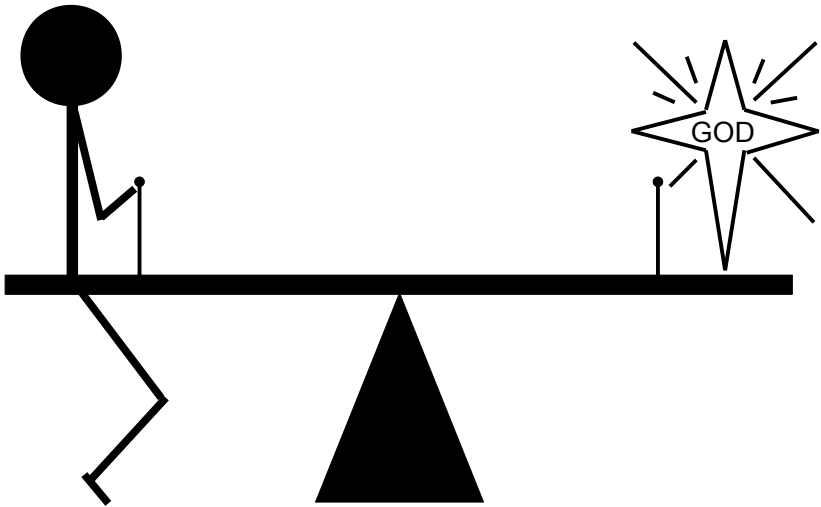


The Christian Spiritual Diet

By John A. Aeby



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the author of this book. The Lord told me that until this book was finished that I wouldn't be able to get a full time job. I tested His word over a hundred and fifty times to find what He said was true. Many of those times I had great recommendations and followed through the entire interview process until I finally came in second place for the one position. I thank all that supported me in many ways from the small jobs and many donations the Lord used to provide for my needs until the book was completed.

As far as the cost of this book, it's my intention to carry as much of the financial burden that I can to cover all copyright and publishing costs. Others may reproduce this book in its entirety at their own expense. I firmly believe that no man should benefit or have gain from the Gospel. All men should freely have access to what good the Lord Jesus has for His people. I trust that the Lord will provide for my needs by other means (1Tim.6).

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INTRODUCTION

As we listen to Christian radio programs and read Christian self help books, our walk for Jesus becomes more and more complicated. We struggle trying to balance all the information that is available to us in our search for a strong Christian walk. Many times we find ourselves overwhelmed to the point of wanting to "drop out of the race." It seems that God puts us up against unfair and impossible tasks. How can we become perfected if we are so imperfect due to the plight of sinful corruption? Surrounded by all the help we need, we sometimes find ourselves feeling hopeless and incapable. Is God that cruel? Has God left us without the help we need to move forward? Of course not. There's just something about retaining the simplicity of Jesus Christ. Over all, I'm not saying that it isn't good to listen to Christian radio programs or to read additional material that may better help our understanding of the Bible or our God. What I hope to teach is how to put everything into balance or to have a better perspective on our Christian walk, making our walk far less complicated.

To help relate to the issue of being overwhelmed, lets take a look at a disease. If our body had cancer, the cancer in our body would cause many symptoms. Fever, body pain, nausea, Jaundice,

sudden weight loss and loss of appetite are just a few possible symptoms that come from cancer. We may treat the symptoms all day long but treating the symptoms never cures the cancer. We do need to recognize the symptoms because it's the symptoms that let us know that there is a problem in our body. Just the same as having a physical disease, our spiritual body works in much of the same way. Within our spiritual body, we have a cancer and it's called sin. We can't operate on it but Jesus is the cure. In the same way cancer causes symptoms, sin also causes symptoms. Lust, hate, coveting, jealousy, greed, impatience, adultery, fornication and lying are just a few of the symptoms of sin. Again, our problem is that we keep trying to attack the symptoms instead of dealing with the source issue of the sin in our flesh. The one true cure is Jesus Christ and if we don't apply Him to our lives effectively then one or many of the symptoms will return. We need to stop attacking the symptoms in ourselves or others and start to simply recognize the symptoms as warning flags to the real issue of not applying Jesus Christ in our lives as we should.

We need to shed away all of the things that aren't foundational toward our Christian walk. Everything that isn't a scriptural (spiritual) *requirement* of God has a way of hindering our walk by throwing us off balance and throwing us off course. Man has a distinct nature to add on to God's laws. Eve added to God's command when she said we shouldn't eat or touch the fruit of the tree or they'll die (Gen.3:2-3). God didn't say that we

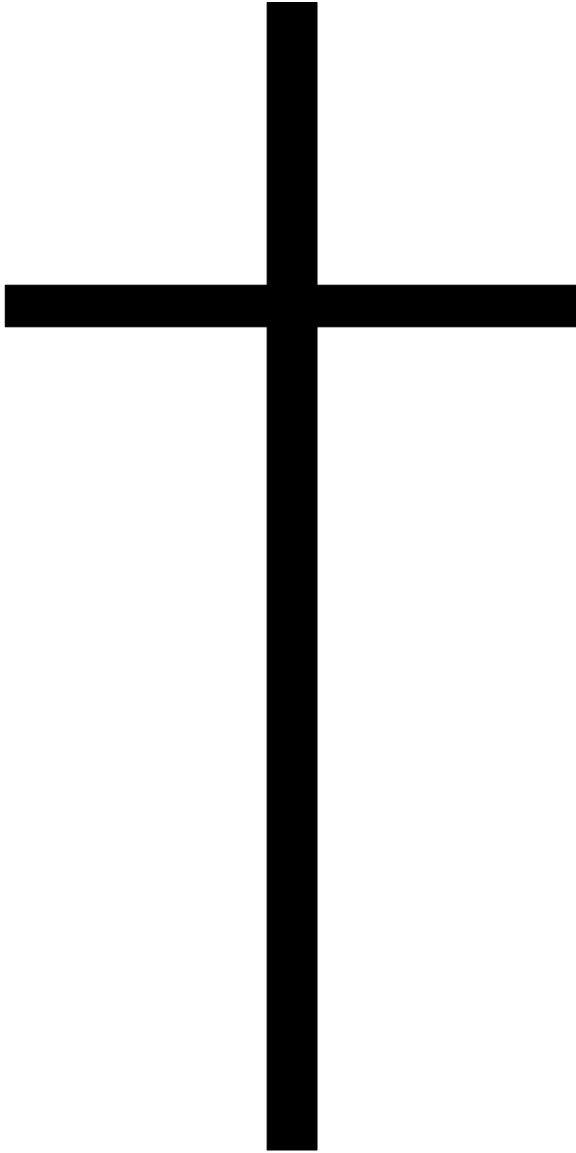
couldn't touch the fruit but to the contrary we were supposed to tend the fruit (Gen.2:15-17). How could we tend the fruit without touching it? So, even in the beginning of history, man has begun to add our own rules onto Gods commands. Man continued to add to the laws even in Jesus' time. The Scribes and Pharisees fought Jesus with great anger, time and time again, to defend their rules. Jesus at one point said that for the sake of their traditions they transgress the law (Mat.15:3-7). Jesus had to defuse these laws man added and placed on themselves. The fact is that we put ourselves in danger doing so (Mat.5:20). In this case the scribes and Pharisees clearly have worshiped God with lip service and not from their heart.

We have to admit that chances are, we have some personal doctrinal garbage that we need to "take to the curb." This isn't intended to be a personal attack on your character or identity, but there is a bit of a need for some house cleaning. Sometimes it isn't easy to look past what we believe and/or how we were raised because of what I call *childhood familiarity*. We build our identity on what we are taught to be true. When someone speaks against what we believe, we take it as a personal attack. This also contributed to the anger the Scribes and Pharisees had when Jesus confronted them. Throughout the pastoral/christian scholar communities there are thousands of differences in scriptural interpretation. The only one that knows which interpretation is correct is the Lord. The Holy Spirit needs to be our source

(John16:12-15). We need to read scripture and allow the spirit to interpret it for us, instead of taking man's opinion that is often swayed by selfish gain.

These issues I view as being the complexity of man vs. the simplicity of Christ. There are a few requirements that I found that can't simply be placed to the side because they are fundamental. Most important is the cross. So, on the cross I've hung the rest of our spiritual requirements for a balanced spiritual life. Now we have a visual aid to help us remember what these requirements are. As we place each piece on the cross, we begin to have an image to remind us of the requirements. Similarly to the food pyramid that reminds us of a balanced diet for our bodies, we can use the cross itself to remind us of our spiritual balanced diet.

Each chapter of this book will be dedicated to each of these spiritual requirements. With each piece we'll build a strong spiritual foundation for our spiritual walk. Also, in each chapter I plan to dispel some of the issues that need to be taken to “the spiritual curb.”



chapter 1

THE CROSS

A few times I have run across someone that was concerned about the cross being an idol. I have to admit that the concern is a legitimate one. It's good to have the cross as a reminder of what God has done but we have to remember that it was man made. The importance of the cross is to remember what it was used for. God used the cross to accomplish two very important things. One was of course salvation and the second was reconciliation.

When we come to the communion table, we have the bread and the wine. Most people recognize that the wine represents, Jesus' blood and it's by His blood that we are washed clean. Again, most people recognize what the bread represents, His flesh but most don't realize the importance of what His broken flesh does for us.

Salvation came to us through Jesus dieing on the cross and paying our debt to death, so we wouldn't have to. Salvation is usually what comes to mind when someone sees or mentions the cross. It's ok to equate the cross to salvation but there's more. When Jesus was crucified there was a great veil that separated men from the Holy of Holies. It kept men from being able to enter in before the presence of God. When Jesus was crucified it was split by the hand of God from top to bottom (Mat 27:51.) This was the

sign of Jesus' flesh being divided. His flesh was divided for reconciliation of men to God. Again Peter said that "by His stripes we are healed" (1 Peter 2:24.) The word Healed literally translated means to cure or to make whole. Bringing two halves together to make one.[iaomai-G2390](Strong Pg. 466 ; vines Pg 203.) Jesus' body was broken so that we can become whole again with God (Heb.10:19, Mat.27:51)

In the beginning, before sin came into the world, we walked and talked with God readily on the earth. Once Adam and Eve ate the fruit of knowledge, sin entered the world and God had to divide us from Eden and Himself for our sake(Gen.2:16–17,Gen.3:6-7,Gen.3:22-24). Our sin-filled body simply couldn't exist in the presence of God and His Holiness. To be in God's presence would be like turning a light on..... darkness is then destroyed. Through His son and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we again have the ability to walk and talk with God. So the second accomplishment of the cross was reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ.

There is more on the cross than our sin !

Today we look and see Jesus on the Cross and rejoice because our sins are nailed on it with Him. There is however, something else nailed on the cross with Him. This other thing is harder to accept for many. I have even had folks rage in anger at

my suggestion of it. With this in mind, let me share with you a couple testimonies to help the understanding of those that may have a difficult time accepting the other thing that's on the cross with Jesus.

One day, I was at a grocery store with my daughter. While I was in the car, in a parking spot, an older man backed into my car as he was trying to leave. The older man became upset and was apologetic about the accident. I recognized that it wasn't intentional and He was sorry for what he had done, so I told him not to worry about it. In the spirit I said " It's OK, I'm not worried about my car and your more valuable than my car is."

I had the right to make him wait for the police to fill out a report. I had the right to force him to pay for the damages and even my time. God's mercy, in that moment, was more powerful and impacted his life greater than the Law and my rights ever could.

A second testimony...

I was hauling a new trailer as I went through a drive through window to buy lunch. After I received my lunch, I pulled up to give the person behind me room as I sorted through my lunch bag. While I was parked, the person behind me got his

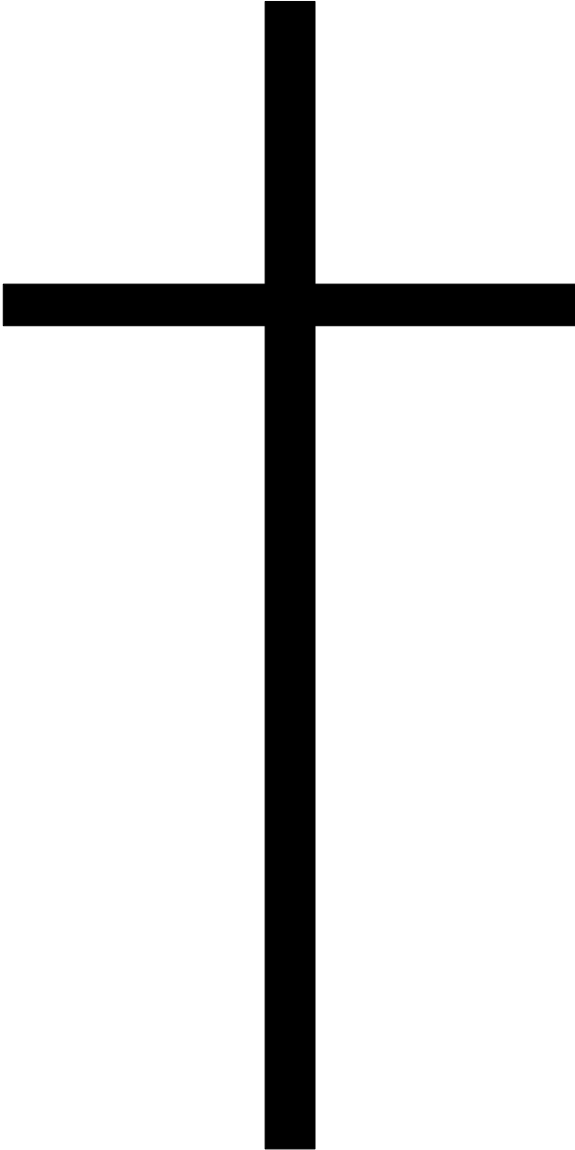
meal, forgot about me and drove into my trailer. He was driving a new, gold trimmed, Cadillac Escalade and I was driving an old Chevy blazer with character. He was a young black man in a predominately black neighborhood and I was a seemingly out of place white man. We met each other out of our vehicles at the damage to my trailer. I bent the fender away from the tire so I could continue to drive. I turned and shook the man's hand and said " It's OK, don't worry about the damage to my trailer. It's not worth any more fuss." He looked shocked and confused as he said " OK, Thanks." As I was walking back to my car, a man that was watching the incident from another parking lot yelled out to me saying, " Hay You!!! I saw you !!! You're a good man ! You're a good man !"

Again, I had the right to claim for damages. I had the right to "make him pay" for my inconvenience and my time. God's mercy was much more powerful and life changing in that moment. Not only did God's mercy shine on the man that hit me but also on the ones that witnessed the whole scene.

The other thing that's nailed on the cross with Jesus and our

sin, is our rights. Jesus told us to turn the other cheek and to give our cloak also. Jesus told us to carry our enemies load for two miles instead of one (Mat.5:39–42). We have been bought through the price of Jesus' blood and our bodies are not our own but God's (1Cor.6:19–20). Now we were set free from sin through Jesus' blood but are now slaves to righteousness (Rom.6:18+19). Set free from sin that is to destroy us but willfully we surrender to the shackles of Love to righteousness. Through Jesus' act of obedience to God at the cross, He has fulfilled the law that we have no hope of justification (Gal.3). Jesus fulfilled the law and now we do what's right, not because we have to but because we want to. Jesus transforms us from the inside out and we have the Holy Spirit to follow through faith.

PRAYER



Chapter 2

PRAYER

Prayer is where GOD defines YOUR personal relationship with
HIM

Prayer is a necessary requirement for our growth (Mat.4:4). In this one verse alone, it's made clear that we require God's input. It's true that we were created just for that purpose. We were created through and for God's love. Prayer is a difficult place to broach because it's a place that is very personal. People communicate with God on many different levels. Some may talk to God during grace at the table while others spend hours praying before God on their knees in a closet. Some may not hear the voice of God where others may hear an audible voice and carry on a conversation. Each level of relationship directly depends on a person's spiritual maturity level. There is nothing wrong about being at any level as long as we are looking to God for growth. We shouldn't look down at another person because they aren't as spiritually mature nor should we think that we are less of a person because someone else may be more spiritually mature. In Gods' eyes, we are loved the same (Romans 2:11). We should look however, for the increase of our walk (1 Corinthians 12:30-31). We should always look for our personal increase in spiritual maturity.

When I first met the Lord I was fifteen. His presence came into my room and I could sense what He said and followed His direction. When I obeyed Him I was baptized in the Holy spirit about four o'clock in the morning and was able to hear His voice in the spirit clearly. If you have been baptized in the spirit you know it. If you aren't sure, I encourage you to pray about it.

There is a difference between accepting Jesus as a personal savior, the baptism of water and the baptism of the holy spirit. In the book of acts (Acts 10:44 – 48) men were baptized in the spirit before they were baptized in water. Then there were men that were baptized in water but didn't even know about the Holy spirit (Acts 19:1-7). I have heard folks believe and teach that when you're baptized by water that you're automatically become baptized in the Holy Spirit. By the evidence just given, it isn't true. Now I don't want to put God in a box because I'm sure there are many that received the baptism of the Holy spirit when they were baptized in water but the main thing to understand is that there is a difference. By my own testimony, I was able to sense the voice of God before I was baptized in the Spirit but after baptism in the Spirit I was able to hear Him clearly.

Now, I equate the baptism of the Holy Spirit with being born again and this is why. Jesus said that you can't enter or see the kingdom of God without being born again (John 3:3-8). Jesus said that there is a difference between being born of the flesh and being born of the spirit. When you are baptized in the spirit you become

a new creature. Does this mean that if you aren't baptized in the spirit that you aren't saved? No. Paul said "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom.10:8-9 (NKJV)). However, The Holy Spirit is our helper and enables us to do what we normally can't do without Him.

The Word of God

An importance of being baptized in the spirit is clarity of His spoken and written word. Now, the word of God is what God speaks. Scripture is God breathed and contains what was once spoken from the mouth of God that is now written. John said that there isn't enough room in all the world that could contain everything that the Lord Jesus has done (John 21:24-25). How much more has God spoken than done. Every time scripture refers to the "word of God" it's talking about what's spoken, not written. This begins to touch on the *childhood familiarity* for some that I spoke of in the introduction. Lets look at some scriptural examples:

2 Tim 3:16 - 17 (NKJV)

"¹⁶All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction

2 Tim 3:16 - 17 (NKJV)(continued)

in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Here, the word, "scripture" [graphe-G1124] is used to convey a Holy writing; "God inspired." (Strong, Greek dictionary pg 20). In context, it's referring back to scripture itself.

John 19:21 (NKJV)

²¹Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'""

Here, the word, "write" [grapho-G1125] is used to convey something written by man, without being inspired by God.(Strong, Greek dictionary pg 21).

Matt 12:36 (NKJV)

³⁶*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*

Here, the word, "word"[rhema-4487] means men speaking, not God speaking (Strong, Greek dictionary pg. 63).

2 Tim 4:2 (NKJV)

²Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season.

Here, the word, “word”[logos-G3056] means what is spoken with deity or what God speaks (Strong, Greek dictionary pg 45). Paul is saying that we need to preach that God can speak to you and into your life because of the reconciliation done through Jesus on the cross. Speaking not through Scripture but by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3:2 (NKJV)

² while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

Whenever the words, “word of God”[rhema-G4487 and theos-G2316] in scripture are in conjunction, then in every case “word” is the Greek word rhema but is used to describe God speaking because of the conjunction (again not speaking to us through Scripture but by the Holy Spirit and by God's mouth) (Strong, Greek dictionary pg 63+36).

In this chapter, it's important to understanding that the “word of God” has everything to do with prayer. We speak to God and He speaks to us though the Holy Spirit. This is the same as having a conversation with anyone else we know, except, this

conversation is with God and is prayer. Now we're delivered from the law and the letter but it's the spirit that we should now live in and for (Rom. 7:6). Again, Jesus said that it's the spirit that leads us into all truth (John 14:25-26).

Finally, we have to look at John 1:1-14. In verse 14 Jesus Christ is clearly identified as the Word. In every use of the word "word" from verses 1-14 "Logos" is used. Taking this into consideration, we now see that "Logos" is Jesus. Truly, Scripture does testify of Jesus and many try to find eternal life in scriptures but don't receive eternal life. Scriptures truly testify that Jesus is the way to eternal life and that we need to seek after Him (John 5:39+40). Our job is truly not to preach scripture but to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, (2 Tim. 4:2)(1 Cor. 1:23)

Different ways to pray.

The most common prayer is mostly heard at the kitchen table called grace. Scripturally, all we are required to do before eating is to thank God for our food (1Tim.4:4,Mat.15:36, Mat.26:27). Giving thanks is important because it's a moment to reflect on God's blessings and to not take them for granted. That's not to say that it's wrong to have a lengthy prayer before eating except that your food might get cold and that's OK too. We do have to be careful that our prayer doesn't become ritualistic or mechanical. A ritualistic prayer tends to lose its meaning and

becomes less important. Praying the Lord's prayer is a good example of this (Mat.6:9-13). God didn't intend for us to ritualistically use His example because it does lose its meaning but it is intended to be an example to pray like this...

Dear Lord,
you are so Holy,
help me be obedient to you
so that your will is done in my life
living in the spirit and not in the flesh
please take care of all my needs
please forgive me and have your mercy on me
I need your strength to keep from giving into temptations,
keep anything away from me that isn't from you,
I stand in your kingdom
and give you all the glory
forever and always
amen!

This is another way or example to pray. It needs the following points.

Call out to Him
give Him praise
submit to Him
acknowledge His authority in humility

imitate Him

petition Him for all your needs

ask for forgiveness, confessing your sins

ask Him for His help to fight temptations

ask for His protection

Acknowledge that the church is His not ours

give Him all the credit not taking any credit for ourselves

acknowledge He's eternal

acknowledge that we're held accountable for our prayer

There are folks that may pray a couple times a day, then there is something about praying without ceasing (1Thes.5:17). What this means is, after being baptized in the Holy spirit, you acknowledge God's presence and direction all day long. This is also called walking in the spirit. I'll discuss walking in the spirit more in chapter 5 (Pg.46).

Intercessory prayer is the spirit praying through us for a person or group of people. That group of people can be identified as a specific group like a church or a group of people identified by a region like a city, state or country. Because Intercession is done through the spirit it's best taught by the spirit as far as how, what and when it's accomplished. Intercessory prayer requires the baptism of the Holy Spirit and its authority. Intercession is also a key to revival. If any person or group is in need of revival then intercession with lamenting prayer is sometimes required.

All in all, prayer has everything to do with gaining a deeper relationship with God. The more time we spend with God, the more that we get to know Him. Many will truly fail without time in prayer and getting to know Him (Matt 7:21-23). Lastly remember that prayer isn't something to boast or be puffed up about but always done in humility (Matt 6:6-18).

Fasting

In comparison, there are only a few scriptures that deal with fasting. Fasting is when you do without something that your dependent on for a duration of time. Most often it refers to doing without eating food. The purpose of fasting is to make the flesh weaker to help the spirit to be stronger. The longest duration of a food fast in scripture that I can recall is forty days (not assuming that I know everything)(Matt 4:2). If anyone should fast they need to do so with wisdom. Fasting does tear the body down and it wouldn't be a good Idea to fast for forty days right before or after a surgery. Fasting before or after a surgery could very well kill you. Fasting is ALWAYS accompanied with prayer. Without prayer, fasting is in vain and does more damage than good. This is an area that I'm not by any means an expert and would encourage you to study fasting carefully and make sure you can fast safely. Above all, be sure it's something that God leads you to do and not something that you want to do for attentions sake.

Seeking God

James 4:7-10

Over the years I've talked to folks about seeking God and even pastors struggle with this. The biggest problem is that it seems to contradict scriptures that talk about God being omnipresent. It is true that God is everywhere at all times. So, why do we have to seek Him? It isn't to bring Him to you but to bring yourself to Him.

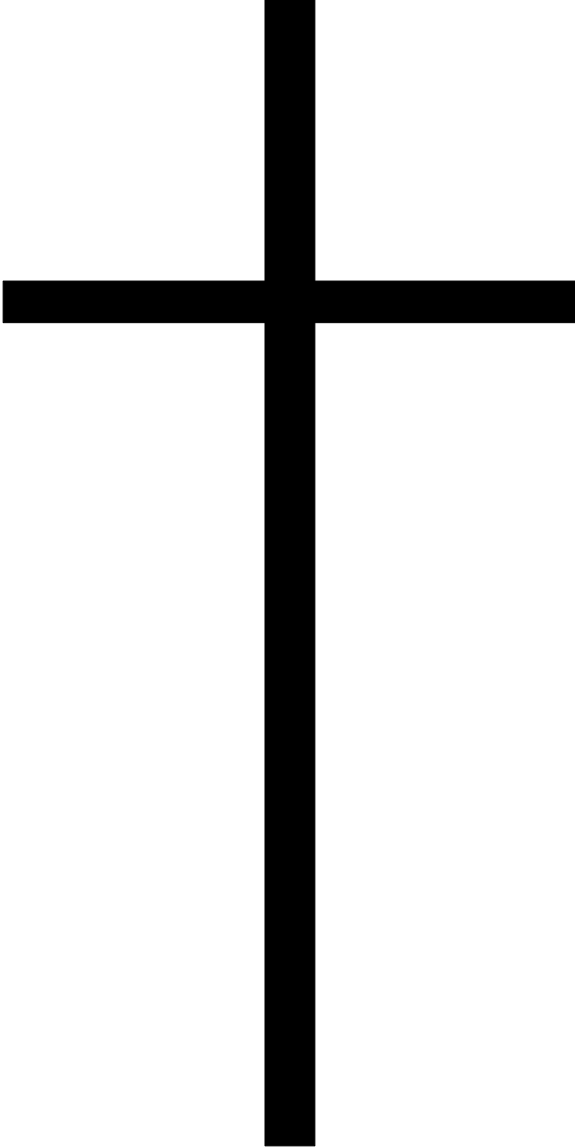
As we make mistakes in our life, these mistakes put up walls between us and God. Just like a child that has done something wrong and hides from their parents, we have a tendency to hide our face from God just like Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:8). The process of seeking God reveals the walls that are present so we know what needs to be brought down allowing His presence to come into us. There are over three hundred references about seeking God in scripture so there is something significant about the process. Recently, I seem to be helping more and more people of God to learn how to seek the Lord. I feel it's important to go over the process in this book.

There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). There is condemnation and there is conviction. Condemnation drives you away from Christ where conviction drives us toward Him. Condemnation takes away your hope and self esteem where

Conviction is the beginning of humility and repentance. Condemnation is what erects the walls in our life that separates us from Jesus. Conviction gives us joy and eagerness for more correction. Condemnation is from the liar and accuser that wants to destroy us. Conviction comes from God with the hope of restoration, love and growth.

In the process of seeking the Lord, there may be times when you can't seem to get to the place of being still before Him. The enemy many times fights against us to keep us from being in the Lord's presence. Remember what the Apostle Paul said, "we don't wrestle against flesh and blood..."(Eph 6:12). The word to emphasize here is "wrestle." Sometimes we have to be faithful and wrestle for the Lord's blessings and as we are faithful the enemy will flee (James 4:7-9). Be completely submissive to the Lord. Recognize your sins and approach Him in humility. We are never worthy of His presence. It's by His mercy that we can go to Him boldly. The Lord doesn't move because we demand it. He moves because He loves us and because of our petitions. When you know the Lord's voice, sit still until the Lord gives you the release to go. In doing so, you'll receive His greater blessings. Don't just give the Lord your time but give Him your quality time. Cheating God only cheats yourself.

PRAYER



SCRIPTURE

Chapter 3

SCRIPTURE

Scripture is a very important part of our spiritual diet but it can also be destructive. As I mentioned before, you can have many perspectives on the same verse of scripture. The “word of God” is an example of having a different perspective but lets look for a moment at a different example. Does Psalm 37:4 tell me that if I want a Cadillac or Mercedes that he'll give it to me or does it say that because I delight in the Lord that He will change my old desires and give me new ones? I've seen folks view that scripture in both ways. One of these views can be quite destructive.

One of the main reasons that I talked about prayer first is because it is required to have the spirit to interpret scripture for us. Scripture itself teaches we should have died to the law, but it's the spirit that we should now live in and for (Rom.2:29,Rom.7:6). Remember that Jesus said the spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13). Does it mean that because the law is dead to us that we should do without scripture? Absolutely not! Scripture is still a beautiful gift from God and is “God Breathed.” Four important things scripture is for is doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).

Doctrine defined is, “a teaching or an instruction (vine, pg. 331).” Doctrine is the set of principles or precepts that define

God's character or what we should believe. Today, this is an evident problem. We turn on the TV to listen to a sermon, then change the channel to hear a second sermon that contradicts the first. There are so many different doctrines and opinions that it's evident that the enemy has gotten into a few ears to distort the truth. This isn't necessarily the fault of the speaker although some responsibility does lay on his/her shoulders. Remember that Paul said that we aren't fighting against people but a spiritual enemy (Eph 6:12). We do have the responsibility to use scripture as the tool intended to reproof and/or correct our doctrine.

Reproof is when you read a particular passage that reinforces a truth that you already know. Reproof also helps scripture to stay fresh in our minds, to serve its purposes that the spirit needs it to, in season and out. Reproof is also something we can apply to a relationship with others. As we hear someone speaking about doctrine, we can give affirmation to him/her by quoting or referencing a scripture that would apply.

Correction is when we are reading scripture and we find that a particular passage may not state what we thought it did. Correction should always be positive. Remember that if we love Jesus, we should also love correction (Prov. 3:11+12). For me, I see correction as an opportunity to grow or learn. We also may give correction to another but always remember that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). We should never put someone down but to the contrary, lift them up for the sake of

restoration. If we give correction with condemnation then it isn't from God, it's from our flesh.

To better understand “instruction into righteousness”, lets look at what righteousness is. In Hebrew, righteousness [tsedaqah-H6666] means the being of right or justified (Strong, Heb. dic. Page 98). In Greek, righteousness [dikaiosune-G1343] means having the equity of good character or action (Strong, Greek dic. Page 23). So scripture is a tool to teach us how to build a life that is full of God's character and truth.

Up to this point I've stated that we can't read or understand scripture without the holy spirit. Now, I also say that scripture is a tool that we have to help us understand God, Jesus and the Holy spirit. We also need to take into consideration John 5:39. This is a short scripture that also explains the purpose of scripture. In general it states that scripture speaks or leads us to Jesus Christ. This really comes together when we reexamine all the scripture references that use the term “word” or “word of God”(remember John 1:16). So now we have a new perspective of what scripture is saying when we read those verses again in context. Again, I encourage you to reread and reconsider the context and perspective of what the spirit of God is trying to say. Scripture, in a whole, is directing us to a personal relationship with a living God (Matt. 4:4+7:23).

JESUS Fulfilled Scripture/Law

Imagine for a moment when you were a child. As a child, do you remember the feelings of wanting to imitate someone you looked up to? Whether it's a parent, grandparent or sibling, most can recall someone in their life that they wanted to imitate. When we are exposed to the fulness of God's love through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and by the mercy of God through Jesus the son, there is an instinctive reaction of wanting to imitate God. It's through this reaction that we do what we are supposed to do, not because we have to but because we want to. Our love for God is so great that we naturally want to imitate or follow Him.

It is impossible to follow the entirety of the Law. No man is perfect. There is going to be a Law that we'll break or a Law that we fail to follow. Gal. 3:10 said that if you live by the law you live under a curse. It's by believing in Jesus Christ that you have eternal life and avoid the curse through walking in the Holy Spirit. Think of it this way. When we followed the Law we may not remember all of its contents and fail. When we follow the Holy Spirit (the author that knows all of the law's contents and won't contradict any of its contents), We are simply lead through life without conflicting with the Law. We have now become enabled to no longer fulfill the lusts of the flesh and walk in perfection (Gal. 5:16). In this the Law is fulfilled through Jesus Christ thru his death and resurrection that enabled all flesh to be born of the spirit.

We are no longer accountable to the Law but to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Does this mean that scripture is no longer needed? No, it means that our perspective on scripture has changed. Scripture has now become a check system as to our walk instead of a Law system. We need to begin looking at scripture as If/Then statements. An example would be 1 John 2:9. IF we hate our brother THEN we are walking in darkness. By this if/Then statement, if we are hating a brother (in or out of Christ), then the love of Jesus isn't in us and we need to go to Jesus and allow Him to change us from the inside-out. This is the very precept that John is introducing us to (1 John 1:4-2:11). Scripture became a tool that we eagerly hunger after for the sake of correction instead of a Law that we hide from in fear of condemnation (Rom 8:1).

Translations

There are many translations of the bible today. Many are paraphrased (simply rewritten to make the bible easier to understand), while other translations are from the original Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. Some translations (claiming to be from the original text) has many omissions that fit the new authors agendas instead of sticking to the authenticity of the original scripts. Other bibles have included commentaries from the rewrite author to give his/her opinions to the meaning of the text. You have to know what

your getting when you buy your Bible and be sure to do a little research about each translation before you choose. In my opinion, the King James and the New King James versions did the best in translating from the original scripts. Both translations have few errors although neither translation is perfect. Again the most important thing is to pray and get the original authors interpretation and opinion of the scripture as your reading.

The Cannon

In an over simplified explanation of the cannon, king James decided to print the bible and had scholars of the day determine what books should be included and which ones should not be. Some of the criteria was based on how they referenced to one another as well as other criteria. Some books were left out because of lack of content (either unfinished work or simply too short). Over all I have to question the judgment of the group that were making these decisions. Many won't argue that the contents of the common cannon were in fact God breathed but what about the integrity of the persons putting together the common biblical cannon.

I say common cannon because the roman catholic church has added some books called the Apocrypha. Although the added books are accepted by many, others adamantly refuse to accept them. Many like to claim Rev.18:22 to their favorite cannon saying

you aren't supposed to add or subtract from the scripture but in context it specifically refers to the book of Revelation only.

Where is our focus when we are debating these issues? I find that my best interest is in the spirit over the letter. Again I have to refer back to John 5:39. If the text is directing you into a personal relationship with the living God, then let's all go to the living God. We aren't saved by what we know but who we know. Scripture does in fact state that His people die because of the lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). However, I need to remind you that, this was a scripture before the Holy spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost (book knowledge is what most had for reference without personal relationship and the new covenant) and the ultimate knowledge is that we can have a personal relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is now with us to guide us.

Infallibility Of Scripture

Many people like to claim that there are a lot of errors in scripture. Primarily, in the gospels. An example would be the list of the apostles. The twelve may not seem to match between Luke's account and the others (Matt. 10:2, Mark 3:14, Luke 6:13). There seem to be many “discrepancies” and we tear Scripture apart trying to find the answers instead of seeing the simple answers. The synoptic gospels are a good example of this. If you were to try to get account of an accident by the means of several witnesses you'd

find many differences in their stories. Each person standing in a different location and having a unique perspective based literally on their point of view. The gospels are the same. You take all of the witnesses accounts to form a strong compilation of the truth. In the instance of the fore mentioned, I would notice that Luke wasn't named one of the twelve (even in his account) and that Mathew would be a better source for that information as well as it being collaborated by Mark (Who also wasn't named among the twelve). Taking the gospels together as a whole, that form a perfect work of the full account and is all in all established by “two or three witnesses”. To me, it makes scripture far more beautiful in almost forcing us to go to the Spirit for our direction. In this, scripture serves its purpose (remember John5:39, that scriptures purpose is to direct us to Jesus).

The Biggest Problem With Scripture

We go to seminaries, bible colleges or simply listen to a teaching. If man is giving an interpretation of scripture instead of the Holy Spirit, then it's man that is in control instead of the Holy Spirit. Man has a huge desire to have that control. It gives them an ability to make themselves a savior for the people and making people rely on themselves instead of God. If man has control over how scripture is interpreted, then man has control over the reader. If the Holy Spirit interprets, then God is in control over the reader.

In this, ministers, pastors and teachers cause people to come back regularly giving money for the “Gospel” and making them dependent on them. We are called as men and women of God to equip people to be able to stand on their own, NOT to create dependents on ourselves but to make people dependent on Jesus Christ. We are not perfect but God is and always will be. When we make men dependent on us we only set them up to fail. 1 Tim 6:5 gives a strong warning about using the Gospel for gain (not just monetarily but esteeming themselves above others with prestige as well).

The Bottom Line

It's important to read scripture for yourself from cover to cover to get it's context. If you come across a scripture that you don't understand yet, don't worry, you probably aren't ready to understand it and you can just keep on reading. So, reread scripture, you can get the understanding of scripture verses when your ready for them. Above all, always pray when you read scripture to get the Lord's interpretation instead of man's. Also, remember that a man or woman that loves God, loves correction. Be ready for constructive criticism and pray over a difference of opinion (let iron sharpen iron with Love).

PRAYER

FELLOWSHIP

SCRIPTURE

Chapter 4

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship is a key part of our spiritual diet in Christ. Heb. 10:25 shows that we shouldn't neglect coming together. There are several ways that we may come together, from a church service, to meeting with one or more in Christ at a restaurant to dine with. Each place has its own purpose. As we come together, the only requirement to having fellowship is to acknowledge Jesus' presence with you (Mat. 18:20)

There are many reasons for fellowship, from Prov 27:17 (iron sharpens iron) to a time for lifting each other up. Rom.12 is one of my favorite scriptures that gives a description of the spiritual family and what we do for one another as well as our family goals for one another. One thing that strikes me the most of what we do for one another is giving each other comfort. Considering scripture references, I think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego that they were in the fire but not alone. Jesus on the mount when he was transfigured and many other instances of difficulty that many other men/women of God were given comfort by the presence of even angels in times of need. With this in mind, I contest that comfort is the greatest reason. No wonder, why the enemy works so hard to divide us.

When it comes to relationships, the Lord gave us a

commandment that we should take a look at. Mat. 18:15 tells us that if a brother (or sister) sins against you that you should confront them. It doesn't say if you feel like it or if it's convenient. Scripture says to go. Another point is that you should go privately, not in front of a crowd to get satisfaction.

In confronting a family member, it does one of two main things for your relationship. First and mostly it gives them the opportunity to repent. Many times we may hurt someone and not even realize it. We need to take this into consideration when someone sins against us. It's true that it may have been intentional but we really need to give the benefit of doubt. Always look for the best in someone instead of the worst but with your eyes open with loving wisdom. The second reason we need to confront a family member is that there is always the possibility of a misunderstanding where the family member didn't sin against you at all. It may have been someone else or it could be that the event may have happened completely different than what your perception provided. Again, always give the benefit of doubt.

Lets look at Gen. 9:20-27. Noah was both drunk and naked. Noah's son Ham told of his nakedness and the other two covered his shame. Ham and his lineage was cursed to become servants to the other sons and their lineage. When it comes to someone's sin or shortcoming, we shouldn't gossip about it but be ready to cover their shame. In Mat.18 it says to go to them privately. We need to really honor this for the sake of the person we are confronting, if

not for ourselves, if it turns out to be our sin and shame instead. Keep in mind that if we don't we may become cursed by God as Ham was.

The most important ingredient in solving an issue with a brother or sister in Christ is love. We really need to take others into consideration first (Rom. 12:10). If they don't listen then it's very important to finish the Lord's instruction from Mat. 18:16-18. If they don't repent it's no longer just about his/her repentance but it's now about protecting the church as well.

Gossip

Gossip is one of the great destroyers of the church. We all think that we have a reason or we may even deny that it's gossip in the first place. I went to the Lord about this issue and he cleared up the definition of gossip for me. He said that “gossip isn't defined by the person speaking but it's defined by the person spoken about.” In other words, If while your talking about someone and they suddenly enter the room, if your suddenly embarrassed then it's gossip. Gossip is really a matter of pride. Either we think that we're so great to have such knowledge about someone making us smarter than everyone else or we are putting people in their place, beneath us, as a means to lift ourselves higher. In both cases its about pride.

Church

Most of us grew up in a church that's a particular denomination or an independent group. We have a certain amount of identity that we form within ourselves in regard to that church. So much in fact that if we hear someone speak negatively towards the church we were raised in, we may quickly take it as a personal attack. Instead of hearing someone speak against our church, we hear them speaking against us. There comes a time in our life, however, that we realize that our "home church" isn't a perfect church. Lets look at Mat. 16:18. The word "church" in that verse is not plural. So by Jesus' statement, there is only one church. It isn't the catholic church, the baptist church, the church of Christ or any other church for that matter. In Charlotte, NC at one time there were over 165 registered denominations in the city. So which church is His church? None of them. How can we have the audacity to think that we have the ability to start, fix or close church doors. Jesus created His church two thousand years ago. Our job isn't to start, fix or finish a church because Jesus is the author. Our job is to step into the church that Jesus started years ago through obedience to the Holy Spirit of God. Am I saying that today's independent churches or denominations aren't part of God's church through Christ? No. I'm saying that if a church isn't being obedient to the Holy Spirit, then it isn't part of God's plan and that God's church is far bigger than any one church or denomination by

its self. Jesus' church is spiritual not physical.

The most powerful church I ever participated with is one where they simply started to seek God until The Lord revealed in the spirit who in the group was given authority (after praise and worship). Then, that person with authority, would give a word of correction, knowledge or teaching in however the Lord lead through the spirit. During or before praise and worship, matters of prayer for healing, communion, matters of disputes and other prayer needs were dealt with before service. In matters being dealt with before worship the enemy was already defeated and the people weren't being distracted. They could give all of their attention to God during the service.

Lets look at 2Cor.3. Many people today are standing up wanting to claim to be an apostle, prophet, pastor, evangelist or teacher. Many go to school for years to get a doctorate. Getting education is OK and I enjoy study myself but look at what the apostle Paul was saying in this passage. He's saying that if we put weight on the letter for someone's approval that it could bring spiritual death but it's the spirit that needs to give approval for someone to stand in any place of authority. Bottom line is that we need to truly know one another in the spirit and not the flesh. By knowing someone in the spirit, we see people how God sees them. We don't have the expectation of leaders being perfect but we will see the fruit of someone that The Lord Himself approved.

PRAYER

FELLOWSHIP

OBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE

Chapter 5

OBEDIENCE

John 4 tells of the story of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman. Before He met her, His disciples went to go get food. When His disciples returned they were puzzled to find that the Lord was no longer hungry. Jesus then replied:(John 4:34 NKJV) *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."* From this reference, we can clearly see that obedience is a strong part of our spiritual diet. Just knowing the Lord's will isn't enough but to do His will is required (James 2:20).

James 1:22 is an often quoted scripture. To be doers of the “word” and not hearers. I need to remind you the implications of what I wrote in chapter 2. When scripture talks about the “word” that it's referring to Gods voice. This makes a huge difference on the source of our direction and to what exactly we are being obedient to.

It's through obedience that we develop fruit. John 15 describes this process and that it requires being grafted into Jesus. In listening to Jesus and obeying His voice, we are following the same voice that spoke the universe into existence (John 1:3+14). It's through this type of obedience that His glory is manifested through miracles and healing. Here are a few examples in testimony:

One day, I was walking through a commercial truck shop. Passing a man that I knew, as he was walking in the opposite direction, the Lord told me to stop him. I stopped him, asking what was wrong and he told me that there was nothing wrong. I stopped him a second time after he took a step and asked him what was wrong (by the Lord's direction) and he again said that there was nothing wrong. A third time I stopped him as he took another step and asked him, "No, something is wrong, what is it?" He replied, "Well, if you must know, I'm going home tonight to kill my wife and kids because I know she's cheating on me!" The Lord had me pull him outside to talk privately and I explained to him the ways of the Lord. Instead of killing his family he was baptized in his church that weekend instead.

Another testimony:

I was driving down a four lane road and the Lord told me to pull off the road. I started to pull off to the right and the Lord told me to go to the gas station on the next left corner instead. I stopped on the corner of the station, got out of the car and the

Lord told me to pull up another ten feet. I got back into the car and did what the Lord said. As I got back out of the car, a driver took a turn too fast and flipped his vehicle over and landed where I was first stopped. The Lord had me there to help the couple that was in the vehicle and give them the lord's love as they explained to me the many marital problems they were facing as well as a miscarriage a few days earlier.

Another testimony:

When I was in a college lab, I asked an instructor how she was feeling. She replied that she wasn't felling well because of a migraine headache. The Lord told me to tell her that I would pray for her headache to go away, then when I told her she laughed. I told her that she shouldn't laugh because the Lord honors prayers. She said, “ No, I'm not laughing because of what you said, I'm laughing because my headache is gone.”

In these three cases and hundreds of others, simply being obedient created a situation or stage for a miracle. I was told by a friend of mine once that I didn't have to ask God every time I went

to the bathroom. My reply is that you never know when you may not get to one in time.

Many folks use scripture as a source for direction or obedience. This really puts you in danger of being under the curse spoken of in Gal 3. Trust the lord! The spirit of God will never contradict scripture. Let's look at tithing (ouch! Yes, I know I'm treading on dangerous ground here). If you want to look at tithing in full context. It only applies to the Israel nation as a tax system. The exception to this is the story of Melchizedek and we'll look at this in a little bit. Tithing is discussed in the new testament four times (Matt. 23, Luke 11, Luke 18 and Heb. 7). In Matt. and Luke references, they are all in the negative reference toward the scribes and pharisees so they are no support for tithing. Hebrews seven refers to a tithe that was given to Melchizedek from Abraham and a few verses later (v.19) there is a statement that the law fails and we're directed to something better in a relationship with God. Now, if the Lord speaks to you personally and asks you to give ten percent that is for your personal relationship with the Lord but not something to impose on others.

The truth of the matter is many churches today are using the Israeli tax laws to control a congregation thinking that they will gain more money (remember 1 Tim. 6:5). Sadly, only two percent of the congregation actually tithe. So, in teaching tithing, they're really getting less than what God would give. Well, if you really

want to beat people up with scripture as far as “what to do” lets look at the book of Acts, chapter four, verses 33-37 and we'll all start selling off all that we own and giving it all to the poor but with one small prerequisite.... Pastors and leaders first! Then we'll discuss how it's going about the time winter sets in. Scripture does say that we aren't supposed to give out of necessity (2 Cor. 9:7). Isn't tithing presented to us as a necessity?

Looking again at Acts 4:33-37, if you notice, they aren't commanded to share all things but it is something that happened naturally, out of love for one another. This is how obedience works with the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants us to obey him, simply because we Love Him and out of our relationship with Him, not because we have to but because we want to.

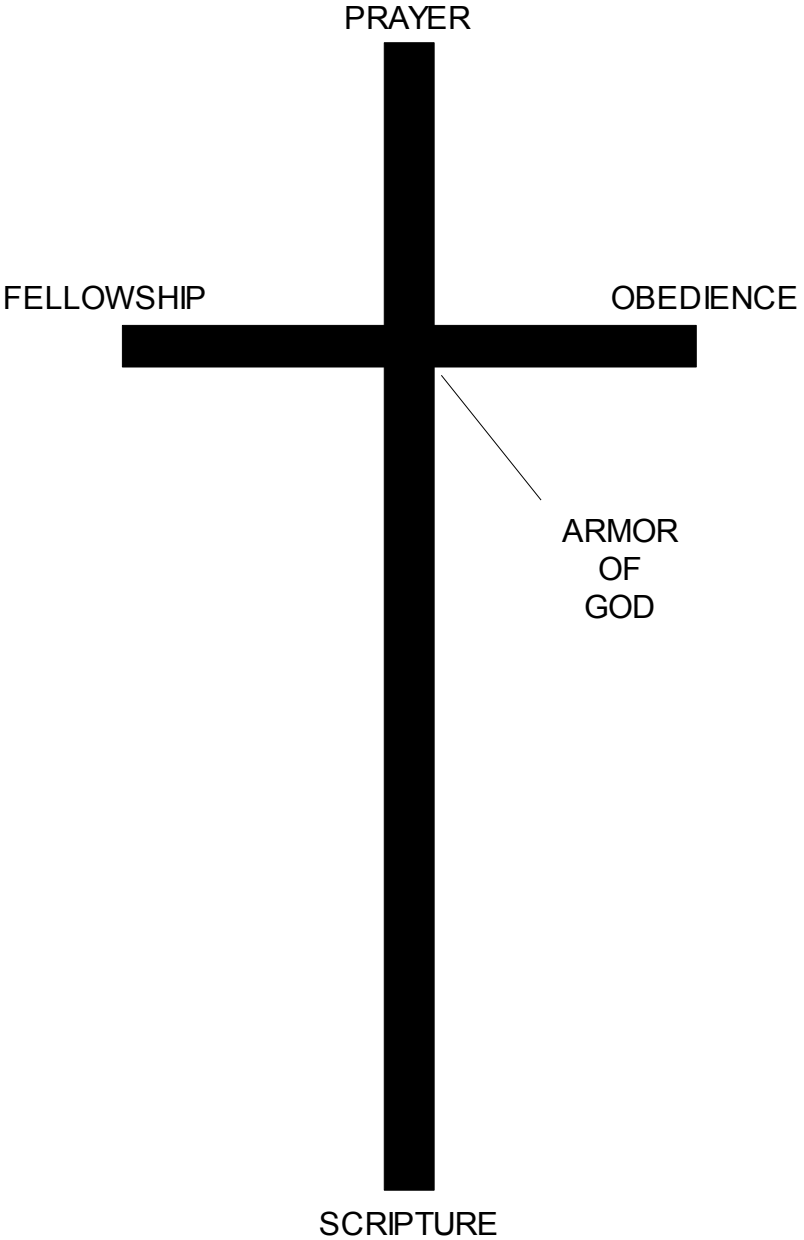
I've worked with churches that teach and believe in giving instead of tithing and they bring in more then the 10%. I find that those churches are far richer and their needs tend to be met (consider Exodus 36:6-7).

In The Name Of Jesus

Doing something in the name of Jesus is a man or woman carrying the authority of Jesus. Just because you USE Jesus' name doesn't necessarily mean that you are doing it IN Jesus' name and WITH His authority (Acts 19:13-16). If you are doing something in obedience to the Spirit of the Lord, then you are walking in

Jesus' authority and in His name. There was a centurion that understood authority well in Matt. 8:5-13. The centurion recognized that Jesus Himself didn't have to be present for the miraculous to take place. He recognized Jesus' authority over sickness and death and that Jesus only had to give a word and it would be done. Scripture says that Jesus actually marveled over the centurion's faith. Can we build our faith up enough to cause Jesus to marvel? Walking in Jesus' authority is *walking in the Spirit* (Gal.5:16). In walking in the spirit you're simply following the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that you're walking in His strength and not your own.

After Jesus marveled, He said something quite troubling that not to many pastors preach on. Matt. 8:12 (NKJV) ¹²”*But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” We need to take the Lord's authority quite seriously and not take His name for granted. As we sit with Abraham in the Kingdom of heaven, under Jesus' authority we sit as kings with crowns (1Cor.9:25) but the ones that try to enter in under our shadow as even our sons will be cast out. In truth we have to equip so that others can stand on their own with Jesus Christ instead of creating dependents. Whoa to those that try to create dependents causing Jesus' children to stumble.



Chapter 6

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:10-20 (NKJV)

¹⁰Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—¹⁹and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We have to realize, to be successful in our walk, that there is a battle to fight. There are spiritual hosts that aren't seen but we are at war with constantly (yes, demons and devils that are fallen angels). God has provided spiritual armor to help us fight the good fight.

Look carefully at the wording in verse twelve. First of all, we wrestle. Some of the battles may take time and the biggest battle deals with the strongman (we'll discuss more about the strongman later). Second thing to realize is that when we are attacked by someone that we know or love, it isn't the person in the flesh that's attacking us but a spirit that is using them. If you're not being lead by the spirit then you're opening up to the enemy to use you. We are all subject to this fact. None of us are perfect. So, the next time someone beams a fiery dart at you and hits that red button in your life that no one is supposed to know about, now you know why. The individual hurting you wasn't the one taking aim but it was the demon that pushed them to fire in the first place.

Lets take a few moments to consider each of the pieces of the armor of God. Each part of the armor of God, truth, righteousness, preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and word of God are all characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can say Jesus is Truth. Jesus is righteousness. Jesus is the gospel. Jesus is faith. Jesus is the word. So, in effect, as we are

putting on the whole armor of God we're putting on Jesus Christ Himself. This also makes it very appropriate that the armor of God is being placed in the center of the cross where our Lord hung. Realize also that because Jesus is the defense and offense He is the one doing most of the battle not you. Demons have the power of over a hundred men. We, in ourselves, have no hope of defeating the enemy so learn how NOT to get in the way and allow the Lord to battle for you. The main battle we need to be concerned with is the strongman.

Strongman

James 1:14+15 (NKJV)

¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

This shows a process in which we can be defeated. The main source of power the enemy has is our own desires or our flesh. Quite simply, if the enemy can trick us into wanting it, then the enemy comes in with it. When a demon becomes attached to the desire of a person then it becomes a strongman attached to our will. Our free will is the only thing that gives the enemy strength and actually is used to tie Gods hands. This is why Paul talks about

putting the flesh under subjection to the spirit and why we must put the flesh to death so that the spirit may live.

The greatest battles occur while we are seeking the Lord like I discussed in chapter 2 (Pg.22). Look at James 4:7-10. Many have heard the quote, resist the devil and he'll flee but submitting to God with humility is a huge part of it. As we submit and become humble, the light of God exposes the strong man and we have to let God have our will and change our minds to take away the handhold the enemy has on us. If we allow God to change our heart and mind (Rom.12:1) then the enemy can be cast out.

Pieces of The Armor

Now there is an importance in understanding each piece that Paul presented to us. Each piece is foundational in our walk and spiritual well being. For this reason, lets now examine each piece of the armor and make sure that we have a solid understanding of them.

Salvation

I remind you again what was already explained to you in chapter 1 of this book. In chapter 1, salvation was pretty much explained. We need to realize that the enemy often attacks our mind and wants us to doubt that we are saved. So, have the

certainty of salvation through your relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

Lets take a different perspective for a moment about salvation. We tend to look at salvation through our perspective instead of though God's perspective. Imagine for a moment what God must have felt when in the garden He had to separate Himself from us for our sake. He loves us much more than we can imagine. He patiently waited for His son Jesus to die and allow for reconciliation (Heb.10:19). Remember John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever should believe in Him shall not die but have everlasting life". Jesus died and rose from the dead, over coming death for our sake.

Righteousness

Remember what we looked up in chapter 3 (Pg.27)? Righteousness means having the equity of good character or action. We need to stay consistent in our relationship with the Lord. In season and out of season, always being ready to fight the good fight. If we aren't being consistent then we are opening up to the enemy to use us. We need to stay vigilant.

Remember that the breastplate is an article of defense. Being vigilant and consistent seems to be an offensive stance but it really is for our own benefit. Righteousness is for our defense.

Truth

Have you ever wondered why you may not see signs and wonders that were spoken about in the Bible? Have you ever considered why there are so many diversities in doctrines and why so many doctors in theology constantly disagree with one another? Where is the truth of the Word of God? Lets look at Hebrews 2:4. In this passage it's made clear that signs and wonders are a seal of Gods approval on men. Look at verse one and see how it talks about things first heard and how it may drift away. It seems more meaningful how it's the loins that are protected with truth (because the loins contain the reproductive organs). In the process of reproducing more spiritual souls, it's critical that we preserve the truth and accuracy of the gospel as younger generations take from us what we pass on. Now it's true that many false men of God or anti-christs may also show signs and wonders (2Thes.2:9). Men of God, however, will always give glory to God and Christ Jesus, not to themselves or others.

Truth and doctrine go hand in hand. It's true that we are in the days of itching ears (2Tim.4:1-5). Be extraordinarily careful and read scripture for yourself, in context, so you can recognize the counterfeits. Consistently reread, so that the scripture is fresh in your mind and you're continually given reproof and correction.

Gospel of Piece

Gospel is a word or message given from one person to another that causes great joy (Vines, 167). Scripture teaches to preach the word of God. In this reference, and others, I refer to John 1. Jesus is the Word. Jesus is the way to God. Jesus is salvation. Jesus is reconciliation. All in all Jesus is everything. Now why do we shod our feet? We shod our feet to protect our heels from the serpent's head. We are blessed and enabled to carry such a wonderful message into the world. Carrying His words is a wonderful blessing and privilege. It's our Lord's message of love that brings ultimate piece.

Faith

Paul said that above all we should carry the shield of faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is our greatest defense. As an inexperienced soldier, the shield is quite heavy and difficult to lift up. The more we use our armor, we learn to trust that shield more and more and the lighter that shield becomes over time. Faith is more about our relationship with Jesus. The greater we dig deeper in our relationship with Jesus the more we learn how much we can trust Him and His word. We listen to His voice and learn that we can trust a living God. It does take practice and comes to his children as a practical skill.

Word of God

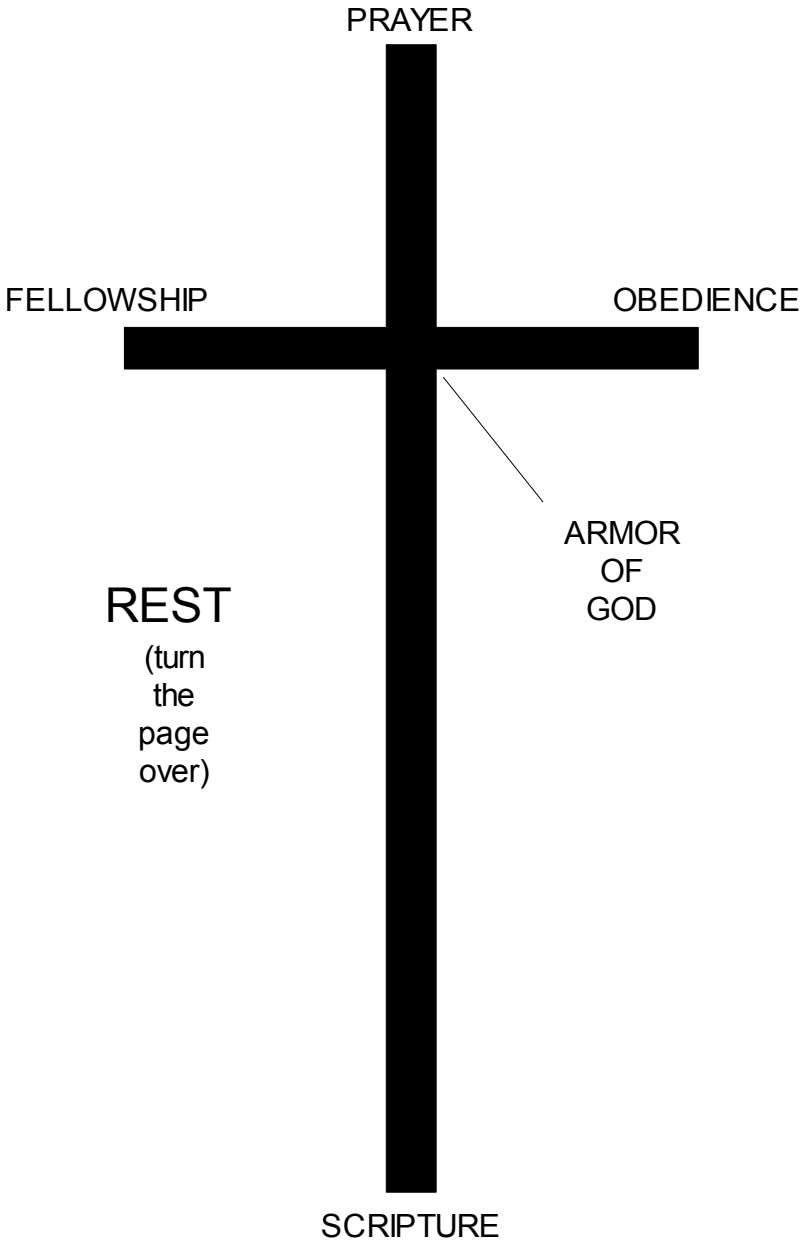
Every part of the armor was, of course, defensive. The Word of God is the only offensive piece. It's important to have all of the defensive pieces in place and secured in our lives before trying to wield a sword. We want to make sure that while we strike a blow to the enemy that our defense doesn't separate, opening a hole in our defense and leaving us vulnerable. Every good swordsman has practice behind him and an instructor. The instructor is Jesus Himself through the Holy Spirit. No man, including myself, can teach how to wield the sword. All instruction comes from the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26). Just remember that the word of God isn't only what's contained in scripture but all words that the Lord Jesus puts in your mouth.

REST

Chapter 7

REST

Although this is the shortest chapter in the book, it's equally important to your spiritual dietary needs. I usually have someone drawing the cross and the dietary needs on a sheet of paper as I explain them. For a moment, I need you to use your imagination. Up to this point, everything is drawn out on a piece of paper and now I ask for you to turn the paper over (hiding all the other parts). Now, simply write on the back of the piece of paper, the word "REST." The Lord gave rest to us in the original commandments and he told his disciples to rest as well. (Lev. 23:2-3, Mark 6:30-32). Jesus Himself rested and He was perfect in all ways (Mat. 14:23). I'm convinced that if He wasn't crucified He'd be alive today but for our sakes, He gave himself freely. Never the less, In His perfect body He rested, as an example to us. He rested and prayed (1 Thes.5:17). We should also pray to hinder the enemy and to keep him at bay as we allow the Lord's strength to keep us.



Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

Over all, the main purpose for our walk in Christ is two fold. One, so that through our walk we can allow God to conform our heart to His. Second, so that we can introduce others to Jesus Christ to increase our family.

As far as Jesus changing our heart, nothing will change unless we allow Him to move in us. Is.29:13 shows us that the lord looks into our heart. It's out of our heart that a man is defiled or the heart produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Mat.15:18-19). The fact of the matter is that Jesus judges us by our hearts (1Cor.4:5). It's our heart that either betrays us or shows God's glory and is a testimony to Him. We need to constantly guard our hearts for our own sake (Phil.4:7). Truly, work out our salvation with fear and trembling because our fate isn't determined by what we want to claim (as if we can change or control God's mind) but by what the Lord sees fit to do (Mat.20:16). Remember, the Lord said that we can't enter in except as a child. Allow the Lord to clean your heart from unrighteousness so that you can be clean and chosen. I'm quite convinced that the Lord doesn't look at our sin as much as he considers what flows out of our heart.

How can we help others if we don't allow God to first work in us? With what strength will we be able to lift up our brothers

and sisters that need us the most, if we don't permit God to strengthen us? How can Jesus use us to give men His love if His love isn't in us? What moves us to bring the lost to the Lord's feet? Why would anyone want to be a Christian if they don't see something that would draw them in? We first have to have the Heart of Christ and the spiritual training to be able to work effectively for Him (1Cor.13).

Remember what Paul said: "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21). Also, remember that Jesus said:"count the cost" (Luke14:28) and "Those who saves his life will lose it but those who gives up their life for my sake will save it" (Mat.16:25-26). We have to surrender our life(flesh) for the sake of the Gospel.

A Word From God

Years ago, the Lord gave my best friend and me a word. We were sitting in a restaurant at a bay window table when suddenly a flock of birds appeared outside the window and started to perform for us. In sink they would all pitch one way and all you would see is a black wall of birds. The birds pitched another way and they seemed to disappear. They did all these types of waves and motions that left us speechless. They performed for about fifteen minutes then left as quickly as they came, they were gone. Then the Lord spoke, *"Just as these birds moved so shall my remnant as they walk in my spirit"*..... Be Blessed.

Citations

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