



FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

LEVEL
1



NEW BIRTH

TWO MONTHS

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

STRATEGY OF JESUS SIMPLIFIED

strategy



APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY
OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

**STRATEGY OF JESUS
SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP
LEVEL 1 - NEW BIRTH
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

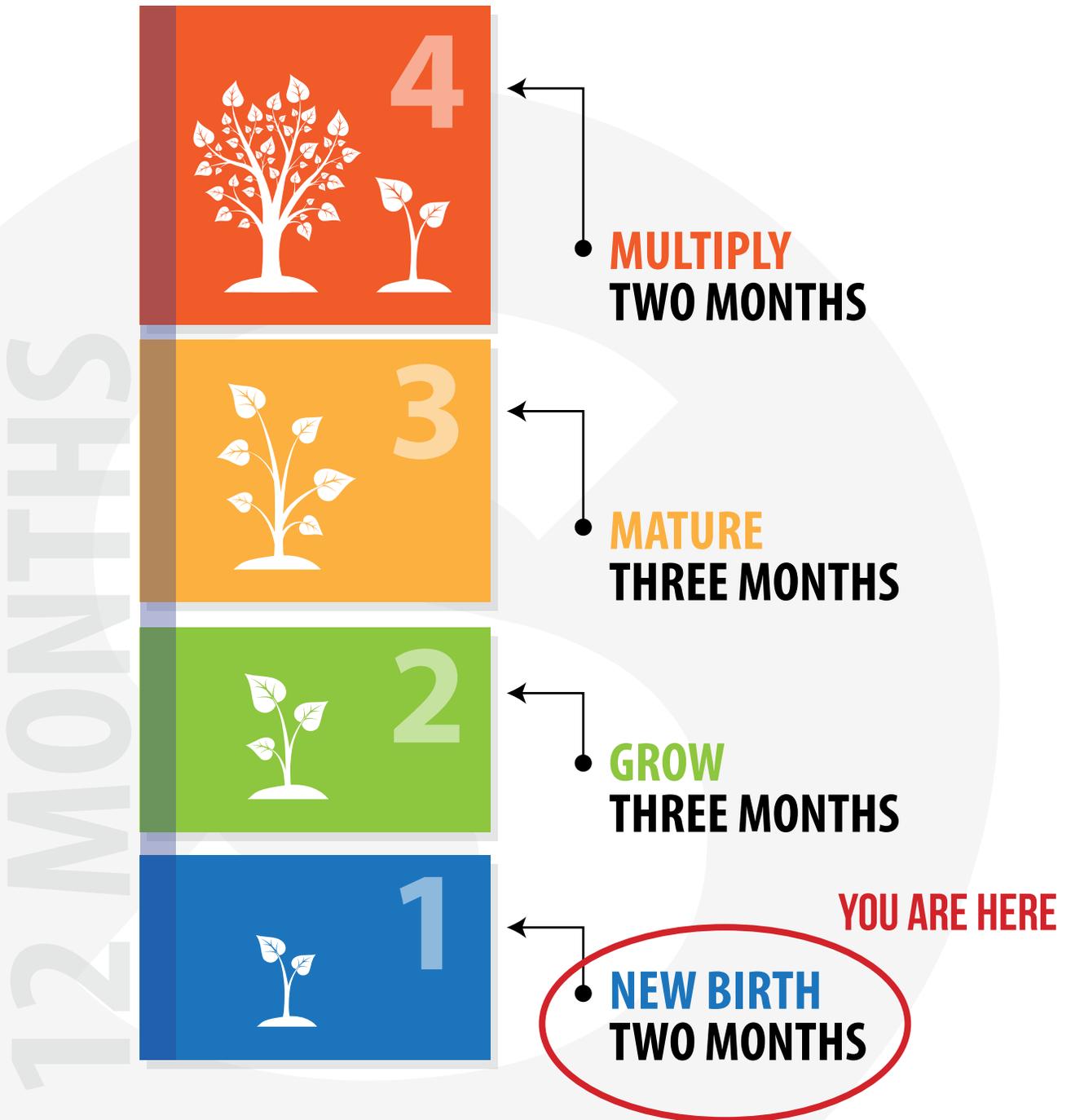
LESSON 1 - THE BIBLE, THE GREAT BOOK OF GOD.....	9
<i>What is the Bible? What is its origin? How and for whom was it written for? What are the benefits of knowing it and practicing what it teaches?</i>	
LESSON 2 - TREASURING THE WORD OF GOD	13
<i>How do we study the Word of God and keep it in our hearts? Can we overcome sin through it? How do we apply what the Bible says in our daily walk?</i>	
LESSON 3 - WHERE IT ALL BEGINS: FAITH.....	17
<i>How can we overcome the obstacles of life? How to develop the Faith that allows us to overcome daily?</i>	
LESSON 4 - THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD.....	21
<i>How is God? What is His nature? What does "oneness of God" mean? What is the name of God?</i>	
LESSON 5 - WHERE DO WE COME FROM?.....	25
<i>Was the human being created? Who did it and for what? What led the human being to his fall? What consequences has this brought?</i>	
LESSON 6 - WHERE ARE WE HEADED?.....	29
<i>Is there life after life? Where do the dead go? Is there a Heaven and Hell? What are Hades, Abraham's Bosom?</i>	
LESSON 7 - CONDEMNATION OF SIN.....	33
<i>What is sin? Where does it come from? What are its consequences? What is condemnation? Is there a way out, is there hope? Where is salvation?</i>	
LESSON 8 - THE DIVINITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST	37
<i>Who is Jesus? Is he a prophet only? Or is it God himself?</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 9 - THE WORD OF THE CROSS	41
<i>Why did Jesus have to die crucified? What does His sacrifice mean?</i>	
<i>How does it benefit us? How should we respond to it?</i>	
LESSON 10 - THE DIVINE GIFT OF GRACE	46
<i>What is grace? How does it function in the believer?</i>	
<i>Why is it important?</i>	
LESSON 11 - GRACE AND THE HOLY LIFE	49
<i>Is grace a license to sin or does it move us away from it?</i>	
LESSON 12 - FAITH AND REPENTANCE	53
<i>Why is Faith important? How does this relate to the change of life?</i>	
LESSON 13 - WATER BAPTISM	57
<i>What purpose does water baptism fulfill? How should it be practiced?</i>	
LESSON 14 - THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	60
<i>What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit consist of?</i>	
<i>Why do we need to receive it? How do we know if we really have it?</i>	
LESSON 15 - ORIGIN, FAITH AND VALUES OF OUR CHURCH	64
<i>Where does our Christian denomination come from? How was he born?</i>	
<i>What are our beliefs? What are our moral values?</i>	
LESSON 16 - COMMITTED WITH MY LOCAL CHURCH	69
<i>Why is it important to belong to a local church?</i>	
<i>How does the commitment to it develop?</i>	
<i>What benefits does that bring?</i>	



FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP



LESSON 1

THE BIBLE, THE GREAT BOOK OF GOD

What is the Bible? What is its origin? How and for whom was it written for?
 What are the benefits of knowing it and practicing what it teaches?

Scripture to memorize: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* Hebrews 4.12.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let’s read Isaiah 55.8–11. The Bible is the greatest book in the world. It is the book of God, concerning God, written by men of God, that teaches how to be men and women of God. The Bible contains the wisest literature ever known, as well as the best in poetry, history and human relationships. But above all, the Bible offers us God’s plan for the salvation of the human being. Believers are the objective of this book; so that if we really want to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ, we must know and love the book that reveals Him. We cannot love God more than we obey Him, and we cannot obey Him more than we obey His Holy Word, which is the Bible.

The Bible is the Word of God, not just an ordinary book. It is unique because the author is God: *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* 2 Timothy 3:16 It is a book written by men, but inspired by God through them, who heard His voice. The Bible speaks with absolute authority because it is the only book in its class!

2. UNIQUE IN CONTINUITY, INTEGRITY & SURVIVAL

The Bible was written in a span of more than one thousand six hundred years, more than sixty generations and more than forty writers of various occupations in life: kings, peasants, shepherds, soldiers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, students, professionals, religious and others. It was written on three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe; and in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. It contains hundreds of topics, which sometimes appear to be in controversy and create a diversity of opinions. However, we can see that his writers speak with phenomenal harmony and amazing uniformity, presenting the drama of man’s condemnation for sin and the wonder of redemption obtained by Christ Jesus; despite the drastic cultural, geographical, language and time differences that existed between them.

This integrity is nothing less than a miracle when one considers the disagreements that would result if only ten authors wrote about the same subject; even if they had in common their occupation, generation, time, place, continent and language. It is truly amazing that the Bible maintains its continuity and never contradicts itself. But there is an explanation for this and it is found in the same pages, in the words of the apostle Peter:

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1.20–21.

This is why no other religious book in the world can claim the accuracy of the Bible regarding prophecy; because this is the only volume ever produced that has predicted, without fail, the future of nations, races and



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

peoples, countless cities, and a particular nation - Israel, while announcing the coming of what would be the Messiah Savior. There are more than three hundred prophecies concerning Him, only in the Old Testament, given one thousand six hundred to four hundred years in advance, which accurately describe His birth, life, death and resurrection (Isaiah 46.9–10; Luke 24.44).

As for its survival, through centuries of persecution and criticism the Bible has not only survived, but has become the most beloved book in history. The French scholar, known as Voltaire, said the Bible would be extinct by 1850, but the opposite has happened since then: it has continued to increase in circulation until it becomes the most distributed book of all time. Matthew 24.35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." This promise of Jesus is still being fulfilled today.

3. BENEFITS OF STUDYING AND KNOWING THE BIBLE

In the Bible we find the best advice to enjoy this life, as well as the path that leads us to eternal life. If we pay attention to what it wants to teach us, we will receive great benefits. Here are some examples of them.

(1) Salvation, new birth: The book of Genesis, whose meaning is "origin", says that the Law of God established from the beginning that each created being be reproduced according to its species. That is why we humans and other creatures of the Earth reproduce while maintaining our biological characteristics that are unique in each species, and that are transferred through genes, through the material called DNA. This explains why children resemble their parents, uncles or grandparents.

As well; the Bible contains "the DNA" of God, and it is through that information that we are born again and become His children, becoming like Him. God engenders us spiritually through His Word. This, of course, does not mean that we can be born again without going through water baptism and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit - we will study these issues later - but the truth is that both the birth of water and that of the Spirit are only possible through the Word of God:

"...Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." James 1.18. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter 1.23–25.

(2) Faith: *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"* Colossians 2.6. This means that we receive salvation through faith in Jesus, and we must continue our way with Him in that way: through faith; In fact, without faith it is impossible to please God, as Hebrews 11.6 tells us. So our walk with God will depend entirely on our absolute confidence in His power, wisdom and goodness, *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* 2 Corinthians 5.7. We see therefore that faith is very important; It is vital. But where does faith come from? How do we get it? *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Romans 10.17.

(3) Power: The planets were formed by the Word of God. Stop for a moment to think about the vastness of the universe, in its infinity. To think that it became instantly, by a divine mandate! God ordered the universe to exist with His word. What a tremendous power! This is far from our ability to understand.

(4) Protection: We find that another quality of the Word of God is to defeat Satan. There is a wonderful lesson for us in Matthew 4.1–11 where two beings —the Almighty God manifested in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the most highly created being, Lucifer— locked themselves in combat on Earth. The Lord Jesus, of



course, must have had weapons in his arsenal that we could not even imagine; however, when He wanted to defeat the devil, he laid hold on the Word of God. He was teaching us that the way to defeat the devil on this Earth is to use the powerful Word of God. Jesus said three times: "It is written." It is encouraging for us to see that our Lord did not use a weapon that would not be available to all of us, but one that we always have at our disposal ... the Word of God. It flees the enemy! The apostle Paul refers to the Scriptures as an important part of God's armor: **"...take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."** Ephesians 6.17.

(5) Nourishment: The Bible compares itself with milk and meat in 1 Corinthians 3.2 and with honey in Psalms 19.10. Job said: **"... I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."** Job 23.12. The Bible is the food of our soul. We cannot live only with natural food. Our spiritual health is maintained with every word that comes from the mouth of God. If we are not careful to eat regularly and properly - healthy foods - we will weaken and expose ourselves to disease. Likewise, if we live life with little or no diet of the Word of God, we will fall into spiritual malnutrition: **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."** 1 Peter 2.2.

(6) Fructification: In the first Psalm we read concerning the man who **"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night."** verse 1-2. Do you do well to meditate day and night on the law of the Lord? Yes, because you will be like this: **"..a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."** V. 3.

(7) Success: Modern psychology tells us that almost every human being has a natural desire to succeed. The Bible has a plan for the prosperity of man and the promise that we can succeed wherever we go, if we dedicate ourselves to continually apply the Scriptures to our lives: **"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."** Josh 1.8.

(8) Guide: It is very difficult for a person to find their way in the darkness of the night, without light. Likewise, it is very difficult for us to find our way in life without the guiding influence of the Word of God: **"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"** Psalms 119.105.

(9) Wisdom: You may never have the capacity of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle or Einstein, but the Bible says that thanks to it you can become wiser than they: **"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."** Psalms 119.98-100.

(10) Liberty: The truth of the Word of God is the only one that can give real and lasting freedom to men, women, children or the elderly. If we make time to meet her and continue living in her, the truth will set us free: **"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."** John 8.31-32.

LESSON 2

TREASURING THE WORD OF GOD

**How do we study the Word of God and keep it in our hearts? Can we overcome sin through it?
How do we apply what the Bible says in our daily walk?**

Text to memorize: ***“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”*** Revelation 1.3.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Word of God tells us that it is very important and necessary that we learn to treasure His teachings in our hearts. Let us read Psalms 119.9–16. Let us now see some powerful reasons we have for keeping the Word of God in our hearts.

2. CONTROL THOUGHTS

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: eat and drink, saith he to thief; but his heart is not with thee.” Proverbs 23.7. Here we see that thoughts inside a person eventually result in their outside behavior. That is why there are several tips in the Bible about how to control our thoughts. Perhaps the most important is in Philippians 4.8: ***“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*** That is, we must control our thoughts by occupying our mind with good things.

Does that mean we should think about flowers, birds, or nature? Well, that would not cause harm because such things are part of God’s creation; but there is something to meditate on that is much better than nature: the Word of God. The Bible says that the blessed man is the one who ***“...delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*** Psalms 1.2. We should try to have thoughts of God, and this is achieved by meditating on His Word. Our own thoughts are ineffective, but meditating on the Word of God allows us to control our thoughts. Matthew 12.34 tells us that ***“...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”*** The principle here is that what happens in our minds is expressed in our actions.

This principle from the internal to the external is observed in God’s own behavior. The Bible tells us that He thinks and that ***“the LORD of hosts thought to do... hath he dealt with us.”*** Zechariah 1.6. John 1.1 dice: ***“In the beginning was the Word...”***. The Greek word for Verb is logos, and this in turn involves the idea or concept: ***“in the beginning was the thought or concept of God; and the thought was in God.”*** This means that God foresaw what one day He would be: the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world; the first-fruits of those who slept; the Firstborn of all creation; the First among many brothers. From the beginning, God conceived the glory that would come through and for Jesus Christ.

Creation is another example of God’s thoughts. He thought first and then created man in the image of his thoughts. God’s thoughts preceded his actions. He thinks and then He creates. The outward action, the externalized—in this case the creation—proceeds directly from the mind of God, from His thought. As in God, we give our thoughts permanent expression with words and deeds. We must find a way to elevate our thoughts, leading them higher than the heavens.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

Let's pay attention to Isaiah 55.7–9: ***"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."***

God's thoughts are higher than our earthly thoughts. If we could somehow intuit what God's thoughts are and put them in our minds and hearts, how would they lift our behavior! What great things we would do! What profound changes would occur in each one of us! Here is great news... there is a way to know God's thoughts: through an intimate knowledge of His Word.

3. DEFEAT SIN

David, the young pastor who was made king and was also a man according to God's own heart, explains why he felt that the Word of God was so important in his life: ***"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*** Psalms 119.11. The Word was able to separate David from sin! Sin is our greatest enemy; It is the cause of all our spiritual problems. Sin begins in the sphere of thought and then results in external acts. There is a bridge from mind to body. The internal is reflected onto the external. This is not just theory; It is a constant principle of life.

James 1.14 says: ***"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."*** It begins internally, then grows into concupiscence, after it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin — the external act— ***"...bringeth forth death."*** V. 15. The Word of God has power to operate in our hearts, especially when we hide it at the bottom of it. There she can do many things. Our enemy knows this and that is why he suggests so many excuses for not bringing the Word of God to our hearts.

You must take care to be content with sermons nothing more; of not having time for personal reading; of the lack of discipline and daily habit; and of ideas such as that the Bible "is very boring" or difficult. Please remember this: ***"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*** David put the sayings of God in his heart because he knew they would do something for him: they would help him control his thoughts and finally overcome sin. This is why we want and should treasure the Word of God in our hearts.

4. TREASURING THE WORD IN THE HEART

David's son, the wise King Solomon, says to keep the commandments of God within you (Proverbs 2.1). He goes on and tells us that if we hide God's commandments in our hearts, we will be saved from vile men and women, and from moral sin. This is very powerful advice. Proverbs 7.1 says: ***"keep my commandments."*** Just as a farmer brings his grain from the field to his barn, we can be accumulators of the Word of God and store it in our mental barn.

Hiding the Word of God in our hearts is not only beneficial, but a vital practice for every child of God. There are at least five practices or steps we can take with the Word of God, and all are important: We can be listeners of the Word and can read it; We can also study it, memorize it and meditate on it.

(1) Hearing. We do this by paying attention to the preaching and teaching of the Pastor or Teacher. This is possible when we meet to worship and hear the Word of the Lord. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit we will be provided with deep spiritual understanding as we gather from the riches of the scripture study given by



the minister or leader. Of course we will always have to mix what we hear with Faith: ***“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”*** Romans 10.17.

(2) Read. This gives us an overview of the Bible, which is a source of great enrichment and spiritual joy. It is something we can do to review what we have heard, or as a starting point to begin further studies, memorizations or meditations. Ordinary people in Old Testament times almost never had the opportunity to read the Word of God, because a copy cost a lot of money; Up to one year salary! Even today, about half of the world’s population has never seen a Bible. What a privilege we have! We must take advantage of this! ***“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”*** Revelation 1.3.

(3) Study. The study of the Bible leads us to personal discoveries of God’s truths. ***“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so..”*** Acts 17.11. We can and need to study the Bible systematically —by themes, biographies, chapters or books— and to add interest and improve understanding, we can take advantage of the many aids available today: Bible dictionaries, concordance, various translations and versions, electronic applications, computer software, online bibles and many other resources.

(4) Memorization. Learning God’s Word by heart enables us to use ***“the Sword of the Spirit”*** to overcome Satan and his temptations. When the biblical texts live in our minds, we can take them out as someone who takes something out of a pantry in time of need. Being prepared to answer every man with the Word is something of invaluable value to testify or encourage us, and others. Memorizing was a practice that Jewish children performed and performed very well. Jesus memorized scriptures that he later employed. When He spoke to the devil, He said: ***“It is written”***. Jesus knew Deuteronomy 8.3 by heart. He knew the verse before this one and also the later one. He knew every exact verse he should use to defeat the devil. ***“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”***

(5) Meditate. This step can be taken in combination with each other. We must take time to meditate on what God speaks to us in what we hear, read, study or memorize the Word. This is the most important thing to become ***“doers of the Word.”*** We need to practice meditation in order to apply what we learn from the Bible in our daily lives: ***“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*** Psalms 1.2.

These are the five steps through which we can hide or treasure the Word of God in our hearts. We must strive to practice each of these; otherwise our relationship with the Holy Scriptures will be defective and incomplete, as when a puzzle is missing a piece. It can be argued that doing all this is difficult and —we admit— in a way it is, because it requires effort and discipline; but that will be more than everything at the beginning.

Then, and as the Word grows in your heart, something will ***“stir up”*** within it. A passion will ignite, so that you will no longer feel the process as an effort, but as a delight. If you start doing it, it will perpetuate itself. If you discontinue it, you will want to return there, because treasuring the Word of God in your heart will bring great joy and blessing to your life.

LESSON 3

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS: FAITH

How can we overcome the obstacles of life? How to develop the Faith that allows us to overcome daily?

Text to memorize: *“For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* Mark 11.23–24.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let’s read Hebrews 11.1–16. The Bible tells us here that we can be saved by Faith, protected by Faith, walk with Faith, stay in Faith, live by Faith, inherit God’s promises by Faith, be rich in Faith, pray with Faith, overcome world by Faith and praise God for Faith. God desires the trust of every human being in Him and His Word, for *“...without faith it is impossible to please him.”* Hebrews 11.6.

2. WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

Everything we are or will become begins with Faith. In 2nd Peter chapter 1, we are reminded of what we need to walk through with Faith. Verse 5 tells us about the graces or attributes of the believer, and teaches us that before Anything productive in our life, we must count on Faith.

Faith constitutes the link between the natural and the supernatural. For example, in order to obtain spiritual resources from the Bible, we need to read it with living and active Faith. Thus, Faith will become our main support, one that will lead us in every phase of our Christian life. God is Spirit (John 4.24), and for Him to respond to our scrutiny, *“...for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Hebrews 11.6.

3. WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is not complicated; it is simply believing in what God says; It is to have the conviction that the Word of God is true. Hebrews 11.1: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Faith is trusting in God; to put trust in Him. It is to be totally sure that one will receive what is expected of Him. It is to live convinced that something exists, even when we cannot see it.

The noun faith is found 253 times in the Bible, mostly in the New Testament. The verb believe and its variations appear about 270 times and its synonym trust about 65 times. In the biblical sense, Faith means the entire inclination of the human personality to God, in Christ Jesus, with absolute confidence and confidence in His power, wisdom and goodness (Hebrews 4.2). As God has chosen to reveal himself to men through His Word, the Bible is the fundamental source of True Faith: *“...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10.17. If we have this Faith, we will believe that the Word of God is Truth.

The word hear used in Romans 10.17 means more than perceiving a sound; It also includes understanding. That is, this text teaches us that Faith comes from understanding the Word. And what do we need to understand? That there is power in the Word (Hebrews 4.12); that it is divinely inspired (2 Timothy 3.16–17); that it is established in Heaven (Psalm 119.89) and that it will never pass (Matthew 24.35).



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

4. HOW TO OBTAIN FAITH

We already said that Faith comes from the Word of God. A person can go as far in the Faith as his knowledge of God's Word allows. So, if we want to have more Faith, we need to have more of the Word in us: ***"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."*** John 15.7.

The Word of God can live in our way of thinking and acting; become a living part of us so that we live in conformity with it. The opposite of this will be our own thinking, or human logic —always negative. Jesus tells us to ask for what we want and it will be done to us. Such is the result of Faith in our life; a very positive position. The Word of God is always positive; and we become positive too, when the Word remains in us.

The desire for the Word of God to become part of our nature is the foundation upon which Faith is built in us. Such desire leads us to meditate on the Word and to seek more from God in fervent prayer and fasting, because we want all that He has for us. However, fasting and praying will not change God or build our faith alone. Fasting and praying change us and help us cultivate the Faith we have gathered from the Word of God.

Do you want to walk in a life of active Faith? You must wish that the Word of God becomes part of you; reading it, studying it, memorizing it and meditating on it. Then you must personalize it, believing with all your heart that what God says he will do, He will really do. The Scriptures are designed by Him to stimulate you and give you Faith: ***"...these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"*** John 20.31.

In Romans 10.14 Paul expresses doubt that a person can have faith in someone he has not heard, and that he can hear —which includes understanding— without having a preacher. Yes; the Word needs to be preached. Jesus prayed for those who would have faith in the preached Word (John 17.20), for those who would believe in it. The people of Samaria who had Faith, ***"...when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*** Acts 8.12.

Jesus himself said: ***"And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not."*** John 5.38. Not believing in a person's word is discrediting their honesty and dishonoring their character. How much more is this true in the case of those who do not believe in the Word of God? We have a great reason to have faith in God: His Word. We can only know Him through His Word that reveals Him. Hence, man has, of necessity, to trust that His Word is true and trustworthy. We call this trust ***"walk by Faith."***

5. WALKING BY FAITH

The Apostle Paul told the early Christians that Faith was a way of life. In three of his letters he wrote that ***"The just shall live by faith"*** (Romans 1.17; Galatians 3.11; Hebrews 10.38); and also that ***"For we walk by faith, not by sight."*** 2 Corinthians 5.7. In other words, our responsibility is to receive the Word of God, accept what He says and not try to understand how He does it. Habakkuk 2.4: ***"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."***

The Word stimulates, awakens and produces Faith; and it is through Faith that we are saved. If we want more Faith, after our experience of salvation, we have to feed ourselves more and more with the Word of God. Only then can our faith grow. But before we learn to walk by Faith we must identify and learn to overcome some obstacles that can cause us to lose Faith, and therefore the blessings God has for us. Consider this:



(1) Disbelief: There are at least two causes for disbelief: **ignorance** and **disobedience**. It is evident that those who never heard the Word of God cannot believe in it. People remain in spiritual ignorance when they ignore what the Scriptures teach. And there are people who do know what the Bible says, but they refuse to obey. The Israelites, for example, failed to enter the promised land because of disobedience, according to Hebrews 4.6. The word that in this writing was translated as disobedience, also means lack of persuasion. The only cure for disbelief is brokenness and humiliation.

(2) The Senses: The use of the senses can sometimes be a great obstacle to your faith. Thomas, the one who doubted, said that he would not believe in the resurrection of Jesus unless he could see Him in person and touch His nail marks and His pierced side (John 20.24–29). Thomas' faith was not based on the Word of God, but on his natural senses. He said he would believe only by seeing. That is not biblical faith. True Faith is the evidence of unseen things (Hebrews 11.1). With God it is about **"believing to see" and not "seeing to believe."** Jesus said to Thomas: **"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."** John 20.29. Faith does not depend on the senses, or feelings or emotions. It depends on the Word of God and its truths. Faith recognizes that the Word is true and will be fulfilled even in its smallest details (Matthew 5.18) because the Word never changes, but is eternal.

(3) Doubt: **"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."** James 1.6–7. Many people receive salvation or are healed but then, because some symptoms come back, they think that maybe that was not real. If you know you have received a promise, do not hesitate. Resist the devil (James 4.7). Do not be fooled by the father of lies. Stand firm in the Word of God: **"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"** Hebrews 10.23.

(4) Indignity: This is a subtle obstacle. We often feel that we are not good enough to deserve God's gifts; And that is true. However, God does not save, answer prayers, or heal, based on merits. Everything He has given us is based on His merits on the Cross. We are unworthy, because of our lack of righteousness, but by Faith in Jesus we are now worthy, since through Faith we have been **"...we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** 2 Corinthians 5.21. If we believe that we are worthy in Him, we will ask with confidence and we will receive, because **"our heart condemn us not..."** 1 John 3.21.

(5) Fear: This obstacle is a weapon that the devil frequently uses to cause us worry and anxiety. Romans 8.15 tells us that fear has its slaves. When we fear, we become paralyzed and stop receiving the supernatural things of God. But Faith works for love (Galatians 5.6). **"perfect love casteth out fear."** 1 John 4.18. Every day we must keep in mind that the Lord loves us; that He is our Heavenly Father and will never allow evil to come upon us: **"Fear not: believe only..."** Luke 8.50. **"Be not afraid, only believe."** Mark 5.36.

6. FAITH IN THE WORD

Faith expressed in words is a verbal confession of what we believe; It is witnessing to a truth that we have embraced. We bring our faith to the living domain when we agree with the Word of God out loud! **"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith..."** Mark 11.22–23.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

Learning to speak in Faith through the Word of God, repeating it over and over again, results in the unity of your mind with the mind of God. Find a promise, memorize the corresponding writing, and when you need it, say it out loud. Apply it to your need. Personalize the Word by replacing the words “he” with “me”, “yours” with “mine”, etc. For example, 2nd Corinthians 5.17 says that **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”** You can apply that Scripture to your life, saying: **“I am in Christ; I am a new creature; The old things in my life have passed!”** But always make sure your words are based on the written Word, not your feelings or emotions. The more you feed your life with the Word, the more your faith will grow.

7. FAITH IN ACTION

Successfully walking through Faith requires—in addition to word— action. To live a true life of Faith, one has to act based on the promises of God, ignoring the circumstances or feelings that emerge: **“...faith, if it hath not works, is dead...”** James tells us 2.17.

Consider the Old Testament heroes in the book of Hebrews, who acted for the Faith: Abel offered, Enoch walked, Noah prepared an ark, Abraham went out, Sarah gave birth, Isaac and his son Jacob pronounced blessings, Moses returned to Egypt, He kept the Passover and passed through the sea. Joshua marched, Rahab hung the cord of grana. Why? Because they not only saw the promises of God, but **“...they were convinced of them and hugged...”** It was a way of life. They walked by Faith, not by sight; and when they obeyed the Word by Faith, they were able to see the supernatural in progress.

Faith resulted in action also in the New Testament. The lepers went before the priests and were clean (Luke 17.12–14). The man with the dry hand reached out and was healed (Matthew 12.13). The blind man had to go and wash before he could see (John 9.17). The paralytic raised his bed and walked (Mark 2.3–12). Let these examples be a stimulus for your walk by faith as a child of God: **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”** Hebrews 12.2.

8. CONCLUSION

Our Faith proclaims a powerful message to promote the great cause of God on Earth. Our Faith tells this world that Jesus did not die on the Cross and rose on the third day in vain. It proclaims that Jesus has power to save, heal and keep us; that He lives in us; and that His Word is true. Salvation, healing and abundant life have already been promised and provided by Christ Jesus: **“...all things are possible to him that believeth.”** Mark 9.23. We can believe and receive, or doubt and live receiving little and nothing. God’s promises can be received today by faith, in prayer, just as the children of Israel fought to claim the promised land: **“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...”** 1 Timothy 6.12. Dare to believe in God! Get ahead with Faith and trust Him completely, in all your life.



LESSON 4

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

**How is God? What is His nature? What does “oneness of God” mean?
What is the name of God?**

Text to memorize: *“Hear, Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah one is.”* Deuteronomy 6.4.

1. INTRODUCTION

Believers fight daily against currents of thought such as Atheism, Agnosticism or Humanism, which call into question the existence of God, or deny it directly. For us, on the other hand, the existence of God is the cornerstone of life, for we have understood that *“...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Hebrews 11.6.

2. RATIONAL ARGUMENTS OF GOD’S EXISTENCE

There are at least four rational arguments that are used to prove that God exists: (1) The Cosmological argument, which holds that everything that exists has a justified cause; that is, it exists for something. (2) The Teleological or design argument, which holds that the universe reveals intelligence, order, harmony and purpose; denoting the existence of an intelligent being that designed it. (3) The Axiological argument or the moral law, which speaks of the recognition by man of a superior goodness or moral ideal that is above all in the moral universe. (4) The Ethnological or Historical argument, which argues that among the peoples of the Earth is a perception or feeling of the divine, manifested in external cults. At all times and places, human beings feel the need to worship a superior being. What does the Bible say about God?

3. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT ONLY ONE GOD EXISTS

God reveals his existence through the nature that He created himself, and through His Word that He himself inspired. God’s revelation is on every page of the Bible. The first verse says: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* Génesis 1.1. David wrote: *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.”* Psalms 19.1. That is why Paul affirms that all men know something about God, because God has told him so. Let’s read Romans 1.19–20 and Hebrews 1.1–3.

God is one, and the Bible teaches it: *“Jehovah our God, Jehovah one is.”* Deuteronomy 6.4. *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe.”* James 2.19. However, there is still confusion in the world concerning how many gods there are. There are even Christians who believe in more than one God; for example, the trinitarians. We instead believe that there is only one God; that is, we believe in the uniqueness of God, which categorizes us as unitary or unicist.

Uniqueness refers to the unique quality that God possesses. God is indivisible; He can’t be divided. This theological concept is very old. The historian Josephus records that Abraham—who lived in the land of the Chaldeans, Babylon—was the first to openly declare that God is one; therefore the Chaldeans rose against him and God decided to get him out of there.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

The doctrine of uniqueness is central to the Bible. Old and New Testament teach it clearly and emphatically. Deuteronomy 6.4 becomes the most distinctive and important declaration of faith for the Jews, who call this verse “Shema” and quote it very often. But in the Old Testament there are many other verses that affirm that God is one; for example, Exodus 20.3, where we find the Ten Commandments, which begin with these words: “You will have no other gods before me.”

God re-emphasized the Shema by declaring that He is a jealous God who does not tolerate that his people have other gods, in Exodus 20.5. Let’s also read Deuteronomy 5.7; 32.39. Here He says that there is no other god with Him. In 2nd Samuel 7.22 and in 1st Chronicles 17.20 he also says that there is no other outside Him. And in Psalm 86.10 he says that only He is God. Hallelujah! The prophet Isaiah also wrote several statements emphasizing the truth of God’s uniqueness:

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.. 11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.” Isaiah 43.10–11. ***“I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”*** Isaiah 44.6. ***“Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any”*** Isaiah 44.8. ***“I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;”*** Isaiah 44.24.

Likewise, the New Testament affirms that God is one; that is, it continues the teaching of the Old Testament regarding this fundamental truth. Jesus himself quotes Deuteronomy 6.4 and calls it ***“The first of all the commandments”***, in Mark 12.29–30. The Apostles taught this as well: ***“one God.”*** Romans 3.30. ***“...none other God but one.”*** 1st Corinthians 8.4. ***“...one God...”*** 1 Corinthians 8.6. ***“God is one.”*** Galatians 3.20. ***“One God and Father of all.”*** Ephesians 4.6. ***“For there is one God...”*** 1 Timothy 2.5. ***“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe...”*** James 2.19. Then, you should never accept the idea of a God composed or divided into three people, for being unbiblical.

4. THE NATURE OF GOD

Let us now examine two areas of God’s existence: His nature and His attributes. Human beings tend to imagine God as if he were one of us, when in reality He is very different from us. Every human attempt to represent God through sculpted images, paintings or literary descriptions will always ***“fall short.”*** The nature of God is best understood through the study of its attributes. What are the attributes of God? They are its distinctive qualities; those things that make him unique. An attribute is a quality or property. It is by studying the attributes of God that we can know the essentials of His being; that is, His divine nature.

First, God is Spirit. Jesus affirms this in John 4.24; and ***“a Spirit has no flesh or bones”*** according to Luke 24.39. It is for this reason that God forbids us to make images of Him, or to compare him with anything known. Let’s read Deuteronomy 4.15–20 and Isaiah 44.9–20. God is also Love, according to 1st John 4.4; and Light, according to 1st John 5.5. So, Spirit, Love and Light are His essential characteristics; fundamental elements of His divine nature. Let’s look at other attributes of God.

God is omnipotent. This is how He introduced himself to Jacob in Bethel: ***“I am the Almighty God.”*** Genesis 35.11. In other words, He has no limitation; It is not subject to any law. We are subject to many laws, for example, the law of gravity; But God no. He does not get tired, or fatigue, or sleep, or need to walk. Job recognized this: ***“I know that thou canst do everything...”*** Job 42.2.



God is omnipresent. This means that God is present everywhere. He is everywhere at the same time. His Spirit fills everything; His presence covers the entire Earth (Isaiah 66.1–2). Even other spiritual beings, such as angels and demons, are confined to a certain space, but not the Lord (Mark 5.10; Jude 1.6; Revelation 20.1–3).

God is omniscient. This means that He knows everything. Psalms 139.1–6 teaches us that God knows our thoughts, ideas, intentions and plans. God has complete knowledge of everything, including the future (Acts 2.23).

God is holy. God is absolutely holy. He dwells in holiness and purity. He never dwells in sin, and so He commands us: ***“Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the LORD your God.”*** Leviticus 20.7. Holiness implies perfection, goodness, mercy, justice, faithfulness, and many other virtues that God has.

God also has individuality, personality and rationality. He is an intelligent being (Romans 11.33–34), with a definite will (Romans 9.19) and with the ability to reason (Isaiah 1.18). Finally, the fact that human beings are emotional beings indicates that God also has emotions, since He made us ***“in his own image”*** according to Genesis 1.27.

5. MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

Being that God is spirit and that it is impossible for man to see or touch him; God has had to reveal himself to him in different ways, through manifestations. The word manifestation comes from the Greek words ***“anadeixis”***, which means to show publicly, and ***“phanerosis”***, which means to make something visible, manifest or known.

One of the ways in which God became visible to man in ancient times was through theophany, or bodily manifestations. For example, God appeared as a man to Abraham in Genesis 18.1–3; to Jacob, in Genesis 32.24–28; to Moses in Exodus 33.18–23; and to other prophets like Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Amos. Theophany were manifestations of God for certain times and places. But in Jesus Christ, God manifested in the flesh for all mankind and for a long period of time, as read in 1st Timothy 3.16: ***“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”***

We have then that God has manifested himself to man in three ways: as Father in creation, as Son in redemption and as Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Now, these three manifestations in no way imply the existence of three persons in the divinity, as Trinitarianism maintains. For the biblical teaching arising from Deuteronomy 6.4 is clear in stating that there is only one true God. As for the manifestation of God in the flesh through Jesus Christ, we must say that this was the only way God could come to this world and rescue him. Then we will explain this point better. For now we will say that, by manifesting in the flesh through Jesus Christ, God also revealed to us His Name, which had been hidden.

6. NAMES FOR GOD

Biblical time names were generally more significant than today. They used to reveal something about people’s character, origin or life. For example, Abraham means ***“Father of multitudes”***; Jacob, ***“impersonator”***; and so in several cases. Similarly, God has used different names or titles to identify himself; to make yourself known to the human being. His ***“names”*** teach us different aspects of His character and power:

LESSON 5

WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

Was the human being created?
 Who did it and for what?
 What led the human being to his fall?
 What consequences has this brought?

Text to memorize: *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”* Genesis 2.7,22.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Bible teaches us that God is the Creator of the human being. It was He who made us, and not we ourselves (Psalms 100.3). Biblical statements such as these contradict the commonly accepted beliefs and theories that man comes from the ape and is part of a supposed evolutionary chain.

2. GOD MADE US IN HIS IMAGE

Genesis 1.26–28: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”*

According to this writing, God did for us something that only a loving God would do: He granted us his image. When mentioning the **“image of God”**, the Bible does not refer to a physiognomy, face or figure. As we have already learned, God is Spirit (John 4.24). Therefore, the image of God that we carry is not physical, but spiritual and moral. We have inherited from Him all good, pure, just; everything that has to do with His perfect morality and holiness.

Through His creative Word, God created everything that exists —animals, plants, air, water, etc. And He created it from nothing. However, He made us differently: He made us with His own hands, from a pre-existing material that is the dust of the earth. When He made us, God placed in us unique qualities, which make us totally different from the rest of creation:

The human being possesses intellectual faculties (Genesis 2.19). This means that God gave us the ability to reason and think; He gave us creativity, for example, to name animals or to generate scientific knowledge; among many other things that we can do and that the rest of the living beings cannot.

The human being was created innocent (Genesis 2.25), that is, without any malice in him, without inclination of any kind to bad things. When it was created, human beings did not know evil; I couldn’t even imagine. In other words, we were created with a holy moral nature, like God’s (Ecclesiastes 7.29).



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

3. WHY DID GOD CREATE US?

God made us to manifest His nature. Human beings enjoy spiritual things that even angels do not enjoy (Hebrews 2.16; Psalms 8.4–5). It was the man whom God gave of His Spirit when he breathed life into him.

God made us to fill the Earth (Genesis 1.28). Procreation, having children, is a mandate from Him.

God made us to share His government. Man was in charge of dominating and ruling over the beasts of the field, and over the whole Earth (Genesis 1.28b; Psalms 8.6–8). God created this world to share it with us.

But above all, **God made us to have communion with Him.** That was his main purpose in creating us. He had many angels and beings created in heaven to interrelate; However, in man He put something special.

4. GOD MADE US WITH FREE WILL

Perhaps the greatest or most amazing of all is that God made us with the ability to decide. This is what is known as free will. God did not make us like robots, but gave us our own will. Human beings have the capacity and freedom to choose what should be done... or what does not suit him/her.

In His great love, God does not impose things on anyone. He has the ability to do it because He is Sovereign King; but His chivalry is so great that He has given us the freedom to choose: ***“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”*** Deuteronomy 30.19.

The human being was created by God with the freedom to make his own decisions. And what did man decide? He decided to get away from God. Even so, because of His great love, God sought us—and still seeks us—to save us and return us to our original position, the one we had before man sinned against Him:

“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5.18,21. We recommend you read the entire chapter 5 of Romans.

5. THE FALL OF MAN

Genesis 2.16–17: ***“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”***

The disobedience to the command given by God not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil seems somewhat minimal compared to the sin we see today in the world. But that tree was not something insignificant for God. He had planted it in the center of the Garden of Eden to test man, to determine whether man loved Him or not. The commandment was not difficult or complicated; it was simple: Adam and Eve should not eat that fruit; and that was all.



Genesis 3.1: ***“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*** The woman was tempted by the ancient serpent, which is the devil (Revelation 12.9). The enemy was already in operation at the time, with his bad work; and he did not miss the opportunity with the captivated woman who listened to his lies. This teaches us that the devil has always made war on us, trying to ruin the projects that God laid out for us.

After listening to Satan comes the familiar story from chapter 3 of Genesis: ***“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”*** V. 6. Man sinned by disobeying God; He fell from the grace of God and the glory in which he had been put. Sin was consummated.

The human being failed and his eyes were finally opened. Now Adam and Eve knew good and evil; and the first thing they did was run to hide from God: ***“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”*** V. 7–8.

Something important must be understood: man fell by choice. God had made it perfect; He had given him the power of decision. Man could choose between sinning or not sinning; but chose to do it. It is true that Satan’s evil influence was present, but it is also true that man had - and still has today - the privilege of deciding what he wants to do. So, did God have anything to do with the fall of man? Many think so; that it was He who allowed man to sin; But this is not true. It was the man who made such a decision. God is completely Holy and would never allow or tolerate sin in His creation. Although He knows all things, the decision to disobey was of man, not His.

6. GOD’S JUDGMENT

When sin appeared on Earth, God had to deliver His judgment, punishing not only the human being, but also the snake. In addition, the Earth suffered a curse and the effect of sin was transmitted to all mankind from there: ***“...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”*** Romans 5.12,13.

God said to the snake: ***“...thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”*** Genesis 3.14. God punished the snake for being an instrument Satan to tempt the woman (and still punishes every person who lets himself be used by the devil). To the woman he said: ***“multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children...”*** Genesis 3.16. Since then, women suffer the strong pain of childbirth —it is said that the worst of the pain - allowed by God for her to remember her sin. In fact, every pain that human beings suffer is somehow a reminder that we have failed God. To man he said: ***“Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”*** Genesis 3.17.

LESSON 6

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

Is there life after life? Where do the dead go?
 Is there a Heaven and Hell?
 What are Hades, Abraham's Bosom?

Text to memorize: *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* John 5.28–29.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a reality that we cannot ignore or avoid: that one day we will die. The Bible says that we are like the flowers of the grass, which comes out in the morning and in the afternoon it no longer exists: *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."* 1st Peter 1.24–25.

Our life here is really short. But there is another reality, although most people don't know it. Many believe that at death everything ends; but the opposite is true: it is at that moment that true life begins. We are so busy in this world, that we often forget that there is a life after this life: An eternal life. We also forget that everything we do here will affect our eternity. We need to ask ourselves: where will I spend eternity?

2. WHERE DO THE DEAD GO?

The Bible teaches us where people go when they die: *"All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."* Ecclesiastes 3.20. So that's it... Or not? Not at all. Here the Scripture is referring to the body, but that is only part of us. Human beings are much more than body; We are also soul and spirit: *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* 1st Thessalonians 5.23. We are tripartite beings and each part of us goes to a different place after we die:

- (1) The body goes to the grave. *"The dust return to the earth..."* Ecclesiastes 12.7a. The body returns to the place from which it left. This statement also seems to be a divine mandate in the sense that the dead should not be cremated or embalmed, but buried.
- (2) The spirit goes to God. *"... the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."* V. 7b. The spirit is the **"breath of life"** that God put in us at the moment of being conceived. Life comes from Him and returns to Him.
- (3) The soul goes where it belongs. According to the Word of God, there are only two places where the souls of people who die go: *"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* John 5.29.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

Jesus says there are two “resurrections” or destinies for the human soul: Life or condemnation. There are no three destinations, nor four. Nor are there purgatory or limbo, taught by Catholicism. Let us now see what does exist, according to the Bible.

3. HADES, PARADISE AND THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM

Jesus told a shocking story about what happens after death. Let’s read Luke 16.19–31. Here the Lord explains in detail the process of man’s life and how things are after death. The main protagonists of the story are a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus; men of very different fate in the world: While the rich live from party to party, Lazarus waits by his door every day, trying to find something to eat in the trash. One day, both die.

Death makes no difference between rich and poor. The rich man dies and is buried; and here the differences begin, for while he goes to Hades—a place of torment—Lazarus is taken by the angels of God to Abraham’s Bosom—a resting place; the place where the souls of the righteous went before the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greek word Hades refers to the region of lost souls awaiting God’s judgment and is equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol, which means insatiable or place of oblivion. Hades has also been translated as burial, abyss and hell—although in reality it does not correspond to the latter, as we will see later.

V. 24 mentions that there is great suffering in Hades, showing the enormous contrast between that place and Abraham’s Bosom, a place of comfort, rest and happiness. While in Hades, the man who had been rich in life raised his eyes and saw Abraham and Lazarus from afar. He wanted to go up to where they were, but it was too late for him: those who are going to stop on that side cannot pass to the other, and vice versa.

4. PARADISE

“Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ 43And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’” Luke 23.42–43.

As we have been saying, souls go to their rightful place as their works have been in life. This can be clearly seen in the case of the two thieves crucified with Christ. One of them repented and when he died, he immediately went to Paradise; while the other thief did not repent and obviously had a very different destiny.

Jesus introduces a new word here: Paradise, which comes from the Persian language and means a place protected by a fence; site outside this world for recreation; A place of bliss and good luck. Paradise is not Abraham’s Bosom, but a new place that Jesus. He went to prepare to give rest to the souls of those who have served him faithfully.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He defeated Hades and death; and as a result of His victory, he rescued the righteous souls that were in Hades and took them to Paradise: *“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”* Ephesians 4.8–10.



Paul refers to Paradise in 2nd Corinthians 12.2–4, presenting it as the third heaven: ***“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”***

And our Lord Jesus speaks again of Paradise in Revelation 2.7: ***“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”***

In short, when a person dies his body goes to the grave, his spirit returns to God and his soul enters a state that the Bible compares to the dream, to await the resurrection. The soul of the wicked goes to a place of restlessness called Sheol or Hades, while the soul of the righteous will rest in the presence of God in Paradise.

5. HEAVEN AND HELL

Some believe that eternity will be located on Earth; but in revealing the final destiny of souls, the Bible speaks of two places that are outside the Earth: Heaven and Hell. In His earthly ministry, Jesus taught extensively about both places. Actually, the entire New Testament teaches about Heaven and Hell, mostly the book of Revelation.

We can then be sure of the existence of these two places, which God has prepared for very different purposes. Heaven aims to be the abode of saints, who will enjoy the eternal joy of salvation. Hell instead has been created to establish the separation of the disobedient.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12.2.

The Bible also calls Hell “the second death” in Revelation 21.8: ***“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death..”***

The contrast between Heaven and Hell cannot be bigger. As we have just seen, Hell is described as a lake of fire: ***“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*** Revelation 20.10. It is also described as a cold and dark place: ***“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** Matthew 22.13.

Heaven, on the other hand, is a place of eternal light: ***“And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”*** Revelation 22.4–5. It is also a place of great beauty: ***“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him”*** Revelation 22.1-3.

LESSON 7

CONDEMNATION OF SIN

**What is sin? Where does it come from? What are its consequences?
What is condemnation? Is there a way out, is there hope? Where is salvation?**

Text to memorize: *"...The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous."*
Genesis 18.20.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this confusing world, so full of philosophical and religious currents, and where even the worst sinful acts are usually supported by the crooked concepts of man, it is of the utmost importance that we clearly define our position regarding sin, aligning ourselves as much as possible with the Eternal and Holy Word of God.

2. SOME DEFINITIONS

The dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language teaches that sin (from Latin peccātum) consists of voluntary transgression of religious precepts; something that departs from right and right or that is missing from what is due; excess or defect in any line. In the Greek language, the concept of sin was forged from the word "hamartia" which means failing the goal; be wide of the mark. The Larousse dictionary says that sin is a transgression of the divine law. And the Dictionary of Theological Terms defines sin as a lack of fundamental belief; distrust and rejection of God; human displacement of God as the center of reality.

The Bible, on the other hand, defines sin as an offense (Genesis 20.9); fault (26.10); perversity (Exodus 28.43); error (Leviticus 5.1); missing the mark (Matthew 1.21; 3.6); error or transgression (Ephesians 1.7); and weakness (Hebrews 9.7).

3. THE ORIGIN OF SIN

The first thing we will see here is that sin does not come from God. There are those who affirm that God allowed sin, but the truth is that He gave us the ability to choose between obeying or sinning; and we chose to sin: ***"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. 5They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation."*** Deuteronomy 32.4–5.

"Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. 11For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways." Job 34.10–11. God truly hates sin. God is holy, and that way he made us: clean, pure and spotless. In his image and likeness: ***"And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy..."*** Leviticus 20.26. ***"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."*** Isaiah 6.3.

The fall of Adam and Eve is often referred to as the beginning of sin, but sin occurred much earlier with Satan's rebellion in Heaven. That is, sin appeared in the spiritual world when man had not yet been done, as we can see in the following scriptures:



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ” 1 John 3.7–8. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” John 8.44.

Before becoming the devil, Satan was an angel at the service of God whose name was Lucifer: ***“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.” Ezekiel 28.15–16.***

“;How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. 14I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. 15Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” Isaiah 14.12–15.

He wanted to be equal to God and managed to trick many angels to follow him. But God expelled them from His presence and since then Satan and the demons are dedicated to influencing humanity to turn them away from God. The devil has specialized in inoculating the poison of sin in man.

4. CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

Tempted by Satan, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and thereby caused sin to infiltrate Earth. Adam and Eve lived in a condition of purity, innocence and perfection; and part of that perfection was to have free will, or the power to decide between obeying God or not. Therefore, and beyond the influence of the devil being present in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were held responsible by God for their own disobedience. It all started when the woman was tempted by the devil:

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yeah, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. 7And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” Genesis 3.1–7.

In the last verse we can see that a shocking and drastic change occurred in man, due to sin. In the first place, sin affected his entire being: spirit, soul, body, emotions, conscience, etc. Soon after they sinned, Adam and Eve realized they were naked. Then they were afraid of God.



Second, they lost the image of God; not completely as it happened with the devil and his angels, but to a great extent. The divine image in Adam and Eve was stained, deteriorated. The first human couple experienced a spiritual disconnection from God, so they also suffered a progressive estrangement from Him, which in turn led her to ignorance of God.

Third, Adam and Eve did not know each other; they even ignored themselves. Once they sinned, they were no longer the same. That is what moving away from God brings: disconnection and rebellion of instincts.

In four place, their relationship with God was affected. Adam and Eve were not only expelled from Paradise; They were also removed from the presence of God. His relationship with Him was very damaged. Why? Because sin creates a great separation between God and man: ***“Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”*** Genesis 3.23,24.

But the biggest change produced by sin is what we will study now.

5. CONDEMNATION

By disobeying, Adam and Eve introduced sin into the entire human race: ***“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”*** Romans 5.12. Now we are all born with a sinful nature, slaves of sin: ***“...There is none righteous, no not one: 11There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”*** Romans 3.9–12.

Our nature changed from innocent to sinful, and from pure to depraved. Our nature is now sinful, inevitably leading us to sinful deeds, bringing us guilt before God and condemnation: ***“...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*** Romans 3.23.

We are born guilty before God, sentenced to death; ***“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** Romans 6.23. In biblical terms, death means separation for man, in three aspects: (1) The moment in which the soul and the spirit leave the body and die. (2) Living far from God in this life. (3) The final spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God, or condemnation.

Physical death is still inevitable today, but through Jesus Christ we can all now be free from spiritual death and condemnation: ***“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6AND hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”*** Ephesians 2.5–6.

6. SALVATION

From the beginning, God drew up a plan of salvation for us. This is a very important issue. Many people have heard of him, and many often believe that his salvation or entrance to Heaven is assured; But will it really be that way? How can a person be saved? How do you get to get salvation?

LESSON 8

THE DIVINITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Who is Jesus? Is he a prophet only? Or is it God himself?

Text to memorize: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* Isaiah 9.6.

1. INTRODUCTION

The most important question that the world has asked itself through the ages is: Who is Jesus? He himself asked His disciples: *“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”* Matthew 16.13, which indicates that Jesus is interested in what his disciples think about Him. Today, many continue without knowing who Jesus really is. Even Christian people do not know His true identity to some extent. Let’s see what the Bible says about it.

2. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

Almost all the doctrinal problems that exist in Christianity have to do in a certain way with the issue of the identity of Jesus Christ. For many, Jesus is a prophet, a teacher, or a good man, nothing more. In their time, some even thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, or Elijah who had returned, or Jeremiah, or some other prophet (Matthew 16.14); but who is Jesus really?

Faced with this crucial question, Peter said to Jesus: *“...Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Matthew 16.16. And Jesus replied: *“...Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* V. 17. Here begins the greatest revelation of Jesus: He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christ (Greek) equivalent to Messiah (Hebrew); and Messiah means anointed.

The Jews had been waiting for God’s Anointed for a long time, as reflected in Jesus’ encounter with his first disciples: *“We have found the Messiah”*, Andrew exclaimed (John 1.41). Nathanael said to Jesus: *“Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”* John 1.49. The Samaritan woman told him: *“I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.”* John 4.25–26. Jesus openly declared himself as the Christ, or the Anointed of God who was to come into the world. As we will see next, the Anointed or Messiah was none other than God himself coming in the flesh to free Israel from oppression and be King over them.

3. JESUS IS GOD MANIFESTED IN FLESH

Jesus is God incarnate, that is, God manifested as man. Let’s look at two prophetic texts that identify it: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* Isaiah 9.6. *“...a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* Isaiah 7.14.

The name Immanuel means *“God with us”*: *“And she will bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he will save his people from their sins. 22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth*



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Matthew 1.21–23. Therefore, Jesus is not only human, but also divine. He is God made man. He is “Christ the Lord.” Luke 2.11.

Many struggle to understand this, but it is not very difficult if God reveals it to him: **“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”** Luke 10.21–22.

These words of Jesus match those he said to Peter: **“...For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”** Matthew 16.17.

4. THE FATHER AND THE SON ARE THE SAME

Jesus prayed to the Father: **“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”** John 17.1. By encountering biblical verses like this, many have identified Jesus as a person separated from the Father, a **“second God”** or the second person from a trinity. But what the Bible really states is that in Jesus Christ the divine attributes and human nature were mixed perfectly and incomprehensibly.

The Bible designates Jesus as **“Son of man”** and **“Son of God”**, because on the part of Mary, in whose womb he took the form of man, He was human; but on the part of the Holy Spirit that begotten Him, He was Divine. In his Divinity, Jesus is God; but in his humanity he is man. In his Divinity, Jesus is the Father; but in his humanity he is the Son. In his Divinity Jesus is the Spirit; in his humanity is flesh.

Jesus Himself affirmed that He is the Father: **“I and my Father are one.”** John 10.30. **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 9...he that hath seen me that seen the Father, shew us the Father?.”** John 14.6,7,9.

The key to understanding this point is knowing how to distinguish the occasions on which Jesus acted as a man, from those that he did as God. Once that is understood, the door opens for a clear understanding of who Jesus Christ really is: The Almighty God, Jehovah Savior... **“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”** Hebrews 1.3.

5. JESUS IS THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus is not only the Father, but also the Holy Spirit. To understand this, we have to remember two very important things: (1) God is Spirit. (2) There is only one Spirit: **“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”** Ephesians 4.4–5.

The apostle Paul affirms that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Spirit: **“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.”** 2nd Corinthians 3.17. Jesus was identified as the Lord by the Apostles, and this is correct, because Jesus himself had identified himself thus: **“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.”** John 13.13.



When he proclaimed himself Lord, Jesus automatically proclaimed himself as the Spirit, as he had said to his disciples before being crucified: ***“The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*** John 14.17.

Given the assertion —erred— that God is three persons, it is worth asking: If the Father is one person, the Son another and the Holy Spirit another, which of the three lives in us? What are we temple of? Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 6.16 that we are ***“the temple of God”***; in 2nd Corinthians 13.5 it says that we are ***“the temple of Christ”***; and in 1st Corinthians 6.19 it says that we are ***“temple of the Holy Spirit”***. So, do three different people live in us? No way! The correct and natural conclusion is that all three are the same, and that Jesus is not only the Father but also the Holy Spirit.

6. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY AND TRUE GOD

Let’s review what Jesus said in John 14.7: ***“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”*** God became incarnate so that we could see and touch him, to walk among us. Therefore, when Philip asks him to see the Father, Jesus tells him that he had already seen him.

That was prophesied: ***“Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.”*** Isaiah 52.6. That is, the God of the Old Testament manifested in the flesh and was present among us. For this reason Jesus could say: ***“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”***

Jesus is none other than the God of the Old Testament who has manifested himself to the world in human form. A spirit cannot die. That is why God became man: to be able to give his life for us on the Cross, die for our sins, be buried and rise again on the third day.

Eight days after the resurrection, Jesus went to His disciples and ***“...the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*** John 20.26–28.

John declared: ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*** John 1.1. See also John 1.14. And Paul said: ***“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*** 1st Timothy 3.16.

It can also be seen that Jesus is God in the fact of his three main divine attributes. (1) He is omnipotent: ***“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*** Mathew 28.18. See also Revelation 1.8; John 17.2. (2) He is omniscient: ***“Now we are sure that You know all things...”*** John 16.30a. See also John 2.24–25; 4.16–19. And (3) He is omnipresent: ***“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”*** John 3.13. See also Matthew 18.20.

LESSON 9

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

Why did Jesus have to die crucified? What does His sacrifice mean?
How does it benefit us? How should we respond to it?

Text to memorize: ***“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*** 1st Corinthians 1.18.

1. INTRODUCTION

As we said in the last lesson, God manifested in the flesh through Jesus Christ to provide salvation for His fallen creation. The Incarnation of God came about for the purpose of Propitiation, a term that means placating anger. The holiness of God demanded that He separate himself from humanity when it sinned in Adam and Eve. Such separation caused the spiritual and physical death of the human being.

Furthermore, sin placed man under eternal damnation; since the holy Law of God requires it. But then God chose to be bound by this principle of punishment for sin, He himself came to die in our place. That is exactly what the Gospel is about; When Jesus died for us, He was buried and on the third day He rose for the salvation of those who believe in Him:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” 1st Corinthians 15.3–4. Our Christian faith revolves around these three fundamental elements: death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. WHY JESUS HAD TO DIE

Basically, there are three reasons why the Lord Jesus had to die:

- (1) God established the principle that without bloodshed (the giving of a life) there can be no remission or deliverance from the punishment of sin: ***“...without shedding of blood is no remission.”*** Hebrews 9.22.
- (2) The sacrifice of animals was not enough to remit the sins of man, for we are greater than them (we were made in the spiritual image of God). ***“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.”*** Hebrews 10.4,5.
- (3) Nor could an ordinary person suffer the penalty for humanity, since every human being deserves eternal death for their own sins: ***“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*** Romans 3.23.

So, in order to provide an acceptable substitute, God Himself came to Earth as a man without sin —Jesus Christ. He was the only innocent person who has ever lived, the only one in history who did not deserve to die; thanks to which it could be our perfect substitute on the Cross. The death of Jesus became the permanent propitiation for our sins.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

The above does not mean that God has overlooked our disobedience, but that He inflicted on himself the death penalty that corresponded to us. Through the sacrifice of the innocent Lamb called Jesus Christ, God Himself bore the sins of the whole world: ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”*** Isaiah 53.6. ***“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*** Romans 5.8.

3. THE WOUNDS OF JESUS

On the Cross, Jesus endured an extremely painful and shameful process, mentally and physically. What Christ suffered to fulfill God’s plan also included the shame of being crucified, something that was considered a curse in itself (Galatians 3.13). After being arrested, Jesus suffered all kinds of humiliation, abuse, and at least six types of wounds on his body:

(1) Lacerations: In the Roman gallows, Jesus was whipped 39 times with a cane with leather strips called scourge, on whose tips were pieces of metal and bone. Those whips ground and tore his body (Matthew 27.26).

(2) Punctures: They were performed with sharp instruments, such as the crown of thorns that put the Lord on the head. Those thorns were embedded so deep in his skull, that blood gushed and ran down His face (Matthew 27.29).

(3) Bruises: The blows that Jesus received produced bruises and bruises on his head and body (Matthew 27.30).

(4) Drilling: To nail Christ on the Cross, sharp nails, about fifteen centimeters long, were used that pierced the median nerve of his wrists and feet (Matthew 27.35).

(5) Dislocation: When hanging from the Cross vertically, Jesus’ arms and shoulders dislocated (Psalm 22.14,17); a suffering that lasted for hours.

(6) Incisions: In order to confirm His death, a Roman soldier struck with a spear the side of Jesus, piercing his lung and heart (John 19.34).

The death of the crucified was asphyxiation, and it came slowly. For several hours, the victim was pushing up to breathe, but this caused more and more bleeding in his back, scraping it against the rough wood of the cross. Unable to continue the upward movement, the crucified finally died.

4. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Christ bore our sins even before the cross. During his ministry, He freed and forgiven those who approached him. This means that, when Jesus arrived on the Cross, he had already been bearing our suffering: ***“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*** Isaiah 53.4–5.



While on the Cross, Jesus Christ said: **“It is finished!”** Which means that He finished the work entrusted to him, triumphing over Satan: **“For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”** Hebrews 2.14.

By shedding His blood, Jesus annulled: **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”** Colossians 2.14. The power of the blood of Christ annulled every accusation that weighed against us. That list of sins was nailed to the Cross, and Jesus promised us not to remember more than what was written on it (Hebrews 10.17).

In other words, the blood of Christ paid the debt we could not pay; He paid for our freedom, so that we no longer live in Satan’s prison: **“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”** Colossians 2.15.

Now, through that blood that was shed on the Cross, our whole being receives healing. We can keep spirit, soul and body clean until the coming of the Lord (1st Thessalonians 5.23), because on the Cross He finished everything that could stain us. His sores heal all physical illness, soul and spirit: **“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”** Psalms 147.3.

The blood of Christ is powerful to cleanse our conscience (Hebrews 9.14). When we confess our sins, He cleanses us from all evil (1st John 1.9) and rescues us from our vain way of life (1st Peter 1.18).

5. A NEW AND LIVE ROAD

On the Cross, Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of all times, and the benefits obtained by Him are now available to all those who believe in Him and obey Him (Romans 3.25). Christ came to become **“the way, the truth, and the life.”** John 14.6; so that, through Him, we can reach the promised Salvation from ancient times.

Before Him, humanity lived in constant sin, breaking God’s Law and suffering the consequences of it. Most people lived far from God and therefore, under the dominion of Satan. God’s people offered animal sacrifices to cover, forgive, remit or atone for sins; but those sacrifices did not totally take away the blame.

But through His bodily sacrifice on the Cross, the Lord Jesus opened the way to save humanity from the oppressive hand of Satan; a path that could only be opened with the shedding of the blood of a pure and perfect Lamb that would definitely carry the sin of humanity. Now we have free access to His presence through **“...a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh”** Hebrews 10.20.

The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross became the only and final sacrifice, for all time (Hebrews 10.12), for all human beings; providing constant intercession for our sins and free access to the throne of God (Romans 8.34; Hebrews 4.14–16; 1st John 2.1).

Jesus Christ is now the only one who takes us directly to God, without the need for more mediators or priests: **“Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”** Hebrews 9.25–26.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

The Way has already been opened for us and no more sacrifices are needed, because ***“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*** 1st Peter 3.18. ***“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*** 1st Timothy 2.5.

6. THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Jesus Christ died on the Cross and was buried to free us from the slavery of sin and Satan; and on the third day he rose to give us life together with Him: ***“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Seven when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*** Ephesians 2.4–6.

When he died, Christ was buried in the grave and his soul descended to Hades, the place of the souls that have departed (Acts 2.25–32). Three days later, He rose with a glorified physical body, overcoming death and Hades (Romans 4.25; 1st Corinthians 15.14). This wonderful event is central to our faith, and is essential for our salvation, for several reasons.

Thanks to the resurrection, we who have believed in Jesus also have the power to overcome; we have new spiritual life in Him, healing for the body, innumerable blessings in this life; besides that we will soon receive immortality, that is, the fullness in eternity (Isaiah 53.5; Romans 5.10; 6.4; 8.19–23; 1st Corinthians 15.20–23; Colossians 1.14,20; Hebrews 2.14).

Through His death, burial and resurrection, the Church of the Lord will soon recover all that the human being had lost because of sin. Even the present creation will be released from the curse that was imposed on it because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Romans 8.22–23).

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended to Heaven, where he is to be exalted forever and ever (Ephesians 1.20,21; Philippians 2.9). During His earthly life, He had temporarily left His divine prerogatives of glory, honor and recognition, submitting to human limitations; but now He is no longer limited: in Heaven, like God, Jesus Christ is openly invested with all power, authority and glory (Matthew 28.18; Revelation 1.8).

7. THE POWER OF THE WORD OF THE CROSS

For its purposes, the Bible describes the crucifixion of Christ in four ways:

(1) Redemption (Matthew 20.28; Galatians 3.13; 1st Timothy 2.6). Redeeming means freeing or rescuing by paying a price. The blood or the life of Christ was the ransom that God’s holy law demanded to redeem us from captivity and the penalty of sin (1st Peter 1.18–20; Revelation 5.8–10).

(2) Propitiation (Romans 3.25; 1st John 2.2). This means satisfaction or placating; something that allows God to forgive sin without compromising His holiness and justice. The death of Christ fulfilled the righteous requirements of God, being propitiatory of our sins (Matthew 26.28; John 1.29).

(3) Reconciliation (Romans 5.6–11; 2nd Corinthians 5.14–21). As a man without sin, Christ man became our mediator before God (1st Timothy 2.5) and thus removed the barrier of enmity that prevented us from having fellowship with God.





NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

LESSON 10

THE DIVINE GIFT OF GRACE

What is grace? How does it function in the believer? Why is it important?

Text to memorize: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. 9Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* Ephesians 2.8–9.

1. INTRODUCTION

Grace is one of the central doctrines of Christianity. Its importance cannot be understated. Understanding grace will give the believer a greater sense of the wonder of our salvation. The objective of this study is to assist the believer to understand that we are saved because God is good and not because we are good.

2. WHAT IS GRACE?

The simplest way to define grace is to say that grace is the free and undeserved favor of God towards us. Grace is God looking favorably at us even though we have done nothing to deserve that kindness. What makes God’s way of looking at mankind breathtaking is that rather than acting in ways that merited the kindness of God, men acted in ways that provoked God’s righteous anger. God should have looked upon mankind disapprovingly because of our behavior, but rather than doing that, God chose to look upon mankind favorably. God’s choice to give mankind an opportunity to be saved in spite of our behavior is called grace.

3. WHY CAN’T WE EARN OUR SALVATION?

We cannot earn salvation because man is a sinner and our sins have provoked the righteous anger of God. By **“righteous anger”** we mean that God’s anger is without argument. He has every right to be angry with men for disobeying his commandments, not honoring Him as their God, and committing many other sins that have offended him.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” Romans 1.18.

Mankind’s saddest reality is that our sins have broken our relationship with God. This broken relationship did not put mankind in a neutral position with God but in complete rebellion against him. When describing that condition, the Apostle Paul described men as being enemies of God (Ephesians 2), being at war with God (Romans 5), being separated from God (Romans 3.23). Once we sin our works became useless to save us. Therefore, men must look outside of themselves if they were to find salvation from their sins. It is that realization that, ultimately drives the sinner to the cross of Christ and to the grace of God.

The message of grace is that God chose to save us rather than judge us. He chose to offer us his grace. **“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”** Romans 5.8.

4. GRACE IS A GIFT FROM GOD

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2.8–9.

Grace costs us nothing. We cannot earn it. Notice what Paul said to the Ephesians, he said that grace is a free gift of God. It is a free gift to all who believe in Jesus Christ (Romans 5.14–16). Only those who believe the message of the cross and surrender their lives to the risen Savior receive the benefits of the cross. Grace is free for the repentant sinner because Christ on the cross paid the price for our peace with God and thereby demonstrated God’s favor (grace) towards us.

In Ephesians 2.8 Paul says that the reason God sovereignly chose to save us by grace is that grace eliminated all human boasting. Grace takes away from man the ability to say that he is saved because he is good. He cannot boast in his own goodness. The only goodness that displays itself in salvation is God’s goodness. Therefore, the only option left to man, when he thinks about his salvation, is to give glory to God. God alone acted to save us. He alone gets the glory. Without his grace salvation would be impossible.

5. WHO GETS THE BENEFITS OF THE GRACE GOD OFFERS?

An important question is, are all men offered the grace of God? The answer is yes. Jesus paid the price for all men. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that only those who surrender their lives to Jesus Christ receive the salvation that grace offers. Saving grace is offered to all, but only those who respond to the Gospel by believing in Christ receive the gift of salvation. This is an important truth.

Imagine a father offering his son a gift. Does the simple offering of the gift mean that his son gets to enjoy the present hidden in the box? No. One more thing must happen before the child is able to enjoy the gift that has been offered to him. The gift must be received by his son. Only then can the child enjoy the gift hidden in the box, the child must receive the gift. Salvation works much the same way.

In order for a person to be saved he must first be presented the Gospel message, believe, then receive the gift of salvation by obeying the gospel command for the forgiveness of his sins. Only then does the penitent sinner receive the benefits of salvation (Mark 16.16; Acts 2.37–38). While all mankind stands condemned before God for their sins, because of God’s grace, believers stand before God enveloped by his love and favor. Everyone else stands before God condemned.

6. THE SINS OF DAVID AND GOD’S GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS.

The story of David’s repentance for the sins of adultery and murder illustrate perfectly the message of grace. David sinned when he committed adultery with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba. Then upon discovering that Bathsheba was pregnant with his child, David tried to cover up his sin by having her husband killed in battle. These were serious and morally detestable sins.

But that is not the most astounding part of the story because sin is common to the human experience. The shocking thing about this story is how God dealt with David’s sin. God dealt with David’s sin graciously. First, by confronting him with his sin. Then he completely and instantly forgave him of his sin. The story develops like this:

- 1) David sinned (2nd Samuel 11.1–16).
- 2) David’s sin displeased the Lord (V. 27).
- 3) David hid his sin (2nd Samuel 12.1–6,12).
- 4) God confronted David with his sin (V. 7–12).
- 5) David confessed and repented of his sin (V. 13).
- 6) God instantly and completely forgave David for his sin (V. 13).
- 7) David suffered consequences for his sin (V. 10–11).



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

The Scriptures say that as soon as David confessed his sin declaring, **“I have sinned against the Lord”**, the prophet Nathan told him, **“the Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.”** That must have been an astounding thing for him, immediate forgiveness for a sincere confession. Did David do anything to deserve God’s forgiveness? He did absolutely nothing. He just repented and confessed. The fact that God openly declared David forgiven highlights the message of grace. David did nothing to deserve God’s favor, still God chose to forgive him. That is precisely what God does to the broken repentant sinner who has trusted in Christ as his savior, he completely covers him with his grace.

7. GRACE IS A SOVEREIGN CHOICE

“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Romans 9.15. Grace is the sovereign choice. God chose to look on us favorably without our having done anything to deserve his favor. That amazing truth becomes clearer when we think about the rebellion of the angels.

The angles that fell apparently were deceived by Satan as Eve was in the garden of Eden. Yet, in his sovereignty, God chose not to extend to the angels that rebelled the possibility of forgiveness; he provided no way for them to be redeemed (Revelation 12.4). The angels that rebelled received what they deserved for their evil deeds, judgement without mercy (2nd Peter 2.4; Jude 6). That is an awesome thing to consider.

The judgment of the angels highlights the extraordinary choice God made in saving us. When Adam sinned, God sovereignly chose to save him and us in him (Romans 5.9). The only way to describe the actions of God after Adam sinned is Grace. God offered mankind a way to be redeemed rather than making the just decision to condemn us. That is grace.

8. HOW DOES GRACE WORK IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER?

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8.1.

Grace frees us from the condemnation of sin. **“I don’t have to be perfect to be saved.” “I don’t have to live up to a certain standard to be saved.” “I will be saved despite my sin and failures.” “I am saved by grace.”** These are the declarations of the redeemed because salvation is not based on our works (good or evil) but rather on God’s grace; the free, undeserved favor from God saves us.

The Christian will feel conviction when he sins, but he should not feel condemnation. As Paul says, walking **“in the Spirit”** or walking in faith frees us from condemnation. Condemnation drives us from the presence of God. Conviction of sin drives us to God. Grace teaches us to confess our sins and to turn from them. It teaches us that we can always go back to God and find God’s favor in our times of need.

9. CONCLUSION

Grace produces grateful life. The Christian life must be a life of gratitude for what God has done for us. Imagine Paul’s gratitude for being freely offered salvation after having persecuted the Lord’s church. Paul Frequently wrote his testimony telling the wonders of God’s grace in his life. Undoubtedly, the thanks of God marked this man and set his destiny as the most prolific missionary and evangelist in the history of the church. Grace produces one of the most important virtues of the Christian life, gratitude. By the grace of God we serve Christ with grateful hearts.



LESSON 11

GRACE AND THE HOLY LIFE

Is grace a license to sin or does it move us away from it?

Text to memorize: *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* Titus 2.11–13.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson we learned that grace is a gift from God. It is God’s undeserved favor. In this study we will focus on the corresponding truth that grace does not lead to careless living nor does it teach us to take sin lightly, rather it teaches us to live a holy life. To demonstrate this we will be examining three passages: Titus 2.11–13, Romans 5.19–21 and Romans 6.1–3. From these texts we will learn that grace teaches the believer that he should separate himself from sin and strive to live uprightly. These verses and many other verses are important because they set the foundation for living a genuinely holy life by faith and not a simulated **“holy”** life in the flesh. Genuine spirituality is founded on grace.

2. GRACE TEACHES US TO LIVE A LIFE OF HOLINESS

Let’s read Titus 2.11–13 again. This chapter of Titus is significant because it makes the point that once we are saved by grace, instead of freeing us to live carelessly, grace teaches us to avoid sin and to live righteously before God. In certain Christian circles there is a lot of confusion about the subject. The truth that God saves us apart from our works is threatening to some who think that teaching God’s grace opens a door for licentious living. They reason, that if a person is saved by grace alone, without works, then Christians will be free to live in unrighteousness, because, they reason, regardless of how much Christians sin, their sins will always be forgiven. Their reasoning is flawed.

These teachers say that the correct formula for being saved is not grace alone, but rather, grace and human works. In their minds Christians are saved by God’s grace, but also by the sincere efforts Christians make to live a life of holiness. If a Christian makes authentic efforts to live a holy, then God will forgive the sins they commit. The grace and works formula, they reason, will cause the believer to live a balanced life and not be careless with sin.

However, we cannot get away from clear biblical teaching of Paul that a person is saved by grace alone apart from human works, as taught in the previous lesson, The gift of Grace. That truth, together with the corresponding truth that grace teaches a Christian to live righteously, assures us that grace is not a license to sin.

In other words, Grace never frees us to live carelessly. In this passage (Titus 2.11–13) Paul’s emphasis is that grace teaches the Christian to renounce ungodliness and to live soberly. Grace is a teacher of righteousness. That’s great news. It teaches us the importance of denying the flesh and its carnal desires.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

3. GRACE ONLY TEACHES THE SAVED

Notice that Paul is referring to a specific kind of grace. He's referring to the grace **"that bringeth Salvation"**. Not every teaching about grace is salvific. There are some ideas about grace that are a stumbling block to believers. Any teaching that grace frees the Christian to practice sin without consequences is not the kind of grace Paul is referring to (Romans 6.1–2). The kind of grace Paul is referring to first saves us, gives evidences of salvation, and then keeps us safe.

It is important to understand that although grace is offered to all men, the grace of God only teaches those who have been genuinely saved (John 14.16). Unsaved persons have other teachers: Satan, the world, the flesh (Ephesians 2.1–3). The unsaved have no desire to live for God or keep his word. If they do seem to keep some of the commandments of God, it is for religious reasons or perhaps because they were taught that ethic by their parents, or some other person, or by culture itself. But they do not keep the commandments to honor God. That desire, living righteously, separated from sin for the glory of God, only characterizes those who have been born again. The reason the born-again person has new desires is because he's been given a new heart (Ezekiel 36.26).

Grace only teaches regenerate hearts. It is only the regenerate heart that desires to live for God (Romans 6.4). A grace filled heart is a faith filled heart. Grace is working where faith is present. Some Christians live their lives following rules, that's religion. We follow Christ's commandments not on the bases of fear nor to deserve heaven, we follow Christ's Commandments by faith, motivated by love (John 14.15). The Christian's motivation is completely different from that of the unsaved person.

4. SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (2nd Samuel 12)

Sin brings consequences. Although, it is true to say that we are saved by grace, Christians must understand that grace does not free us from the temporal consequences of sin. In the last study we looked at king David's sins. We stated that David was forgiven immediately and completely by God for the sins he committed once he confessed (2nd Samuel 12.13; Psalms 51). That is true, however, here is an important truth we learn from David's experience: sin although forgiven, brings consequences. This can be learned from David's experience. David suffered three consequences for his sins: 1) his kingdom would always be at war (violence), 2) he would suffer the loss of his son, and 3) he would suffer public shame because of his son's immorality.

It is interesting to note that David's consequences seem to correspond to the sins he committed. David committed adultery; his son violated his own sister. David murdered Uriah; he experienced violence for the rest of his reign as King. God's forgiveness does not mean we get to escape the immediate consequences of our sins. The sobering and amazing truth is that a Christian can be embraced by God's grace and still suffer for the willful sins he commits. That is a sobering truth.

When grace teaches us to avoid sin and to live righteously, grace is working in us. Grace is not just the kindness of God that covers us, it is the power of God working in us. For the believer the sin question is not something that primarily has to do with whether we will remain saved or not, rather it is an issue that has to do with giving evidences for the reality of our salvation. If a person is unsaved, he will be careless with sin. When a person is saved, he will be careful about how he lives and strive to live a holy life (Hebrews 12.14; 2nd Timothy 1.9).



The believer that is truly saved struggles against sin and then, if he fails and confesses, he is forgiven by Christ for the sins he commits (1st John 1:9). He is not forgiven because he fought, but because, in confessing his sin, he believes in Christ and Christ's forgiveness (Ephesians 2.8–9). Sin is powerless to condemn the believer as long as he is trusting Christ (Romans 6.12–14). Faith in Christ is the saving factor, not compliance with the law.

5. GRACE IS INFINITELY GREATER THAN THE SUPER-POWER OF SIN

Romans 5.20–21: *"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; 21 that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."* Paul's message to the Romans emphasizes two things: that they should not underestimate the abounding power of sin, and that grace is always greater power than sin's abounding power. Let's look at both points.

(1) In verse 20 Paul uses two Greek words to communicate the truth that while sin is superabundant, grace is much more powerful than sin. To prove that sin is powerful, Paul uses the Greek word *plen-on-ad'zo* which was translated **"abound"** in the King James Version Bible, although the true meaning of the word is super-abundant or to super-increase. *Plen-on-ad'zo* communicates the idea that sin abounds in our world and that it is powerful. In fact, sin is super-powerful and should never be underestimated by the believer. To underestimate something is to give it less importance than it has. The Christian should never underestimate sin's ability to affect his life.

The believer must also keep in mind that sin abounds in the world in which we live. It reaches out and touches everything. Paul, in his epistles, has made it perfectly clear that sin is a controlling force in the world; that its tentacles have extended out and touched every human being, including Christ. In His case, our perfect Savior felt the effects of sin when our sins were placed on Him at the Cross. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God."* 2nd Corinthians 5.21. Jesus was made sin for our salvation.

Returning to Romans 5:20, Paul also says that God's law magnified sin; the Law turned it into something big. In other words, it brought sin into the proper focus. Sin showed its real magnitude. So, sin is not something to take lightly. The victorious Christian understands the abundance and power of sin, and therefore avoids playing with it; provoking or flirting with it. The Christian is clear that taking any position other than that of a warrior fighting against sin will be destructive to his faith and to his relationship with Christ. If the believer is to live a holy life, the reality that sin is a big problem must remain clear in his mind.

(2) When Paul goes on to refer to the power of Grace, he uses another Greek word: *hoop-er-per-is-syoo'-o*, which is translated as **"much more abound"**. *Hoop-er-per-is-syoo'-o* is composed of two words: *hooper*, which means above or beyond; and *per-is-syoo'-o*, which means super-abundance. The message, then, is clear: sin is powerful, but Grace is much more powerful than sin. In a world where sin is a super-power, Grace is always greater. Sin has to bend its knee before it. Grace always defeats sin. This is excellent news for the Christian. It declares that when the Christian is touched by sin and he confesses the sin and moves away from it, Grace wins every time; Forgiveness is granted and the slate is cleaned again.

6. ABOUNDING GRACE NEVER GIVES IN TO SIN

Romans 6.1–3: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"*

LESSON 12

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Why is Faith important? How does this relate to the change of life?

Text to memorize: *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 4For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* 1st John 5.3–4.

1. INTRODUCTION

Remember: nothing we do to save is enough. Neither good works nor obedience to God’s laws can save us, for Salvation is a gift; a gift from God that we don’t deserve. With this, we do not deny the value of good works, but the Word is clear in establishing that Salvation is by Grace alone, and through Faith: *“...For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”* Ephesians 2.8. The Bible is also clear when it says that we have all sinned (Romans 3.23) and that the punishment of sin is eternal death. But God, in His grace, has provided a way to avoid Hell and reach Heaven: Faith in Jesus Christ.

2. FAITH SAVES US

The Salvation of God is obtained by believing in Jesus and the sufficiency of His sacrifice on the Cross. The eternal destiny of human beings will then depend on their response of Faith to the grace of God that is through Christ Jesus: *“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, 26to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”* Romans 3.24–26.

So God’s gift of Salvation is received through faith in Christ, who through His life, death on the Cross and resurrection, opened the way to eternal life; a path that can only be traveled by faith: *“...it was imputed to him for righteousness. 23Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”* Romans 4.22–25.

Now, having faith in Jesus Christ is much more than a verbal profession. To have faith in Him is to believe in His Word; and believing in it implies obeying it. Obedience to the Word of God is absolutely necessary for salvation. Obedience and Faith are inseparable. On the other hand, obeying the Word of God is much more than an intellectual process of acceptance and practice. To obey the Word is to appropriate each part of it; is to embrace His truth and Inspiration; is to make firm decisions that lead to a life committed to the application of its statutes and divine precepts.

Once again, Faith is the means of appropriating God’s grace; It is the means by which we surrender ourselves to God, obey His Word and allow Him to do His saving work in us. In summary, the faith that saves is: (1) acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation and (2) obedience to the Gospel.

3. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND OUR FREE WILL

How does the sovereignty of God and the free will of humanity relate? Many argue that only those whom



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

He has predestined for salvation will be saved, and that this salvation cannot be lost. Others emphasize the free will of humanity; that any person who responds by faith to the gift of Grace can be saved, and that this salvation can be lost. The Bible, on the other hand, seems to affirm both: both the sovereignty of God and the freedom of choice of men; and, although these two truths seem irreconcilable in our human wisdom, we are sure that they are not at all.

We believe in the sovereignty of God, but at the same time in the individual responsibility of the human being, as being free. In other words, Salvation is a matter of responsibility. Our individual freedom is a very important expression of God's love for us. It was for love that He made us with free will, with the opportunity to choose. It could not be otherwise. So every human being has freedom of choice to believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior, or to reject him. Anyone who responds to Him through Faith can be saved:

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1st Timothy 2.4–5. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 3And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." 1st John 2.2–3. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2nd Peter 3.9.

A person should never be forced to believe in Jesus for Salvation. True faith cannot be coerced. To be genuine, faith has to be voluntary. Jesus never forced anyone to follow him. His ministry shows us that people have the freedom to believe in Him or reject Him. Jesus clearly explained the consequences of Faith and the lack of Faith, positive and negative respectively, but He never resorted to pressure in urging people to follow him. The disciples of Jesus also presented the Faith as a voluntary response to the Gospel.

We also believe that it is necessary to persevere obediently to the end, through Grace, in order to attain eternal life: ***"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."*** Matthew 24.13. At the same time we recognize that it is the power of God that acts in us and sustains us in Salvation: ***"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."*** John 10.27–28.

4. THE COST OF SALVATION

Salvation cost Jesus humiliation, suffering, crucifixion and death for our sins. Sharing the message of Salvation over the centuries has cost many faithful witnesses, torture, imprisonment and death. Salvation also has a cost for those of us who now respond by Faith to the gift of God's grace: ***"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."*** Matthew 16.24–25.

Salvation costs us the old way of living; It means death to ourselves. This should not be taken lightly. The Salvation process results in transformed lives, and not only for the hereafter, but also for the here and now. Although good works do not produce Salvation, Salvation must produce good works: ***"Who will render to every man according to his deeds 7To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life, 8but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil..."*** Romans 2.6–9.



According to James 2.14–26, Faith is only alive when it produces action. Without works, she is dead. Is it possible to have an initial degree of faith in Christ and still not be saved? Yes, if there has not been a manifest response of acceptance, commitment and obedience to God’s requirements or commandments. Consider the example of the Samaritans who believed the Gospel preached by Philip, and obeyed immediately: **“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”** Acts 8.12.

5. REPENTANCE

Acts 3.19: **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...”** Repentance is a topic forgotten in many churches, but that continues to be the core of the believer’s conversion process.

According to the dictionary, regret means to regret a person for having done something wrong. However, the biblical word metanoia (Greek) which was translated as repentance, it speaks rather of a radical change in way of thinking, attitude and behavior. In theological terms, repentance is a spiritual regeneration produced by God, whose purpose is to restore in us His image, which was damaged by the transgression of Adam and Eve.

Repentance is the key to real conversion or spiritual rebirth. No one should be baptized without first being genuinely repentant! Christ preached strongly about repentance. **“Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** He insisted frequently (Matthew 3.2; 4.17; Mark 1.15). Jesus tirelessly announced the need for a radical change in the lives of people who want to enter the kingdom of God.

Study in Luke 19.1–10 the story of Zacchaeus, who received Christ in his house, repented of his sins and changed his life. Without regret there can be no such change of life. Jesus told people **“sin no more”** (John 8.11), and the Apostles also said it. Repentance was preached even to religious, to stop putting their religion above mercy (Matthew 9.13).

6. ELEMENTS OF REPENTANCE

Repentance is made up of three elements. The first is the understanding of sin. This implies fully understanding how horrendous sin is before a Holy God who abhors it. His Word says: **“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”** Isaiah 59.2.

The second element is the conviction of sin. When someone is aware that he is a sinner, he experiences pain from having failed God; a pain caused by feelings of sadness and unworthiness before Him: **“...ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance [...] 10For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of...”** 2nd Corinthians 7.9–10.

The third element is sincere recognition. The sinner must recognize his unfortunate condition, admit with sincerity that he has offended God and assume that, without divine forgiveness, he is totally lost: **“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”** Psalms 51.3–4. **“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”** 1st Timothy 1.5.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

As you hear the Word of God and spend time in His presence, conviction, guilt, pain and unworthiness are produced in the heart of the repentant sinner. This happened with Pedro, after the miraculous fishing. Standing in front of Jesus, he exclaimed: ***“Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”*** Luke 5.8. No doubt Peter felt unworthy in the presence of God.

7. THE EFFECTS OF REPENTANCE

Sincere repentance comes from the will of the individual, who feels the weight of his guilt and decides to do something to remedy it. He does not wait to be discovered in his failure to repent but that it is detestable, to the point of wanting to confess and depart from it. In other words, the sinner who has truly repented does not have to be forced to change, but does so by his own will. True repentance thus has direct effects on the person’s behavior, bringing changes in their attitudes, customs and lifestyle.

First, repentance leads to confession of sins - the clearest evidence of a repentant heart. The repentant sinner arrives before God and confesses his faults, for he well knows that he could not deceive the Lord, and that trying to hide his sin would not only have no benefit, but would bring condemnation and death. Then study chapter 7 of the book of Joshua. Instead when confession occurs, health and forgiveness come, as seen in the following scriptures:

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10.10. ***“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin....”*** Psalms 32.5. ***“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”*** Acts 3.19. ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** 1st John 1.9.

Second, repentance leads to abandoning sin. A repentant person will abandon his sinful life. When there is true repentance, the desire to sin is over and is replaced by the desire to seek from God, as is the case with the prodigal son of the parable, in Luke 15.11–21. His return to God is explained by the apostle Peter: ***“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”*** 1st Peter 2.25. In short, if there is true regret, there is a change of life. Let’s read Isaiah 55.6–7.

8. CONCLUSION

Repentance and Faith can be understood as ***“two sides of the same coin”***. It is impossible to put your faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior, without first changing your mindset about who He is, and what He has done for you. Whether you need to repent of stubborn rejection of Him, or of ignorance and selfishness, you always need a change of mind about Christ. You need to know Him, to know who He is. The biblical repentance that leads to salvation is to change your mentality from rejection of Christ to faith in Christ. If you wish to genuinely serve the Lord, you must experience the repentance of your sins; for, as we have already said, only those who are truly repentant leave their lives of sin and seek God from the heart.

Are you willing to true repentance, to obedient Faith?



LESSON 13

WATER BAPTISM

What purpose does water baptism fulfill? How should it be practiced?

Text to memorize: ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*** Mark 16.16.

1. INTRODUCTION

Water baptism is a fundamental part of the Christian life; it is one of the most important sacraments or sacred things of our Faith. The word baptism comes from the Greek verb “baptizo”, which means: dive or submerge. This verb was used previously to refer to the action of introducing a cloth into a tincture container, to give it color. Water baptism is a fundamental doctrine of the Bible; it is nothing less than the gateway to the Church and to Heaven; that is, an indispensable element for the believer of this age to achieve salvation and eternal life.

2. INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted water baptism for anyone who wishes to be part of the Church that He founded. No one can be considered a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ if he has not passed through the waters of baptism. This has been since the Church began. Both the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus, and even Jesus himself, were initiated into the Faith through water baptism.

Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus commanded that his disciples baptize those who believe in Him: ***“... go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*** Mark 16.15–16. Let’s also read Matthew 28.19. The Church fulfilled this commandment during its first years of existence, baptizing people who believed: ***“But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”*** Acts 8.12.

When Jesus arrived, the practice of baptism was not unknown to the Israelites, since God commanded them to wash for their first encounter with Him on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19.10), they began to purify themselves by washing with water, and so they continued doing (2nd Chronicles 30.19; John 2.6).

John the Baptist baptized his followers in the Jordan River. He even baptized Christ (Matthew 3.13), and Jesus taught Nicodemus that, to be saved, it was necessary to be born again through water (John 3.5). As we will see later, Jesus would institute water baptism in His Name as a requirement to be his disciple.

3. THE BAPTISM THAT NOW SAVES US

Before the death of Jesus on Calvary —under the law of Moses— the remission of sins was done by the sacrifice of a lamb. But under the Grace, or dispensation of the Church, all the believer has to do is trust in Jesus Christ as his Savior, repent of his sins and be baptized in His Name. Let’s see why.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

Since the wages of sin is death (Romans 6.23) and that without shedding blood there can be no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9.22), every sinner before Christ was to offer an animal as a sacrifice, every year. But when he died on the Cross of Calvary, our Lord Jesus Christ took the place of those lambs definitively, surrendering his life to rescue us from sin and the condemnation of death.

Jesus said: ***“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*** Matthew 26.28. So now we no longer have to pay a blood price for our sins, but we must simply repent of them, trust in Jesus Christ and be baptized in his glorious Name. In that way, our sins are forgiven through His blood, under Grace (1st John 1.7).

Our Lord Jesus Christ summed up the plan of salvation in two fundamental things: believing in Him and obeying Him, being baptized. Jesus said: ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”*** Mark 16.16. So baptism saves us. This is the first and most important reason to be baptized in water. We are saved through baptism; affirmation that was later ratified by the apostle Peter: ***“The baptism that now corresponds saves us...”*** 1st Peter 3.21.

The biblical text says **“baptism”**, that is to say that there is only one, a baptism that corresponds to obtain salvation. Any other baptism, therefore, does not apply. Many practice a baptism that serves to name the person; but the corresponding baptism, according to the Bible, is for something much more important than that: it is to save the sinner from hell. The Holy Scriptures also say that there is only one baptism in Ephesians 4.5: **“One Lord, one faith, one baptism”** and, as we have already seen, Peter does not say **“baptisms”** but **“baptism”** (1st Peter 3.21).

Logically, this unique baptism has to be the one that Jesus established and his disciples practiced later. There can be no other. It also follows that the baptism of Christ can only be administered once to the person. It becomes obvious then that, if someone has been baptized with a baptism other than the biblical one—that one does not apply—then they need to be baptized correctly, as were the disciples of John that Paul found in Ephesus. Let’s read Acts 19.1–5.

Water baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sins and the only means given by God under the present dispensation for us to reach Heaven. The baptism of Christ has the wonderful power to wash all our sins, when performed in faith, repentance and sincere heart. That is why Peter confronted his conspicuous audience in Jerusalem and without hesitation he said: ***“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...”*** Acts 2.38. Ananias also later exhorted Saul, saying: ***“Now, why do you stop? Get up and be baptized, and wash your sins, calling on his name.”*** Acts 22.16. Finally, remember the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who is not born of water and the Spirit cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*** John 3.5. Now let’s see how baptism should be practiced.

4. HOW WATER BAPTISM SHOULD BE DONE?

Water baptism is by immersion. John the Baptist used the method of immersion: ***“Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water.”*** John 3.23. Those who accepted John’s teachings were submerged in the waters. Then, in Church times, Philip’s encounter with an Ethiopian man is reported, who asked to be baptized. Acts 8.36–39 says that: ***“they both descended into the water”***, Philip ***“baptized him”*** and then ***“rose from the water.”*** These and other Scriptures, as well as the etymology of the word baptize, which we have already considered, make it clear that the correct baptism is by immersion.



The first baptism recorded by sprinkling or spraying was in 250 AD. Ten centuries later, the Roman Catholic Council of Ravenna authorized sprinkling as an acceptable mode of baptism; same council that also approved infant baptism. All this, however, lacks the necessary biblical support, and has been resisted even within the Catholic Church itself.

Also, how can one accept that a baby be baptized, when he lacks all awareness of sin? The Bible teaches us that sin is **“knowing how to do good and not doing it”** (James 4.17). On the other hand, it should be understood that baptism should be by immersion because only thus typifies the death, burial and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Romans 6.3–4. **“We are buried together with Him”** when we are baptized in water in His Name.

Baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ. The other fundamental aspect of water baptism is what is said at the time of carrying it out. In this regard, there are several differences in Christianity; however, biblically we know that the baptism that corresponds to salvation must be done in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us analyze the command given by Christ on baptism. He said: **“...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** Matthew 28.19.

Looking carefully at the aforementioned text, we see that Jesus speaks, not of names, but of one name. According to this, there is one name that must be invoked at baptism; but it is not indicated there what it is. It is Peter the apostle who, having received from Christ himself the keys of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 16.19), states that the Name to be invoked in baptism is Jesus Christ.

In his first sermon in Jerusalem, the apostle Peter preached it this way: **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** Acts 2.38. And upon hearing it, thousands of believers of different nationalities were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us also read the following scriptures: Acts 2.41; 8.16; 10.48; 19.5; 22.16.

Returning to Matthew 28.19, it is also important to understand that **“Father”, “Son” and “Holy Spirit”** are not names, but titles that refer to different manifestations of God. Therefore, it is very clear that the idea of the Lord Jesus Christ regarding the statement or formula to be used in baptism was not that his words were repeated literally, but that His Name be invoked. Let’s read Luke 24.45–47; Acts 4.12 and Romans 10.13.

There are those who argue that Peter, the other Apostles and the evangelists of the first century of the Church were wrong to baptize without giving literal use to the words of Jesus in Matthew 28.19. But how could they be mistaken in something so transcendent, when they had just been filled with the Spirit of God? (Acts 2.1–4). Jesus had promised them that the Spirit of Truth would guide them to the whole truth (John 16.13) and teach them all things (John 14.26).

Certainly, the Apostles were not wrong. In addition, if what is taught and practiced by them concerning water baptism is called into question, the Word of God is also called into question, since the word gives an account of these facts and presents them as valid. Can the Bible be wrong and at the same time be an affirmation that it is fully inspired by God (2nd Timothy 3.16)? Surely not!



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

5. CONCLUSION

All water baptisms of the first-century Church of the Christian era were ministered to adults, by immersion in water and in the name of Jesus Christ, according to the New Testament. No other type of baptism is registered there. We conclude then that the only correct baptism is this, and that just as the early church practiced it, we must practice it today. Finally, water baptism should only be administered to people who have believed in Jesus Christ, have repented of their sins and are willing to obey God's Word.

LESSON 14 - THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit consist of? Why do we need to receive it?
How do we know if we really have it?**

Text to memorize: *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"* Luke 11.13.

1. INTRODUCTION

If baptism in water is very important, so is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Every believer must receive this baptism, for it is what gives life to the son of God; it is about the power that moves the Body of Christ—the Church—to do what He has commanded us to do. A Christian full of the Holy Spirit is a power in the hands of God; so let's enthusiastically explore this wonderful subject.

2. THE IDENTITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The noun spirit used in the Bible, comes from the words ruakh and pneuma—in the Hebrew and Greek languages respectively—which mean wind or air in motion, in both cases. However, the original meaning of the biblical term spirit is rather breath, that is, air set in motion by breath.

An example of the use of spirit is when God formed man from the dust of the earth and **"breathed into him breath of life"** Genesis 2.7. Here the word spirit connects directly with the life of the human being. For its part, the biblical term **"Holy Spirit"** refers to God, exclusively, since God is the Holy Spirit.

The expression Holy Spirit is also used to refer to the manifestation of God in the life of believers, during the current dispensation of Grace. It was the writers of the New Testament, citing the Old Testament translated into Greek, who standardized this term to refer to the presence of God dwelling in the human being and working in his life.

As we have studied, the Holy Spirit is the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not a person separated from God. God is the Spirit (John 4.24), and there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4.4–5). So there cannot be two or three spirits dwelling in the believer. In 1st Corinthians 12.4–9, we see that everything derives from the same Spirit.

3. GOD'S PROMISE FULFILLED

In the Old Testament, Isaiah wrote that God would speak to his people **"with stammering lips and another tongue."** Isaiah 28.11. He also wrote: **"I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants."** Isaiah 44.3.

The prophet Ezekiel, for his part, wrote: ***“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”*** Ezekiel 36.26. And we read in Joel 2.28–29: ***“...I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on my menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”***

In the New Testament, John the Baptist announced the coming of the Holy Spirit: ***“...I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*** Matthew 3.11. Time after that, Jesus himself promised this baptism to his disciples. Let’s read John 16.7. Here, He affirmed that he should leave this world, so that the Holy Spirit would come to continue the work of comforting and guiding believers.

Note that it is Christ who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He promised that those who believed in Him would receive as a reward ***“rivers of living water”*** sprouting within them (John 7.37–39). He also taught that we should ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11.13). Finally, he sent his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for this spiritual baptism (Luke 24.49), because without him, they would never carry out the mission entrusted to them — to preach His Gospel.

The divine promise concerning the descent of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled shortly after the ascension of Jesus. It happened in Jerusalem, during a celebration of Pentecost —a Greek word that means 50 days after Easter. This first baptism of the Holy Spirit marked the birth of the Church (Acts 2.1–4). From then on, the disciples actively participated in this spiritual experience, as we can see in Acts 4.31; 8.17; 9.17; 10.44; 13.2; 19.1–6 and other scriptures. We believe that the Holy Spirit remains active in the Church; that is, for us, Jesus’ promise to baptize with His Holy Spirit is still valid.

4. WE NEED TO BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Believers need to receive the Holy Spirit; that God may dwell in our life. This is indispensable to achieve eternal life, as Jesus said to Nicodemus: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*** John 3.5. What does it mean to enter the Kingdom of God? In the first place, it is to enter the domain of God on Earth, that is to say, the Church; but it is also to arrive at the place where all the saved believers will live after this life. So the filling of the Holy Spirit is required to enter the Kingdom of God, to remain in him.

The apostle Paul says about this: ***“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”*** Romans 8.11. “Vivify” means in this case to resurrect, that is, a renewal of life. This is what will happen with the mortal body of the believer at the time of the Rapture of the Church. Study 1st Corinthians 15. The resurrection of the children of God will take place through the Holy Spirit who dwells in them. That is, without the Holy Spirit, the believer cannot be resurrected or be raised with the Rapture of the Church.

The above statement is consistent with what Ephesians 1.13–14 says: ***“You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee [what is given as a guarantee the fulfillment of a contract] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*** Here, ***“the purchased possession”*** is the salvation, the entrance to Heaven, the definitive union of the Church with Christ. During the time of Jesus, the groom returned —after having been committed to his girlfriend for some time— to



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

collect the piece of cloth or garment he had given to her as a sign of commitment; and then they were united in marriage. So also when Christ returns for his Church, the Holy Spirit will be the mark or sign that will indicate that a believer is committed to Him and ready to go to Heaven.

In this same way, the Apostle Paul recommended the Ephesian brothers to avoid saddening the Holy Spirit, since this is the seal of God for the coveted day of the uprising of the Church: **“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”** Ephesians 4.30. So we must always live filled of the Holy Spirit, while we wait for Jesus.

5. EVIDENCES OF THIS BAPTISM

How do we know if someone has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit? There is a lot of confusion in Christianity about this subject, but the Bible is really clear about it, teaching us that there are at least three evidences that a person has been filled with the Holy Spirit.

The initial evidence of this baptism is speaking in other tongues, or languages not learned, as can be seen in Acts 2.1–4; 14–16. The people who had gone up to Jerusalem to participate in Pentecost and who witnessed the first descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, thought that Jesus’ disciples were drunk when they heard them speak in new tongues. However, as we have seen, which the prophets had announced. It was a promise from God.

Speaking in tongues was, remains and must be a frequent phenomenon in the life of the Church. Let us now read 1st Corinthians 14.2–4. The **“edification”** of which Paul speaks here has to do with the faith, strength, power and knowledge that a person receives when God fills him with his Spirit. Christ had said it before: He would send his Spirit for our comfort (John 14.26; 15.26; 16.7).

Speaking in other languages also serves as preaching to unbelievers, as happened in Jerusalem and as taught in 1st Corinthians 14.21–22. That is why it is so important to speak in new tongues and that brothers are not prevented from doing so (V. 39). When a person receives the Holy Spirit and speaks in new tongues, he also receives spiritual strength to do many things that he could not do before.

That is precisely the second evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By being baptized with the Holy Spirit, the believer receives supernatural power from God, just as Jesus promised in Acts 1.8. Such power helps him remember the things Jesus taught, giving him spiritual strength (John 14.26), especially in difficult situations. The Holy Spirit also guides us to the truth and reveals the deep things of God (John 16.13), granting the believer divine wisdom, just as it happened to Apollos (Acts 18.24–26). It gives us spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2.1–10; Acts 6.1–6); and allows us to share the good news effectively (John 15.26–27; Acts 4.31). The latter is very important, because only through anointed preaching by the Holy Spirit can hearts be converted to God (1st Corinthians 1.21).

The third evidence of having received the Holy Spirit is the change in personal life; that is, the manifestation of what Galatians 5.22–23 calls **“fruit of the Spirit.”** Let’s read this text. The theme of the fruit of the Spirit will be covered more later in our discipleship school, but now we must say that the greatest work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life is not the visible demonstrations of power such as miracles and healing, but the inner transformation so that your life can be pleasing to God.



6. HOW TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

In this section we will share practical advice on how to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some believers have difficulty receiving this baptism; especially those who are quiet and reserved. Faced with such difficulty, some even think that this blessing is not for them.

The Bible records the case of some disciples who had not yet received the Holy Spirit, despite already being baptized in water. Let's read Acts 8.14–17. This happened in the city of Samaria during the evangelizing campaign that Philip carried out. The people were baptized in water in the name of Jesus, but it was not until Peter and John came from Jerusalem to supervise the work and pray for them, that the Samaritans received the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the Apostles. The opposite case is also recorded in the Bible: people receive the Holy Spirit before being baptized in water, as happened with Cornelius and his people. They, just by listening to the preaching of the Word once, began to speak tongues and were immediately baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 10.44–48).

Therefore, receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit can become more or less difficult, but what everyone needs to know is that they ought seek it, for it is for all who believe in Jesus (Acts 2.39). And for this there are no magic formulas or tricks. Nor is it something we can learn in a course like this. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a gift that God has already granted by faith to believers. However, there are certain factors that are decisive for a person to receive more ease. Let's see four:

In first place, the person must want to receive it. By simple logic, God will not give the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who do not wish to receive it. In this regard, Jesus says the following: ***"On the last and great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and raised his voice, saying: It was the last and great day of the religious gathering. Jesus stood up and spoke with a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The Holy Writings say that rivers of living water will flow from the heart of the one who puts his trust in me'."*** John 7.37–39. What do we learn here? That only those who thirst for Jesus —thirst for the Holy Spirit— can drink from him.

In second place, the person who wants it has to ask for it. In the Bible, we are exhorted many times to ask God what we want. In this case, the key text is found in Luke 11.13: ***"...if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for it?"***

In third place, the Holy Spirit must be sought. This means that you have to pray and pray until you receive it. That was precisely Jesus' order for his disciples: ***"Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but remain in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*** Luke 24.49. The disciples spent several days waiting for the promise of Christ, in prayer and supplication, until the Lord blessed them with this special gift. God will always give his children his blessing, if they seek Him wholeheartedly.

Finally, brothers who have already received the baptism of the Holy Spirit must pray for those who do not yet have it. Special prayers should be made for those who expect to receive it. This is what Peter and John did for the Samaria brothers: ***"...they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."*** Acts 8.17. Those who have already been anointed by the divine touch, especially the ministers, should frequently insist and even apply a bit of pressure to the new believers, to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit, laying hands on them until they receive it.

LESSON 15

ORIGIN, FAITH AND VALUES OF OUR CHURCH

Where does our Christian denomination come from? How was he born?
 What are our beliefs? What are our moral values?

Text to memorize: *“Bringing to mind the unfaked faith that is in you, which first lived in your grandmother Loida, and in your mother Eunice, and I am sure that in you too.”* 2nd Timothy 1.5.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will study three topics closely connected with our Christian and apostolic identity:

- (1) The origins of our denomination,
- (2) our biblical-theological position, and
- (3) the most important moral values we hold.

2. ORIGIN OF THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY

Charles Parham, an American Methodist minister who lived between 1873 and 1929, became independent of his church to begin the movement that would later be known as **“Pentecostalism”** —to us **“the latter rain”** promised by God. In 1898, he founded a Bible school in Topeka Kansas that, like others of his time, used the Bible as a single textbook. In class, they chose a topic and read everything the Bible said about it. This is how they found that speaking in new languages is a visible sign of demonstration that the person has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to the book Acts of the Apostles.

That was how, between December 31, 1900 and January 1, 1901, at the Topeka school, Parham students began to speak in tongues; Miss Agnes Ozman being the first to do so. In 1905, Parham moved his school to Houston, Texas; and here William J. Seymour, a black man who lived between 1870 and 1922, enters the story. Seymour grew up in the Baptist Church and then joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1903 he moved to Houston and in 1905 he entered the Parham Bible School, where he learned the doctrine of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in new languages.

In 1906, Seymour moved to Los Angeles, California, to serve in a church that emerged from the 2nd Black Baptist Church, but there he was rejected for preaching the doctrine of **“speaking in tongues.”** That same year he rented a building on Azusa Street No. 213 and on April 14, 1906 he founded the “Mission of the Apostolic Faith”. His cults were characterized by manifestations of the Holy Spirit and miraculous healings. In that place, on June 5, 1906, Abundio López and his wife Rosa - Mexican immigrants - received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues; thus becoming the most remote connection between the mission of Azusa Street and what would later become the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus.

In short, our church —along with other Pentecostal denominations— originated from the Azusa Street movement, at the beginning of the 20th century, and was subsequently incorporated under the laws of California, United States, in 1930.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

3. OUR FAITH

We believe...

1. That there is only one God, manifested to the human being in different ways: as Father in creation, as Son in Redemption and as Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Deuteronomy 6.4; Isaiah 43.10; John 14.7; 2nd Corinthians 3.17).
2. In the Holy Bible, totally and verbally inspired by God, and constituted in our only infallible rule of normative faith for the Christian life (2nd Timothy 3.14–17).
3. In biblical dispensations or separation in successive stages of the progressive revelation of God to man; with different administrations and rules of life in each one (Hebrews 7.11–12).
4. That the Bible should be interpreted under the Hermeneutic Grammar-Historical method, and not figuratively or allegorically, except when the context or the meaning of the text expressly requires it that way (2nd Peter 3.16).
5. That God made man directly in His image and likeness, free from sin; with a rational nature, intelligence, will, personal determination and moral responsibility before Him (Genesis 2.7; 15–25; James 3.9).
6. That before us, God created the angels to serve Him; but a third of them rebelled following Lucero, a cherub who wanted to be equal to God. Now, Satan and demons oppose God and seek the destruction of man (Genesis 3.1; Isaiah 14.11–15; Ezekiel 28.14–19; Revelation 12.4–9).
7. That because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, man now has a sinful nature that separates him from God; and that only through faith in Jesus Christ and repentance, can man be restored to communion with God (Romans 3.23; Acts 3.19).
8. That God self-deprived himself of His glory and became man in Jesus, to take the initiative in our salvation (Psalm 8; Isaiah 9.6; John 1.14; Hebrews 1.1–4).
9. In the virginal conception of Jesus, in his earthly life completely free from sin, in his substitutionary and expiatory sufferings and death on the Cross, in his bodily resurrection of the dead and in his victorious ascension to Heaven (Isaiah 7.14; Romans 5.8; 8.34; 2nd Corinthians 5.21; 1st Timothy 3.16; Acts 1.9).
10. In the complete present and future justification of the soul, offered by God for free through faith in Jesus Christ and the sacrifice on our behalf made by Him on the Cross (Acts 10.43; Romans 10.13; 3.24–26; Hebrews 7.25; 5.9).
11. That Jesus Christ man is now the only mediator between us and God; and that only through His mediation are we saved (Acts 4.12; 1st Timothy 2.5; Galatians 3.20).
12. That Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, that in Him now “dwells all the fullness of the divinity bodily” and that He is the true God and eternal life (John 20.28; Colossians 1.15; 2.9; Titus 2.13; 1st John 5.20; Revelation 4.2).

13. That in order to be admitted to the Kingdom of God, man needs to be born again through faith in Christ and the truth of His Word, through water baptism and the renewal or baptism of the Holy Spirit (John 3.3–8 ; 1st Peter 1.23).

14. In biblical baptism for the forgiveness of sins, performed by an ordained minister with immersion of the entire body in water, only once and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16.16; Acts 2.38; 8.16; 10.48; 19.5; 22.16; Galatians 3.27).

15. At the baptism of the Holy Spirit, received with the initial evidence of speaking in other languages or languages, as He wants (Acts 1.5; 2.4; 10.44–46; 19.1–7).

16. That at birth the believer is placed in the spiritual body of Christ, the Church; of which He is the head (1st Corinthians 12.12–13; Ephesians 5.23–32; 1.22; 4.15; Colossians 1.18; Revelation 19.7–8).

17. In the need and possibility of living holy through the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, which also enables us to be faithful witnesses of the power of God (Acts 1.8; Hebrews 9.14; 1st Peter 1.15).

18. In the literal practice of the Lord's Supper as a commemorative act of the work of Christ on the Cross, testimony of our communion in Him and announcement of his return to Earth; and in the practice of Christian Foot-washing as an act of Christian humility (Luke 22.15–20; 1st Corinthians 11.23–28; John 13.3–17).

19. In the validity of the spiritual gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit to the Church for its edification, in accordance with His will (1st Corinthians 12.1–12).

20. That the Church began on the Day of Pentecost and will be raised by Christ in what is known as "rapture", to be delivered from the Great Tribulation and thus participate in the Wedding of the Lamb (Acts 2; 1st Thessalonians 4.13–18; 1st Corinthians 15.51–54).

21. That all faithful Christians will appear before the Court of Christ to receive awards for their deeds done for the cause of Christ on Earth (2nd Corinthians 5.10).

22. At the Second Coming of Christ in visible, bodily form, with his glorified Church; to end the Great Tribulation and reign over the world for a thousand years (Zechariah 14.5; Jude 14; Revelation 20.4).

23. That God's plans for the Church and Israel are different; for Israel still has pending earthly promises, which are to be fulfilled after the Rising of the Church; while the Church is the recipient of celestial and eternal promises in glory (Philippians 3.20; 1st Peter 5.10).

24. And in the Last Judgment, which will reward the faithful with eternal life in Heaven, in joy and happiness; and will condemn unbelievers with eternal death in Hell, in pain and torment (Revelation 20.11–15; Matthew 25.46).



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

4. OUR MAIN VALUES

Obedience and holiness. We must love God above all. This love is demonstrated by obeying His commandments (2nd John 6). We must live our whole life apart from evil and consecrated to God, that is, in holiness; which begins with a profound change in the heart and then is reflected on the outside, that is, in our body, which has become a temple of the Holy Spirit. In that sense, we follow the guidelines of the Word of God and avoid all non-biblical extremism, as well as any human asceticism (Romans 5.20–6.2; 1st Corinthians 3.16–17; Hebrews 12.14).

Relationship with God. We exist to give worship to God and have a relationship with Him, who is the center of our life. We are nothing without Him (Luke 10.27; John 15.5). We cultivate our relationship with God by practicing disciplines such as prayer, fasting, Bible study, congregating in the church, participating in the Lord’s Supper, practicing Christian foot-washing, submitting to spiritual authority, paying tithes, offering, evangelizing, serve others, exercise spiritual gifts, etc.

Image of God. The goal of each Christian is to develop the character of Jesus in his life; that is, having more of Him and less of himself. Living “in the power of the Resurrection” means being full of Him and empty of ourselves. Jesus is our role model, our model; and every Christian in our church must reflect His character, living a life under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2.5–11).

Prayer. Prayer is a privilege, a necessity and a duty of every Christian. To pray is to dialogue with God. Through prayer we can walk with Him, get His anointing, receive answers to our requests and much more. In our prayer we offer God praise, we thank His blessings, we forgive our debtors, we confess our sins, we present our petitions, we intercede for others, we read portions of the Bible, we apply what we read in our prayers, we meditate on the greatness of the Lord, we listen His voice, we sing new songs and conclude with gratitude, praise and worship to Him (Matthew 26.41; 6.7; Mark 11.24.25; Ephesians 6.18).

Use of time. In addition to the daily time to read the Word, pray and wait on God for answers, we must have a daily time of systematic study of the Bible, with meditation and memorization. At least one day of the week we must depart to fast and develop spiritual sensitivity. We also allocate specific time to serve in our local church and testify of Christ in the community (Matthew 6.17–18; Psalm 119.9–16; Hebrews 10.24–25; Acts 1.8; Ephesians 5.15, 16).



Gender and functions. Although man and woman are spiritually equal before God, He has ordained different spiritual functions for men and women, at home and in the church. The husband must be the leader of the home and men must be the leaders of the Church, as pastors and deacons. Therefore, only men are eligible for Christian ministry (Galatians 3.28; Colossians 3.18; 1st Timothy 2.8–15; 3.4–5.12).

The family. This is a fundamental principle of the Kingdom of God, established by Him from the beginning. Marriage between a man and a woman is the will of God and the foundation of society throughout the world (Genesis 1.27). Marriage keeps society free from immorality. If the family is lost, society too. This is why we protect the unity and holiness of marriage until death. Marriage is a symbol of the union of Christ and His Church. The husband must love his wife just as Christ loved the Church. The wife must submit to her husband's biblical spiritual leadership just as the Church submits to the Authority of Christ.

Children are an inheritance from the Lord and parents are accountable to Him for teaching their children the spiritual and moral values of the Bible, guiding them with their own example of life and proper discipline that includes biblical bodily correction (Genesis 1.26–28; Exodus 20.12; Deuteronomy 6.4–9; Psalms 127.3–5; Proverbs 19.18; 22.15; 23.13–14; Mark 10.6–12; 1st Corinthians 7.1–16; Ephesians 5.21–33; 6.1–4; Colossians 3.18–21; Hebrews 13.4; 1st Peter 3.1–7).

Generational Blessings. In the Christian life that is according to the Word of God, blessings are passed from generation to generation. Even if the believer comes to the Faith from a broken or dysfunctional family, he becomes the heir of blessings, because he is born again in the family of God. Although we are not biologically descendants of Abraham, we become his seed through faith in Christ. All the blessings unleashed on Abraham are now ours, to enjoy and pass to our biological and spiritual children (Galatians 3.9).

Prosperity. It is God's desire that we prosper in all areas of life. For this reason, we cultivate spiritual, social and financial maturity. Every Christian can and should live a life free of debt and financial oppression. Poverty is a mentality that can be destroyed with obedience to the principles of stewardship of the Kingdom. God's people do not need more money, but more wisdom from God to manage what they already have. When these principles are implemented, the possibilities are unlimited. God does his greatest works in the midst of obedient faith (3rd John 1.2).

Human sexuality and appearance. God established that no intimate sexual activity be practiced outside of marriage. The only legitimate marriage is the union between a man and a woman (Genesis 2.24; Romans 7.2; 1st Corinthians 7.10; Ephesians 5.22–23). Therefore we reject any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, incest, zoophilia, fornication, adultery, pornography and other sinful perversions of the gift of sex provided by God. We also believe that God disapproves and prohibits any attempt to alter the appearance or gender of the person through transvestism, hormonal treatment or surgical intervention (Genesis 2.24; 19.5; 26.8–9; Leviticus 18.1–30; Deuteronomy 22.5; Romans 1.26–29; 1st Corinthians 5.1; 6.9; 1st Thessalonians 4.1–8; Hebrews 13.4).

The abortion. We believe that human life begins in the embryonic conception and that the unborn creature is also a human being. Abortion is then taking the life of said human being, which constitutes homicide, and that can never be justified. We therefore reject any position that approves abortion, even in cases of rape, incest, genetic defects, gender selection, birth control or attempt to protect the mother's psycho-emotional well-being (Job 3.16; Psalms 51.5; 139.14–16; Isaiah 44.24; 49.1.5; Jeremiah 1.5; 20.15–18; Luke 1.44).



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

LESSON 16

COMMITTED WITH MY LOCAL CHURCH

Why is it important to belong to a local church? How does the commitment to it develop?
What benefits does that bring?

Text to memorize: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”* Ephesians 2.19.

1. INTRODUCTION

With this lesson we reach the end of this course. Here we will learn about:

- The meaning of membership, by identifying ourselves with Christ and other believers.
- Your most important responsibilities as a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus.
- The importance of being a faithful member of the body of Christ and of being committed to your local church.

2. THE LOCAL MEMBERSHIP

What does it mean to be a member of a local church?

- Member is the individual part that belongs to a body composed of more members.
- Believers are united to Christ and are members of His universal body, which is the Church.
- We are also more closely linked to other members of the Church, through the membership of our local church.

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14For in fact the body is not one member but many.” 1st Corinthians 12.12–14.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

We must belong to a local church, or family in Christ. Today, statements against this truth are heard, such as:

- “I belong to a world body of Christ.”
- “Joining a local church is not biblical.”
- “I was injured the last time I belonged to a church.”
- “I don’t need to belong to a local church to be saved.”

To objections like the previous ones, the Bible clearly responds by stating that the members of the Church of the Lord...

- We belong to each other (1st Corinthians 12.13).
- We are united to each other (Ephesians 4.16).
- We are different from each other (1st Corinthians 12.4–6).
- We edify each other (Ephesians 4.16).
- We need each other (1st Corinthians 12.21,22).
- We do not need each other (1st Corinthians 12.21,22).

“...speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, 16according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
Ephesians 4.15,16.

4. IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ADORATION

Our public worship, or worship service, is an excellent opportunity we have each week to express our love for God for what He is and does for us. It is also an excellent means to lead others to the feet of Jesus. That is why it is necessary that we meet periodically to worship God:

“...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4.23,24.

The previous text establishes, not only our duty to worship God, but also the fact that only believers can worship Him. God expects His Church to worship him in spirit and in truth, since unbelievers cannot really do it. However, they can do something: witness us when we worship God. Our sincere adoration thus becomes a powerful testimony for the community: ***“...and when this sound occurred, the multitude came together.”*** Acts 2.6.

Our worship service should serve so that other people are guided at the feet of Christ; and that only happens when the presence of God can be felt and the message that is preached is understandable. Let’s read 1st Corinthians 14.18–26. Here we learn that God expects us to be sensitive to the fears, needs and insecurity of the unsaved who are present in our services.

We need to be mature to offer a service to God that is sincere and at the same time intelligent: ***“I will pray with the spirit, but I will also pray with the understanding; I will sing with the spirit, but I will also sing with the understanding.”*** V. 15. Christ said that He ***“...did not come to be served, but to serve.”*** Matthew 20.28. Our good testimony, sober behavior and helpful attitude are very important in the public worship service. People go to the house of God hoping to see lives changed.

5. A COMMITTED MEMBER

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another...” Hebrews 10.25. A member must submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and be willing to interact in a healthy way with other members and those invited from the local church.



NEW BIRTH

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

The difference between one who attends and a member is summed up in this word: commitment. Our church asks new believers to become formally committed members for four reasons:

- A biblical reason. Christ is committed to His Church: ***“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.”*** Ephesians 5.25.
 - A cultural reason. The commitment to a local church is an antidote to the way of thinking of our current society.
 - A practical reason. Define who we can count on and what you can count on.
 - A personal reason. Being a committed member of the church produces spiritual growth.
- Let's look at some ways to demonstrate our commitment to the local church.

6. PROTECTING THE UNIT OF MY CHURCH

How does a committed member protect the unity of his church?

(1) Acting in love towards the other members. The harmony of the body is essential for its function and growth. Sometimes putting love into action will be a challenge and a test of my character. People often make mistakes, communicate wrongly, or just have a bad day. That is why the Word advises us: ***“...let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*** Romans 14.19. ***“Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus.”*** Romans 15.5. ***“...love one another fervently with a pure heart.”*** 1st Peter 1.22.

(2) Rejecting the gossip. What I say is very important. Gossip can be defined as two or more people talking in a negative way about someone who is absent. The best way to eliminate gossip is to refuse to say or hear it. ***“No corrupted word comes out of your mouth, but that which is good for the necessary edification, in order to give grace to the listeners.”*** Ephesians 4.29.

(3) Holding on to the leaders. God has placed spiritual authorities whose function is to lead me, feed me, teach me and correct me. I will maintain a positive attitude towards my spiritual leaders. ***“Obey your shepherds, and be subject to them; because they watch over your souls; as those who have to give an account; so that they do it with joy, and not complaining, because this is not profitable for you.”*** Hebrews 13.17.

7. SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES

How does a committed member share the responsibilities of his church?

(1) Praying for their growth. The growth of the church is what God does, and since my church cannot stop growing until everyone in our community is saved, I will pray to God to add ***“every day to the church those who are to be saved.”*** ***“We always give thanks to God for all of you, remembering you in our prayers.”*** 1st Thessalonians 1.2.

(2) Inviting the one who does not go to church to attend. I must also do my part to make the church grow. I will invite my friends and neighbors regularly to attend with me. ***“Go on the roads and the fences, and force them to enter, so that my house is filled.”*** Luke 14.23.

(3) Giving a warm welcome to those who visit us. I understand the importance of helping to create a friendly environment for our friendly friends. Smiles, warm greetings and a genuine love demonstrated, make an impact on people who come wounded from the world of sin. ***“Therefore, you received one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”*** Romans 15.7.

8. SERVING AND MINISTERING IN MY CHURCH

How does a committed member serve and minister in your church?

(1) Discovering his gifts and talents. I understand that every born-again Christian has a gift given by God. I will try to discover it and learn to use it in the church. ***“Each one according to the gift he has received, minister it to the others.”*** 1st Peter 4.10.

(2) Being prepared by their leaders to serve. I understand that the Lord gave his Church pastors and teachers to prepare the saints for the work of the ministry. I will have a teachable spirit. ***“And he himself constituted some... pastors and teachers, in order to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ.”*** Ephesians 4.11,12.

(3) Developing a servant’s heart. I understand that in order to achieve this I need to have a good attitude, using my time and talents to serve others and thus fulfill God’s purpose for my life. ***“Do nothing for contention or for pride... not looking at each one for his own, but each one also for others. Let there be in you the same feeling that there was also in Christ Jesus... who stripped himself, taking the form of a servant...”*** Philippians 2.3–7.

9. SUPPORTING THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH

Finally, how does a committed member support the testimony of his church?

(1) Attending faithfully. I understand that in order to grow and learn, I must be there. My testimony and the testimony of my church depend on my faithfulness. ***“Not ceasing to congregate... but exhorting [each other]...”*** Hebrews 10.25.

(2) Living a godly life. I understand that Christian conduct and behavior outside the church building are crucial to the testimony of my Lord. I will strive to live a godly life at home, at work and in my spare time. ***“Only that you behave as is worthy of the gospel of Christ...”*** Philippians 1.27.

(3) Contributing regularly. I understand that my church is helped by my tithes and offerings, which I must give weekly as the Lord has prospered me. ***“Each first day of the week each of you set aside something, as you have prospered, keeping it, for...offerings.”*** 1st Corinthians 16.2. ***“And tithing... is the Lord’s.”*** Leviticus 27.30.

Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus

COMMITMENT TO LOCAL MEMBERSHIP

This commitment must be submitted by any person who integrates into our church by water baptism or request for admission

I, _____, in the city of _____, country of _____,

having understood my need and obligation to be committed to a local church, I **ASSUME MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER** of the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus and this local church.

I declare that as of today, I will identify with the other members of this congregation, as well as their needs, and I pledge to pursue the following levels of the School of Discipleship.

THEREFORE, I DECLARE THAT I WILL...

- (1) ...**PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH**, acting in love, rejecting gossip and following my leaders.
- (2) ...**SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MY CHURCH**, praying at least fifteen minutes a day for their growth, inviting those who do not attend and treating those invited with kindness.
- (3) ...**SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH**, faithfully attending its activities and meetings, living a holy life and contributing regularly with my tithes and offerings.
- (4) ...**SERVE IN MY CHURCH**, through my gifts and knowledge, developing a servant's heart and being prepared to serve.

Signature _____

Date _____

