

# **Building a Relationship with Jesus**



**Jack County Cowboy Church  
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## **A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

### **Lesson 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Some time back the Lord had impressed upon me that whenever I preach or teach, people need to know they need a personal relationship with Jesus. Just knowing who he is, is not a relationship. But many think it is for some reason.

One of the set of verses that caught my attention on this was from **Matthew 7:21-23** when Jesus was teaching the people on the mount. It says (NIV), 21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

And yes I know I’ve had people tell me, well that’s believers and unbelievers. REALLY, do you think a unbeliever is going to say, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ No, I didn’t think so either.

So the way I see it, two things come in to play. One, we need to do the will of the Father and Two, I want to make sure Jesus knows me personally.

That is what this study will be about. 'Building a Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ'. And know the Father’s will.

We cannot properly progress in our Christian walk and our work for the Lord without first knowing that our 'Personal Relationship with Jesus' is in order. We need to realize that 'Building a Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ' is not a one-time event and then you are finished, but rather it is an on going process that we must continually work to improve upon.

We need to continually work to improve on 'Building your Personal Relationship with Jesus'. Your Relationship may have once been very exciting but may have since slipped away. Although you might say this will never happen to me, situations that cause us to slip away come upon us very subtly and many times we do not recognize them until it is too late.

That is the importance of this Study Guide. As you read it and review it, it may help you to recognize when your 'Relationship with Jesus' is beginning to slip away, or maybe you don't have the relationship you need to have with Jesus.

With this in mind, the work that we do is not as important as our Relationship with the Lord. This is because we will soon be standing before Him to be judged for the things we have done in this world, both good and bad! **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**, So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Imagine how you would feel if you are standing there in front of Jesus and you hear Him say 'who are you' or 'I never knew you.' What if He asks what happened to the talent I gave you? In **Matthew 25:24-30** we have each been given something to take care of until Jesus returns. It may be a physical talent, money he blessed us with, a soft and caring heart, or any number of things. What have we done with them? Have they grown, enlarged, helped others so that they know Jesus as Lord.

This is why we need to Repent if necessary and get ourselves right with Jesus. Once we 'Build and/or restore our Relationship with Jesus' we will be ready to leave this earth at any time, and be able to say as Paul said in **2 Timothy 4:6-8**, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.' Then we will hear Jesus say: 'Well done thou good and faithful servant' as he said in **Matthew 25:20-23**.

### **Scriptures: Deuteronomy 4:29**

But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.

### **Study Notes:**

In 'Building a Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ', you must first Seek God the Father as Jesus said in **John 14:9-10**. Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

Some people have told me, if I get where God wants me I can grow and mature in Him and have the relationship He want. But I'm not there yet!

I say to them, "But if from there." This is the place God may have put you. For the Israelites it was the promise land they would one day be in. The same is true for us, we may not be right where God wants us yet but we must seek him from where we are at the time.

But how do we seek Him?

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"Seek first the kingdom of God" is a phrase from the Bible that means to prioritize God's rule and values in your life. It can be achieved by several things.

**Praying:** Pray continually and ask God for help when you need it.

**Reading the Bible:** Read the Bible and try to memorize Bible verses.

**Worshipping:** Worship God and give him praise and thanks for even the smallest things.

**Living righteously:** Love your neighbor, fight oppression, and feed the poor.

**Sharing the Gospel:** Advance the cause of Christ by sharing the Gospel and living out its implications.

**Submitting to God's authority:** Put God's concerns ahead of your own and trust that he will provide for you.

**Fasting:** Set aside a time to focus on God through fasting and prayer.

"Seek first the kingdom of God" is a call to put God first in your life and to trust that he will take care of the rest.

According to the Matthew J. Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible, this passage centers on worldly concerns like worry or anxiety, temptations most of us face. Jesus warned His disciples about worldly concerns often, and we counter them by seeking God and His righteousness.

The Almighty calls us to seek first the kingdom of God instead of worrying about what we'll eat, how we'll dress — temporal or superficial concerns. Our Father, who is love and far more trustworthy than man, encourages us through **Matthew 6:33** and other Bible verses to keep an eternal perspective even as we cross each day off of our calendars. You and I are called to refuse worry and anxiety. Instead, we seek first the kingdom of God.

**Matthew 6:25** Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

**Matthew 6:33** But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

**Romans 14:17** For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

**1 Chronicles 16:10-11** Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

Children love playing the game of hide and seek. Everyone hide except for one person. That person then looks for each other person until the last one is found. But it wouldn't be much of a game if no one did the seeking. Well the same is true for us. We are to seek God's Kingdom with all we have, looking in every nook and cranny until we find Him.

There are many ways to seek God on a daily basis.

Prayer Is number one on my list. The bible tells us in **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, to pray continually. Many other Bible verses offer a similar message. Prayer is important. But what do we do walk around with our eyes close all day? Not hardly.

Prayer is us in constant communication with the Father and Jesus in spirit. As if you were talking to a friend all day. If we communicate enough we also learn to listen, that when the seeking starts to show.

Jesus spoke to the Father often, relaying that importance. He prayed with many people and in groups, but He also spent time alone with God. And during those solitary moments with His Father, we note an intimate communion between the two of them such as in Matthew 26. That opportunity for intimacy through prayer exists for us, too.

To cultivate an intimate prayer life, focus on creating a dedicated space and time for prayer, approaching God with honesty and vulnerability, actively listening for His response, engaging with scripture, and consistently seeking His presence through praise, thanksgiving, and personal reflection, treating prayer as a genuine conversation with God rather than just a list of requests. Some of the key elements of an intimate prayer life could be.

**Dedicated time and space:** Set aside a consistent time each day, whether morning or evening, to pray in a quiet, distraction-free environment where you can fully focus on God.

One of the thing we don't do as christians that I think we should do is have prayer times. Not saying we can't pray off and on all day, but having times for prayer regularly. Most of us have a cell phone these days so do what I do, set your alarms for two or three times a day. Call them prayer time. Now before you say, I don't have time for that, say Father I thank you for this day you have given me and the blessing you put upon my life, In Jesus Name Amen. (What did that take 5 seconds?) So don't say you don't have time. What if God looked down when you was deep in hurt and prayer and said, I don't have time for them right now. Something you might want to think about.

**Open communication:** Speak to God openly and honestly, sharing your thoughts, feelings, joys, struggles, and needs without reservation.

God already knows all our needs and stuggles, so be open and honest. Don't hold back, share with Him everything. **Matthew 6:8** says, your Father knows what you need before you ask him, so be bold and confident.

**Active listening:** After and during praying, intentionally pause and listen for God's response, whether through scripture, inner guidance, or a sense of peace.

This is the hardest one of all. Why, because we want to talk. But trust me in this, if you ever learn to listen spiritually you will stand in awe of the God we serve.

**Biblical engagement:** Incorporate scripture into your prayers, meditating on verses that resonate with your current situation and using them as a guide for prayer. God loves to hear His word back to Him. His word is perfect and we ourselves could never bring anything perfect to Him on our own.

One of the things I like to do is pray the scriptures. I read a psalm or group of scriptures out loud before I pray. I will use scriptures within my prayers as I pray. For example using **James 1:5-6**, Father your word says, If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. So Father today I'm asking for wisdom to be able to ..... (and so on) also Lord it says, But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt. Father help me with any doubt I may have that I may believe.

That is one of the ways to use scriptures in our prayers. You don't need to say James 1:5-6 says, but you can if you want too. What ever you are comfortable with.

**Worship and praise:** Begin your prayer time by praising God for who He is and thanking Him for His blessings. Thanking Him for even the smallest thing in your day.

Have you ever paid attention to the prayers in the bible. One of the key things you see in most all their prayers is praising God first. Things like, God you are Awesome, God you are the creator of all things, God you are to be praised by all creation, etc, etc.. Look up some of those prayers and use them as a guide for your prayers.

A few to get you started would be like, **Psalm 23:4-6, Psalm 25:4-5, 1 Kings 3:3-9.**

**Personal reflection:** Take time to reflect on your day, your relationships, and your spiritual needs before coming to God in prayer.

One of the things I use to do a lot was keep a pocket tablet in my shirt pocket and pants pocket. When something happens during the day that I see God move, I would write it down. Then later I could reflect on it. I would thank Him and reflect on the relationship he gave me with my wife. I would write my spiritual needs down so I could remember to ask about them in prayer. Things like, Lord I need more time in your word, or I need more ability to understand or Lord I need to work on my anger. Things like that would be spiritual needs.

**Seek God's presence:** Focus on experiencing God's presence rather than simply asking for things. In other words, try to feel God's present in and around you. He is there, His word says He is with us all the time, so look for His presents.

**Journaling:** Consider keeping a prayer journal to record your thoughts, reflections, and insights from prayer time. I just have a notebook with paper and a few dividers in it, works just as good as the fancy ones. Or as I said earlier, one of those small pocket notebooks work really well.

**Consistency:** Regular prayer is key to developing a deep relationship with God. We have a tendency to say, I just don't have time today, I'll do it tomorrow. Don't let that happen to you. Make time and be consistent. Like I said earlier, Christian are the only religion that don't pray two or three times a day at set times, And I think we should.

**Authenticity:** Be yourself when you pray, expressing your true emotions and needs. You don't have to use big words, as I call them, just be the way God made you. Trust me He understands who you are.

**Patience:** Be patience, Building intimacy with God takes time and consistent effort. It don't happen over night, but it will happen in time.

This is where a lot of people fail. It don't happen fast enough or on the schedule we want. Let it happen in Gods timing, you'll thank Him for it later. The main reason, you will be wiser for it.

**Seek guidance:** If needed, consult a spiritual leader or mentor, someone more mature in Christ for support and guidance on deepening your prayer life. One of the thing I tell young Christians, a way to get started is find you a prayer partner. Someone you can either pray with, or pray at same times different locations. Someone to hold you accountable in you pray life. Remember Jesus said when two or more gather in my name He is there also. So if two people in two different locations call upon Jesus in prayer at a given time, guess who is with them, Jesus.

Prayer is both a conversation and an encounter with God. Prayer is the key to awakening and strengthening such a deep relationship and desire for the Father.

As you read your Bible, ask God to show Himself to you. Spend some time writing down what God teaches you about Himself as you read and study His word. Know that the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever wants to have relationship with you also! Make God's word your personal meeting place with Him!

Spend time looking around you and paying attention to all that God has created. Pay attention to small things like flowers and birds as well as extraordinary things like mountains, oceans, stars, rainbows and babies! Creation gives us confidence that God is who He says He is. Give Him thanks and praise His glory!

When you truly worship God, sometimes you can forget why you came to Him. You are able to lay down your list of needs and wants and just enjoy being in His presence. Simple times of sharing with Him how wonderful and amazing He is will allow your heart to grow closer to His. Find worship music that honors and glorifies the Father and join in!

Most of us want to talk to or at God. Take time to say, as young Samuel did in **1 Samuel 3:9**, “Speak Lord, Your servant is listening”! Write down anything you think you hear. Maybe it will be as simple as “I love you.” Other times it may be something He wants you to do, or something He wants to share with you about Himself. If you aren’t sure if He is speaking to your heart, show a trusted, mature believer what you have written to get confirmation. If it agrees with Scripture and if it is something that is like the character of Jesus, likely you have heard something from the Father.

Simply sitting quietly in His presence with no expectations other than just enjoying being with Him can be the most intimate way of developing your relationship with God. No agenda, no wants or needs expressed, just being alone with no distractions. Sometimes you can use some quiet worship music. But getting used to sitting with God in silence just as you would with another person you love dearly is a great practice. It’s okay to just be.

God is continually present in each moment of your life. He has come to live within you always! Cultivate nearness and affection for Him in prayer. **James 4:8** says, When you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.

# **A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

## **Lesson 2**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The next subject that will help in building a relationship with Jesus is reading our Bible.

This is the hardest one of all, because I can hear some of you say, well I just can read, it make my eyes hurt. Or well I can read but don't ask me to remember any of it. Trust me, I heard every thing out there when it comes to why people don't read there bibles.

But with Today's technology we really have no excuse. If you can't read, you can listen to audio or they even have video of the bible. You pick the version of the bible you want and your set. The video versions are really nice because they go word for word with which ever bible you use. (KJV, NIV, NLT, etc..) I will use reading in this study to mean which ever kind you use. Reading, Audio, or Video.

And don't say, well I don't have time for that kind of stuff. But do you watch TV in the evenings.

We really have no excuse in this day and time! Just saying...

But anyway, reading the Bible helps strengthen your relationship with Jesus by providing a direct way to learn about his life, teachings, and character, essentially allowing you to "get to know him" better through his own words and actions as recorded in scripture, thus fostering a deeper connection and understanding of his love and message, it's like having a conversation with him through the written word.

### **Scriptures: Joshua 1:8**

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

### **Study Notes:**

Key points about how reading the Bible helps with your relationship with Jesus.

**The bible gives us Direct access to God's revelation.** The Bible is considered the primary way God reveals himself to humanity, particularly through the life and teachings of Jesus.

**We can Understand Jesus' character.** By reading the Bible, you learn about Jesus' compassion, love, forgiveness, and sacrifice, allowing you to better grasp his nature and emulate those qualities in your own life.

Reading the Bible is to equip you so you can have your own intimate encounters with the Living Word! Here are a few steps on how to read the bible to discover Jesus' True Character.

Start with some of the stories with Jesus. When reading the Bible to understand Jesus' character, I suggest opening up to any passage in one of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. A few story suggestions: Woman at the well (**John 4**), Jesus walking on water (**Mark 6:45-56**), Bartimaeus receiving his sight (**Mark 10:46-52**). Don't feel like you need to read a whole chapter at once. Start with a section, or even a verse or two!

Notice Where Jesus is Mentioned. As you read through the passage, observing what is going on in the story or scene and take notice of where Jesus is mentioned. Don't overthink it, just notice Him. What you note could be something Jesus says or it could be someone else mentioning Him. It is important to understand the overall narrative arch of a story before you dive super deep into what Jesus is trying to teach you through it.

Observe Jesus' Character. Go back and read the passage again, pausing at every moment Jesus speaks or is mentioned. Then imagine yourself in that moment observing Him doing or saying what is written. As a bystander, what would you observe about Jesus' character through His actions and words?

Apply Jesus' Characteristics to Yourself. Apply His character traits to your own life. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow according to **Hebrews 13:8** so how He acted 2,000+ years ago is how He is going to continue to act today. How incredible is that?

**Guidance for daily living:** The Bible offers practical wisdom and principles based on Jesus' teachings that can guide your decisions and actions in everyday situations.

Every situation that we could ever get into while in this flesh is in the bible and has been handled. The Bible is a instruction manual from God for daily living, but very few use it for Guidance.

**Personal reflection and application:** When you read the Bible, you can reflect on how the stories and teachings apply to your own life, leading to personal growth and a closer relationship with Jesus.

**Spiritual nourishment:** Regularly engaging with scripture can provide a sense of spiritual sustenance and renewal, deepening your connection with Jesus.

The Bible is God's Word to man. It reveals the plan of God for all of mankind. It reveals the nature of God, the sinfulness of man, the plan of salvation in Christ, the prospects of heaven for the saved, the doom of the unsaved in hell, guidelines for the Christian to follow in order to live and act as they should. It is God's word to us. It is the most important object we have on this earth. We are to love it, learn it, and then live by it. He will strengthen your faith, speak to your heart, and give you guidance and direction for every need and decision in your life. **Psalms 119:105**, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

The entire “Christian” conversation and the most distinctive part of our faith is focused on God’s desire to have a relationship with us. He wants to be your friend and heavenly father. He wants you to know him, which is a deeply personal connection. At first, God may seem like a distant being, but He’s not. He’s very available. The more you know him, the more you will love Him and many, many other benefits will come. To know God, you need to be with God.

The first, best way to know God is to read, and/or listen to the Bible, which is also referred to as “God’s Word” or “Scripture.” Consider God’s word **daily bread** you can’t live without.

As an individual find the Bible reading plan that will make you successful in reading God's Word. Bible Reading Plans are designed for different individuals. Some folks are not strong readers and some folks can read many chapters each day, like me, some are just beginning their adventure with reading the Bible, and some have a good grasp of God's Word for them as individuals. Each Bible reading plan out there is clearly marked so you can pick a plan that will lead to a successful time for you to learn all about God. I know most have started reading the bible and have never finished.

So what does it take to be Successful in Your Bible Reading. My suggestion is to start with the New Testament only. Reading the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Or start with the Gospel of John, which is where you will see a lot about the character of Jesus. Once done with the four Gospel’s, read the book of Acts. This will give you insight into the building of the church. Then read the letter’s of Paul, Peter and John. Don’t read Revelation yet.

As you read, take notes. If you have questions, write them down so you don’t forget them. If you find a verse that you can relate too or you think you need, either write it down or hi-light it in your bible. If you want to really want to grow and mature, find a good bible study group to get in or get you a study partner that you can go over question and what you have read.

What happen a lot of the time, people find a reading plan on the internet that jumps around all over the bible and you finish not know any more than you started with.

I told this same reading plan to several people through the years. It seems to work in the long run better then jumping around all over the bible. I also tell them once you finish the New Testament except for Revelation, Start over and read it again. Once you have a grasp on the New Testament, start on the Old Testament. Start in Genesis and read down to Malachi. The Old Testament may not make a lot of since but it will with time. But Jesus life and character will be found in the New Testament, so that’s the best place to be.

Before you read each time, pray God will open the eyes of your heart and mind to receive His word. Pray He will give you understanding with what you read. He will each time. Remember God’s word says in **James 1:5**, If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

I know you probably think I’m rambling but remember I say earlier in God’s word it says in **Joshua 1:8**, Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

So it gives us good reason to read the bible, but we need to read it to know the character of Jesus Christ. Why, because in **2 Corinthians 3:18** it says, we are being transformed into his likeness. (Christ) also in **Romans 8:29**, For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. (Jesus Christ)

As I said earlier ask God to speak to your heart before you start and then listen to your heart as you read. You need to spend time reading God's word. At least once a day read a portion of the Bible. You can read a chapter or a column, or, if you have a modern translation, even a short a paragraph. Like I said the Gospel of John is a good place for a new Christian to become introduced to Christ and His Message. Even those who have been christian for a time but never read the bible, it's a good place to start.

### **Establish a Quiet Time**

You need to grow in your faith in Christ. And to do this, it is essential for you to establish a quiet time. By "quiet time" I do not mean a peaceful moment in a bubble bath. I mean getting alone with God and His Word. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, we sometimes find it easy to live our lives with little or no regard for the God who saved us or for His Word.

The Bible is the revelation of God's mind to you. It's what He wants you to know and do. Not only did God give His Son the Living Word to save you, He gave His Book the Written Word to guide you.

Many people own a Bible, but they never read it. For most people, it's an out-of-date book, good for their grandparents but not for them. Someone has said that if everyone blew the dust from their unused Bibles simultaneously, we'd all be killed in the dust storm.

To be sure, some sections of the Bible are difficult to understand, and some are not as exciting as others. Still, every section of God's Word has something to say to us, and that makes every passage very important.

When should you have your quiet time? It's important to read the Bible as often as possible. But I have found it helpful to have a specific time each day when I shut everyone out except God.

For me, that specific time is early in the morning. My mind is less cluttered then and my day is less complicated. As the day goes by my brain becomes cluttered with all the things of the day around the house. It makes it hard to think with other things in my mind. Besides, God deserves me at my best, and the best part of my day is the first part.

Perhaps you will find another time of day suits your lifestyle better. That's fine. But make sure you establish a time and stick to it. What should you do when you have your quiet time? It helps me make my moments with God and His Word more meaningful.

Like I said in lesson one start with Prayer. Ask God to prepare you to meet with Him. If there is something in your life that you know displeases Him, confess it. Let Him forgive you so that nothing will hinder your communion together.

Then read a specific portion of Scripture, perhaps a chapter or two. If you are not very familiar with the Bible, I encourage you to start with Gospel of John in the New Testament.

I also enjoy reading one or two of the Psalms or proverbs every day, but you do what you feel ready to do.

After you have read a passage, Meditate on it for a while. Think about what you read, and ask yourself what it means. What does God want you to do? Remember, even though you may not understand all you read in the Bible, you can still obey what you do understand.

As I said write down questions about the passage as you read. I always keep a pen and notebook nearby when I read my Bible. I write down the things I have learned from my reading and also the things I do not understand. Later I can find the answers to my questions from someone who knows about the subject, or I can find an explanation in a Bible commentary or some other Bible reference material.

Then Read the passage Again. Reading it the second time usually brings to light things you didn't notice the first time. One of the ways we learn is repetition. You will find a lot of stories in the bible that sound alike but different places and characters. God teaches us through repetition. This is a great way to learn on your own; for as you read, you'll have God's Holy Spirit as your teacher. **John 14:26** says, But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

And just so you know, every time you read, even the same scriptures, you will see something different or God will show you something you need.

Finally, as you finish reading for the day pray again. Thank God for sending His Son to die for you. Thank Him for giving you His Word the Bible because without it you would have no answers to life's big questions. Thank Him for teaching you from the passage you have just read.

One last thing. Many new Christian readers start a quiet time each day with great enthusiasm. But they soon get too busy. Their days fill up with activities, and other responsibilities press in upon them. And somehow God gets squeezed out.

The person who merely samples the Word of God never acquires much of a taste for it. You must come back to the banquet table of God's Word daily, just as you come to a table daily to eat physical food. Once you start, don't quit!

Come to your Bible regularly. Open it prayerfully, read it expectantly, trust it implicitly and live it constantly. It is true! The Bible **that's** falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't.

Take each step for the new and mature Christian and let God by the Holy Spirit work in your life to do exciting things. Guaranteed!!

Pray and ask God to speak to you before you start... and read it as though God will speak to you through it and He will!!

Before we leave this lesson I would like to give you an overview of the bible.

The Bible is not just one big book, but actually a collection of 66 smaller books written over a period of at least 1600 years by about 40 different authors. Everything they wrote was inspired by God. In the front of your Bible is a Table of Contents which lists the names of all the books in the Bible. The Bible

is divided into two sections: the first section which contains three-fourths of the Bible is called the Old Testament, the second section is called the New Testament.

There is a handy abbreviation that Christians use to specify verses in the Bible. They list the name of the book first, followed by the chapter number, and then the verse number. For example John 3:16 means the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16. This way you can quickly and easily locate scriptures.

**The New Testament** (Recommend reading the New Testament first).

The New Testament reveals to us Jesus and the plan of salvation. It begins with the book of Matthew and ends with the book of Revelation. It is divided into four general areas.

**The first four books:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell us the story of Jesus when he was on this earth.

**The book of Acts** tells us the history of the early church after Jesus' death and resurrection.

**The letters (from Romans to Jude)** are correspondence from early Christian leaders to other churches or individuals.

**The book of Revelation** tells us the future story of the end time when Jesus will come back to this world and reign on earth.

A new reader should always start reading the Bible in the first four books of the New Testament, called the Gospels. The book of John is especially easy to understand. Some short letters in the New Testament, also called epistles, which are helpful to believers are the books of Philippians, James, and 1 John.

### **The Old Testament**

The Old Testament reveals to us how God dealt with the nation of Israel. It looks forward to the coming Savior of the world, Jesus. It begins with the book of Genesis and ends with Malachi. It is also divided into four general areas.

**The first five books, Genesis to Deuteronomy,** tell us the beginning of man and the establishment of the nation of Israel with the promise of the Savior of the world coming from this chosen people. It not only contains the early history of Israel, but also the Law of God as revealed through Moses. For example, Exodus chapter 20 records the Ten Commandments.

**The next twelve books,** Joshua to Esther, are the historical books of the nation of Israel after it became a kingdom in Canaan. Two short books in this section which reveal God's hand on the life of believers, which new Christians may enjoy, are the books of Ruth, and Esther.

**The next five books, Job to Song of Solomon,** are the books of poetry and wisdom in the Bible. Especially helpful to new believers are the book of Psalms, which was the hymnal or songbook of the nation of Israel; and Proverbs, which contains the sayings and advice of the wisest king Israel had.

**The last seventeen books, Isaiah to Malachi,** are the books of the prophets of Israel who God sent to warn, admonish, and encourage his people toward the end of the history of Israel as a nation.

God will truly Bless you if you get into a routine of reading his word.

## **A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

### **Lesson 3**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

I started this series of lessons with the title of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We started with Prayer and then I talked about reading your bible. Both of these items are essential to our growth and maturity in Christ. I could talk and talk about building a relationship with Christ, but I got to thinking, how many out there truly know what a relationship is!

So before I go any farther, I want to ask a question. What is a Relationship? If I was to ask 100 young people out there in the world today that question, I would most likely get a lot of different answers. But I'm not just going to pick on the young people here, I could ask the same question to 100 older adults and would get a lot of different answers also.

So before I go any farther, write in the blanks below what a relationship is to you.

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So with that said, let's see if we can find out what a true relationship really is!

#### **Scriptures: Philippians 2:5**

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

#### **Study Notes:**

A while back I was setting on the back porch of my home, watching the birds and talking to God, and a thought came to my mind. How would I describe a relationship. What brought it to mind was the birds I was watching.

There were these male and female Finch birds building a nest in one of my bird houses. You can tell male and female apart by their colors. Anyway they had a pretty neat relationship going on. One would come to the bird house with stuff for the nest, place it in the house and then set out on the edge of the bird house until the other bird arrived with it's nesting material. This went on all day, actually for a couple days, with one bird waiting on the other until the nest was built inside.

I figured that's was going to be the end of that togetherness for a while, but boy was I wrong!

Over the next several day, I never seen the female Finch but I seen the male Finch everyday. He would fly to the opening of the bird house with a bug or something in his beak. He would stick his head in and the bug would disappear. I thought, what is going on? After a little private eye stuff, I found that the female Finch was on the next with eggs under her. The male Finch was keeping her feed while setting on the eggs.

I though to myself, wow, I bet he will be glad when she hatches those eggs where she can feed herself.

And if your wondering, yes I spend a lot of time on my back porch every morning drinking my coffee, so yes I can watch them every morning.

Anyway back to my story. After about two weeks or a little over, I noticed something changed. The male Finch was still bringing food to the bird house, but now also was the female doing the same thing. I put two and two together and decided the eggs must have hatched. Sure enough, you could here the sound of baby bird inside the bird house now. And now both adult birds were bringing food to feed the young. One bird would feed and sit on the birdhouse until the other one came with food, then it would wait on the other one. This process went on each day.

After a while the young bird all flew the nest, so to speak, and the bird house was silence again. You know how I think, I was thinking boy, bet he's glad that's over with! But you are not going to believe this, after a few weeks it all started over again. I'm pretty sure it was the same two birds and now after several years they still come to that same bird house two or three time a year.

If your wondering why I told this story, it's because God showed me what a real relationship was by the example of those two birds. That's what we are going to talk about in this lesson.

Let's start with what the dictionary says about a relationship.

Webster's Dictionary says relationship is:

relationship (a noun)

1: the state of being related or interrelated

2: the relation connecting or binding participants in a relationship: such as a kinship

3: a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings or a romantic or passionate attachment.

Wow, Did they get it wrong or what! A relationship is not a noun. A Noun is a word used to identify any of a class of people, places, or things, or to name a particular one of these. God showed me a relationship is not a noun, it is a verb. It is a thing of action. It don't sit still.

So I'll hit you with another question. How do we know Jesus in a relationship as a verb. A lot of people know Him as a noun, because they know who He is. Shoot, even the demons knew who he was. I remember in my bible reading where Jesus come upon a man who was being controlled by demons.

**Luke 4:34** the demon said, “Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” Jesus told him to “Be quiet!”

So just knowing who Jesus is, is not a relationship, otherwise all them demons Jesus run into would be saved. We need to have a verb type relationship with Jesus. A relationship of action. Jesus tells us many times in scriptures what is required for us to know Him. And possibly stepping on a toe or two, Just a Sunday relationship is not enough. Jesus wants us to be with him everyday.

Okay I just heard someone say, well I know Jesus is with me everyday because the Bible tell me so! Better re-read that last line. I am not saying he is not, what I’m saying is are you with Jesus, big difference. Jesus wants our interaction with Him through out each day.

To interact with Jesus each day, Christians often practice daily prayer, reading and meditating on the Bible, actively incorporating his principles into their daily decisions and actions, and seeking his presence throughout the day through mindful reflection and worship, essentially, living a life guided by his example and teachings.

I told someone the other day some of the best sleep I get is when I have a few hymns stuck in my brain a night. I’m singing those hymns all night in my dreams. Sure do sleep good. Well it is the same during the day. In the morning I prayer then read a scripture or two. Then through out the day I try to keep those scriptures on my mind. That’s what it means to meditate on the word. When I have a decision to make during the day, I ask Jesus what I need to do a lot of the time. But most of all through out the whole day I am thanking Him for everything done, for the peace he puts on me and for being there for me. That’s what it mean to interact **with** Jesus.

I read somewhere once where a true relationship is built on a foundation of mutual respect, trust, and open communication. In other words it's a connection between two individuals that goes beyond physical attraction or superficial interactions. A true relationship is about creating a deep and meaningful bond with someone, where both feel seen, heard, and valued.

We should prioritize each other's feelings, needs, and desires. Somebody just said, hold up there cowboy! How am I going to prioritize Jesus feelings? That a good question. Let’s say your setting in front of the TV watching a rated R movie with a lot of nudity. You said before, you know Jesus is always with you, right. So how is He feeling having to watch that movie. What about Jesus needs and desires, how do I meet them. By doing what he commanded us to do in the words of the bible.

When there is a true relationship, we make time for each other, listen actively, and communicate effectively. We also respect each other's boundaries. Jesus does not want possession or control, it's about partnership and collaboration. Jesus want to work together as a team, supporting our goals, dreams, and aspirations. He will celebrate our successes and help us through challenges and difficult times.

Having a personal relationship with Jesus is a transformative experience that impacts every aspect of your life. So, how do you know if your relationship with Jesus is right?

Here are some key indicators you are on the right track.

Have you made Jesus the Lord of your life, acknowledging your need for Him in your everyday life. Is Jesus the center of your existence, guiding your thoughts, words, and actions?

Do you regularly communicate with Jesus through prayer, expressing your thoughts, desires, and concerns? Are you cultivating a deepening intimacy with Jesus, seeking to know Him more deeply and experiencing His presence in your daily life?

Are you exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit in your life, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Is your relationship with Jesus transforming your character, attitudes, and actions, making you more like Him?

Do you see personal transformation and growth in your life, reflecting Jesus' love, grace, and compassion? Are you actively studying and applying Jesus' teachings from the Bible, seeking to align your life with His will?

To further explore these indicators and deepen your relationship with Jesus, consider reflecting on your heart towards Him, seeking regular check-ups to ensure your love for Him remains fervent.

A true relationship with Jesus brings numerous benefits. A true relationship can bring joy, happiness, and fulfillment. Studies have shown that people in a true relationship with Jesus tend to have better mental and physical health, including lower blood pressure, a healthier weight, and a stronger immune system. It provides a sense of belonging and connection to someone else, which can be a powerful antidote to feelings of loneliness and isolation. It can foster personal growth and development. It also gives a sense of Security.

Cultivating and nurturing a true relationship with Jesus takes effort, commitment, and dedication. Prioritize quality time together. Make time to talk, listen actively, and communicate openly and honestly. Express your appreciation and gratitude celebrating your strengths and accomplishments.

By following these tips and prioritizing your relationship, you can build a strong, healthy, and fulfilling connection with Jesus. Remember, a true relationship is a journey, not a destination, it takes time, effort, and commitment to cultivate and nurture.

Jesus described what it's like to have a true, authentic relationship with him this way in **John 10:14-15**, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." Just as Jesus knows us intimately, if we are his sheep, we know him as well. Every day he invites us into a mutual knowing relationship with him through Scripture.

There are so many ways you can attempt to learn about Jesus in the world today, but there's only one way to truly know him, through the Word of God. Ultimately, if you want to truly know Jesus, you have to know the Jesus of the Bible.

Jesus is the Word made flesh, the perfect fulfillment of Scripture. Without knowing the Word, we can't know Jesus. And it's impossible to have an authentic relationship with someone we don't truly know.

Another reason we should take time to get to know the one true Christ is so we can authentically worship him. If we aren't careful to worship who Jesus has revealed himself to be through Scripture, then we will end up worshipping a false version of who we think Jesus should be. If the Jesus you worship never disagrees with your personal opinion or agenda, it's possible that you don't know the true Jesus.

In fact, the more we learn about Jesus, the more we should be challenged toward holiness and away from worldly living. And while it might be easier to serve and worship a Jesus who never disagrees with you, this false Jesus isn't the path to salvation.

Since Jesus first walked the earth, there have been those who misrepresent him. We have to meet Jesus in the pages of Scripture first before we attempt to learn about him anywhere else. While there are wonderful Christian books and Bible teachers out there, you'll never know if what they say aligns with the Word of God unless you read it yourself.

Getting your theology about the person and character of Jesus Christ from social media, podcasts, books, and even pastors is dangerous when you haven't taken the time to seek him first through God's Word. But when you take the time to truly know the Jesus of the Bible, you won't be deceived by the world's misrepresentations of him.

Through maturity and knowledge, we leave childish things in the past. However, when it comes to Jesus, the more we grow in spiritual maturity and knowledge of him, the more our love for him grows. We will never outgrow Jesus and our need for him! So let's commit to seeking Jesus through the divinely inspired, inerrant Word of God and have a true relationship with Him that He wants.

## **A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

### **Lesson 4**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

We have been talking about having a true relationship with Jesus. Well true Worship brings us into a better relationship with Jesus. So what does It mean to Worship God and Jesus?

In this lesson I may use God instead of Jesus at times. The reason is Jesus Himself said in **John 14:10**, Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we also enter into a relationship with God the Father.

#### **Scriptures: John 4:23-24**

Jesus said in **John 4:24**, God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. How do we worship God, "in spirit and in Truth", as Jesus commands us? The verse before it **John 4:23** tells us specifically what type of worshipers God is looking for. "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks".

#### **Study Notes:**

To "worship in the Spirit and in truth" means to worship God with a sincere heart and genuine devotion, based on a deep understanding of who God is as revealed in the Bible, essentially involving both a heartfelt internal commitment and an accurate knowledge of God's truth, not just outward rituals or formalities.

Before we go any farther, what do you think the definition of Worship is in the dictionary.

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Later in this lesson we will see if you are right.

Did you know there are different ways to worship God? We can worship God in Spirit and truth through praise and thanksgiving, prayer, reading the Bible, confession, obedience, tithes and offerings, music, spending time with Him, and using our skills to glorify Him.

The first part of worshipping God is understanding what worship is. In short, worship is an action that springs up from the posture of our hearts. When we want to get closer to God, we actively seek ways to do so.

Jesus is the foundation of truth. **John 1:1** confirms this by saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”.

God is looking for us to turn away from wickedness and anything that tempts our hearts away from Him. Our true intentions, even those we hide from ourselves, are not hidden from God. The Lord knows our hearts and helps align us when we allow Him into our lives.

Worshipping God was never meant to be a spectator sport. We’re meant to dwell with God. That means we should earnestly pursue Him in all areas of life.

There is a difference between performing and worshiping, and we’re called to worship God in Spirit and truth. When you worship, remember that God is a spirit, He is everywhere and knows everything.

I know of many churches the main event, so to speak, is the music. They have these big name gospel singers come in and perform. Their excuse is well we get people in the door to hear the gospel. But I beg to differ. Most people who go for the event want to be back unless it is someone they want to hear or see. But that is the way worship has become in America.

The purpose of our worship is to honor and glorify God and Jesus. Not to entertain and impress others. Our focus should center on God and His attributes, not on self-centeredness and the audience we gather. A sincere and humble heart is what we need to bring to Jesus, not seeking recognition and approval.

One of the things I have learned in my walk toward Jesus is what He used in a parable He told in **Luke 18:11-13**. It was the story of a Pharisee and a tax collector who had come to pray at the temple. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

A sincere and humble heart means we are not worthy to come before God, but with what Jesus did for us He made a way for us even though we are sinners.

Keeping our eyes on God and listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit helps us focus on what really matters, a relationship with Jesus.

God shows us what proper worship looks like throughout the Bible. You can read some of the examples in the Book of Psalm, where praises and glory are given throughout the book. And there are a varying of degrees of obedience, confession, and people using their skills to honor God in the entire Bible.

We can take the examples in the Bible and learn how to become true worshipers and worship God in the Spirit and truth.

God is so good! Worshiping God in Spirit and truth is full of benefits. Worship in Spirit and truth fosters a closer, more intimate connection with God, A Deeper Relationship. Genuine worship leads to spiritual growth and life transformation by aligning us with God's truth. Regular worship deepens our trust and belief in God's promises and presence. True worship empowers us to share our personal experiences of God's goodness with others. But most of all, worship helps us understand and follow God's perfect and pleasing plans for our lives.

While the benefits are wonderful, we should also be aware of the purpose of our worship. The purpose of worship is not the expectation that God will come and minister to us but that we are coming to minister to Him.

Many people have an unfortunate “worship” experiences because they go expecting God to attend to their needs and aren’t too focused on worshipping or hearing Him.

We are to be expectant that God rewards those who seek Him, according to **Hebrews 11:6**, but the position we’re coming from is also essential. Are we seeking God because we truly want to seek Him, or are we seeking out the gifts He provides? Worshiping God is different from worshipping the gifts of God.

The gifts are not bad. They testify of God’s love towards us! The deeper connection with God leads us into a more intimate relationship with our Father. Since our friendship with God naturally grows when we seek Him, our trust and love also grow.

Transformation is another benefit of worshipping God in Spirit and truth. Genuine worship leads to spiritual growth and transforms our lives by aligning us closer to God. Some aspects of transformation include freedom, joy, love, and peace.

Once we align ourselves with the Holy Spirit and the truth, which is Jesus, we can unite with God. When we worship corporately, we join together with other believers and can encourage each other while growing closer to God as a community.

Worshipping God in Spirit and truth also helps strengthen our faith and aligns us with God’s Will, which, according to **Romans 12:2**, is perfect and pleasing.

Our testimonies are a powerful gift from God because every time they’re shared, it confirms our healing and opens the doors for others to have the chance to see the goodness of God.

We can worship God throughout the day in many different ways. We can give Him Praise and Thanksgiving by Expressing gratitude and admiration for God's blessings and actions. Through our Prayers by having a conversation with God, sharing your heart and listening to His guidance. Engaging with God's Word by reading to understand His character and truth. Admitting sins and struggles to God, seeking forgiveness and healing is a way to worship humbly. Also dedicating your time and efforts to serve God and others, by utilizing your God-given abilities to glorify and serve Him.

Part of worshipping in Spirit and truth is relying on the Holy Spirit’s guidance and being honest with God. Don’t hide behind words that sound good, but are empty, like “everything is okay.” Stick to the Bible when you don’t know what to say.

Praise is expressing gratitude for the things God has done. We can praise Him by pondering and speaking of all the goodness He has shown us. God is not concerned if we are dressed perfectly or can recite words that we don’t understand. God’s concern is the condition of our hearts because everything we do flows from it.

Seek God and praise Him. The only way for our hearts to change and to worship in the Spirit and truth is with God being the focus. So, lean on Him and open your heart up to His truth.

Worship means respectful devotion, loving, honoring, and obeying someone who deserves our highest regard. Worshiping God means acknowledging and celebrating His power and perfection in gratitude. Worship includes understanding and awe of God's Holiness; we remember how great He is and behave reverently in His Presence.

Worship is a key part of our relationship with God, which we can experience because of Jesus Christ. When we worship God, we actively recognize Him as our Creator, Savior, and King. Worship is how we tell God that we love Him. Worship is our "reasonable service" of gratitude for all God has done for us. Worship is a way to spread the Gospel message to non-believers; when others see us worshiping God, they will realize that there is Someone Who deserves our worship, and may want to learn more about Him.

Spiritual disciplines are active ways in which we try to live God's way, demonstrating how much we appreciate His salvation and want to be more like Jesus, which is the best way to honor Him. When we are spiritually disciplined, we are allowing God to control our fallen human instincts with His Own perfect wisdom, which helps us to see more clearly what He is like and have a closer relationship with Him. Worship is a spiritual discipline, and most other spiritual disciplines have a worship element to them, praying, obeying, serving, and trusting in God's guidance are all ways of telling God how much we love and respect Him, and want to do His Will.

In the beginning of this lesson I ask a question, what does worship mean to you. Here is the **Dictionary Definition of Worship.**

As a noun: the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity.

As a verb: show reverence and adoration for a deity; honor with religious rites.

A lot of people out there worship as a noun, feeling or expression. God wants us to show our worship. Just as the verb definition says, we need to show reverence and adoration for and to our God through our worship.

My goal is not to remind you of the God we serve, who He is. My goal is to encourage you to remember that because He is a consuming fire, because He is holy and almighty and sovereign and righteous and awesome, therefore He is to be worshiped with reverence and adoration.

I want to address the subject of reverence in worship. I'm going to mention a few things that I urge you to avoid, things which I presume most of you are already aiming to avoid. And you're doing it for a good reason, but I want to urge you to think about these things and to press on in your faithfulness.

**Many churches put an Emphasis on Joy and Uplifting Experiences.**

As I think about this subject of reverence in worship, the first present-day problem is this: an emphasis on joy and on having an uplifting experience in worship. Joy, certainly in the worship of God, is an important and desirable feature. In fact, you could say, so is having an uplifting experience in worship. We want our people to be edified, to be built up. There's a sense in which this is a Scriptural idea, but there's an emphasis on these things to the point of there being an overemphasis. Large bands play and sing long repetitious songs. People sway back and forth with arms raised, eyes closed. This is not the

essence of worship. They are not what we could call the absolutely necessities of worship, that is, the thing without which there is not true worship. But, that's the way these things are presented, that's the way they are spoken about in our day and age. In fact, when we think about worship nowadays, and when you enter into conversations with people there's almost an assumption that if there's going to be true worship it has to be especially characterized by joy. I don't believe that's what the Scriptures teach.

**Another one is what I call corporate worship.** I don't think Jesus would have went to a church where He had to dress a certain way to be there. Many churches today fall into this category. Suit and tie on the men and women in their Sunday best. I'm not saying we can not be serious in our worship but when we set boundaries that have to be met to worship, it's wrong.

Jesus set on the side of a hill and taught the people. He feed the people setting on grass.

Well that was a different time, they didn't have the things we have today. Really, who just said that? Better do a little reading in that day and time. They had the Temple, yes, but ever since they came back from captivity they also had Synagogues, which is like our church building. But what is the church?

What most Christians don't know is the church is not a building. They think it is and they hold that building in very high regard. That building has to look a certain way, as in the fancy décor they use. That building has becomes an idol in their worship.

I look at some of the churches on TV these days, and wow, talking about over the top. They spend millions on décor. Then as you watch the service you see everyone is dressed to the hilt in their high dollar clothing so they can impress someone else. I'm sorry that's not church. Dressing nice is one thing but trying to impress is wrong.

Okay, I better move on before I get in trouble. But I guess that is not going to happen.

The next thing that has become so wrong in the church is **Entertainment in Worship.**

I know many people would say, "Well, we're just trying to create the best possible worship experience." I would ask the question, "But why then such a production?" I ask this question, why does the entertainment industry set the standard? Why is that? Why is it that the way that things sell determine what's going to be flashed up on the board or the wall behind the music leader rather than what the men of God determine should be used in the worship of God as a general rule? Why do we need the event to get people to church?

Now, before you start to jumping on me, I don't think there is anything wrong with music in our services. King David wrote a lot of the Psalm, which are song. Some of these songs were use in his worship to God with the people. He also was a creator of musical instruments.

But today things have change a bit and not for the better as far as I'm concerned. Many churches are using the event, I call it, to get people in to the church building. They say, well if we get them in we can share the gospel with them. But the problem is, you can hire some famous person or band to come in this week, people will come to see them. But unless their back next week, you probably won't see them again. And they don't just use famous bands and singers to get people in to the church. It can be any number of thing people as a whole like to do such as, ropings, rodeos, famous celebrity speakers, Etc.. I've even seen things like craft fairs settings, with people teaching how to do certain things.

They say what ever it takes to get people in church!

I think some of these people really need to re-read their bible, because if I'm not mistaken God the Father calls those to Jesus for salvation and the ones He want to know and teach. I don't thing the event is what does it.

If I remember in **John 6:44** it says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

So it's not the event that draws people to Jesus, It's the Father and the Father only!

But people have their own way of thinking and that thinking is wrong according to scriptures.

**I'll close out this lesson with this:**

Let these principles of the Word of God about reverence in worship inform and influence the way you order and conduct every part of your public worship. God has put you in a place of influence and authority in the church. Don't cave in to things, desires, requests, etc., that you are not convinced are biblical.

Some of the things where people might recommend change, that you don't feel comfortable about, might come from biblical motivation. They might. I'm simply saying don't cave in when you doubt that.

When the ungodly come in to the church building, we need to make them feel at home and with family. We try not to offend them by what they wear or the way they may look. But it needs to be in a biblical way, not worldly. However, you cannot have God-honoring, biblical worship without offending them with scriptures. But God will do that if He is working on that heart.

I'm not saying that we try to aim to make people feel judged. We preach the Word of God and God will bring that to pass by His Holy Spirit. The key is to do things in a biblical way and let the chips fall where they may. That's what God has called us to do.

Reverence in our worship, is what we will have when we combine the joy of our salvation with those sobering and humbling realities.

So I will finish this lesson with a question. What does Worship have to do with my relationship to Jesus and God the Father? I think you know the answer to that question.

# **A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

## **Lesson 5**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Serving others significantly strengthens our relationship with Jesus by allowing us to actively demonstrate Christ-like love in the world, mirroring his example of selflessness and putting the needs of others first, ultimately leading to a deeper connection with his teachings and purpose, this is clearly illustrated in the Bible.

Jesus exemplified a life of service, washing his disciples' feet and prioritizing the needs of the marginalized. By following his example and actively serving others, we are actively embodying his love and compassion. Serving others requires putting our own ego aside and recognizing that we are not above helping others. This humility aligns with Jesus' teachings on selflessness and prioritizing the needs of others. When we serve others, we experience the fulfillment and joy that comes from giving back to the community, which reflects the happiness Jesus found in serving humanity. Through acts of service, we connect with God's love and grace by actively participating in his work in the world. Serving others provides opportunities for personal reflection and growth as we confront our own limitations and are challenged to step outside our comfort zones.

Let's talk more about serving and how it builds our relationship with Jesus.

### **Scriptures: Mark 10:45**

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

### **Study Notes:**

We live in a world where those with the most authority do the least amount of work. Those with the power don't serve others. They are the ones that are served. Most of us have a secret desire to be served more than to serve. We think we deserve it. We dream of having enough power and wealth so that we never have to work again. Our culture sees the blessed ones as those who get waited on and served.

Jesus showed us that in the kingdom of heaven, it is quite the opposite. The all-powerful God became a human being and served us by dying on the cross. Jesus modeled to us the life of a man for others. He constantly served those around himself. While his disciples were arguing about who is the greatest, Jesus healed people, fed thousands, and humbly washed the dirty feet of those that were fighting for rank in the kingdom of heaven.

To show us what he has in mind, he comes among us as one who serves. Then calls us to serve.

**Matthew 20: 25–27** says, Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Serving others requires new eyes, for we need to see that the needs of our neighbors are as real and important as our own. Most of the time we look right through others, never see them, or hear their cries for help, let alone care about what they need. When we are preoccupied with our concerns, much of the world is simply invisible to us. Seeing others is what the contemporary song calls 'having our Father's eyes' and the Bible calls having the 'Mind of Christ' in **1 Corinthians 2:16**.

This is what helps us to see as God does, poor people and rich people, productive people and non-productive people, educated and non-educated people. The Spirit of Jesus is one of compassion, grace and hope. This is not simply religious rhetoric, it is a way of life, the cruciform or cross-shaped way of life, a life of service and sacrifice. The Christian discipline of service is the way the world discovers the love of God. And how we grow in our relationship with Christ being like Him. We are the way God blesses the earth.

Serving helps us grow in our understanding of God's heart for the lost and hurting people of this world.

Aggressively look for places to serve. This won't be much of an issue for those of us raised with a strong work ethic. The rest of us need to constantly seek places to serve, both in the church and out of the church. Seek ways to serve fellow Christians, but also seek to serve those in your community and at work. If you ever catch yourself saying, "I wish someone would..." perhaps you need to take it upon yourself to be that someone.

Use your stuff to serve others. Everything that we have in our lives is a gift from God. Therefore we should see our stuff as a gift from God not just for us but also for those around us. Serve those around you by sharing your stuff with them. Open your home to share meals with friends and family. Use your garden or tools to care for and maintain more than just your own yard. Develop yourself to see the stuff you have as being used more than just for you but for those around you.

Serve first and ask questions later. Our tendency is to ask the question "Why?" Why should I serve those around me? Is this my area of gifting? How is this going to develop my relationship with Jesus? The reality of it is that these questions can't truly be answered on paper. You can read countless Bible verses. You could hear stories from people's lives. You could hear hundreds of hours of sermons about Jesus humbling himself as a servant. But you won't get it until you mow your elderly neighbor's yard without them asking or paying you. You won't get it until you pick up rubbish in your neighborhood without anybody asking you. If you aren't going to serve until you fully understand why, you'll never get round to it. The reality is you need to serve first and then ask questions, because by serving you'll

find the answers. Many people have discovered their spiritual gift and passion by volunteering to do something that at first seemed unappealing.

Seek a change of heart. **1 Corinthians 13** says that if we do anything without love, it is pointless. If you have a heart that is begrudging towards service, seek God to change your heart. Jesus wasn't reluctant in his service. It was his joy to serve. Seek God to give you a heart that takes deep joy in serving those around you.

I will say this, it takes Discipline! Confront the temptation to serve only when it's convenient or exciting. That's not disciplined service. Ask God for a servant's heart and eyes so you are compelled by his love to serve in ways and times beyond the bounds of any "official" ministry. You may feel inadequate, you may be limited by an unusual schedule, you may be physically incapacitated, but there's still a way for you to serve. People with unusual schedules or physical limitations often make powerful intercessors in a prayer ministry. Despite their limitations, those with a heart to serve always have a way to serve.

Do you remember the Pony Express, the fast mail service that crossed the USA from East to west and back in the 1860's? It was in operation for only 18 months but its been immortalised in movies, TV shows and even in a Theme Park in California. This original courier service relied on horseback riders carrying messages between relay stations connecting the prairies, plains, deserts, and mountains of the Western US and played an important communications role in the Civil War. A letter could get from Missouri to California in 10 days, because riders were expected to travel 70-100 miles a day, which they achieved by changing horses every 20 minutes and keeping the weight down on the horse. The riders travelled light carrying only flour and bacon, borax and cream of tartar, and always rode in shirtsleeves. How would you recruit volunteers for this hazardous job?

An 1860 San Francisco newspaper printed this ad for the Pony Express: **WANTED:** Young, skinny, wiry fellows not over 18. Must be expert riders willing to risk daily. Orphans preferred.

Those were the honest facts of the service required, but the Pony Express never had a shortage of riders. We need to be honest with the facts about Following Christ. Like the Pony Express, serving God is not a job for the casually interested. It's costly service. He asks for your life. He asks for service to Him to become a priority, not a pastime.

The young men of 1860 who read that newspaper ad envisioned an excitement that was far from the reality, the routine of the long, hard hours alone. But they were part of something bigger, something that changed lives.

Most of us think of spiritual practices as meditation, recited prayers, mental disciplines and maybe fasting. What you probably won't include on that list are things like: Listening to someone. Learning a name of an adult or child. Holding the door open. Noticing someone across the room who is struggling. Asking someone how they are doing and actually paying attention. Feeding someone who is hungry.

Visiting with or advocating for someone who is in trouble with the law. Dropping clothes off at an op shop or social service center. Adding your name to the cleaning roster for your Church, a list on which there are usually fraction of those who belong!

You may already think of these practices as spiritual. You may even do them intentionally, as part of your desire to follow Jesus, who clearly favored the small, invisible and private over the flamboyant and public, who modeled paying attention to someone without drawing attention to ourselves.

But I don't know if you think of it as a spiritual discipline, something we do purposely, to bring us closer to Christ, a practice in which we engage whether we are gifted in that way or not. A spiritual practice is a way to be deliberate about matters of the soul. It brings out the sacred in experiences that could otherwise seem just everyday.

Down through the centuries the way of Jesus has been understood to require deliberate and attentive spiritual practices. But you won't often hear the practices of serving being promoted with the same degree of reverence or fervency as what have become known as the interior spiritual practices.

For some reason, when it comes to being a serious follower of Jesus, the spirituality of serving others doesn't seem to count as much as prayer, worship or church attendance. This in spite of the fact that Jesus said such things as when you give don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, when you pray don't be like the Pharisees, and if you want to be my disciples do things like give those without the ability to thank you something as small and ordinary as a cup of cold water. So let's make it our aim to be available to others.

The ministry of serving may be as public as preaching or teaching, but more often it will be as secret as floor duty or cleaning the toilets. It may be as visible as singing up front, but usually it will be as unnoticed operating the sound equipment to amplify that singing. Serving may be as appreciated as a good testimony in a worship service, but typically it's as thankless as washing dishes after a church lunch.

Most service, even that which seems the most glamorous, is like an iceberg. Only the eye of God sees the larger, hidden part of it. Beyond the church walls, serving is baby-sitting for neighbors, taking meals to families in transition, running errands for shut-ins, providing transport for the one whose car broke down, feeding pets and watering plants for holiday takers, and hardest of all, having a servant's heart in our own home. Serving is as commonplace as the practical needs it seeks to meet.

That's why serving must become a Spiritual Discipline. Our self-absorbed individualism rebels against its repetition. Two of the deadliest of our sins, sloth and pride, loathe serving. They blinker our eyes and chain our hands and feet so that we don't serve as we know we should or even as we want to. If we don't discipline ourselves to serve for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom, we'll "serve" only occasionally or when it's convenient or self-serving.

Pride and selfishness can get in the way. Self-righteous service requires external rewards. It needs to know that people see and appreciate the effort. It seeks human applause, with proper religious modesty of course.... Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. It eagerly wants to see if the person served will reciprocate in kind. The flesh whines against service but screams against hidden service. It strains and pulls for honor and recognition.

It will devise subtle, religiously acceptable means to call attention to the service rendered.” So if self-righteousness is the wrong motivation, what should motivate us to want to serve or to decide to serve, whether we want to or not?

The prophet Samuel in **1 Samuel 12:24** exhorted the people of God to service with these words: "But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you".

It is no burden to serve God when we consider what great things He has done for us. Do we realize what our life would be like without Christ? Do we remember what it was like to experience his forgiveness and freedom ? When the fire of a servant's heart grows cold, its time to consider what great things the Lord has done. If we cannot be grateful servants of Him who is everything and in whom we have everything, what will make us grateful?

"Serve the LORD with gladness" says the Psalmist in **Psalm 100:2**. We are not to serve grudgingly or grimly, but gladly. In the courts of ancient kings, servants were often executed for nothing more than looking sad in the service of the king. In **Nehemiah 2**, we can see this happen. You didn't mope or sulk when you served a king. Not only does it give the appearance that you don't want to serve the king, but it is a statement of dissatisfaction with the way he's running things.

So something is wrong if you can't serve the Lord with gladness. Do you serve the church with gladness or with gloom? Do you serve your neighbors willingly or reluctantly? Do your kids get the impression from you that serving God is something you really enjoy or merely endure?

**Psalm 84:10**, Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

To close let me say this. Serving, no matter where put in us the love that Jesus has for us. It helps build our relationship not only with Him but with other Christians. It also gives us a very strong witness for Christ.

## **A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

### **Lesson 6**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

So far in this study of building a relationship with Jesus Christ we have talked about five things, so let recap so we don't forget.

The first item was prayer and how prayer brings us into a closer relationship with Jesus. Prayer is us in constant communication with the Father and Jesus in spirit. As if you were talking to a friend all day. If we communicate enough we also learn to listen, that when the seeking starts to show.

Jesus spoke to the Father often, relaying that importance. He prayed with many people and in groups, but He also spent time alone with God. And during those solitary moments with His Father, we note an intimate communion between the two of them such as in Matthew 26. That opportunity for intimacy through prayer exists for us, too.

To cultivate an intimate prayer life, focus on creating a dedicated space and time for prayer, approaching God with honesty and vulnerability, actively listening for His response, engaging with scripture, and consistently seeking His presence through praise, thanksgiving, and personal reflection, treating prayer as a genuine conversation with God rather than just a list of requests. Some of the key elements of an intimate prayer life could be.

The next thing was God's Word. It could be reading, listening or watching. In today's technology we have many ways to connect with Jesus in the word. Reading the Bible helps strengthen your relationship with Jesus by providing a direct way to learn about his life, teachings, and character, essentially allowing you to "get to know him" better through his own words and actions as recorded in scripture, thus fostering a deeper connection and understanding of his love and message, it's like having a conversation with him through the written word.

It reveals the plan of God for all of mankind. It reveals the nature of God, the sinfulness of man, the plan of salvation in Christ, the prospects of heaven for the saved, the doom of the unsaved in hell, guidelines for the Christian to follow in order to live and act as they should. It is God's word to us.

Then we talked about what a relationship really is. What we discovered might have surprised some people. So just knowing who Jesus is, is not a relationship, otherwise all them demons Jesus run into would be saved. We need to have a verb type relationship with Jesus. A relationship of action. Jesus tells us many times in scriptures what is required for us to know Him. And possibly stepping on a toe or two, Just a Sunday relationship is not enough. Jesus wants us to be with him everyday.

To interact with Jesus each day, Christians often practice daily prayer, reading and meditating on the Bible, actively incorporating his principles into their daily decisions and actions, and seeking his presence throughout the day through mindful reflection and worship, essentially, living a life guided by his example and teachings.

Then talked about what worship really is and how it brings us closer to God the Father and Jesus. Worshiping God was never meant to be a spectator sport. We're meant to dwell with God. That means we should earnestly pursue Him in all areas of life.

There is a difference between performing and worshiping, and we're called to worship God in Spirit and truth. When you worship, remember that God is a spirit, He is everywhere and knows everything.

The Last thing we discussed was serving others. This one can hit home to a lot of people. Our culture sees the blessed ones as those who get waited on and served.

Jesus showed us that in the kingdom of heaven, it is quite the opposite. The all-powerful God became a human being and served us by dying on the cross. Jesus modeled to us the life of a man for others. He constantly served those around himself. While his disciples were arguing about who is the greatest, Jesus healed people, fed thousands, and humbly washed the dirty feet of those that were fighting for rank in the kingdom of heaven.

Now I want to bring all these together within the aspects of our life in Jesus, before we go deeper. Yes it takes all these to have a true relationship with Jesus, but there is also several things which need to happen as each and all are carried out in our lives.

### **Scriptures:**

**Hebrews 6:1** Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of **repentance** from acts that lead to death, and of **faith** in God,

**2 John 1:6** And this is love: that we walk in **obedience** to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

**Hebrews 12:1** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of **witnesses**, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

### **Study Notes:**

If you haven't figured it out, Repentance, Faith, Obedience and Witnessing are a few of the thing we need to make everything we have talked about up to this point come together.

Let's start with Repentance, what is it. Well, you know me let's see what the dictionary says. It says, the action of repenting; sincere regret or remorse. That's sounds about right don't it? Well the bible definition of repentance is a little different.

In the Bible, repentance is a change of heart and mind that involves turning away from sin and seeking God. It refers to an event in which an individual attains a divinely provided new understanding of their behavior and feels compelled to change that behavior and begin a new relationship with God.

The Hebrew word for repentance is derived from conversion or return; the Greek word from change of mind or of intention. And the thing itself corresponds closely to the etymology of both words. The meaning is that, departing from ourselves we are to turn to God, and having taken off our former mind, we put on a new. On this account, in my judgment, repentance can thus be well defined. It is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of Him, and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the spirit. Mortification is defined as, great embarrassment and shame, and Vivification is, the activity of giving vitality and vigour to something.

When we call repentance a turning of the life to God we require a transformation, not only in outward works, but in the soul itself. Only when it puts off its old nature does it bring forth the fruits of works in harmony with its renewal. As I said Repentance consists of two parts, namely, mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit.

Repentance is a reverse process that is the opposite of straying away from the will of God. Repentance is a painful state of human mind, when people realize the enormity of their sins. Repentance is the attitude of abhorring self and the actions that produced separation from God. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit, the deeply profound refining process of the human mind that will redirect, link, and commit the mind to God as the sovereign of the human temple.

Repentance is the presence of Jesus in the life of the sinner. Repentance is abhorring sin. Repentance is a sentence, "Go and sin no more." Repentance is reconciliation with God. Repentance can be expressed verbally, such as in the case of Zacchaeus in **Luke 19:8**. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold".

Through repentance we start towards that relationship with Jesus.

Next, let's talk about Faith. Faith in the dictionary is, complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

Have you ever wondered about faith, doubted that you had it, or wished you had more? Few things are more misunderstood than faith. Yet, few things are more important. Did you know that without faith it is impossible to please God? Try as you might, work as hard as you will, you will not and cannot please God without faith. You don't have to take my word for it. It's right in the Bible, in **Hebrews 11:6**: And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Well, if faith is so important, how do we get it? Even more basic, what is faith, anyway?

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is often called the faith chapter of the Bible because it centers on faith. In verse one, it begins by telling us, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." So this is exactly what we need, a definition of faith. But a definition doesn't do us any good if we can't understand it. So let's look at this definition closely. To begin, what does "the substance of things hoped for" mean? What can the word "substance" mean in this definition?

The original Greek word translated as substance in some Bible versions is *hupostasis*. From that meaning, *hupostasis* came to mean, "a steadfastness of mind," "confidence," or "assurance."

Assurance makes us sure of something. When we say that we hope for something, we are saying that we would like it to be so. But we are not saying that we are sure it will be so. But when we have assurance, we are sure. So faith is what makes us sure of what we hope for.

Now let's look at the last part of the verse. It says that faith is "the evidence of things not seen." Again, it will be helpful to look at the Greek word translated "evidence." The Greek word translated here as "evidence" is *elegchos*. Actually, "evidence" is a good translation of it, but it can also be translated "proof." So, we can say that faith is the evidence or proof of things not seen.

Let's put it together then. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence [or proof] of things not seen." In other words, faith makes us sure of the things we hope for, and that assurance is itself proof of these things.

But what are we to have faith in and how are we to get it? Let's begin to answer that by moving right on into Hebrews 12. Verse 1 essentially says that since we have this great cloud of witnesses or martyrs, the example of these great people of faith, let us go on and look to Jesus, who is the "author and finisher of our faith." Jesus is the cause and the completer of our faith. In other words, He has done everything necessary for our faith.

Do I mean that there is nothing we have to do to work up faith? Nothing at all we must do to work up faith? Yes, I do. The idea you often hear of working up faith is totally foreign to the Bible. Instead, the Bible says that faith is a free gift. Let me repeat that. The Bible says that faith is a free gift.

So how does faith play into our relationship with Jesus? Faith acts as the foundation of a relationship with Jesus, signifying a deep trust and reliance on him, allowing individuals to connect with him through belief in his teachings, promises, and sacrifice, leading to a personal connection where one seeks guidance, comfort, and strength from him, essentially, it's the act of believing in Jesus and committing one's life to following his example.

So if Repentance is the presence of Jesus in our life and Faith is the assurance and the evidence or proof He is in our life, I would say we are well on our way to a relationship with Jesus.

Next let's talk about Obedience. Obedience is an act or instance of obeying. Pretty straight forward. But what role does it play in building our relationship to Jesus.

In Christianity, obedience plays a central role in our relationship with Jesus, acting as a concrete expression of our love for him, signifying our trust in his teachings, and demonstrating our commitment to aligning our lives with his will, essentially, obeying Jesus is seen as a natural response to the love he has shown us, deepening our intimacy with him rather than just following a set of rules.

Love and obedience are intertwined. Jesus himself stated "If you love me, keep my commandments" in **John 14:15**, emphasizing that genuine love for him is manifested through obedience to his teachings. Obedience isn't about blindly following rules out of fear, but rather a conscious choice to live according to Jesus' teachings because we believe in his wisdom and love for us. By obeying Jesus, we demonstrate our trust in his guidance and our willingness to submit to his authority in our lives. As we strive to live according to his teachings, we experience a deeper connection with him and a greater understanding of his will. Obedience is not just outward actions, but also an inward transformation where we begin to think and act more like Jesus in our daily lives.

If all one does is obey the rules because of the consequences and punishment associated with disobeying the rules, then the rules generally get thrown out the window when the rule-maker is no longer around. I guess what I'm saying is that when grounded in love, people want to respond favorably according to the wishes and will of the person who is the object of that love. By our very nature we want to look good in the eyes of someone we're trying to impress. That someone would be Jesus.

It's all about love. Christ is merely reminding us that if you love him, then obeying his rules, his teachings, which were given to us out of the love of the Father, should come from the heart. Our desire to please should override our mere compliance to the rules. The point is obedience to God has so much more to do with wanting to do the right thing for the right reason, than doing the right thing because it is law, punishment notwithstanding.

Obedience means many things about our relationship with God, certainly. It's a hallmark of submission to Him, it's an expression of love and worship, and if we're honest it's probably a manifestation of self-interest, too. But it is also a form of engagement that in and of itself is a knowing of God. By adopting His perspective, we come closer to understanding His nature, and He welcomes that. It is always God's desire to be known, and to make Himself known.

Which also means that obedience is a deeply personal act. And I suspect that's why it's so hard to browbeat others into obedience, to demand it of them. It's behind what Jesus told us about tending to our own sin rather than focusing on other people's in **Matthew 7:3**. Obedience born out of love for God, obedience as an act of knowing and intimacy, isn't something that can be forced. People can't be shouted or guilted into it. In the end, it comes from an understanding of God that desires an even deeper understanding of God, a love that manifests as genuine curiosity and desires to go deeper into a relationship.

Last, but not least, let's talk about witnessing.

Witnessing plays a crucial role in our relationship with Jesus by actively sharing our personal experience of faith with others, demonstrating our commitment to Him, deepening our understanding of His teachings, and fulfilling the call to spread the Gospel, essentially acting as a representative of Jesus in the world by sharing the trans-formative power He has brought into our lives.

By sharing our faith, we express our gratitude for the impact Jesus has had on our lives, showing our appreciation for the gift of salvation. Witnessing isn't just about words, but also about living a life that reflects Christ-like values, allowing our actions to serve as a testament to our faith. The act of actively sharing the Gospel often leads to a deeper personal study of scripture and reflection on our own relationship with Jesus. The Bible instructs Christians to be witnesses for Jesus, making it a direct command from Him to share the good news. The process of witnessing can be a catalyst for personal spiritual growth as we encounter questions and challenges that require us to further explore our faith.

The complexity of Christian relationships should never be underestimated. We live in a world which constantly challenges our faith. It is a world in which Jesus says we are to be His witnesses. We show Christ to the world as the children of God, as disciples of Jesus Christ and as temples of the Holy Spirit. We will never witness to the world by adopting its practices but by witnessing to it. People need to here a sermon through our lives or Witness. It's like a sign in my office, "The best sermon are lived not preached." Our witness tells other were in a relationship with our lord and savior, Jesus Christ.

## A Study of building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

### Lesson 7

#### INTRODUCTION:

I guess we have made it to the last lesson. Hopefully these lessons have opened your eyes to what a real relationship with Jesus looks like in our lives. So as I was thinking on how to close out this series, I thought what better way than, “Living for Jesus.” And I could say, what does it mean to live for Jesus?

The chief duty of every Christian is to love God and obey His word. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” As you begin your walk and relationship with the Lord, determine in your heart to forsake everything in your life you know to be sin.

Sin is any attitude, thought, or action that falls short of God’s glory. There are sins of commission and sins of omission. Sins of commission are acts of disobedience against God’s law as revealed in the Bible. This includes sinful practices and harmful habits. Sins of omission are failure to do good. The Bible says in **James 4:17**, “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” Sin is further a mindset. It is a rebellious, self-centered attitude that says, “I don’t care what God says; I will do as I please.”

One cannot live for God and deliberately practice sin. In **Romans 6:1-2** Paul once asked, “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” He answered his own question: “By no means!

How can we who died to sin still live in it?” Just as one must put down one object to pick up another, the new Christian must lay aside sin to follow Christ. You Are Not Alone. You may be asking, “But how can I do this? I have tried to overcome my sin before, only to fail.” The answer is you can overcome sin in God’s strength. Never forget, you are not alone in serving the Lord. When you came to Christ, He entered your life and gave you a new nature. He now promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” in Hebrews 13:5.

Near the end of Jesus’ ministry, He told His disciples He would soon leave them and return to heaven. However, He left them with a wonderful promise. “I will not leave you as orphans,” He said. He then explained to them what He meant: “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, he dwells with you and will be in you.”

Jesus was saying that He would come to them in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He still comes to us in the same way. Remember, the Holy Spirit now lives inside you. He is ever present to give you the power you need to triumph over sinful practices and habits. The Bible tells us, “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” If you will ask Him, the Holy Spirit will fill you and empower you to live for God. God has also given us His word to strengthen us. Just as food nourishes and strengthens the natural body, God’s word nourishes and strengthens our spiritual lives.

David prayed, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” If you want to have victory over sin, prayerfully read your Bible every day. As you read, respond to what it says and allow God’s word to become part of you.

You may ask, “What should I do if, after trying to live for God, I stumble and commit a sin?” When this happens, you should not despair. Though God is grieved, He does not cast you aside. Nevertheless, your sin has put you in a dangerous place. The Bible describes sin as a wild beast crouching at the door waiting to devour the one who opens it. If not dealt with, your sin can destroy you.

The Bible tells us what we should do when we sin. John wrote in **1 John 1:8-10**, If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

When we sin, the Holy Spirit comes and convicts us. At such times, we should welcome the Spirit’s rebuke, admit our sin, and ask God to forgive us. We should then ask God to fill us again with His Spirit and empower us to live holy lives.

Okay, let’s change gears. As you work towards a closer relationship with Christ, nothing is more important than your being immediately filled with the Holy Spirit. When you repented of your sins, the Holy Spirit came inside you and gave you new life in Christ. Now, He wants to fill you and empower you to serve God better.

The Bible commands us to “be filled with the Spirit,” in Acts 1. This was Jesus’ last command to His disciples before He returned to heaven. He ordered them to “wait for the promise of the Father, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” The disciples obeyed, and on the Day of Pentecost, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Peter then stood and explained that the promise of the Spirit is for all God’s people, for “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” The promise still holds true today. God will give His Spirit to anyone who repents and follows His Son Jesus.

The main reason you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit is so that you might be empowered as Christ’s witness to your lost family and friends. Jesus promises, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.” Along with power to witness, being filled with the Spirit brings other wonderful blessings into the Christian life. These blessings include an increased awareness of Christ’s presence, overflowing joy, and a greater love for God and for others.

The experience further imparts to the believer greater effectiveness in prayer and the power needed to do the works of Christ, including the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Every believer should earnestly desire to be filled with the Spirit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is received by faith, as is every gift from God. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit today by taking three simple steps of faith. Ask in faith. The Bible says that God gives to those who ask. So, begin your quest by asking God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. As you do, expect Him to keep His promise and give you the Holy Spirit. You will sense the Spirit's presence coming upon you. Receive by faith. Once you sense God's Spirit on you, reach out by faith, and receive Him inside you. In faith, pray, "In Jesus' Name, I receive the Holy Spirit!" As you pray, remember Jesus' promise: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." The moment you believe, the Holy Spirit will enter and fill your entire being. You will sense His powerful presence inside.

As a witness for Christ, your speaking will not be forced, it will be a natural flow of supernatural words. You should simply allow it to happen, and cooperate fully with the Spirit by boldly speaking out in faith. As you follow Christ, you can expect many blessings to come into your life. These blessings include peace, provision, and the hope of heaven. Along with these blessings, however, comes responsibility. A major responsibility of every follower of Jesus is to witness for Him.

We witness for Christ when we share the good news of salvation with others. We tell them that Christ is indeed the Savior of the world. He is the Lamb of God who died for the sins of all people then rose from the dead on the third day. Now, if they will put their faith in Him, they can be saved.

We also can Witness what Jesus has done in our lives. Some of what He carried us through. Our witness comes through loud and clear if God leads someone to us. And as I said, don't worry about what to say, the Holy Spirit will give you the words needed at the time if only you listen.

Christ is our model of how we should witness. Jesus witnessed in three ways. With His grace-filled words, with his beautiful life, and with His powerful works. Concerning His words, Jesus testified, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." Concerning His life, the people declared, "He has done all things well." And concerning His works, Matthew writes, "He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people." You should determine to witness for Christ in the same ways.

As you witness, As I said, don't forget to tell them what He has done for you personally. Tell them how you met Christ, how He has changed your life, and what He means in your life today. Your personal testimony can be a powerful means of winning others to Christ.

Witness with your life. Not only should you witness with your words, like Jesus, you should also witness with your life. Your way of living should testify to what God has done in your life. As people observe you pure life and your loving kindness toward others, they will be drawn to Christ.

You can also witness for Christ with your good works. These works include acts of compassion and demonstrations of God's power. They testify to Christ's great love and mighty power.

Some Christians have a wrong idea about serving God. They believe that God's work is to be done only by the preachers. These misguided Christians believe their job is simply to go to church each Sunday and listen to what the preacher has to say. "After all," they say, "that's what we pay him for." The Bible, however, teaches that every Christian is called to a life of faithful service to God and others.

The Bible compares the church to the human body, referring to it as "the body of Christ." Just as our bodies have many members and each member has its own important function, so is it with the church. Paul wrote, "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

The church functions best "when each part is working properly." When even the slightest member of the body does not function as it should, the entire body is affected. For instance, one sore toe can cause the entire body to limp. It is the same with the church. If any member refuses to do his or her part, the entire church is weakened. It is therefore important that every Christian find his or her place in the body of Christ. God is depending on each of us.

One can serve the church in various ways. Some things Christ has called every Christian to do. For instance, He has called us all to pray and to share our faith with others. And He has called us all to give to God's work and to lovingly care for one another. There are, however, special tasks that He has especially gifted each of us to do. These giftings include both natural abilities and spiritual gifts. We should regard both as sacred gifts from God.

Paul says in **Romans 12:6** that we each have "gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." These gifts include prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, showing mercy, and many others. Other areas of service include practical things such as helping with projects, ushering, building maintenance, and other practical chores.

Christ has a place of service for you in His church, the body. It is important that you find that place. You may be wondering, how can I find my place of service in the church? You can begin by being available to help out wherever needed. When the pastor asks for volunteers, be the first to step up. He may need help in bible study, in outreach, or just in the church. Whatever the need, do your best to help. The Bible says in **Ecclesiastes 9:10**, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

While every Christian is called to serve God, you should know that God places a special call on some. For instance, God called Samuel to be a judge, and He called Isaiah to be a prophet. Paul testified that he was "called to be an apostle." He further wrote that that Jesus "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Possibly Christ will call you to be a pastor, evangelist, missionary, or church planter. Time will tell. What is important now is that you remain full of the Spirit and keep your heart open to the Lord and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, if He should speak, be like Isaiah who answered, "Here am I! Send me."

In closing let me say this, I hope you have enjoyed the journey of building a relationship with Jesus Christ, and that you have applied each lesson to your life. The Bible tells us in **James 1:22** to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only.” If you have applied the lessons, take a moment to look back and notice how your life has begun to change.

Remember, however, this is just beginning. You now have your whole life to live for God. You would do well to keep this book handy and to occasionally review its lessons. You will also want to share what you have learned with others. Most of all, however, you should keep your Bible near, and read it every day. And stay full of the Holy Spirit by remaining constant in prayer and in your commitment to God’s will.

As we close our study, allow me to pray for you.

Dear Lord, I pray for my friends who have studied this book. I thank You for saving them and making them Your children. I pray that they will continue to apply the lessons they have learned in this study, and that they will become strong in You. That they will have the relationship you want from them with you. Walk with them and continue to work in their lives so that, one day, when they stand before You, You may be able to say to them, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” In Jesus name, I pray. Amen

God Bless