- 5) Do you think Satan tries to imitate the Lord's Church with a pseudo version of the Lord's church?
- 6) Who is the world's church?

Just as Jesus foretold during His ministry the temple is entirely spiritual.

Hebrews 9:11, 8:2b; John 4:21-24

- 1) Is the Lord's temple spiritual or physical?

The church is "the temple of the living God" just as prophesied hundreds of years earlier.

2 Corinthians 6:16b-18

- 1) When you assemble together as a body of believers – the church, do you think temple?
- 2) Does knowing who and what you are in Christ make a difference when sharing in the Lord's Supper, expressing one another love, and the pursuit of unity?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

The Very Special Cornerstone in the Temple of God

- 3) How does the knowledge of being the Lord's temple affect your daily worship with fellow temple stones and builders and interrelationships in the world?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus--High Priest

The temple of God must have a high priest who intercedes to God the Father on behalf of all of the other priests and this is what Jesus does. He is the high priest of His temple--His body of faithful believers--His church. The writer of *Hebrews* revealed: "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (9:11-12).

God the Father gave this position to Jesus because He offered His human body as a sacrifice for human sin. He will hold this position forever. The *Hebrews* writer also stated: "So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee.'" God designated Him "a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (5:5-6b). After His ascension God the Father made Him the High priest of His temple.

Just like Melchizedek, He is also a king of a kingdom, His throne is located in Jerusalem, and He is the High Priest. But the Lord's kingdom is spiritual. He is a spiritual king. His Israel is spiritual. His Jerusalem is spiritual. His temple is spiritual. His work as High Priest is spiritual. His servants are spiritual.

The writer of *Hebrews* also offered insight into how the temple is on the earth while at the same time in heaven, "we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man" (8:1b-2). Jesus the high priest of His body of believers, His church--His temple, is now sitting at His Father's right hand side in heaven. He is the one high priest through whom all of the priests of the temple serve God the Father. But since His temple is made up of the saints, even though His throne is pictured as being in heaven, heaven includes the body of Christ which is physically located on earth. In a spiritual sense all believers are already in heaven.

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--High Priest

The sacrifice which Jesus offered is "once for all".
Hebrews 9:12b, 7:27

- 1) Do you think He will need to come again in order to repeat what He has done before?
- 2) What do you think "once for all" means?
- 3) Does "all" mean all or are some people predestined to go to Hell?
- 4) Does "all" include you?
- 5) Does "all" mean the Lord will forgive your sin regardless of intensity?

After His resurrection God His Father made Him the high priest over His people.
Hebrews 5:5-6; Psalms 110:4

- 1) What do you think a high priest does?
- 2) Why is it important to recognize Jesus as your high priest if you are a Christian?

Jesus is both high priest and king "according to the order of Melchizedek".
Hebrews 6:20, 7:1; Genesis 14:18-20

- 3) Does this information help you to understand how God fulfilled His promise through the ages?
- 4) What is Jesus a high priest over?
- 5) What does Jesus rule over?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--High Priest

Melchezedek reigned as the king of Salem, later known as Jerusalem.

Psalms 76:1-2; Hebrews 7:1

6) Why do you think Salem and Jerusalem are significant in connection with Jesus?

7) How is the Lord's temple, the spiritual state of Israel, Jerusalem, His church, His kingdom, and you His saint, connected?

The Lord's temple is His church, but it also includes heaven and God's throne.

Hebrews 8:1b-2; 2 Corinthians 6:16b

1) How do you feel about experiencing the blessings of heaven as a saint on earth?

2) Have you ever thought about the church as a whole as part of the throne room of God?

3) Does this information change your attitude towards the church?

4) Even though there are countless numbers of congregations of saints known as churches, how do you regard each individual assembly in light of the whole body of Christ? How are they connected together?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

All of the prophets, before and after Jesus returned to heaven, spoke of Jesus and His mission. In *Acts* Luke recorded Peter proclaiming, "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (3:18).

Jesus foretold of His own future and mission as well. Throughout His ministry He spoke many times about His upcoming death and resurrection: "Saying, 'The son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day'" (*Luke* 9:22).

He foretold of Israel's coming judgment because of their unrelenting rejection of their Lord God up to and including His own ministry and life: "Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a nation producing the fruit of it'" (*Matthew* 21:42-43).

He foretold how the restoration of worship in Jerusalem and the temple would involve the spiritual realm instead of the physical, "Jesus said to her, 'an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father'" (*John* 4:21).

He gave insight about Satan's judgment and the destruction of his house—his worldly dominion: "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (*John* 12:31-32).

He spoke about the coming new age when worship would dramatically change from physical to purely spiritual as a result of the changing of the covenant at the time of His death: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (*John* 4:23-24).

Jesus spoke of a time when God would no longer consider the Jewish people automatically included in His kingdom because of birthright, circumcision, and the covenant given to Moses. Effectively ending Jewish exclusiveness, the theocracy of Israel, and opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (*John* 3:3).

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Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

He foretold of the coming of the Holy Spirit and His work in an entirely new way of salvation: "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven'" (*John 3:5*).

He foretold of the coming of the Holy Spirit and His indwelling presence in the lives of the faithful. For the first time since Adam and Eves sinned God will personally fellowship with His restored people: "He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, who those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (*John 7:38-39*).

He spoke of the Spirit's conviction of the world: "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment" (*John 16:7-8*).

He foretold of the upcoming work of the Holy Spirit in the new age of the New Covenant which began at Pentecost: "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me" (*John 15:26*).

He foretold of His complete sovereignty over the earth, heaven, hell, and all of the forces of darkness: "And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'" (*Matthew 28:18*).

Jesus is also the source of all prophecy both before His birth, during His ministry, and after His ascension: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (*Romans 10:17*).

Jesus fulfilled the prophecy concerning the "prophet like Me" written by Moses thousands of years earlier: "Moses said, 'The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people'" (*Acts 3:22-23*).

Everything spoken by Jesus during His ministry originated from His Father in heaven, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (*John 7:16b*).

Through Jesus, God the Father drew a line in the sand warning all of mankind they have only two choices of eternal destiny. One involves eternal life in the presence of God exclusively through Jesus Christ – the prophet, priest, and

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Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

king, and the other eternal destruction, which is existence outside of the presence of God.

The quote which Luke wrote in Acts originated in Deuteronomy and reads a little differently but with more emphasis: "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him" (18:18-19). During the Lord's ministry a great judgment took place among the Jewish people. The sole determining factor of faithfulness depended and continues to depend upon recognizing Jesus and worshipping Him as the Son of God. God assures all people of all time He will personally take every person into account for his thoughts, motivation, spiritual decisions, and life.

Everything Jesus taught during His ministry came from His Father in heaven. If anyone refuses to listen to Jesus – the prophet, he is refusing to listen to God His Father. Thus accountability in judgment will be with the one who has made the decision to either listen to or ignore Jesus. The judgment will be righteous because it will be based entirely on the choices and decisions made by the person being judged. And Jesus does indeed have the final say: "On that day when, according to My gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ" (*Romans 2:16*).

Questions

Jesus fulfilled every prophecy concerning His life, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, kingdom, and church.

Acts 3:18

- 1) Have you ever thought about Jesus the prophet?
- 2) What do His prophecies mean to you?

He described His entire ministry.

Luke 9:22

- 1) Imagine yourself in this crowd, what would you think after hearing this prophecy?

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Questions

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

2) Is this prophecy relevant today?

He described Himself as the rejected cornerstone of His restored temple.
Matthew 21:42

1) Are you able to see this very old prophecy in a new light concerning the temple He is building?

He spoke about Israel's upcoming judgment.
Matthew 21:42-43; Romans 11:26-28

1) What happened to Israel when Jesus died?

2) What is their place in the Lord's will today?

3) Who is the new covenant Israel?

He foretold who would receive His restored kingdom: "a nation producing the fruit of it".

Matthew 21:43b; 1 Peter 2:9a

1) What nation is Jesus speaking about?

2) What kind of fruit is Jesus expecting?

3) Why couldn't the physical nation of Israel produce this fruit?

He revealed how the restored temple will be built; spiritual instead of physical.
John 4:21

1) Where did Jesus build His new temple?

2) Is it already started or is it something to happen in the future?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

He revealed a soon to come judgment of the world.

John 12:31a; Acts 17:30-31

- 1) What judgment happened to the physical nation of Israel?
- 2) What judgment took place in the world?
- 3) Does the judgment still affect people today?
- 4) What do you think about when it comes to accountability to God the Father through Jesus Christ?

He gave insight about the destruction of Satan.

John 12:31b; Matthew 12:25-29; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13

- 1) How is Satan destroyed when He is still around?
- 2) What is being plundered from His house?
- 3) What is his house?
- 4) What influence does Satan have in the world today?
- 5) Who is under his authority in his dominion?
- 6) What is he trying to do with Christians?
- 7) How do you fight off his deceptions in your life?

He revealed the beginning point of His new covenant church.

John 12:32; Hebrews 8:13, 9:16-32

- 1) Do you think Jesus will exclude anyone from His body because His Father predetermined his destiny?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

- 2) Have you sinned too much for Jesus to save you?
- 3) What is the new covenant church?

He spoke of His resurrection.
John 12:32

- 1) What does His resurrection mean to you?
- 2) Does His resurrection have anything to do with how you are redeemed?

He offered insight into the dramatic changes in worship style.
John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:1-10

- 1) What are some of the differences between pre-Christian worship and new covenant worship?
- 2) Which do you prefer?
- 3) How are sacrifices offered in your life?
- 4) How do you serve as a priest?
- 5) Do you feel led by law, the freedom of the Spirit, or maybe a little of both?

He spoke of ending Jewish exclusiveness and Law.
John 3:3, 4:21; Hebrews 7:11-22; Romans 2:28-29, 4:13-16

- 1) What happened to the Law of Moses?
- 2) Does the Law still apply in your Christian life?
- 3) How does the law of "good and evil" affect your daily life and practice of righteousness?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

- 4) What part does the physical nation of Israel play in the new covenant?
- 5) What is the spiritual state of Israel in the new covenant?
- 6) Who are the children of Abraham in the new covenant?

He revealed how a believer will be allowed into His future kingdom.
John 3:3, 5; Colossians 1:13-14; Revelation 1:6

- 1) What is being "born again"?
- 2) How is the Spirit connected with being "born again"?
- 3) What is the kingdom belonging to Jesus?

4) Is His kingdom now or in the future?
He revealed to whom, why, and how the Holy Spirit will be given.
John 7:38-39; Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13-14

- 1) To whom is the indwelling presence of the Spirit given?
- 2) How does God give the Spirit?
- 3) What does it mean when a servant is given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

He revealed a second major work by the Holy Spirit, "He will bear witness of Me".
John 15:26

- 1) Do you think there is a difference between the Spirit's special ministry to help establish the church in the first century and His indwelling presence?
- 2) Why did the Spirit give special gift to first century Christians?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

- 3) Did the Spirit ever give gifts to people before their redemption?

He spoke of His absolute authority over all of creation.
Matthew 28:18

- 1) What does Jesus rule over?
- 2) Does Jesus have authority over you?
- 3) Do you live and think in light of Jesus having authority over your life?

Jesus is the source of Scripture and its prophecies.
Romans 10:17

- 1) Where do you think Scripture came from?
- 2) If you believe God wrote Scripture do you live it as such?
- 3) Where does faith come from?

Everything spoken by Jesus during His ministry came from His Father.
John 7:16b

- 1) Why do you think God the Father had such an influence in Jesus' life?
- 2) Do you think God the Father restricted Jesus during His ministry?
- 3) Is Jesus your example of how to exercise faith in God the Father?

Anyone who refuses to listen to Jesus will be "utterly destroyed".
Acts 3:22-23; Romans 2:16

- 1) Is judgment an idle threat to weak people?
- 2) Do you think Jesus really has the authority and power to back up His word?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Prophet who is Above all Prophets

- 3) What is do you think is the most deadly sin a person can commit?
- 4) Who is the person who listens to Jesus?
- 6) How does a person listen to Jesus according to His will?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – Mediator

Jesus Christ, the believer's high priest, is now in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. As high priest in His temple which is His body of faithful servant/priests, He serves as a mediator to His Father. In his *first* letter to *Timothy* Paul wrote, "For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (2:5). Jesus is mankind's only representative to God and He is in this position because of the sacrifice of His human body, offered to satisfy the requirement of redemption. In this way He provides a continuing ransom for all of mankind as the new covenant age moves onward through history. As a result of His physical life He is able to mediate on the behalf of God's children since He knows exactly what a person needs from firsthand experience. Jesus is the first human being to have received His resurrected body and He lives forever, He is God. He clearly understands the human experience in its entirety.

Jesus fully understands the many weaknesses people must suffer. He can empathize with those who choose to serve God's will in the hostile environment of the world and the lust which leads to endless temptations. Jesus experienced lust and temptations, the desires of the flesh common to all mankind. He understands what His servants are going through as they encounter their daily battles against sin. He understands the desires of personal lust and a body which is openly hostile against God's standard of righteousness. The writer of *Hebrews* said, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (2:17-18).

Jesus knows each of His servants on a very intimate level; He lives in His children, because He is one with the Holy Spirit. As a result of this He is able to explain to God the Father why His servant fails and sins. He knows what is in his heart, his mind, what motivates him, and his level of faith. Jesus knows how difficult it is to consistently serve God to ones full potential. He knows His servants will often give in to the constant barrage of temptations hurled their way. As a result of His humanity Jesus is indeed the perfect high priest able to aid His children through His work of mediation with God His Father.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Mediator

Paul told Timothy there is but “one mediator ... between God and men, the man Jesus Christ”.

1 Timothy 2:5

- 1) What does a mediator do between two people?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus needs to mediate for a Christian?
- 3) What is Jesus mediating about?

Because Jesus is a man He is able to understand the needs and feelings of His people.

Hebrews 2:17, 4:15

- 1) Do you think Jesus understands what you are going through in life?
- 2) Are you willing to put your life in His care?
- 3) How is Jesus able to help you change your life in order to better serve Him?

Jesus knows His people because He lives within them, in of their temples.

John 14:23

- 1) How does Jesus live in you?
- 2) Is there a connection between Jesus and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?
- 3) Do you live and think with the knowledge of Jesus living within your body?
- 4) Do you ever think about how much Jesus knows about what is in your heart and mind?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Jesus – Advocate

As the high priest of His chosen people Jesus also serves as a legal advocate. Jesus knows His servants will sin, some on purpose, some without purpose, others out of spiritual ignorance, and a small number simply from apathy and neglect to do the right thing. But regardless of reason why, Jesus is assuring His children they have legal counsel before God the Father. In his *first* letter *John* wrote: “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1).

Jesus personally pleads on the behalf of each one of His servants when they fail and sin. He intimately knows about the sin and what motivated it to take place.

Jesus is able to approach His Father, who is sitting right next to Him in His temple which is also His body of believers. He is having a Father-Son conversation on behalf of each one of His children who are also His body. The sin is forgiven without record and God the Father determines the necessary discipline if any. Even though the grace of God and the bloody sacrifice of Christ will cover all sin before and after redemption, the Lord’s servant is not immune to God’s discipline.

Questions

Jesus personally pleads to God the Father on the behalf of any servant who sins.
1 John 2:1, 1:8-10, 3:6-10

- 1) Are you a sinner?
- 2) Does God account sin to you causing guilt?
- 3) How does a servant who is free from sin accountability accountable to sin?
- 4) Are you free from the guilt of sin?
- 5) How does repentance connect to sin?
- 6) How does the Spirit help you live closer to the Lord’s standard of righteousness?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Advocate

When sin is forgiven for the Lord's servant, no record exists.

1 John 2:12, 3:5-6, 9

- 1) Do you think all of your sins are forgiven?
- 2) What is confessing your sins?
- 3) Do you think revealing your personal weaknesses to trustworthy fellow servants is a good thing to do?
- 4) What do you think Jesus is asking of the Father on your behalf?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Jesus – Intercessor

Another blessing of the work of Jesus, the high priest of His church, is His ability to personally intercede to God on the behalf of His children. In a way very similar to a mediator and advocate Jesus intercedes on the behalf of His servants to His Father as well.

As high priest, Jesus approaches His Father on the behalf of the individual priests in His temple, His church. If anyone or anything goes so far as to try and accuse any servant belonging to Jesus, Jesus will personally intervene on his behalf. In *Romans* Paul wrote, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (8:33-34).

The believer in Christ is in a very special spiritual position. His Lord is his Savior and his Savior is God’s Son. Only God has the authority to save or to destroy and He gave all of this authority to Jesus His Son who is the Lord of His children. Jesus is not interceding on the behalf of a separated servant of sin whose lord is Satan. He is speaking to God His Father on the behalf of His child as a result of having redeemed him from the bondage of sin. A child adopted by Jesus at the cost of His life. As a result God considers His children the “elect” among men. God’s children are a very special chosen people.

Only God has the authority to condemn, and He has given this right to Jesus Christ. Who has any power to condemn His children? The answer is obviously no one.

Paul also wrote this very reassuring verse: “who shall separate us from the love of Christ” (*Romans* 8:35). The answer is simple, no one or any spiritual force is powerful enough to force a child of God away from His loving embrace. Only one force is an exception--freedom of choice. A bond-servant may choose to return to his old slave master, sin, thus separating himself from His Lord and Savior. God doesn’t like it, but He is not going to interfere with anyone’s basic freedom of choosing who he wants to serve: Jesus, obedience, and righteousness, or Satan and sin.

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Intercessor

If anyone or anything brings a charge against one of the Lord's children, Jesus personally pleads on his behalf to God the Father.

Romans 8:33-34

- 1) What does an intercessor do between two parties?
- 2) What do you think Jesus is pleading about?

Only God is able to justify His servant.

Romans 8:33

- 3) What does it mean for God to consider you justified?
- 4) Why can't someone or something make a spiritual charge against you?
- 5) How does justification protect you spiritually?

Only Jesus has the authority to judge.

Romans 8:34, 2:16

- 1) Why does Jesus have this authority?
- 2) What does this authority to judge mean to you?
- 3) Are Christians Judged?

No one is able to forcibly separate a child of God from Jesus.

Romans 3:35

- 1) Can the Lord's servant return to serving sin and Satan?
- 2) Is it possible for a Christian to lose his salvation?
- 3) How does a servant's freedom of choice connect with eternal assurance?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Intercessor

The only way for a child of God to separate from the Lord's love is by his own choice to return to serving sin.

Hebrews 6:4-6

1) Who is allowed by God to separate from the Lord's body?

Jesus is not speaking to God the Father on the behalf of just any servant but only His servant and child of God the Father.

1) Does the Lord's spiritual protection extend to those who are serving sin and Satan?

2) What type of spiritual protection does Jesus offer to those who are serving sin and Satan?

3) Do you think the Lord's spiritual protection is too exclusive and narrow minded?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – Master

Even though a believer is a freed child of God he is still a bond-servant of Christ. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Romans*: “do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves of obedience, you are slaves of the one who you obey” (6:16a). The moment a person sins and acquires a debt to sin he becomes a slave of sin. He also is given the grace of freely choosing to return to God the Father through righteousness in Christ. Either way he will never cease from being a slave until his death.

God is telling everyone there are only two spiritual options to choose, each one with a destiny of its own. He is either a servant of sin or a bond-servant of Christ. That’s it; there are no alternate ways to serve God. For as long as a person is a slave of sin he is a servant of sin and lives under the authority of Satan, “the dominion of Satan” (*Acts* 26:18a). If he is purchased by Jesus he is “delivered ... from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (*Colossians* 1:13).

All who are willing to express their confession of belief in the deity of Jesus by faithfully responding to His will fulfill redemptive repentance. They will experience rebirth when the Holy Spirit unites their spirit with the death, burial, and resurrection with Christ in baptism resulting in freedom--“freed from sin” (*Romans* 6:18a) becoming slaves “of obedience” (6:16b) and “of righteousness” (6:18b).

Once redeemed by Jesus the servant becomes one with “a people for God’s own possession” (*1 Peter* 2:9a). And as a result he serves God the Father through Jesus. His ownership has changed from sin and Satan to Jesus. In his *first* letter *Peter* encouraged his brethren to carefully consider their freedom in Christ by not abusing it with sin. He wrote, “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond-slaves of God” (2:16). He highlighted the spiritual reality of newfound freedom in Christ and the need to constantly keep in mind their new identity--servants of Christ. Their status had changed from a slave in bondage to a bond-servant of God through Jesus their new Master and Lord. They may be free, but they are still servants.

Paul also mentioned the importance of lifestyle changes as a bond-servant of God through his Lord Jesus Christ. He explained why as well. The reason is fairly simple, “he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (*2 Timothy* 2:21b). The “good work” is in service to Jesus Christ his new Master – his Lord. This is what all servants of sin agree to upon purchase by Jesus; they will honor the New Covenant in Christ and allow

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – Master

the Spirit to lead him through life in order to give God glory. Thus, to honor service to Jesus is to honor the confession of Jesus as Lord and Master.

There are no gray areas which encourage compromise. One's spiritual master is either sin and Satan or the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a major reason why the counsel of the Holy Spirit is so important for the servant. His counsel through Scripture is the servant's New Covenant how-to-instruction manual.

Questions

All servants of Christ are His slaves.

Romans 6:16a

- 1) Are you a spiritual servant?
- 2) How do you make the change from serving sin to serving righteousness and obedience?
- 3) What is involved in the change?
- 4) Do you see yourself as the Lord's servant?
- 5) Do you act like the Lord's servant?
- 6) Do you think like the Lord's servant?

Everyone is born innocent, but once they choose to transgress a law sin becomes their master. From then on they serve sin within the domain of Satan as slaves of sin.

John 8:34; Romans 7:7-13; Acts 26:18

- 1) How did you become a spiritual servant?
- 2) Did you become a servant of sin the moment of your birth?
- 3) Do you think anyone knows when they commit their first sin?
- 4) How many sins does it take to become a servant of sin?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Master

- 5) Who serves sin and Satan?
- 6) How do you know the difference between the Lord's servant and a servant of sin?

When a slave of sin chooses to repent in order to serve Jesus He is freed from sin, law, and Satan's dominion.

John 8:36; Romans 7:1-4; Galatians 3:10-14; James 2:10; Colossians 1:13-14

- 1) How are you freed from sin?
- 2) How are you freed from accountability to law?
- 3) How are you freed from Satan's dominion?
- 4) Do you feel free?
- 5) Do you live free?
- 6) Do you think free?

Every servant who chooses to confess Jesus as Lord and Master is separated from sin by death and becomes a slave "of obedience" and "of righteousness".

Romans 6:18a, 6:16b; 6:18b

- 1) How can you be free while remaining the Lord's servant?
- 2) What does freedom mean to you?
- 3) What does serving obedience mean to you?
- 4) What does serving righteousness mean to you?
- 5) How do you serve righteousness if you are already righteous?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Master

- 6) Does serving righteousness mean you are progressively becoming more holy?
- 7) How do you learn how to serve God the Father according to His standard of righteousness?

All servants of the Lord are God's "possession".

1 Peter 2:9a

- 1) Does being a "possession" bother you?
- 2) What does "possession" mean to you?

All bond-slaves of God are free.

1 Peter 2:16

- 1) How does freedom connect with your position as a servant, slave, and possession of God?
- 2) Do you feel free?
- 3) How do you express your freedom as a "possession"?

All bond-slaves must learn their new life, its lifestyle, and responsibilities to their new Master.

1 Peter 2:16; 2 Timothy 2:21b

- 1) Why is it so important to learn how to serve Jesus?
- 2) Is serving Jesus very different from serving sin and Satan?
- 3) How do you learn how to serve Jesus?
- 4) How does the Holy Spirit help you?
- 5) How does freedom help you?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – Master

- 6) What is the difference between learning spiritual milk and meat?
- 7) Are you making an effort to relearn life?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus--Shepherd

Jesus tenderly and carefully cares for each one of His lambs belonging to His flock, personally protecting each and every individual. Everything His lambs need, both physically and spiritually is determined and provided by the Shepherd. In his gospel letter *John* quoted Jesus: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (10:27-29).

God may consider people as similar to sheep simply because of their utter lack of spiritual understanding. Without a spiritual Shepherd they are lost, clueless of what to do next. *Peter* stated in his *first* letter: "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (2:25). If not for the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ the entire human race would simply walk over the cliff of sin and tumble into the certain death of the curse of sin. No one even knows what is happening until it is too late.

Peter reminded his brethren of the great cost of their spiritual ignorance: "And He Himself bore our sins on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (2:24). Humanities perceived remedy for a worthy life through rationalizations of being, wisdom, philosophy, created religion and idolatry, tradition, ritual, and moral behavior, is rooted in the spiritual ignorance Jesus exposed. He alone has provided the only alternative—"grace and truth" (*John* 1:14b). *John* quoted Jesus, stating: "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep ... if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture ... I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (10:7b, 9a, 11).

Jesus exposed sin and all of the associated spiritual and physical destruction left in its path. He let His people know their perceptions of religion did not come from God's will but their own will and imaginations, developed from their experiences in a corrupted world. He came to enlighten the spiritually ignorant sheep of the world. There is only one way to avoid the danger of aimlessly walking about spiritually naked and without any protection, unmindful of the certain death patiently waiting. He will always be the one and only Shepherd.

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Shepherd

Jesus only considers those who “hear My voice” as His lambs.

John 10:27a

- 1) Do you believe Jesus hears those who are serving sin and Satan?
- 2) What type of prayers by the lost gain God’s attention?
- 3) Does knowledge of how attentive God is to His children help your prayer life?

His lambs are the only servant’s He knows.

John 10:27a

- 1) What about those who do not serve Him?
- 2) What is required of a servant to serve Jesus?
- 3) Does Jesus know you?

His lambs are those who choose to “follow” Him.

John 10:27b

- 1) Do you follow Jesus?
- 2) Are you straying out of the fold?
- 3) How much of your servant life do you focus on serving your Master?
- 4) In what proportion does serving your own self contrast with serving Jesus?
- 5) When do you focus on serving Jesus?
- 6) How much of your life do you focus on serving Jesus?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Shepherd

Jesus gives "eternal life" only to His lambs.

John 10:28a

- 1) What is your attitude towards eternal assurance?
- 2) Do you feel the necessity to constantly reassure your faith?
- 3) Why do you need to reassure your faith?
- 4) What builds assurance and confidence?

Jesus gives absolute protection and assurance to His lambs.

John 10:28, 15:18-19, 17:14-20

- 1) Do you feel protected by Jesus even though life is terrible?
- 2) Is spiritual protection and assurance connected with physical life?
- 3) What does the world think of you as a servant of Christ?
- 4) If your closest friends and relatives are not Christian, how do they feel about your faith in Jesus?
- 5) Do you feel assured when everything seems to go wrong in life?
- 6) What is assurance based upon?
- 7) Can you trust your feelings concerning God's care for you?

Jesus and God the Father "are one"; assurance is assured by God the Father as well.

John 10:29-30; Romans 8:26-39

- 1) How assured do you feel right now?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Shepherd

- 2) How confident do you feel your faith is right now?
- 3) Do you think finding ways to test your faith will help build assurance and confidence in God's protection?
- 4) Are you one with Jesus?
- 5) If you are one with Jesus are you one with God the Father?
- 6) Do you feel united with God or is it all by faith in His the integrity of His Word?
- 7) What are some ways to grow in assured and confident faith?

Jesus has always referred to people as sheep mainly because of their spiritual ignorance and inability to protect themselves from spiritual harm.

1 Peter 2:25a

- 1) Have you ever considered your spiritual intelligence is on the level of sheep?
- 2) What do you think God is trying to communicate to people?
- 3) Do you see people who are willing to follow other sheep as they quietly fall off the steep cliff of life into darkness and death?
- 4) How do you teach spiritual insight to a sheep person?

The Lord's sheep "have returned" which means they once belonged to Him before they chose to stray out of His fold.

1 Peter 2:25b

- 1) Does returned mean once being with Jesus and then experiencing a separation?
- 2) Do you believe in babies being sinful from the moment of birth?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Shepherd

- 3) Why do you believe in this doctrine?
- 4) How does a young child become accountable to law in order to sin?
- 5) Does a child need to become accountable to law in order to sin?
- 6) What causes separation?
- 7) How does a separated person return to Jesus?

As the Shepherd Jesus is the “guardian of your souls”.

1 Peter 2:25b

- 1) Does the Lord’s promise offer assurance?
- 2) How do you feel about His promise during physical distress?
- 3) How does an easy and comfortable life affect your confidence and assurance?

Jesus had to allow the sacrifice of his human body in order to enable His sheep to return to Him.

1 Peter 2:24

- 1) Why do you think Jesus had to die?
- 2) What does Jesus require of sheep in order to protect them?
- 3) Is returning to Jesus a onetime event or service to a different Master?

Jesus laid “down His life for His sheep”.

John 10:7b, 9a, 11

- 1) What does His death mean to you right now?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Shepherd

- 2) Is His death as important to you now as it did the moment of your choice to return to Him?
- 3) How does His death impact the small moments of your life?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus--Husband

One may think a physical master or shepherd is a loving caretaker, yet he must consider his own wellbeing as well. His interests are divided. Not so with Jesus. The loving care of the believers by the Lord Jesus is so intimate He is married to His people. Jesus is the husband of His bride – the church. His body is the church; His faithful believers are His bride forever. He is one with His bride.

Marriage takes place when a man and a woman agree to covenant with God. The covenant begins a sacred union in which the two become one entity. *Mark* recorded Jesus reminding His people about the sacred nature of the covenant of marriage: "But from the beginning of creation, God made from them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh" (10:6-8). The same sacred union holds true spiritually between a believer in Christ and His position in Christ. In his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul wrote: "Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (6:14, 15a, 17).

The spiritual oneness all believers have in Christ is their marriage covenant with Christ. In his letter to the *Ephesians* Paul said the unity of marriage will always remain a bit of a mystery. However, a closer look at the unification of a saint with Christ and his fellow saints God reveals insight: "Because we are members of His body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (5:30-32).

Marriage between a man and a woman is a physical and living revelation of many of the spiritual realities taking place within the Lord's body. Spiritually the body of Christ is one with Him even though both are separate entities. When God instituted marriage He designed it to physically illustrate the spiritual fellowship which He desires for His restored people. Sin may have caused a marriage separation between God and His people but Jesus restored the marriage, "In that day I will also make a covenant for them ... and I will betroth you to Me forever ... then you will know Me ... and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' and they will say, 'Thou art my God!' (Hosea 2:18a, 19a, 20b, 23b).

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

In marriage a man and woman are spiritually connected by covenant as “one flesh”.

Mark 10:6-8; Genesis 2:24

- 1) What do you think Jesus meant when He said two distinctly different people merge into one entity?
- 2) What do you think about the spiritual side of the covenant of marriage?
- 3) How does physical marriage mirror spiritual marriage in the church?
- 4) Is the covenant of marriage important to God?

Marriage is a physical and spiritual example of what take place when a servant is connected by covenant with Jesus.

- 1) How does a covenant affect your service to Jesus?
- 2) Is the Lord’s covenant of marriage important to you?
- 3) Do you understand His covenant of marriage?
- 4) What are His vows for the marriage covenant? What are yours?
- 5) Why do you think Jesus created a new covenant to follow instead of simply saying all salvation is by the freedom of grace without conditions?
- 6) Why doesn’t God just allow people to live with Him without any formal covenant?
- 7) Do you think God is discerning about who chooses to covenant with Him?
- 8) What is a covenant?
- 9) Why is a covenant important?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

In Christ when the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is received the servant becomes "one spirit with Him".

1 Corinthians 6:17

- 1) Do you feel united as one with Jesus? 2) How do you determine what your relationship with Jesus means? By what standard are you measuring your relationship?
- 3) What is a relationship with Jesus? Is it a feeling of heart, or is it more?
- 4) Can you describe your relationship to Jesus?
- 5) Is your marriage relationship with Jesus guided by His covenant of marriage?

Every servant is a member of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:15a

- 1) How do you know if you are partnered with God the Father?
- 2) What is fellowship?
- 3) Is fellowship with God the same as a relationship?
- 4) Why do you think God uses the word fellowship to describe your relationship with Him?
- 5) Do you feel as if you are a functioning part of the Lord's spiritual body?
- 6) What is His body?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

Jesus uses the covenant of marriage to physically illustrate His union with His saints.

Ephesians 5:30-32

- 1) What kind of covenant did you agree to obey when you became one with Jesus?
- 2) When you covenanted with Jesus in marriage does this mean you covenanted as one bride—His entire body of saints?
- 3) How long will the covenant last?
- 4) Can you default the covenant with adultery causing a divorce?
- 5) According to Scripture how can you default your covenant to serve God the Father through Jesus Christ?

The natural hierarchy of spiritual authority is included in marriage, “Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ”.

1 Corinthians 11:3

- 1) Is Jesus your “head”?
- 2) What is more important in your life: your self and its desires or the ways of righteousness and obedience to Jesus?
- 3) Do you agree with God about His spiritual hierarchy?
- 4) How would you describe your part in the Lord’s marriage— independent, wage earner, leader, apathetic, ect?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

Speaking about His bride – the church, Jesus “is the head of the church”.
Ephesians 5:22-23

- 1) What does “head” mean to you?
- 2) What is the Lord’s church?
- 3) Why is understanding the nature of His church important?
- 4) Is the church the same as His body?
- 5) What is Jesus trying to communicate about His authority?
- 6) What is Jesus trying to communicate about interrelationships among His bride, one another love, and unity?

The church “is subject to Christ” in the marriage.
Ephesians 5:24a

- 1) Who do you serve?
- 2) Try to explain the meaning of Lord and Master?
- 3) If Jesus is your Master than what are you?
- 4) Even though you are a holy married son of God, are you still a servant?
- 5) What is the basic responsibility of a servant?
- 6) When do you serve Jesus?
- 7) Is Sunday the only time you are willing to serve Jesus?
- 8) How do you balance serving Jesus and living in the world?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

- 9) Do you ever find yourself compromising your commitment to serve Jesus?
- 10) When you see your Master coming do you try to hide?
- 11) When you see your Master coming do you suddenly begin to do your work for Him?
- 12) How does a Christian compromise his service to Jesus?
- 13) How does a Christian keep from compromising his covenant promise to Jesus?
- 14) How does the world influence your service to Jesus?
- 15) How does the normalcy of life distract your service?
- 16) How does your service to Jesus affect your normal way of life?

Jesus deeply loves His bride.
Ephesians 5:25b

- 1) How does Jesus love His body of believers?
- 2) How does Jesus define love?
- 3) How does Jesus expect his bride to express her love to Him?
- 4) What is sacrificial love?
- 5) By what standard are you measuring your sacrificial love?
- 6) Are you practicing love towards Jesus?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

- 7) How do you love spiritually?
- 8) How are one another love, relationships, and fellowship with Jesus and His body connected in your life?

Jesus sets His bride apart from sin and the world.
Ephesians 5:26a; 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18

- 1) How does Jesus set you apart from sin?
- 2) Why does Jesus want you to separate yourself from the influence of the world?
- 3) How does Jesus set you apart from the world?
- 4) Are you trying your best to keep yourself separated from the spiritual influences of the world?
- 5) How does the world affect your faith?
- 6) How do you remain separated from the world when so many important things take place within its environment?

Jesus presented His bride to Himself by having "cleansed her", making her "holy and blameless".
Ephesians 5:26-27

- 1) What does Jesus mean when He spoke of cleansing?
- 2) What is holiness?
- 3) Are you holy?
- 4) Do you act like you are holy?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--Husband

- 5) Do you feel holy?
- 6) Can you sin and still remain holy before God?
- 7) How does holiness set you apart from the world?
- 8) Why are you so different?
- 9) Why do you think holiness is often a fragile state of being?

The prophet Hosea spoke of the Lord's marriage union many hundreds of years before His birth:

- 1) The marriage will only involve those who choose to covenant with God.
- 2) The marriage will last forever.
- 3) His bride will "know Him".
- 4) His bride will include both Jewish and Gentile people.
- 6) His bride will be "My people".
- 7) His bride will declare, "'Thou art my God'".

Hosea 2:18a, 19a, 20b, 23b

- 1) What is the covenant you agreed to with Jesus?
- 2) What does forever mean to you?
- 3) What do you think "know" means?
- 4) Do you "know" Jesus?
- 5) Who is (are) His bride?
- 6) Who does the Lord's bride belong to?
- 7) How do you declare "thou art my God" in your life?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Jesus – King

Jesus is King; He never lost His authority and rule over His kingdom even though His people twice rejected Him. First, when they desired to live like their heathen neighbors choosing a physical king rather than God their creator. Second, after most of the leadership desired the retention of their perceived power and received support from the common people. Many of whom unquestioningly followed their leadership, sending Jesus to His death on a Roman cross. His death, burial, and resurrection restored His rightful position as King. He is the king over those committing their worship to God the Father through Him. He is also king over all of His creation, both spiritual and physical, “King of kings and Lord of lords” (*Revelation 19:16*).

In his gospel letter, *John* quoted Jesus answering a question asked by Pilate: “Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness of the truth’” (*18:37*). Pilate most likely didn’t understand what Jesus said. But the Lord professed a most profound truth; He identified Himself as the rejected King. His life, ministry, God the Father, and the Spirit, witnessed the spiritual reality of His true identity--the King of Israel.

When the chosen people rejected their spiritual king, they could not reject the fact Jesus remained their king. He ruled His kingdom before His birth, He entered the world a king, He lived life as a king, He died a king, and the Spirit resurrected him a king. There is simply no greater king than Jesus other than in the imaginations of mankind. One’s rejection of Jesus cannot diminish the fact: He is the King.

He is a King of a spiritual kingdom as always, but now His Kingdom only includes those who worship God the Father through Himself. Israel began with Him as their king but they soon rejected Him in order to conform to many of the contemporary standards of the world and refused to worship God their creator according to His will. Because of their unrelenting unfaithfulness Jesus removed the physical nation of Israel from His kingdom: “Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it” (*Matthew 21:43*). After His resurrection He gave His kingdom to His chosen faithful believers: “He has made us to be a kingdom, priest to His God and Father” (*Revelation 1:6a*). His kingdom and believers are one in Christ the King.

The “us” are those whom He has “released ... from our sins by His blood” (*Revelation 1:5b*). And “those who are with Him are the called and chosen and

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – King

faithful” (Revelation 17:14b). His kingdom and His throne are exclusively spiritual and only those who are spiritually serving God the Father through Him serve within His kingdom. *John* quoted Jesus clearly stating: “My kingdom is not of this world” (18:36a).

Upon the resurrection of Jesus a new spiritual age and covenant began to take effect, ending the covenant given to Moses, “He has made the first obsolete ... is ready to disappear” (*Hebrews* 8:13). The physical nation of Israel is no longer within His kingdom even though the Jewish people are still blessed on behalf of the fathers of Israel, “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers” (*Romans* 11:28).

Not only is Jesus King of His spiritual kingdom, He is King over the entire earth. God His Father has given Him complete authority over the entire creation, both seen and unseen, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (*Matthew* 28:18b). Even though Satan is allowed to rule over those who serve him and sin in the world, “the dominion of Satan” he is only able to do what Jesus allows (*Acts* 26:18a). Heaven is under His authority as well as Hell and ultimately “the lake of fire” (*Revelation* 20:14b). The world belongs to Jesus and He governs the nations, Satan, the world, and the universe. He determines future blessings and judgments, “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (*Revelation* 1:5a).

Questions

Jesus is King – He has complete authority over His creation.
Matthew 28:18b

- 1) Do you think this means everything?
- 2) What do you think authority means?
- 3) Does Jesus have authority over you?
- 4) Do you practice your life in light of your Lord’s authority?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – King

Jesus is Lord – He is the one true Master to serve.

- 1) Are you a spiritual servant?
- 2) Who are you presently serving?
- 3) How do you balance service to Jesus while living in the world?
- 4) If Jesus is your Master how are you serving Him?
- 5) If Jesus is your Master when do you serve Him?
- 6) How often should you serve Jesus?

Jesus is “King of kings and Lord of lords.
Revelation 19:16

- 1) What does Jesus reign over?
- 2) Does His authority as King reach into the lost world?
- 3) Who does Jesus reign over?

Jesus needed to come to enter into His creation in order to witness the truth about the identity Israel’s rejected king.
John 18:37; 1 Samuel 8:7

- 1) Who do you think Israel rejected as king?
- 3) Who is your king?
- 4) Do you ever find yourself repeating some of the same patterns of rebellion against King Jesus as Israel did?
- 5) What does the Lord’s witness mean to you?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – King

- 6) Does His witness help you to understand Jesus and His work with Israel?
- 7) What does a servant do in relation to his king?

Jesus has complete authority over Satan, his dominion, servants of sin, Hell, and “the lake of fire”.

Revelation 19:16; Matthew 28:18b; Acts 26:18a; Revelation 1:5a, 20:14b

- 1) What kind of authority do you think Jesus asserts over the eternal destiny of Hell?
- 2) Do you think Jesus has complete control over those who choose to rebel against His righteousness?

Jesus has complete authority over Heaven.

- 1) When you enter into heaven will Jesus still be your king?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus--His Kingdom

Not only is Jesus a King of the world both physically and spiritually, His spiritual kingdom envelopes the entire earth and includes all of those who belong to Him. His kingdom no longer includes anything physical other than His people, wherever they may live. In his gospel, *John* quoted Jesus stating: "My kingdom is not of this world ... My kingdom is not of this realm" (18:36). His kingdom is His body--the church, not a building, religion, or anything manmade. His kingdom is every recreated servant transferred into His kingdom upon purchase, "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (*Colossians* 1:13-14).

His kingdom is where God dwells and walks amongst His people in a restored spiritual fellowship with His holy and righteous sons and daughters. He has united heaven with His body of believers on earth, "But of the son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom'" (*Hebrews* 1:8). The Kingdom of Christ is His body, His Israel, His Jerusalem, His temple--the church, His temple--His servant. All are one in Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Father: "He made us to be a kingdom, priest to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (*Revelation* 1:6).

Questions

The kingdom which Jesus rules is spiritual, it will never be physical.
Hebrews 1:8; *John* 18:36; *Luke* 17:20b-21

1) Why do you think the Lord's kingdom will never be in His physical realm?

Every servant who chooses to serve Jesus is transferred from Satan's dominion to His kingdom.
Colossians 1:13-14; *Acts* 26:18

1) What is Satan's dominion?

2) What is the Lord's kingdom?

3) Does Jesus have authority over Satan's dominion?

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--His Kingdom

4) Who do unrepentant sinners serve?

The old covenant given to Moses ended when Jesus died and with it the theocracy and inclusion of the physical nation of Israel in the new covenant unless they chose to repent.

Hebrews 8:7-13, 10:4-9:16-17; Romans 11

1) Why do you think God severed fellowship with the physical nation of Israel?

2) Will the physical state of Israel ever become the Lord's Israel?

3) Is the physical nation of Israel a nation of saints in Christ?

Even though the physical nation of Israel is not included in the new covenant kingdom it is still "beloved for the sake of the fathers".

Romans 11:28

1) Why do you think God still loves His nation Israel?

2) Is the physical state of Israel saved by Jesus?

The Israel which Jesus rules within His kingdom is His new covenant church, His body of faithful saints.

Matthew 21:43; Revelation 1:6a; Isaiah 56:1-8; Jeremiah 31:1-15, 27-34; Acts 5:29-32, 28:20b; Romans 9:6-33, 11:25-33; Galatians 6:15-16; Hebrews 8:7-13; revelation 21:1-14, 22-27, 22:3-6

1) What is the difference between the physical nation of Israel and the spiritual nation of Israel?

2) Is there a difference between the two states?

3) How is the Lord's church connected to Israel?

4) Are you a part of His church or body of saints?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--His Kingdom

Jesus--His Kingdom

- 5) Are all saints citizens of Israel?
- 6) Is Jesus king of His spiritual state of Israel right now?
- 7) What is the spiritual state of Israel?

His kingdom is His body of "the called and chosen and faithful."
Matthew 9:35, 10:7, 12:28, 16:28, 21:43, 26:26-29; John 18:37-37; Revelation 1:5b;
Colossians 1:13-14; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 1:8, 12:22-24, 28; 2 Peter 1:10-11;
Revelation 5:9-10, 13

- 1) Is the Lord's kingdom right now?
- 2) Is the spiritual state of Israel within His kingdom?
- 3) Is the physical state of Israel in His kingdom?
- 4) Are all saints in His kingdom?
- 5) How does Jesus manifest His kingdom on earth?

His kingdom and throne are spiritual.
John 18:36a

- 1) Will the Lord's kingdom ever be in the physical creation?
- 2) If you are physical how are you living in a spiritual kingdom?

The Lord's servant's – His body the church, is His kingdom.
Revelation 1:6

- 1) Who do the Lord's servants serve?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus--His Kingdom

- 2) How does Jesus identify His servants?
- 3) Have you ever considered yourself as part of the Lord's body?
- 4) Are you a part of His church?
- 5) Are you a citizen of His kingdom?
- 6) Are you a citizen of His spiritual state of Israel?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – His Israel

For many hundreds of years the kingdom of God included the physical nation of Israel. But after continual rejection and spiritual adultery, God chose to give His kingdom to another people – the holy saints in Christ. A people governed by a new and very different covenant through Christ when they accept His offer of redemption. The writer of *Hebrews* quoted a prophecy written by Jeremiah, “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah ... I will put My laws into their minds ... I will be their God, and they shall be My people ... all shall know Me ... I will remember their sins no more” (8:8-12). He concluded his quote with this observation: “When he said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete” (8:13a).

The Israel of the new covenant is not the Israel of the old. The Israel of the new covenant is united with one purpose, to spiritually serve God the Father exclusively through Jesus Christ. Jeremiah foretold: “I will be their God,” which Jesus fulfilled and witnessed: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me” (*John* 14:6).

In *Acts* Peter wrote: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (5:30-32). Peter’s Spirit inspired insight included the following facts:

- 1) God is granting repentance to the people who are Israel only through Jesus Christ.
- 2) Only the people of Israel are receiving repentance.
- 3) Only the people of Israel are receiving the forgiveness of sins.
- 4) Those who are Israel are considered repentant because they have had their sins forgiven and considered by God as obedient to their faith in Christ Jesus.
- 5) The people who are Israel are not only sinless, but also blessed with the gift of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 6) Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the prophets, and the apostles are witnesses to the truth of Peter’s statement. Even though Israel may exist as a physical nation and is blessed by God on account of the fathers of Israel, the restored Israel of the new covenant is no longer a physical nation. The Lord’s covenanted Israel is a spiritual nation with a spiritual capital in a spiritual kingdom governed by a spiritual King--Jesus Christ, according to His new covenant. It is the Israel of promise, the restored Promised Land.

Stepping Stones to Salvation Success

Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – His Israel

The new covenant is specifically for the spiritual nation of Israel in the Lord's spiritual kingdom.

Hebrews 8:8-13

- 1) How do you think the new covenant is connected to the Lord's Israel?
- 2) Are you covenanted to Jesus?
- 3) What is a covenant?
- 4) As the Lord's servant what does the covenant agreement you made with Jesus mean to you?
- 5) Do you consider yourself as a citizen of the Lord's Israel?

Jeremiah foretold of the spiritual restoration of Israel many hundreds of years before its fulfillment by Jesus.

Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:37-40, 33:6-8, 14-18

- 1) Do you think Jeremiah spoke of a restored physical state of Israel or a newly created spiritual nation of saints?
- 2) If Jeremiah spoke of a newly created spiritual Israel and you are a citizen of this new nation, how do you envision your spiritual state of being?

Jesus noted the very exclusive nature of His new kingdom and Israel.

John 14:6

- 1) Does the Lord's Israel include anyone who chooses any other gospel or religion?
- 2) Does Jesus restrict citizenship to His nation strictly to His saints?
- 3) If someone goes to church does this mean he is a citizen of the Lord's Israel?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – His Israel

4) If someone calls Jesus Lord does this mean he belongs to Him?

The new nation of Israel is clearly identified by its citizens, those who have received “forgiveness of sins” and are thus repentant.

Acts 5:30-32

1) Who are the Lord’s forgiven?

2) Are only the forgiven allowed entrance into His kingdom and nation of Israel?

3) How is a servant of sin forgiven?

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – His Jerusalem

All nations have a capitol city where the government is located and the kingdom and nation Jesus rules over is no exception. Just as the restored nation of Israel is spiritual, so is Jerusalem. This is where God dwells. The Spirit inspired the writer of *Hebrews* to assure his readers: “you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven ... and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (12:22, 23a, 24a).

The author is spiritually connecting “Mount Zion” which is Jerusalem with the “church of the first-born”, the new covenant, and salvation in Christ Jesus. Other connections are mentioned in *Revelation*: John “saw” the unity of the “holy city, New Jerusalem” and the “bride adorned for her husband”--the church.

He also revealed the new location of the new spiritual temple of God; God will “dwell among” His people and the church of Jesus Christ – His temple, “shall be His people” (21:2, 3b). Remember what Paul said in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*: Each individual believer is a temple as well as the church as a whole, “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” and “you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you” (6:19a, 3:16b).

Later in his *second* letter to the *Corinthians* he quoted prophecy confirming the believer’s restored fellowship with God and its connection with His restored temple, “For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty” (6:16b, 18)

Everything is one in Christ, the temple is Christ, God the Father and the Holy Spirit are one with Jesus; all are one even though manifested as three. Jerusalem is one with Christ. The spiritual nation of Israel is one with Christ. The church is one with Christ. Every faithful believer is one with Christ. All are in each other as one, yet all are manifested with different identities. In the new covenant kingdom of the Lord there will never be a stranger who is not a citizen living in His new Jerusalem.

In his *Revelation* John saw this very thing taking place within the spiritual realities of the Lord’s spiritual realm and kingdom, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men,

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Section Eight: With God

Jesus – His Jerusalem

and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them” (21:1-3).

Questions

The Lord’s new covenant kingdom, Israel, and Jerusalem are spiritual realities in the present. They are manifested physically as the body of Christ – His church.
Hebrews 12:22-23

- 1) Who is the Lord’s church?
- 2) Are you a part of the Lord’s body of believers?
- 3) Are you able to envision being a part of New Jerusalem?
- 4) Does this spiritual reality change in any way how you consider your position in life?
- 5) In the restored spiritual “New Jerusalem” God will dwell with His people in His holy temple – His people, His church.
Revelation 21:2, 36
- 6) Is Jesus speaking only of the time when Christians are assembled or all Christians at all times and circumstances?
- 7) Does God’s internal presence change your worldview in any way?
- 8) How does God’s personal presence affect your daily life choices and decisions?
- 9) Do you live with the presence of God in your daily lifestyle?
- 10) Do your relationships: marriage, dating, friends, work associates, etcetera, reflect the closeness of God’s presence?
- 11) When a non-Christian witnesses your life and words do they see “New Jerusalem” and all it represents?

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Section Eight: With God

Questions

Jesus – His Jerusalem

Each individual Christian is a temple and the church as a whole is a temple of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 3:16

- 1) Does knowing God is personally in your presence affect you spiritually?
- 2) Does His presence motivate you to engage your faith?
- 3) Do you act like God is living in your body?

Through Isaiah and Hosea, God foretold of the restoration of His temple and personal presence amongst His people.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

- 1) Do you believe the prophets?
- 2) When the prophets spoke of a restored idyllic nation, what do you think they spoke about?
- 3) What do you think about your personal connection with the Lord's new covenant Israel, New Jerusalem, and God's temple?

Jesus connects His restored Jerusalem with His bride and God's personal presence amongst His people.

Revelation 21:1-3

- 1) Is church important in your life?
- 2) What does church mean to you?
- 3) Does the connection between the church and "New Jerusalem" change your feelings towards the church in any way?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Worshipping God

Under the Law of Moses, the faithful expressed their worship through belief and faith motivated sacrifices, moral obedience, and love towards one another. They physically revealed the will of God. Worship involved strict obedience to tribal spiritual leaders, priests, high priests, oral traditions, festivals, laws, required sacrifices of animals, birds, grains, and liquids. Throughout this time God used untold numbers of imperfect priests under the leadership of one imperfect high priest who presided over the rituals and intercession for an imperfect people.

The writer of *Hebrews* noted this about Jesus and the former duties of the priestly service to God: “For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (7:26-27). Personal access to God only occurred once a year, by one randomly selected priest, and only behind a heavy curtain in the inner sanctuary of the temple.

The saint’s belief and faith motivated spiritual focus expressed through obedience to God mattered the most, “you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only” (*Luke* 4:8b). The faithful spiritually self-circumcised their hearts as a result of their practice of faith motivated righteousness according to the will of God. When God considered a servant as spiritually righteous and spiritually circumcised He considered him as righteous and a saint. He also included him in the flow of the promise as it moved through history.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ worship radically changed from physical to spiritual just as He foretold: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers” (*John* 4:23). The Law of Moses ended the moment Jesus died. And with the beginning of the new covenant the application of belief, faith, and obedience changed from its focus upon physical worship to spiritual worship.

Spiritual circumcision changed as well, in the new covenant the Spirit performs the spiritual circumcision during the servant’s unity with the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. However, just as in the ages before the Lord’s death the blessing of righteousness remains dependent upon the spiritual state of the heart – it must be circumcised.

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Section Nine: Assurance

Worshipping God

Belief and faith in the integrity of His word along with obedience to His will are still considered as righteousness by God. However, the servant's worship focus changed to Jesus Christ and His new covenant in order to approach God the Father in righteousness. In the new covenant obedience changed as well. No one is honored by God the Father without first obeying the will of Jesus Christ. In the new covenant the servant's response involves confessing the deity of Jesus and a commitment to repent. Repentance and confession are only honored by God if the servant submits to faith motivated baptism for his rebirth. He believes in the Lord's word concerning what takes place within the water of baptism. Righteousness results when he becomes one with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. His new spirit, self, conscience, and circumcised heart give him his newborn holiness. Spiritually the servant returns to the innocence and sinlessness he had when first born. This is why he is considered as born again by the power of the Spirit.

Righteousness is still patterned after Abraham's example because its reception is still dependent upon the believer's fulfillment of his belief and faith through obedience to the will of Christ in the unseen work of God. The difference is revealed by how the servant fulfills obedience.

The new covenant believer no longer worships God through physical sacrifices and priests. He directly serves God in worship through Jesus Christ. The servant is the Lord's priest. He is one with God because the Spirit lives within him.

His sacrificial service is his own body, his life, "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" (*Romans 12:1*). The worship of a servant of God in the new covenant is now exclusively through Jesus Christ and involves the continual sacrifice of himself as he serves Jesus in unity with His body of believer's. All servants serve God the Father through their high priest, Jesus Christ.

Even though he is God's son, he is still a servant of the Lord Jesus and servants live to sacrificially serve. He no longer needs to reach out to God through physical sacrifices, traditions, special days and festivals, required tithes, and priests, because God is living within him. His worship involves an infinite number of different aspects of serving God based upon faith motivated service rather than obligation to a written law, implied law, or tradition. Every moment of every day offers an opportunity to sacrifice and worship, for his life is his sacrifice and worship.

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Worshipping God

All Christians serve God the Father through Jesus – a “holy, innocent, undefiled” and separated high priest.

Hebrews 7:26

- 1) Who do you serve?
- 2) How do you serve Jesus?
- 3) Is Jesus your High Priest?
- 4) How do you serve your High Priest?
- 5) Are the Lord’s servant’s priests?
- 6) What do they sacrifice?

Pre-Christian types of sacrifices are no longer needed because Jesus offered the “once for all” perfect sacrifice.

Hebrews 7:27

- 1) What types of sacrifice ended when Jesus died?
- 2) What specific sacrifice did Jesus end with His death sacrifice?
- 3) Why do you think Jesus will never repeat what He did on the cross?

The single most important focus of heart towards God before the death of Jesus will always remain the same, “you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only”.

Luke 4:8b

- 1) Who or what did you worship before you choose to change your worship to Jesus? Keep in mind who you served?
- 2) Who do you focus your worship on as you try to serve Jesus?

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Worshipping God

- 3) Do you ever feel as if you are serving with a divided heart?
- 4) How do the values and expectations of the world affect your service to the Lord?
- 5) Is a constant state of repentance important to you?
- 6) How does sacrifice and faith connect?

Another vitally important part of daily worship focused upon the practice of righteousness which in pre-Christian ages resulted in the self-circumcision of heart.

Jeremiah 4:4; Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 9:25

- 1) If God already considers you as righteous or holy why do you need to practice righteousness?
- 2) Is the Lord's gift of righteousness a progressive state of being where you slowly become more holy?
- 3) What is your guide to God's standard of righteousness for holy living?
- 4) Who did God promise give in order to help His saints learn how to live according to His standard of righteousness?
- 5) What are you doing to learn how to live according to His standard of righteousness?
- 6) How does the knowledge of being holy and pure affect your attitude towards trying to practice righteousness in everyday life?
- 7) Are you putting His counsel into practice every day?

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Questions

Worshipping God

After the resurrection of Jesus worship remains vitally important even though dramatic changes took place.

John 4:23

- 1) How are worship and God's standard of righteousness connected?
- 2) How are worship and God's standard of love connected?
- 3) How are worship and God's standard of fellowship connected?
- 4) When does God expect His saints to worship Him?
- 5) What is the difference between assembling for worship and individual worship?
- 6) How do you think Jesus is trying lead His saints to focus on Him alone?
- 7) Why do you think a singular focus on Jesus is so important?
- 8) How do you focus singularly on Jesus with all of the distractions of the world interfering?

After His resurrection God the Father refocused the entire sacrificial system to one spiritual sacrifice – the life of His holy and pure servant.

Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:17, 4:18

- 1) Why is Jesus so important to your worship focus?
- 2) What happens when worship is distracted by worldly expectations?
- 3) How do you practice worldly expectations and responsibilities while at the same time retaining a singular focus on Jesus?
- 4) Have you ever thought of your life as a saint as a mini theocracy patterned after the Lord's ideal vision of what Israel should have become? What about the church as a whole?

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Worshipping God

5) If your life is a mini theocracy where the Lord rules and governs everything in your life how does this spiritual reality affect your moment to moment thoughts, choices, and decisions?

Spiritual circumcision changed when the new covenant arrived, from self-circumcision of the heart by applied righteousness to circumcision of the heart by the work of the Spirit as a result of being considered by God as righteous.
Romans 2:28-29, 4:11; Philippians 3:2-3; Colossians 2:11-14; Deuteronomy 30:1-6

- 1) Before the Lord's death how did the Lord's servant circumcise his own heart?
- 2) After the Lord's death how did circumcision of the heart change?
- 3) How did God circumcise you heart?
- 4) Is circumcision of the heart important?

Obedience to God has made a dramatic change as well. Before the death of Jesus the Lord's servant indirectly served one God. After the Lord's resurrection His servant directly serves God the Father exclusively through Jesus Christ.
John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:4-6, 1:20, 1:3

- 1) How do you serve Jesus and no other god?
- 2) How do you maintain your focus on Jesus when the world and personal responsibilities demands so much of your attention?
- 3) What does serving God face to face mean to you?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Hope

Only a saint in Christ is able to understand the full impact of hope. Hope is only developed from assurance in the promises made by God to those redeemed back into His family of holy children. Paul offered insight into the divine aspects of hope when he stated, "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; ... but if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (*Romans* 8:24a-25). Hope is realized by steadfast belief, faith, confession, repentance, and obedience in God the Father through Jesus. It is sustained by confidence in the integrity of His word. Hope is the servant's expectation of a present and future destiny based entirely upon the unseen truth of God's word. Hope realizes God's word.

Hope fuels an inner peace regardless of how difficult life becomes. No one is able to take from a believer his present and future expectation of the fulfillment of his faith in Christ and the promises of God's eternal inheritance. In *Ephesians*, Paul wrote: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (1:18). Hope is peace.

Hope is the believer's inner vision of eternity with God and helps to maintain his focus upon Him regardless of how good or difficult life becomes. Hope looks past the constant conflicts which arise from the flesh, lust, past experiences, memories, and the difficulties involved with maturing in Christ. Hope assures the Lord's servant of his new life, new present experiences, and new future despite continual messages of disparity. Hope is purpose.

Hope turns past conflict and hopelessness into positive forces of meaningful blessing to fellow believers and the lost, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (*2 Corinthians* 1:3-4). Hope gives meaning to past and present experiences in life regardless of how negative they appear from a physical point of view. Hope gives purpose to even the most difficult of memories and pain. Hope is victory.

The writer of Hebrews offered assurance of the solidity of one's hope in God's eternal promise through Jesus Christ when he wrote: "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong

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Section Nine: Assurance

Hope

encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (6:17-19). Hope stabilizes.

The author is conveying the importance and endurance of hope. For hope is empowered by the assurance of God's unchangeable purpose and promise to His children. God cannot lie, the promise and its eternal blessings are reserved in heaven for those who finish their lives in faith. Those who finish this race will receive all of the promises mentioned plus more beyond imagination. Hope is future glory.

The promises of God are the hope all believers have; His promises are the power of hope in the fulfillment of hope. This is why hope is "an anchor of the soul" for it will not change and the promises given by God are never broken. In hope one's soul is steadfast and secure despite the tempest of the sea around him. Hope motivates a steady life in Christ and ensures every believer they are not only going to receive eternal blessings in the future but they are entering into the very throne room of God through Christ each and every day of their lives while on earth. Hope is a promise.

Questions

Salvation is dependent upon faith in the integrity of God's word; hope is the expectation of faith.

Romans 8:24b-25

- 1) Why is hope so important to you?
- 2) What does hope mean to you?
- 3) Why is spiritual hope always focused on something you cannot physically experience?
- 4) What must you do in order to mature your sense of hope?

Hope and perseverance work together to develop peace.

James 1:2-4

- 1) Why do you think hope is so dependent upon patience?

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Questions

Hope

- 2) Does physical trial affect your hope in unseen spiritual expectations?
- 3) How important is the connection between attitude and hope?

The object of hope is the eternal inheritance.
Ephesians 1:18

- 1) Why do you hope for an internal inheritance?
- 2) What do you expect from God?
- 3) Do you think God is sharing some of His eternal inheritance with you right now?
- 4) Why do you want to be the Lord's servant?

Hope steadies the soul of God's children in the midst of the stormy seas of life.
Hebrews 6:17-19

- 1) Why is hope so important when life goes wrong?
- 2) When physical circumstances seem to take control of your life what generally happens to your level of hope?
- 3) Is it a good thing for hope to cycle from small to great according to circumstances?
- 4) How do you maintain steady levels of hope?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Inner Peace

Peace and hope are built upon the servant's confidence in the ageless promises of God and rest upon the pillar of faith in God through Jesus Christ. Peace is another gift of God's endless grace which the world cannot understand. It is a blessing reserved for only those who express their faith in God through Jesus. In his gospel *John* quoted Jesus, stating: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (16:33). Peace is confidence in Jesus.

Jesus told His children they can enjoy the blessing of peace in heart despite circumstances offering little or no hope in the world. Inner peace is a reality because it is empowered by God Himself. Peace is the natural emotion felt as a result of belief in Jesus, faith in the Lord's gift of life, and hope in the promises of God. Peace is soothing confidence in God's control over circumstances arising in a believers' life, whether good or bad. Peace is confident in tomorrow.

Peace is an inner comfort of knowing the certainty of destiny. Regardless of what life throws in the path of a faithful saint, it cannot alter the reality of eternal destiny against his will. Physical circumstances cannot alter the tender care Christ gives to His lambs when they are troubled, under trial, and persecuted from whatever source. This is one of the reasons why Paul could confidently counsel his fellow believers to "be anxious for nothing" (*Philippians* 4:6a). God already knows and is caring for their needs even before His children have a chance to experience their needs. The believer knows God answers his prayers and will always take care of his circumstances in life regardless of what he experiences and feels. Peace is built upon confidence in God's ability to care for life regardless of perceptions of how life is going. Peace does not fear.

Peace is the result of an inner assurance of God protective care. Even though life often presents seemingly insurmountable obstacles Jesus is always alongside inwardly and outwardly leading the way and giving comfort in indescribable ways. Peace is inner confidence Jesus will never abandon His sheep and will always shepherd His flock with the utmost of loving care. Paul wrote in his letter to the *Philippians*, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7). Peace cannot be fully understood yet it immerses the believer in its reality.

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Questions

Inner Peace

The world only offers spiritual chaos and tribulation disguised as peace.

- 1) How does compromise with the world affect spiritual peace?
- 2) Why does God call for His children to separate themselves from the ways of the world?
- 3) How do you grow in spiritual peace when you have to live within the turmoil of the world?
- 4) How does inner peace develop?
- 5) How are peace, hope, and faith connected?

Jesus offers true peace.

John 16:33; Psalm 4:4, 46:10

- 1) Is Jesus the only source for true inner peace?
- 2) What may happen to your faith if you cannot develop spiritual peace?
- 3) How is peace connected to contentment?
- 4) Do you make it a habit to understand Jesus from Bible study?
- 5) How does fellowship and one another love mature inner spiritual peace?

The Lord's quietness of soul is a feeling of calmness resulting from complete confidence and assurance in His personal attention towards every one of His children.

Philippians 4:6a

- 1) How does spiritual peace connect with confidence in the integrity of God's word?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Inner Peace

- 2) Does doubt affect spiritual peace?
- 3) Do you doubt God's work in your life?
- 4) Is spiritual peace affected by worldly distractions?
- 5) Is spiritual peace affected by compromises with the moral standards of the world?

Peace stands guard over the heart and mind by overcoming the anxieties of doubt, fear, and negative feelings.

Philippians 4:7; Matthew 6:25-34

- 1) How do you feel peace and anxiety connect with each other?
- 2) What does Jesus say about anxiety?
- 3) What causes the troubles in your heart which rob your inner peace?
- 4) Are you trying to do anything spiritual to develop peace?
- 5) Does following the Spirit's counsel concerning how to live according to God's standard or righteousness have anything to do with inner peace?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Heritage in Christ

The people redeemed by Jesus have returned to God the Father and are included in a very exclusive family. The members of this family reach as far back in history as Adam and Eve and onward into history to the second coming of Christ. This is the family of the faithful righteous in God before the resurrection of Christ and the faithful righteous in God the Father through Jesus Christ after His resurrection. This is the family of the promise which God first revealed to Adam and Eve. They are the ones for whom God fulfills the blessings of the eternal inheritance.

After reminding his fellow-believers about their faith and how they expressed it in baptism, Paul noted the spiritual importance of their belief and faith motivated obedience. The Spirit recreated their spirits with Christ resulting in complete unity, "clothed ... with Christ" (*Galatians* 3:27b). Every faithful believer "clothed ... with Christ," must first experience spiritual death with Jesus, a spiritual burial, and a spiritual resurrection, "baptized into His death ... buried with Him ... in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (*Romans* 6:3b, 4a, 4b).

They had also undergone a spiritual circumcision by the hands of the Holy Spirit, "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (*Colossians* 2:11). And as a result the resurrected saint is considered righteous by God. He is holy because His newly recreated child is free of sin debt and spiritually circumcised.

During this spiritual process former sins are separated from the new life by death. The spirit dies and is resurrected new. The new spirit is separated from the old life and flesh, this is his circumcision. Sin does not disappear from the flesh but is separated from the new spirit. The spirit's resurrection with Christ results not only in forgiveness but a complete absence of sin history, innocence, and righteousness. This is why God considers the Lord's new creation justified.

The righteousness given by God is the same righteousness as God blessed Abraham with, "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer" (*Galatians* 3:9). How? When a slave of sin is redeemed by the blood of Christ, his entire spiritual being is being recreated. The whole experience of servant's death, burial, resurrection, and circumcision is spiritual and depends upon his belief in the word of God and faith in the integrity of His word. Belief and faith are only realized when worked out with full expectation in the unseen promises of God.

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Heritage in Christ

God considered Abraham as righteous because he believed Him and responded with obedient faith in His unseen promises. Those who have received righteousness as a result of their redemption and recreation in Christ are considered by God as righteous and included into His family of righteous saints reaching back to Adam and Eve. Both pre and post resurrection saints are considered as righteous by God because of why they responded to His will.

Those who belong to Christ--the singular spiritual seed of Abraham's lineage are the true son's of God through Christ. His children in Christ are "fellow-heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (*Ephesians* 3:6b). In Christ the promised blessing of being included in Abraham's spiritual lineage and promise regardless of physical identity, is fulfilled.

As a result of receiving righteousness through Christ – the seed of Abraham, the new believer in Christ is entitled to receive the promised inheritance because he is one with Christ, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (*Galatians* 3:29). The Promised Land and promised eternal life are both present and future realities.

Paul referred to this when he wrote: "for the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For this reason it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be given to all descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, 'A father of many nations have I made you')" (*Romans* 4:13, 16, 17a).

Later in his same letter Paul wrote, "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants" (9:8). With this short statement Paul bluntly revealed how a circumcised Jew could be physically God's child and yet spiritually separated from His presence. The promise requires belief, faith, obedience, and heart circumcision. It always has and always will. And His will does not depend upon what anyone thinks is right or wrong.

The family of Christ is an exclusive family of only those who are one with God the Father through their unified belief, faith motivated obedience, and spiritual circumcision; as demonstrated by all of the righteous saints through the ages and will continue until Jesus returns.

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

Every new born child of God is “clothed ... Christ”.

Galatians 3:27b

- 1) Try to imagine your naked and exposed new born spirit protected and clothed by Jesus, what does this mean to you?
- 2) How do you think Jesus protects you spiritually?
- 3) How are you assured of your position in His body?
- 4) Are you completely assured of your position in His body?

Every new born child of God walks “in newness of life” and has experienced “the circumcision of Christ”.

Romans 6:3b, 4a, 4b; Colossians 2:11

- 1) Have you experienced your spiritual circumcision by the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How is spiritual newness connected with spiritual circumcision?

All of God’s children are heirs of the promise given to Abraham and his righteous children.

Galatians 3:29

- 1) Why do you think belonging to Jesus is so strongly connected with your spiritual lineage with Abraham?
- 2) Does serving Jesus build confidence in your hope of an eternal inheritance in heaven?
- 3) Do you know who you are in the Lord’s eyes?
- 4) Do you ever have second thoughts about who you are in God’s eyes?

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Questions

Heritage in Christ

Every righteous saint in Christ is a fellow-heir, fellow-member of His body, and a fellow-partaker “of the promise in Christ Jesus”.

Ephesians 3:6

- 1) What does the promise mean to you?
- 2) Do you believe God has placed you within the kingdom which Jesus reigns over?
- 3) Are you a righteous saint? How are you righteous?
- 4) What does being an heir with Jesus mean to you?

The blessings of the promise are only offered to those who choose to receive the “righteousness of faith”.

Romans 4:13

- 1) What is the “righteousness of faith”?
- 2) Why is righteousness so important when it is connected with faith?
- 3) How is faith connected with who you are in Christ?

The spiritual descendants of Abraham, those who are included in God’s promise to Him, are “those who are of the faith of Abraham”.

Romans 4:16

- 1) How can you be related to Abraham?
- 2) How is Abraham connected with the spiritual nation of Israel, your citizenship, and the Lord’s restored kingdom?
- 3) How does this knowledge about who you are to God affect your life right now?

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Questions

Heritage in Christ

The spiritual Promised Land and eternal life are not promised to any descendant of the physical nation of Israel or of any of the fathers before its creation, only to those who are God's children of righteousness.

Romans 9:8

- 1) Before the Christian age began why did God consider spiritual circumcision of the heart so important?
- 2) How are righteousness and salvation connected?
- 3) Is righteousness necessary for any servant desiring to serve God?
- 4) What is the difference between being righteous and living a righteous life?
- 5) Why do you feel righteousness is connected with your inheritance and your spiritual identity?

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Section Nine: Assurance

End of Life Inheritance

When a son of God finishes his race and dies in faith, his experiences on earth will be gathered up, refined by fire, and the outcome will be the fine silver, gold, and jewels of his eternal inheritance, "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 will be revealed with fire; and the fire itself 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 as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

God promised long ago to anyone willing to believe in Him alone, and later through Jesus Christ, an inheritance of life in heaven which includes the treasures of their work of service accomplished for God. With this revelation He is also revealing His love for believers who have remained faithful until death but have built their house primarily with the perishable ways of life. He promises eternal life, but without many of the rewards being offered to other servants. He is not saying a believer cannot be lost, but he will suffer eternal losses due to lifestyle choices.

Jesus spoke to Saul about his upcoming work on His behalf; "To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18).

The inheritance is promised by God only to those who choose to "turn from darkness to light". Likewise the sanctified are only those whom the Lord has separated from bondage in sin and the dominion of Satan. All saints live in the kingdom belonging to Jesus. Either spiritual condition is dependent upon the servant's belief, faith, and resulting obedience to the will of God through Jesus Christ. He is free to serve sin and Satan or Jesus. The quality of eternal life and the blessings of inherited life are options given to every slave of sin upon hearing the gospel message of Christ. If he chooses this new path in life then upon his redemption the Spirit will transfer the new saint "from the dominion of Satan to God".

In order to accomplish this humanly impossible transfer of ownership, the Lord must first redeem him by His death, burial, and resurrection. The Spirit miraculously unites the servant of sin with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. He emerges from the resurrection a new spirit innocent and free from sin – he has received "forgiveness of sins" spiritually separated from his old life and sin.

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Heritage in Christ

Once the slave is freed from his bondage to sin debt and transferred to the Lord's kingdom he is then entitled, as a child of God, to receive "an inheritance" reserved for him in heaven. The new servant of the Lord begins serving God in the Kingdom of Christ under the authority of Christ as his King, Lord, and Master. He is holy, justified, righteous, and sanctified from his old unholy life in bondage to sin under the authority of Satan. The only reason why Jesus honored the servant's belief, faith, confession, baptism, and commitment to repent is because of his willingness to obey Him through belief, and faith in His unseen promises exemplified by Abraham. His belief and faith are proven through his obedience.

Paul told his fellow believer's, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ" (*Romans 8:14-17a*).

The blessing of God's spiritual inheritance is only reserved for those whom He considers sanctified – holy and set apart from his old life, self, heart, and Satan's dominion. These are "Spirit led" people because of two vitally important reasons:

- 1) They have received the indwelling presence of the Spirit.
- 2) They are allowing the Spirit to lead them through a life of faith in Christ.

The quality of inheritance received by the Lord's children is dependent upon these two basic realities. God has offered His grace of restoration. The servant has chosen to return to His family. Both work together in unison. Jesus has restored the partnership between God and His people – fellowship. Fellowship will continue onward into the servant's inheritance in eternal life.

A child of God has a very uniquely blessed and bright future. Even though life on earth may involve experiences which are discouraging beyond description the promise of an eternal inheritance steadfastly remains in his heart. He is a child of God, an heir of God, a fellow-heir "with Christ". The future is indescribably bright even though his present life condition may be discouraging and causes spiritual doubt.

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Heritage in Christ

When a servant of sin receives the blessings of redemption he joins an exclusive remnant of people who have, “the Holy Spirit of promise, who was given as a pledge of our inheritance” (*Ephesians 3:14a*). The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the unseen and unfelt presence of God based upon belief and faith in the promises of God. The presence of the Spirit assures the fulfillment of unseen promises in a new life, in the present as well as in the future after death.

Questions

A Christian’s eternal inheritance will be determined by his life.
1 Corinthians 3:12-13

- 1) Do you serve Jesus differently when you are away from other Christian’s?
- 2) If you reflect on your chosen life decisions how do you think they will be considered by Jesus?
- 3) What kind of spiritual foundation are you building in your house— your body?
- 4) Reflecting upon your life what would you consider as gold, silver, and precious stones?
- 5) Reflecting upon you life what would you consider as wood, hay, and straw?
- 6) How does the vanity of life connect with wood, hay, and straw?
- 7) Are there things in your life which you could change which could possibly be considered by God as valuable to Him?
- 8) Is it important to consider what is motivating your service to Jesus?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Heritage in Christ

All Christian's will receive an inheritance.

1 Corinthians 3:15; Acts 26:18; Romans 6:1

- 1) Do you think the promise given by the Spirit means God will consider you saved regardless of lifestyle?
- 2) At what point do you think God will reject a Christian and remove His presence from him?
- 3) Does knowing you are promised eternal life even if you have a hard time serving Him offer you any assurance?

All Christian's will share in the inheritance promised to Jesus.

Romans 8:14-17

- 1) Do you think the Lord's inheritance is conditional?
- 2) Are you willing to put "to death the deeds of the body"?
- 3) Are you willing to allow being "led by the Spirit of God"?
- 4) Who is a son of God, how do you know?
- 5) What does Jesus promise to all of His children?
- 6) Why does Jesus offer such a generous blessing to His children?
- 7) Are there things in your life which could be changed in order to facilitate Spirit leadership?

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is a part of the Lord's promised inheritance.

Ephesians 3:14

- 1) How do you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

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Questions

Heritage in Christ

- 2) How do you know the Spirit of God is living within your body?
- 3) Does the Spirit's presence affect your hope of an inheritance?
- 4) How does the Lord's promise of an inheritance affect your hope?
- 5) How does the Lord's promise of an inheritance affect your inner peace?
- 6) Does the Lord's promise of an inheritance affect your attitude towards life and lifestyle decisions in any way?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Eternal Life with God

There are only two eternal existences offered by God:

1) Eternal death or separation from God. An existence reserved for Satan, his angles, and any person who refused to serve the God of creation before the death of Jesus or redemption through Jesus Christ afterwards, “if anyone’s name was not written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (*Revelation* 20:15).

2) Eternal life in the presence of God the Father, His Son—Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, the presence all of His holy created beings, and fellow saints. Remember the special promise Jesus spoke of to His Jewish brethren: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (*John* 3:16).

Eternal life is the opposite of eternal death. Eternal life is in the presence of God and eternal death is outside and devoid of the presence of God. There is no other existence after death. Eternal existence only consists of two starkly different realities, the complete absence of light from God or complete submersion in the light of God.

Eternal life is not an idle promise. His promise offers hope to those held in the bondage of slavery to sin and subjection to Satan. Eternal life is a promise of eternity within the presence of God. Spiritual life is the aim of faith, belief, hope, assurance, peace, and love. Eternal death is the eternal continuance of the servant’s choice to reject the grace of God in order to serve sin and Satan.

Eternal life is the fulfillment of belief, faith, hope, confession, obedience, baptism, repentance, assurance, hope, and life serving God the Father through Jesus. It realizes the eternal power of peace and love. Life is the servant’s continued destiny in Christ if he chooses to remain faithful through life to death. *John* wrote in his *first* letter, “And the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--” (1:2).

Paul said eternal life is a gift from God to those who are willing to respond to His call in Jesus. The Lord must first purchase him before he is able to serve God. He announced in *Romans*: “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23b). Eternal life is free because no one is able to earn it through the righteousness of law, moral purity, benevolence towards humanity, or whatever a person may believe in order to appear justified before God. It is simply humanly impossible to achieve eternal life through any type of effort perceived as righteous.

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Eternal Life with God

There are only two eternal life destinies, life with God or separation from His presence.

John 1:12-13; Acts 3:22-23, 4:12

- 1) Is eternal destiny forever settled before or after your physical death?
- 2) Why is the maintenance of a faith led and Spirit counseled life so important?
- 3) Do you ever meditate upon the blessings which God has promised to you upon your death?
- 4) Do His eternal promises affect your ability to suffer through life with a steady eye upon Jesus?

Eternal life is a servant's reward for choosing to serve God the Father through Jesus Christ.

John 3:16

- 1) How do you envision eternal life?
- 2) How does your hope connect with God's promises?
- 3) Does the hope of eternal life affect how you are living right now?
- 4) What do you think the purpose of life is once you begin serving Jesus?
- 5) How do hope, purpose of life, and eternal destiny connect in your heart?

Eternal separation is certain for any servant who chooses to remain in service to sin and Satan.

Revelation 20:15

- 1) Who are serving sin and Satan?
- 2) Why is this lifestyle and spiritual choice so devastating and hopeless?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Eternal Life with God

- 3) Is a Christian given the spiritual freedom to return to serving sin and Satan?
- 4) Why is compromise with the world so important to understand?
- 5) Why is “good and “evil” so important to understand?
- 6) Why is it so important to understand your lust?
- 7) By what standard does God measure compromise with the world?

A servant of sin must choose to worship God the Father exclusively through Jesus Christ in order to receive eternal life in heaven.

Romans 6:23b; 1 John 1:2; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Acts 3:22-23

- 1) Do you ever feel Jesus is a bit too restrictive?
- 2) What if your closest relative does not believe in Jesus?
- 3) Do you ever think about where your dead relatives and friends are spending their eternal existence?
- 4) The truth of the Lord’s plan of salvation reveals the dividing line between real and pseudo salvation. Does the thought of condemning your friends and relatives, both alive and dead to eternal separation from God cause you to consider compromising God’s word concerning how a servant is saved?
- 5) Why is eternal life important to you when so many people deny its existence?

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Section Nine: Assurance

Resurrection after Physical Death

Death for a righteous servant of God is an indescribable blessing. It is the fulfillment of a lifetime of belief, faith, assurance, hope, and service to Jesus. Physical death finalizes his separation from the world. Death completes his sanctification from evil.

Death is final for everyone, whether enslaved to sin or freely serving God through Jesus. The writer of *Hebrews* revealed: "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (9:27). A second chance in life is only the product of well intentioned imagination and pseudo hope. A second chance to reform and change ones destiny after death is a deception of futility. Judgment is set and the conscience of the dead person is sealed.

Death for a servant of sin finally and forever exposes him to the reality of his position as an enemy of God. He will be judged by the very God whom he has rejected throughout his life in sin and service to Satan his lord. Paul revealed in *Romans*, "In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my Gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (2:15-16).

However, for a believer death is a time to rejoice for it's time to meet Jesus his Lord and Savior. *John* quoted Jesus speaking about the coming resurrection: "He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (5:27-29).

Judgment is as certain as death. The purpose of one's life determines whom he will live through eternity. Everyone is equally born with three possessions: body, soul, and spirit. All equally die with nothing but their soul and spirit. All appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

Jesus clearly defined two opposing types of people, the good who are righteous and those who practice evil. Both groups are determined by who they choose to serve within their limited lifetimes. God does not define the boundaries of good and evil by human acts of righteousness. The perception of righteous works in life, regardless of how good and self-giving, is not a factor in whether the servant is judged good or evil. Good and evil are spiritual realities and standards established by God alone. Only God determines how a servant must act in response to His will. It is up to the servant to decide how he is going to respond. As a result of his freedom of choice he is fully accountable to God.

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Resurrection after Physical Death

Even though God has given all people the freedom to determine who they will serve, He has not given them the power to determine the standard of righteousness by which to serve.

A servant of sin is only considered by God as righteous by His grace through the divinely created response of belief, faith, and obedience to His will. This Abraham like response realizes the servant's confession, commitment to repent, baptism, and service to his Lord – Jesus Christ. Worship involves serving Jesus through the rest of life in faithful obedience and repentance, glorifying Him as Lord which glorifies God the Father. In his letter to the *Colossians* Paul wrote: "For although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless beyond reproach--" (1:21-22).

Paul helped to reveal the divine standards of evil and good deeds. Those who are committing "the evil deeds" are the ones who have not received redemption from Jesus. Regardless of who or what a person is in life, before God he is, spiritually speaking, openly "hostile in mind" and "alienated" from His presence and practices "evil deeds" as a normal way of life. Only those who appeal to God for redemption will be "reconciled ... holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Their appeal must be fulfilled by belief and faith motivated obedience in the will of God through Jesus Christ in order to receive righteousness through Christ.

Ones resurrection after death is certain; however the quality of the resurrection will be determined by the decisions made within his lifetime as well as God's judgment of his life in its entirety. God's judgment is righteous because He looks at the servant's heart and the reasoning motivating his decisions, "for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts" (1 *Chronicles* 28:9b). Those who appear before the judgment seat of God are actually being judged by the witness of their own heart, experiences, and conscience. Jesus is truly an impartial judge.

For a believer the resurrection of a glorified body is assured. Paul wrote: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised" (1 *Corinthians* 15:13). The reality of the spirit of a dead saint being reunited with its newly created and perfect body is as real as the Lord's newly resurrected body. Later in the same chapter Paul wrote, "And just as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (15:49). What a glorious future awaits the saint who has chosen to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Section Nine: Assurance

Questions

Resurrection after Physical Death

Death for the Lord's servant is a transition from one life to another.

- 1) What does death mean to you?
- 2) What is the basic purpose for death?
- 3) Do you think once death takes place you are annihilated from existence?

Death is a final transition; there are no other options to redo life or repentance.
Hebrews 9:27

- 1) Do you think the spirits of dead people are given a second chance to repent?
- 2) If death finalizes the spiritual achievements in life should the spiritual aspects of life be taken more seriously?

Both the servant's of sin and servant's of righteousness and obedience will be judged after their death.
Romans 2:15-16

- 1) What do you think is the major difference between the two judgments?
- 2) What do you think happens to a Christian who is judged?

The results of the judgment will be dramatically different between a servant of sin and a servant of the Lord Jesus.
John 5:27-29

- 1) Does knowledge about judgment affect your practice of faith in Christ?

Both types of servant's will experience a resurrection.
John 5:29

- 1) Do you think God is cruel for eternally separating people who rebelled against Him from His presence?

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Questions

Resurrection after Physical Death

2) Do you think God is in control of the lost and their eternal existence in Hell even though He is not personally present?

Both types of servant's receive judgments based upon their own lifestyle and attitude choices.

Colossians 1:21-22; Ephesians 2:1-5

- 1) Do you ever think about the eternal destiny of lost relatives and friends?
- 2) Do you feel guilt for not having done enough to convert them to Jesus?
- 3) Do you feel guilty of spiritual negligence if a close relative dies in sin?
- 4) Are you guilty in any way if a relative dies in sin? Should you feel guilt?
- 5) Does personal choice have anything to do with lifestyle and beliefs?
- 6) Does God expect you to compromise inner peace because of another's lifestyle and belief choices?
- 7) Are you willing to compromise the gospel in order to preach the gospel in a more acceptable way to the lost?
- 8) Is believing you are a Christian enough to assure eternal life with Jesus?
- 9) Does a deathbed conversion justify compromising the integrity of the gospel?
- 10) Is what a person thinks is spiritual right or wrong justified to God if it does not conform to His word?

Even the best of people will commit evil and remain hostile to God if they do not repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

Romans 8:7-8; Colossians 1:20-22; James 4:4

- 1) Is anyone entitled to enter into heaven based upon an extraordinary life?

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Questions

Resurrection after Physical Death

2) Is it fair for God to consider a good, moral, and loving person evil and hostile to Him?

God's judgment is fair, righteous, and impartial because it is solely determined by the servant's heart, thoughts, conscience, and who he chose to serve.
Romans 2:15-16; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, 3:17; 1 Corinthians 4:5

- 1) Who determines how a person is judged?
- 2) How does God judge impartially?
- 3) By what standard of truth is a servant judged?
- 4) What is the source of testimony used in judgment?

A believer's resurrection to life is as certain as the Lord's resurrection.
1 Corinthians 15:13

- 1) Why is the Lord's resurrection so critically linked to all Christians?
- 2) Does the Lord's resurrection offer hope to you?
- 3) How does His resurrection offer hope to you?

The reality of spiritual resurrection will result in a spiritual life as normal as experienced in physical life.
1 Corinthians 15:49

- 1) Have you ever tried to imagine what life in heaven will be like?
- 2) Do you think eternal life will feel as normal as physical life?
- 3) Does Jesus offer any clues to what our eternal bodies will be like?

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Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

When any person dies he is destined to receive judgment by Jesus Christ. Whether he dies in sin or redeemed, he is promised a fair and righteous judgment. In *Acts*, Luke recorded Peter's gospel sermon to Cornelius, his family, and friends. One of the things mentioned by Peter concerned the reality of judgment, "and they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross, God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, ... And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (10:39b, 40, 42-43). In these few short verses the entire gospel is taught plus the ramifications of whatever decision is made. The servant of sin is freely given the opportunity to make a choice determining his eternal future after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and whether the choice is maintained through faith from the rest of his life.

When God judges the righteous, He is doing so through Jesus. Jesus is judging His own son and servant whom He purchased. Paul wrote in his *first* letter to the *Corinthians*: "Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built 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 as through fire" (3:12-15).

In these four short verses, Paul revealed parts of the judgment experience which all of God's children in Christ will experience. Nothing will be hidden from His sight. It will be fair, righteous, and no one who dies in faith will be condemned to eternal separation, even those whose entire work of life is destroyed by fire. The writer of *Hebrews* stated God is: "...able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (4:12b).

Judgment for a saint is a spiritual proceeding which God uses to determine the eternal position of each and every one of His servants. Not his salvation. It involves at least seven parts:

- 1) After a servant of Christ dies he enters into judgment.
- 2) The judgment will not consider his sin because He has entered into judgment in righteousness. He is a redeemed servant of the Lord. He is holy, righteous, his conscience and heart are innocent.
- 3) His judge is his Savior Jesus Christ.

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Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

4) Jesus already knows exactly what he has accomplished for Him as His servant and why.

5) The works accomplished during his life as a servant will undergo a refinement process by the spiritual fire of judgment.

6) Only the deeds in his life as a servant of Christ, which God considers as gold, silver and precious stones, will determine his position in heaven. Every other work will be burned up as waste causing him to suffer loss as a result of having collected a lesser amount of gold, silver, and precious stones in favor of the combustibles of worldly life.

7) Even though every servant will suffer a certain amount of loss, no one will suffer the loss of eternity in heaven. If he died faithful in Christ he will always remain in heaven with Christ. For a servant of the Lord judgment is the just the beginning of an eternity of glorious blessings reserved exclusively for him by God. Life is good in Jesus.

Questions

All judgment is through Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:42; Romans 3:16; John 5:2, 27; Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5

- 1) Does judgment make you nervous?
- 2) Are there reasons why judgment may be a fearful time for a Christian?
- 3) Is it comforting to know your judge is Jesus?
- 4) What do you think will be judged?

When Jesus judges one of His servant's He is looking at a child of His Father who is holy, righteous, and innocent of all sin.

- 1) Will the Lord's servant be judged to determine whether he is going to heaven?
- 2) What does it mean to enter into judgment as holy and innocent?

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Questions

Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

Judgment is fair and unbiased, it is based upon the servant's thoughts and intentions of heart, his works are an expression of his heart.
Hebrews 4:12b

- 1) Who is ultimately responsible for how a servant served Jesus?
- 2) How will a servant be judged?
- 3) What do you think Jesus is trying to determine from His servant's thoughts and intentions?

Judgment for the Lord's servant is a refinement where useless works are separated from the useful.
1 Corinthians 3:10-17

- 1) What do you think combustible works are?
- 2) What do you think jeweled works are?
- 3) How do you think Jesus determines the difference between jewels and stubble?
- 4) Is your spiritual purse full of jewels, gold, and silver?
- 5) Are you trying to change your life in order to accumulate more jewels, gold, and silver in your treasury in heaven?

The Lord's servant will be judged to determine the rewards he will receive, he will not be condemned.
1 Corinthians 3:12-15

- 2) Do you feel more assured about your eternal destiny knowing judgment is not to determine condemnation?

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Questions

Judgment for the Faithful in Christ

- 3) How does your assurance of a positive judgment affect your lifestyle and spiritual choices?
- 4) Do you live life confident and assured of your future?
- 5) How does your confidence in life bring glory to Christ?

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Closing Remarks

Salvation is the most remarkable blessing offered to mankind. It began at the dawn of history with the birth of sin and will continue onward until the moment Jesus returns His second and final time.

It's as simple as a few lines of scripture detailing the gospel, or as complicated as the flow of the promise made to Adam and Eve to final maturity in Christ during His second coming.

The points of interest mentioned in this book highlight just a few of the innumerable blessings found within God's plan of salvation. I have included much more detail in my upcoming book: *Stones in a Divine Stream*. Later the book *Springs of Water in a Wasteland* will help to reveal sin in all of its ugliness. The series is completed with a look at the covenant between Jesus and His body of believers: *A Golden Rock*. May the Lord continue to bless your heart as you ponder and meditate upon the words of His grace and mercy found in Scripture.

Coming Later: Other Books in this Series

Springs of Water in a Wasteland: Part One
Springs of Water in a Wasteland: Part Two
Springs of Water in a Wasteland— Summary: Part One
Springs of Water in a Wasteland-- Summary: Part Two
Stones in a Divine Stream: Part One
Stones in a Divine Stream: Part Two
Stones in a Divine Stream: Part Three
Stones in a Divine Stream— Summary: Part One
Stones in a Divine Stream— Summary: Part Two
Stones in a Divine Stream— Summary: Part Three
A Golden Rock
A Golden Rock-- Summary