

The Power Program

Project 21

The essential foundations of the Christian faith .

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Stage One: Living with God

The Word of God

Read Matthew 7:24-27

Just like a house, our lives need a strong foundation. The world around us changes, but God's Word – the Bible – never changes (**1 Peter 1:24-25**). It is the absolute foundation for our lives.

Read Ephesians 4:14-15

The Creative Word

Read Isaiah 55:10-11

The Word of God has great creative power. God created the universe by his word (**Psalm 33:6,9; Hebrews 11:3**) and sustains the universe by his word (**Hebrews 1:3**). The Word of God has the same kind of creative power in our lives.

The Word of God is like water

Read Ephesians 5:25-27

The Word of God has a powerful cleansing effect. We start life in the kingdom of God totally "washed clean" by the Spirit of God through his Word (**John 15:3**). And as we continue to read and absorb God's word, it enables us to live a life that pleases God.

Read John 17:17

The Word of God is like light

Read Psalm 19:8

Before we knew the Lord, our lives were in spiritual darkness (**Romans 1:21; Ephesians 2:1-2; 4:17-18**). Now, as we read the Bible, God's Word is like a bright light, shining on areas of our lives that God wants to change, and shedding light on the path God wants us to walk with Him.

Read Psalm 119:105,130

The word of God is like a seed

Read 1 Peter 1:23

In the same way that a seed contains the full life of

the tree it will grow into, so God plants the seed of his life into our hearts through his Word.

Read Luke 8:4-15

In verse 11, Jesus says: "The seed is the word of God." When we hear God's Word, it is like a seed sown into our hearts, designed to bring forth life. If our hearts are hard and unreceptive, the seed is "snatched away" and is unproductive. But if we receive it and obey it – allow it to "take root" – then God's Word begins to work in our lives.

Read James 1:21- 22

The word of God is like food

Read Matthew 4:4

The Word of God causes us to grow spiritually. When we received Christ, we were "born of the Spirit" by the Word of God (**John 3:3,6; 1 Peter 1:3,23**). In order to grow in the Spirit, we need to continue to feed on God's Word (**1 Peter 2:2-3**).

The word of God is like a sword

Read Hebrews 4:12

The Word of God is able to cut right to our hearts, making us aware of sin (**Acts 2:36-37**). God's Word can also be used as a weapon against the attacks of Satan (**Luke 4:1-14; Ephesians 6:17**).

A Love for God's Word

Read Psalm 119:103

We can be exposed to God's Word in three ways:

- We sit under regular teaching (**Acts 2:42**)
- We read God's Word each day (**Psalm 119:9,11**)
- We share God's Word with each other (**Col.3:16**)

Through the Word of God, we discover God's nature, and the Holy Spirit works in our lives to change us into the likeness of Jesus (**Romans 8:29**).

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Stage One: Living with God

God

God is far too great for us to fully understand. He has no beginning and he has no end. But what is God really like? The Bible reveals that God is:

- All-powerful (**Jeremiah 32:17**)
- All-knowing (**Psalms 139:1-4; 1 John 3:20**)
- Everywhere (**Psalms 139:5,7-10**)

Hebrews 4:13

God is absolute in power, absolute in knowledge and absolute in presence. But if this is all that we know about God, we are in deep trouble. For if God knows everything, then he knows every sin I have committed. If he is everywhere, there is no place I can escape his hand. If he is all-powerful, he can judge and destroy me any time he chooses. If all we know is the *attributes* of God, and know nothing of His *nature*, we have every reason to fear him.

The Nature of God

There are two parts to God's nature:

- God is holy (**1 Samuel 2:2; Exodus 33:20**)
- God is love (**1 John 4:10,16**)

You cannot understand God unless you understand both these aspects of his nature. But God is not only perfect in holiness and perfect in love, he is also perfect in his balance between the two.

Read Exodus 34:6-7

It is important to see God's whole nature, not just focus exclusively on one part. God is a God of love, but he is also a God of holiness. He is a God of compassion, but he is also a God of justice.

Read Jeremiah 9:23-24

When mankind sinned, God was faced with a problem. He loved us, but his holiness demanded judgment against evil. He could not turn a blind eye to our sin. But there is more to God than we have yet

discovered in this lesson. There are in fact *three* aspects to God's nature which are in perfect balance:

- God is absolutely holy
- God is absolutely loving
- God is absolutely wise

Read Romans 11:33; 16:27

When the holiness of God and the love of God came into conflict over the dilemma of mankind, God's perfect wisdom went to work. God sent Jesus to die in our place. Instead of punishing us, as He has the right to, God took on himself the punishment his holiness demanded. The Cross was where God's love and God's holiness met.

Read Proverbs 9:10

The first and most important revelation you can have of God is to discover him as God! This is called "the fear of the Lord." This fear is not a terror of God, which causes you to hide from him, but rather is an awe of his power and holiness. It is this awe of God which causes us to understand and appreciate the salvation he has offered us (**Hebrews 12:28-29**)

Seeing the Unseen God

Read 1 Timothy 1:17

God is unseen, but He has revealed Himself in three special ways to mankind:

- In his creation (**Romans 1:20**)
- In his Word (**Romans 16:25-26**)
- In his Son (**John 1:17-18; Colossians 1:15**)

In Jesus, we see the nature of God expressed. He is the perfect image of God – the exact likeness of God's nature (**Hebrews 1:3**). In Christ, we see everything that God is – his love, his holiness, his wisdom and his power – all in perfect balance.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6

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Origins

The Bible declares that the beginning point for mankind is God himself.

Read Genesis 1:26-27

Read Acts 17:24-28

What was the plan God had in mind when he created man? We find the clue in **Genesis 1:26-27**, rendered by the *New Living Translation* in this way:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life...So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.’”

God “patterned [people] after himself” so that we would be like him. His purpose for creating us “in his own image” was so that he could walk with us, talk with us and have a close relationship with us (**2 Corinthians 6:16-18**).

God placed the first man and woman in a garden called Eden. But there was also something else in the garden – something dark and sinister that would alter the course of human history.

Read Genesis 3:1

The identity of this snake is disclosed in **Revelation 12:9** as “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.” Satan took on the guise of a snake in order to lure man away from God. So before we look at what happened in Eden, let’s look first at the origin of Satan himself.

The Origin of Satan

Before God made man, he created a class of spirit-beings called angels. One of these angels was of a high order. His name, in Hebrew, was *Heylel*, which means “morning star.” In Latin, the name is rendered *Lucifer*, or “lightbearer.”

Read Ezekiel 28:12-19

Satan, the power behind the throne of Tyre, is described as the model of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty. Satan was not created evil. Everything about him was designed to reflect God’s own glory. Then sin was found in him. When he fell from his position, he took with him all the attributes God had created within him, but in a distorted form. His beauty remains, but is now warped by pride; his wisdom remains, but is now corrupted by violence.

2 Corinthians 11:14 says that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” Evil as he is, he rarely presents himself in an evil light; his words are sweet, though they drip with poison. He is, after all, the “father of lies” (**John 8:44**). And this is exactly how he presented himself to Adam and Eve.

The Fall of Man

Satan’s intention was to lure mankind into his rebellion against God (read **Genesis 3:1-24**). When man rebelled against God, he inadvertently identified himself with Satan’s cause and came under Satan’s tyranny (**1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:1-3**).

Read Romans 5:12

All mankind has inherited the fallen nature of their ancestor. But the wonderful news of the Gospel is that God did not leave man in this sorry state. He intervened in human history.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:22

Just as Adam was the origin of sin and death, so Christ has become for you the origin of blessing and eternal life. On the Cross, Jesus destroyed Satan’s work (**1 John 3:8**) and opened the door for you into the abundant life of God!

Read John 10:10

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Stage One: Living with God

Jesus

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” Heb.1:1-2.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus appeared on the scene of history. He was born into the world and grew up just like every other person, but He was no ordinary man. He was called the “Son of God” (Luke 1:26-38) and the “Word of God” (John 1:14).

The Mission of Jesus

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” Luke 19:10 (see also Colossians 1:13).

Jesus was sent into the world to fulfill the wonderful plan of God for our lives. His mission was:

- To give His life as a ransom for us (Matt.20:28)
- To destroy Satan’s works (1 John 3:8)
- To give us eternal life (1 John 5:11-12)
- To give us birth into God’s family (John 1:12: 3:3)
- To restore fellowship with God (2 Corinthians 5:18; Romans 5:1-2; 1 John 1:3)

Jesus Represented God

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word...” Hebrews 1:3 (see also Colossians 1:15-17).

Jesus existed eternally before He took on human nature (Philippians 2:6-7). As the Word of God (John 1:1), he communicated the heart of God to mankind. In Jesus, we see what God the Father is like.

“If you really knew me [Jesus], you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Anyone who has seen me has

seen the Father. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” John 14:7-11 (see also 1:18).

Jesus Represented Man

“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering” Romans 8:3.

In Jesus we not only see the perfect image of God, we also see the perfect image of man, as God intended us to be. He didn’t just take on human form; He completely identified with life as we know it. He shared totally in our humanity.

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:6-8.

During his life on earth, Jesus experienced all the troubles of life that we face, and so understands how we feel (Matthew 8:17; Hebrews 4:15). In this way Jesus became the example for us. In His words, His actions and His character He showed us how to live a life pleasing to God (1 Peter 4:1-2; 2:21-25).

Jesus opened the door to heaven for us, because:

- Jesus died for you (Hebrews 2:9; Isaiah 53:5-6)
- Jesus was raised to life for you (Eph.2:4-6)

When you accepted Jesus into your life, God linked your life with Jesus. Now, as a Christian, you are forever linked with Jesus - with His righteousness, with His authority, with His character, with His life (Colossians 3:1-4).

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Stage One: Living with God

The Cross

"...Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but...humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!" Phil.2:5-8.

When Jesus was put to death by being nailed to a wooden cross, wicked men thought they were just executing a man who was disturbing their way of life. They did not realize that the Cross was pre-planned by God (read Acts 3:13-18).

Read Isaiah 53:4-6

The Center of History

The Cross of Jesus Christ is the center-point of human history. From the moment that Adam sinned, it was pre-planned by God that Jesus would die on the Cross. From that time on people looked forward in faith to what God promised He would do.

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets...searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" 1 Peter 1:10-11.

Whereas the Old Testament saints looked *forward* in faith to the Cross of Christ, we now look *back* in faith to the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the center of human history and the center of our lives.

The Wonder of the Cross

The Cross lies at the core of God's plan of salvation.

- The Cross demonstrates God's power (1 Cor.1:18)
- The Cross demonstrates God's love (Romans 5:8)
- The Cross demonstrates God's holiness (Col.2:14)
- The Cross demonstrates God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

God's love and holiness intersected at the Cross. His righteous judgment demanded the death penalty for sin. But his love met his own demands. Only the Cross fully satisfies God's righteous requirements. This is the wonderful wisdom of God.

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified...so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" 1 Corinthians 2:2,5.

Victory of the Cross

The Cross has won freedom for you in seven areas:

- Freedom from Satan's power (Col.1:13; 2:15)
- Freedom from past sins (John 8:36; Col.2:13)
- Freedom from your old self (Romans 6:6-7,14)
- Freedom from sickness (Matthew 8:17)
- Freedom from the curse (Galatians 3:13)
- Freedom from judgment (Hebrews 9:27-28)
- Freedom from everlasting death (John 3:16)

The Finished Work

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" Galatians 2:20.

When Jesus died on the Cross, God counted his death as your death. Your old life was nailed to the Cross together with Jesus. As far as God is concerned, when Jesus was hanging on the Cross, he saw you hanging on the Cross in Christ. Christ's death was the death of your old life, so that you could begin a new life in Christ (2 Cor.5:17). As a Christian, you too can say:

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" Galatians 6:14.

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The Blood

"You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" Hebrews 12:23-24.

The shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross was the essential condition for us to receive forgiveness for our sins and acceptance into the presence of God.

"In [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" Ephesians 1:7-8.

The Effect of Sin

Sin has four effects in our lives:

- Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2)
- Sin brings guilt (Psalm 38:4)
- Sin allows Satan to accuse us (Zechariah 3:1-4)
- Sin demands the death penalty (Ezekiel 18:4)

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" Romans 3:23-24.

Reason for the Blood

The blood of Christ wholly satisfies God's holiness. When God rescued the people of Israel from Egypt, he commanded them to put the blood of a lamb on their doorposts, saying "...when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13).

When God saw the blood of the substitute lamb on the doorposts of a home, he passed over them and did not judge that household. This was called "the Passover." The sacrificial lamb was a picture of the

coming Lamb of God - Jesus.

"...For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" 1 Corinthians 5:7 (see also John 1:29).

The Effect of the Blood

"...it was not with silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" 1 Peter 1:18-19.

The blood of Christ not only satisfies the holy requirements of God; it also meets the innermost need of every person.

- The blood cleanses from guilt (Hebrews 10:22)
- The blood gives confidence before God (Hebrews 10:19-22; 4:16)
- The blood makes us worthy (Romans 8:31,33-34)
- The blood makes us holy (Hebrews 13:12)

Seal of the Covenant

"...after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you'" Luke 22:20.

The blood of Christ was the seal of a covenant God has made between you and him. That covenant is everlasting and is the basis by which you can now come close to God.

"(Jesus)...entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption...How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" Heb.9:12-14 (read also 13:20-21).

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Resurrection

“...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 1:4.

The resurrection is an inseparable part of the work of the Cross. The resurrection proved that sin had been dealt with once and for all, and that a new life has been opened to every believer.

“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” Rom. 4:25.

The first Christians went everywhere declaring the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:33). So dynamic was their message that they “turned the world upside down” in their day (Acts 17:6, KJV).

Raised With Christ

“...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” Col.2:12.

When Jesus died, God counted his death as your death. You died in him. But more than that, you were also raised in him. His resurrection gave you five things:

- A new life (Romans 6:4; 1 Peter 1:3)
- A new focus (Colossians 3:1-4)
- A new confidence (Rom.8:34,37; Eph.3:12)
- A new position of authority (Ephesians 2:6)
- A new hope for the future (2 Timothy 1:10)

Resurrection Power

Read Ephesians 1:17-23

The Bible calls the power of the resurrection “incomparably great.” There is no other power in the entire universe that can compare with the power God released in the resurrection of Jesus. When we have a revelation of the power of the resurrection, life takes on a new perspective.

Read Revelation 1:12-16

John had known Jesus before the Cross (John 1:14; Luke 9:29-32; 1 John 1:1-3), but now he saw him in his full glory (see John 17:24). This was the full glory of the risen Christ and it knocked John to the ground.

Read Revelation 1:17-18

When Jesus died, the Bible says He went into the depths of the earth (Ephesians 4:8-10) to a place called Hades – the place of the unbelieving dead. Satan thought He had destroyed the Son of God, but three days later, God raised Jesus back to life. The full glory of the risen Christ – the same glory that knocked John over – exploded in the depths of the earth. And Jesus walked up to Satan and took from him the keys of death and Hades - which represented the authority Satan had over your life. Paul prays that we will understand that this same all-conquering power is available to us each and every day!

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” 1 John 4:4 (see also 5:4; Heb.2:14-15; Eph.6:10).

Future Resurrection

Jesus is called “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18; 1 Cor.15:17-23) because his resurrection opened the way for our resurrection! One day Jesus will return and all believers who have died will be raised to life (1 Thess.4:13-18). Our bodies will be transformed (1 Cor.15:51-54). We will have an immortal body just like the Lord Jesus (1 John 3:2).

“...because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence” 2 Corinthians 4:14 (see also John 5:24-29; 11:25-26; Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:11).

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Stage One: Living with God

Repentance

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” 2 Peter 3:9.

Repentance is the first step we take in personally receiving the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. Repentance is the gateway into God’s blessings.

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” Acts 3:19.

What Repentance is Not

Repentance causes great joy in heaven (Luke 15:7). But before we can understand true repentance, we need to understand what repentance is not.

- **Not just feeling guilty** – No one repents unless they first feel guilty, but not all who feel guilty actually repent (Acts 24:25).
- **Not just being sorry** – Some people are sorry because of the consequences of their sin. They are not really sorry for the sin, but for the sin’s penalty (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- **Not turning over a new leaf** – Many people try in their own strength to change their way of life. Any self-effort has a root of self-righteousness in it, which does not acknowledge the need of repentance from sin (Isaiah 64:6).
- **Not becoming religious** – The Pharisees were extremely religious. They fasted and prayed and had many religious ceremonies, yet never repented (Matthew 3:7-10; 5:20).
- **Not just knowing the truth** – Having an intellectual head-knowledge of the truth does not guarantee that the truth has become a living reality in one’s life (James 2:19-20; Matthew 3:8).

What Repentance Is

Genuine repentance is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Several things mark this kind of repentance:

- Being sorry to God for your sin (Psa. 51:1-4; 38:8)
- Being truthful about your sin (Psalm 32:5)
- Being willing to turn from sin (1 Peter 3:10-11)
- Taking responsibility before God (Luke 19:8-10)

To repent means “to turn around, to change direction.” Repentance means turning from four things:

- Turning from sin (2 Timothy 2:19)
- Turning from the world (1 John 2:15; James 4:4)
- Turning from yourself (2 Cor. 5:15; Luke 14:26)
- Turning from the devil (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13)

But just turning *from* these things is not enough. It is what we turn *to* that makes the difference.

- Turning to righteousness (Romans 6:13)
- Turning to God (Acts 20:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9)

A Command from God

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” Acts 17:30.

Repentance is a “turning around” – away from sin and the world – to face God. There are two kinds of repentance, pictured in the parable of the two sons (read Luke 15:11-32). There is a repentance from:

- Living separate from the Father
- Being turned away from the Father

Repentance is the gateway into the fullness of life God has planned for you! (John 10:10).

“...In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength...” Isa. 30:15.

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Stage One: Living with God

Faith

Faith is an indispensable part of God's plan of salvation. In fact, the Bible says that:

"...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" Hebrews 11:6.

Why is faith so important? To understand we must see what happened in the original temptation of mankind. When Adam sinned, he stepped out of God-dependence into independence. This is the reason God now places such a high priority on faith. Faith presupposes total dependence on God. This dependence on God is expressed in every step of faith.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" Hebrews 11:1.

Faith means having trust, assurance or confidence in another person or that person's words. Having faith in God involves an exchange of trust from self to Him, from relying on one source of knowledge (our five senses) to a higher source of knowledge (God's Word).

"We live by faith, not by sight" 2 Corinthians 5:7.

We are challenged by the Word of God to advance beyond our five senses, beyond our past experiences and beyond our past capacities. This is the life of faith which each one of us is called to – where "nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37; Matt. 17:20).

The Basis of Faith

Our faith in God is based on two important realities:

The Nature of God

Abraham is given as the greatest example of faith at work (Romans 4:16-22; Hebrews 11:8-12). He and his wife were beyond child-bearing age, yet God promised him a son. Even more, God promised that

through that son Abraham would become the "father of many nations." In believing God for his son, Abraham's faith was in three aspects of God's nature:

- God's promise (Romans 4:20)
- God's character (Hebrews 11:11)
- God's power (Romans 4:21)

Abraham's faith was strong because he knew that:

- God cannot change (Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17; Heb. 13:8)
- God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2)
- God cannot fail (Job 42:2; 1 Chronicles 28:20)

The finished work of the Cross

Read Hebrews 12:2

Christ has become the source of our faith in God. His death and resurrection provides the ground for our believing (1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 5:1-2).

The Trial of Faith

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7

Read James 1:2-4

Faith is not faith unless there is an obstacle involved. This is what is called a "trial of faith" and it works in the following way:

- A word comes from God (Rom. 10:17; Josh. 1:8)
- You obey that word (James 2:17; 1:22-25)
- A crisis of faith comes (Romans 4:16-21)
- God brings the answer (Jam. 1:12; Heb. 6:13-15)

"...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4.

Faith *itself* is the victory. Even while you are going through a trial of faith, with the answer not yet in sight, your faith is the victory that sustains you. Faith is the foundation for the whole Christian life (Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20).

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Stage One: Living with God

Grace

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was with them all” Acts 4:33.

The grace of God was very important in the life of the early Christians (Acts 14:26; 15:40). Grace has two meanings. We must understand both aspects in order to experience the fullness of grace in our lives.

Undeserved favor

“For it is by grace you have been saved...not by works, so that no one can boast” Ephesians 2:8-9.

Grace is God’s mercy at work. Even though we were sinners, deserving of judgment, God forgave us and saved us in Christ.

Read Ephesians 1:3-13; 2:1-7

Enabling power

Not only does grace make us *accepted* into the family of God; it also *enables* us to live the Christian life.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Grace simply means God doing what we cannot do ourselves. We could not save ourselves, so God saved us by his grace. Neither can we live the Christian life in our own strength, so God’s grace gives us the ability to do what we cannot do ourselves. Both aspects of God’s grace – his undeserved favor and his enabling power – come to us because we are in Christ.

Daily Grace

Both parts of grace are available to us on a daily basis:

- Forgiveness of sins (Romans 3:23-24)
- Power to overcome sin (Rom.6:14; Tit.2:11-12)

If we only understand one of these truths without the other, we can seriously misunderstand God’s grace. There are two errors that come out of misunderstanding the grace of God:

- Grace means it’s OK to sin (Romans 6:1-2)
- Grace means it’s impossible to sin (1 John 1:8)

A true understanding of grace brings the revelation that, while it is still *possible* for a Christian to sin, God has made it possible for him *not* to! (1 John 2:1; Romans 6:14; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Read Hebrews 12:15

You have been called to continue in God’s grace (Acts 13:43). But you can miss the grace of God through:

- Self-effort (Galatians 5:4; Romans 11:6)
- Self-gratification (Galatians 5:13; Romans 13:14)

Read James 4:6

Grace in Action

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” Hebrews 4:16.

As we walk with God each day, we constantly meet new trials of our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7). Our response to God is faith, which is believing what God’s Word says *despite* what the circumstances might indicate. God’s response to our faith is his grace.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Like Paul, you can discover the daily outworking of God’s grace in the midst of your weakness and inability.

“...My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Water Baptism

“Therefore 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.

To be “baptized” means to be “dipped, immersed”. When a person believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord, they are immersed in water. Why would Jesus command his believers to do such a strange thing?

Baptism is a Picture

Understanding water baptism is the key to a victorious Christian life. The act of going under the water and rising up from it again is a picture of what has happened to the Christian. In baptism, the four stages of Christ’s redemptive work are enacted out:

- He died...I died in him (Romans 6:6-7)
- He was buried...I was buried in him (Romans 6:4)
- He rose...I rose in him (Romans 6:4-5)
- He ascended...I ascended in him (Ephesians 2:6)

Water Baptism is...

My funeral service!

A burial service is not designed to kill someone off. It is only performed when a person is *dead already*. Because you have “died” in Christ, you now bury your old life in water baptism. Baptism is a declaration to that your old life is dead and buried.

My resurrection to new life!

You rise out of the water as a declaration that you are now a new creation in Christ! (read Rom.6:10-11).

Two Old Testament stories illustrate in vivid terms what baptism means to us:

- **The Exodus** (read 1 Corinthians 10:1-2,11)
- **The Flood** (read 1 Peter 3:20-22)

Read Galatians 6:14

The Dividing Line

Read Colossians 1:13

Every man and woman born into the world is born into the dominion of darkness – as slaves of Satan’s power (1 John 5:19). There is no way out of his dominion except by *death*, and there is no way into the kingdom of God except by *birth*. On the Cross and in his resurrection, Jesus became both our death and our new birth. This is what we declare in baptism!

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” 1 Corinthians 15:22 (see also Romans 5:12).

In God’s sight, there only two kinds of people – those who are “in Adam” and those who are “in Christ.”

In Adam

As the father of the human race, Adam was a representative man. When Adam sinned, he brought death and judgment to all succeeding generations. Every person born into the world was born “in Adam.”

In Christ

God did not try to patch up fallen humanity. Instead, he put an end to that race on the Cross and began a whole new race in Christ. Like Adam, Jesus was a representative man. He was called the “last Adam” (1 Cor.15:45,47). When Jesus died, he hung on the Cross as the *last* of Adam’s race. But in his resurrection, Jesus rose not as the “last Adam” but as the “second man,” the beginning of a whole new race of humanity – the New Creation (2 Cor.5:16-17).

In baptism we are declaring that we are no longer part of Adam’s fallen race but are a part of the New Creation in Christ.

“...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” Col.2:11-12.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Holy Spirit

"...Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" Ephesians 1:13.

When Jesus went back to His Father, he did not abandon us as spiritual orphans in the world. He sent his Holy Spirit into our lives.

Read John 14:16-18;16:5-7.

The Holy Spirit is one of the three Persons of the Godhead (Matthew 28:19). That means that although the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son, he is indeed God (note Peter's words in Acts 5:3-4). All three Persons are actively involved in our salvation.

"For through [the Son] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" Ephesians 2:18.

The Gift of the Spirit

"We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" 1 John 4:13.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to every believer (Acts 2:38-39). When a person personally receives Jesus as Savior and Lord, God's Spirit comes to live on the inside, imparting spiritual life (John 7:37-39).

Ministry of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit has a two-fold ministry:

In the believer

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within the believer to help him to grow in the Lord. The Holy Spirit...

- Opens access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18)
- Gives us new birth (John 3:3,6; Titus 3:5)
- Testifies that we are God's children (Rom.8:16)
- Makes us one with the Lord in spirit (1 Cor.6:17)
- Teaches and guides us (John 14:26; Rom.8:14)
- Gives wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17)
- Enables us to live a holy life (Galatians 5:16-25)

- Helps us in prayer (Rom.8:26; Eph.6:18)
- Imparts resurrection life (Eph.1:18-20; Rom.8:11)
- Changes us into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor.3:18).

Through the believer

The Holy Spirit also empowers the believer to serve and glorify God in the world. The Holy Spirit...

- Gives power to witness (Acts 1:8; 4:31)
- Testifies that Jesus is alive (Acts 5:30-32; 4:31-33)
- Anoints with spiritual gifts (1 Cor.12:4-10)
- Releases true worship (Eph.5:18-19; John 4:24)
- Glorifies Jesus (John 16:13-15; 15:26).

New Way of the Spirit

"But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" Romans 7:6.

The "old way of the written code" is a way of self-effort. But in "the new way of the Spirit," it is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live a life pleasing to God. He is the inner power which changes us from the inside out (2 Cor.3:17-18; Rom.8:2).

Baptized in the Spirit

Read Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49

Not only does the Holy Spirit indwell the believer, but he also fills him with power to be an effective witness. The Bible calls this infilling being "baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5). This is God's promise for every believer (Luke 11:9-13). God desires every believer to experience the power of the Holy Spirit both *in* him (for personal growth) and *through* him (in empowered ministry to others).

"Do not get drunk on wine...Instead, be filled with the Spirit" Ephesians 5:18 (see also 3:16-20).

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Temptation

From the very first temptation in the Garden of Eden (read Genesis 3), temptation has been one of Satan's major weapons against man.

Read 1 John 2:16

Genesis 3:6

Good for food "Lust of the flesh"
Pleasing to the eye "Lust of the eyes"
Desirable for gaining wisdom ... "Pride of life"

1 John 2:16

Since the fall, mankind has been governed by the flesh, now corrupted by a sinful nature (Gal.5:19-21).

Victory Won By Christ

Jesus came to the earth to reverse the effects of Adam's fall (Romans 5:12-19). He did this in two ways:

Through his life

Jesus was tempted in everything, exactly as we are, "yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Luke 4:1-13

Stones to bread "Lust of the flesh"
Kingdoms of the earth "Lust of the eyes"
Pinnacle of the temple "Pride of life"

1 John 2:16

Jesus defeated every temptation from Satan. And he opened the way for us to experience the same victory.

Through his death on the Cross

The Cross released us from sin's grip (Rom.6:11-14; 8:1-4,9). We are now free to walk in obedience to God.

The Daily Victory

Because of this great victory won for us by Christ, the Christian can now confidently face any attack from Satan. Here are six keys to continual victory:

Know the victory is already won

Satan was totally defeated at the Cross (Col.2:14-15).

We are not trying to *get* victory. We live in the victory that Christ has *already* won (Romans 8:37).

Walk in step with the Spirit

A new power is placed within the Christian – the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:1-2). We are to walk in obedience to his inner promptings day by day (Gal.5:16,22-25).

Recognize temptation for what it is

Temptation is *not* sin; *yielding* to temptation is! (see James 1:15; Genesis 4:6-7). Even Jesus – the sinless Son of God – was tempted, but he never gave in.

Know the way of escape

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

We are now called to resist temptation in our own strength, but by escaping into God's presence. The Lord himself is our way of escape.

Live in daily submission to God

Read James 4:7

This is the simple secret to resisting temptation. Firstly, we are called to live in a daily submission to God. Then when temptation comes, we have the authority of that submission to resist. And Satan will flee!

Avoid obvious areas of temptation

Read Psalm 101:3

We must never think we are invincible to Satan's temptation. He is "a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Above all, the secret to victory over temptation is in keeping our focus on Jesus (Heb.12:2). If we maintain this daily focus, overcoming temptation is a result of our walk with God (Col.3:1-4; Phil.4:8; Gal.5:16).

"...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Fellowship

“My prayer is...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me...” John 17:20-23.

Jesus’ prayer reveals the nature of true fellowship:

The Quality of Fellowship

“...just as you are in me and I am in you.” Our fellowship together is linked to the quality of fellowship experienced by the Father and the Son. The depth of this love and unity is outworked by the Holy Spirit as we meet in regular fellowship. Christian fellowship then becomes a reflection of the fellowship of the triune Godhead.

The Basis of Fellowship

“...I in them and you in me.” Christian fellowship only works because we have the same Spirit, making us one body (1 Corinthians 12:14,20). This fellowship is based on:

- Common commitment (Romans 12:10)
- Common love (John 13:34)
- Common focus (Philippians 2:1-2)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Meeting Together

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” Hebrews 10:25.

Regular fellowship between Christians is very important for it is through our fellowship that...

- The believer grows in Christ (Eph.4:12-16)
- God is glorified to the world (John 13:35; 17:23)

Walking in the Light

Read 1 John 1:6-7

Our fellowship embraces the need to be open with one another. This is not something that is a prerequisite for fellowship. Rather it is a result of the trust that develops out of fellowship. This openness includes:

- Removing the pretenses (1 Peter 1:22)
- Confessing our sins to one another (James 5:16)
- Forgiving each other (Colossians 3:13)
- Encouraging one another in obedience (Hebrews 10:24)
- Showing genuine concern for one another (Philippians 2:3-4)
- Laying down one’s life (John 15:12-13)

Life involves more than physical life. It also includes our material possessions, our personal interests and preferences (James 2:15-16). This means a willingness to share one’s self.

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had” Acts 4:32 (see also 2:44-45).

This was a description of the early Church. Their unity in fellowship was expressed on three levels:

- One heart – a bond of love
- One mind – a bond of purpose
- All things in common – a bond of concern

This is the outworking of true fellowship - not of outward rules and regulations. This depth of fellowship is a result of “walking in the light,” and is the answer to the prayer of Jesus:

“...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” John 17:21.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Generosity

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” 2 Corinthians 9:6.

Just as God has set physical laws to govern the universe, so God has also put into motion spiritual laws which govern human life. One of these is the *law of generosity* – the principle of sowing and reaping. The first step in understanding the law of generosity is to see material things as God sees them (Luke 9:25).

Ownership is with God

All ownership is with God (Psalm 24:1; 89:11; Job 41:11; 1 Chronicles 29:10-14). Every single created thing ultimately belongs to him, including everything material or immaterial that we may personally have in this life – possessions, careers, families.

Stewardship is with us

We are not owners, but stewards who have been given special responsibility before God for how we use the things he has given us (Matt.25:14-30). When we understand this owner-steward relationship we have with God, then it becomes easy to give. Generosity is part of our stewardship responsibilities. Our stewardship covers every single thing that “belongs” to us.

The key that releases a believer into the full responsibilities of stewardship is *surrender* – the unreserved giving of one’s entire life and purpose into God’s hands. Only when we give *ourselves* do we learn what it means to give of what we have.

Read Matthew 6:24

The Grace of Giving

Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-15

Generosity is part of the grace of God that flows into our lives. Here are some guidelines that can help us in our “grace of giving”:

- Give systematically and regularly (1 Cor.16:1-2)
- Give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- Give without seeking recognition (Matt.6:2-4)

Giving follows a certain order of expression: **tithes** (the beginning of our giving), **offerings** (giving for specific needs) and **sacrifices** (giving that “hurts”).

Firstfruits

Read Malachi 3:10

Tithing is an important lesson in giving. There are three things we need to understand before our tithing pleases God.

- Under the New Covenant, everything now belongs to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Tithing must not be under law (compulsory rule) but under grace (the Spirit-empowered response of our heart to God’s goodness)
- Tithing is the firstfruits of our income, not just one-tenth.

The firstfruits is the first and the best. If we bring a tenth of our income to the Lord, but it is the “leftover” tenth, this is not a true tithe (Proverbs 3:9-10). In the Bible, the firstfruits of a harvest was accepted by God on behalf of the harvest. This is why Jesus is called “the firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20,23). Christ was accepted by God on behalf of the rest of the harvest. In the same way, our tithe is given representing our whole income and our whole lives.

Our generosity brings great pleasure to God. It was the sacrificial giving of the Philippians (read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5) that brought with it a promise of God’s certain provision:

“...They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:18-19.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Kingdom of God

“But you are ...a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” 1 Peter 2:9.

We have been snatched from Satan’s rulership and are now under a whole new authority – that of the Lord Jesus. This change of authority is the keystone to the Christian life.

New Citizenship

Read Colossians 1:12-13

When we enter “the kingdom of light,” we enter a relationship for which we were created – a relationship between the Lord and His creation. The Lordship of Christ in our lives changes our whole lifestyle into that of a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

“But our citizenship is in heaven...” Philippians 3:20.

The Model Citizen

“Let your attitude to life be that of Christ Jesus himself...” Philippians 2:5 (Phillips).

Jesus, though King of the Kingdom, became the servant of all. He is the example for us of the true citizen of His kingdom.

Read John 13:5-17

As citizens of God’s kingdom, we have entered into a master-servant relationship with the Lord (Matt.6:24). Jesus came to do God’s will (Hebrews 10:5-9). Every day he displayed what the lifestyle of the kingdom is all about: living to please God (Ephesians 5:8-10).

Paradoxes

Many Christians don’t like the concept of servanthood because it seems to make one person inferior to another. But in the Bible, we find four paradoxes:

- In slavery, there is freedom (Romans 6:16-23)
- In serving, there is greatness (Mark 9:35; 10:43-44)
- In humility, there is exaltation (Luke 18:14; 1 Peter 5:5-6)
- In submission, there is authority (Luke 7:3-10; James 4:7)

The lifestyle of the kingdom of God is an attitude of *submission and obedience to God.*

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3

We submit ourselves to God’s will *not* reluctantly, because of fear or duty, but we seek to please him...

- Because of all God has done for us (Romans 12:1; Ephesians 4:1; Titus 3:4-7)
- Because in doing so we find fulfilment (Ps.40:8)
- Because of love (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3)

Fruit of the Kingdom

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

In Matthew 21:43, Jesus said that the kingdom would belong to those who “produce its fruit”. The fruit of the kingdom is summed up in a number of scriptures:

- Love, joy, peace (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Goodness, righteousness, truth (Ephesians 5:9; James 3:13-17)
- Righteousness, peace, joy (Romans 14:17)

Since we were created by God, we were also made for his kingdom and its lifestyle. Our responsibility is to live like the people we now are!

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us” 1 Peter 2:11-12.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Worship

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name” Psalm 103:1 (NASB).

It is an awesome thought to consider that we have the ability to bless our Creator, but time after time in Scripture we are exhorted to do just that. We bless him through our praise and worship of Him.

Read Psalm 34:1-3

Praise

Praise is an expression of admiration and appreciation. When we praise someone, we tell them how wonderful we think they are, or how great their accomplishments are. It is the same with the Lord. When we praise God, we are acknowledging his character and power.

Read Psalm 63:3- 4

We are told to praise God for many reasons:

- Because of who he is (Psa.47:6-7; Ex.5:11,21)
- Because of what he does (Psa.52:9; 103:1-5)

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord” Psalm 150:6 (see also 22:26).

Praise is not simply directed in words *toward* the Lord. We also praise God every time we speak *about* him to others.

Worship

Whereas praise is an expression of admiration and appreciation, worship is a deeper expression of love and adoration. It is possible to admire someone without being in love with them. In the same way, worship has to do with our love of the Lord.

Read Mark 12:33

The religious rituals and ceremonies of Israel became detestable to the Lord because their heart was far from him (Isa.1:10-15; 29:13). Today, also, God is only interested in sincere worship that comes from the heart.

Read John 4:23-24

In spirit

Our spirit is called the “inner man” – the real you on the inside (Eph.3:16). Worship results when the inner man, in response to the promptings of God’s Spirit, is released in love and adoration toward God.

In truth

To worship God in truth is to worship him genuinely and sincerely and in full understanding of who he is and what pleases him.

Expressions

There are many expressions of praise and worship:

With the mouth

- Singing (Psalm 9:2,11; 69:30; 95:2; 107:22)
- Praising (Psalm 34:1; 63:4; 71:8)
- Shouting (Psalm 47:1; 71:23; 95:1)

With the hands

- Lifting (Psalm 63:4; 134:2; 141:2)
- Clapping (Psalm 47:1)
- Musical instruments (Psalm 150)

With the feet

- Standing (Psalm 134:1, KJV)
- Kneeling, bowing (Psalm 95:6)
- Dancing, leaping (Psa.30:11; 2 Sam.6:14-15)

These are outward expressions of what is in the heart. Without heart-felt praise, the outward form is empty and displeasing to God. God is always looking at our heart (1 Sam. 16:7). But when our heart is overflowing with gratitude and love for God, it is impossible to be silent. We will use all the outward means to express the praise and worship that is in our hearts.

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name” Hebrews 13:15.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Prayer

“He will call upon me, and I will answer him, and show him my salvation” Psalm 91:15-16.

The time we spend with the Lord in prayer can release the most dynamic, history-changing power this world has ever known. The Bible describes many different kinds of prayer. But the most important kind starts in the hidden place of our homes.

The Secret Place

“But when you pray, go into your most private room, and closing the door, pray to your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you in the open” Matthew 6:6 (Amp.)

We have been invited into intimate prayer by none other than the Lord himself. Paul then exhorts us on how we should do this:

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” Ephesians 6:18.

As we express our feelings and burdens in conversation with God, it can be in the form of adoration (Ps. 34:1-4), confession (1 John 1:9), request (Matt. 7:7), thanksgiving (Eph. 5:4,20) or intercession (1 Tim. 2:1).

An Example of Prayer

Elijah is given to us as an example of a praying man (read James 5:16-18), The NKJV translates v.16 thus:

“...The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

Elijah's prayer was:

- **Effective:** Based on God's Word (Deuteronomy 11:13-17; 1 Kings 18:36)
- **Fervent:** Based on God's character (1 Kings 18:36-46; Matthew 15:21-28)
- **Righteous:** Based on relationship with God (James 5:17; Proverbs 15:8,29)

Five Commands to Pray

- Watch and pray always (Luke 21:36)
- Pray lest you fall into temptation (Matt. 26:41)
- Pray for harvest workers (Luke 10:2)
- Pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
- Pray for your enemies (Luke 6:28)

Many of the people of the Bible had regular times of the day set aside specifically for prayer, often three times a day – at morning, noon and evening.

“As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning, and noon, will I pray and cry aloud: and he shall bear my voice” Psalm 55:16-17 (KJV) (see also Daniel 6:10).

The best example of a daily pattern of regular, whole-hearted prayer can be found in the Lord Jesus himself:

- Early in the morning (Mark 1:35)
- Before each meal (Mark 6:41)
- Occasionally all night (Luke 6:12)

Whenever Christians pray together in agreement, there is special authority.

Read Matthew 18:19

If there is tremendous power when two people pray, what about the whole assembly of God's people praying in one accord? (read Acts 4:24-31).

Joining the Lord

The Bible says that Jesus “always lives to intercede for [us]” (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34). One of His great ministries now is that of prayer. The Holy Spirit is searching for those who will join Jesus in his ministry of prayer for individual people, for the Church and for the nations.

“...Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” Matthew 26:40.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Eternity

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end” Ecclesiastes 3:11.

God created us as creatures of eternity. Even though our physical body dies, our spirit continues to live forever. God has prepared an eternal dwelling for us called heaven.

Heaven

Heaven is a place far beyond anything we can possibly conceive (1 Corinthians 2:9; 13:12). But though the Bible doesn't paint for us a totally clear picture of what heaven is like, it does give us some clues as to its nature. Heaven is:

- A place of great glory (Dan. 7:9-10; Matt. 13:43)
- A place of continual worship (Rev. 19:1-6)
- A place that will never end (2 Peter 1:11)
- A place untainted by evil (Revelation 21:27)

The Book of Revelation describes the New Jerusalem, coming out of heaven, as a place without night (22:5), without curse (22:3), without pain (21:4), without crying or sorrow (21:4) and without death (21:4). This is because the nature of heaven is a product of the nature of God. Heaven is the full manifestation of His presence. That means that what God is like, heaven is like: a place of holiness, full of glory and without end.

Our Link With Heaven

As believers, we now live our lives in a special relationship with heaven, because:

- We belong to heaven (Heb. 12:22-23; Phil. 3:20)
- We are seated in heaven (Ephesians 2:6)
- We have our source of blessing in heaven (Ephesians 1:3; Psalm 16:11)

- We have our names written in heaven (Lk 10:20)
- We have been sent from heaven (Jn 17:16,18)
- We have our mind set on heaven (Col. 3:1-4)
- We have our treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20)
- We have been called back to heaven (Phil. 3:14)

Hell

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” Matt. 25:41.

Heaven is not the only eternal place prepared for people. There is another place called hell (Luke 16:19-31). This place was not originally prepared for people, but for Satan. But when Adam sinned, all of mankind aligned itself with Satan and became enemies of God (Col. 1:21). For all who refuse God's offer of salvation, their destiny is to join Satan in eternal separation from God (read John 3:17-21). But the wonderful news of the Gospel is that Jesus became the escape route from eternal judgment in hell. He became our passport to heaven (John 3:16).

Eternal Life

Read Romans 6:23

Eternal life is part of the total package of salvation that has been presented to us in Jesus Christ. This eternal life is certain because we are now in Christ (John 5:24; 6:40; 10:28; 1 John 5:11).

Jesus himself, before returning to heaven, made a very special promise to every believer:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” John 14:1-3 (see also 17:24).

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

Second Coming

“...whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”
1 Corinthians 11:26.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth is one of the most important subjects for the Christian to know. The first thing we need to know about the second coming is that it is *certain*.

- Jesus spoke about his own return (Matthew 24:30; John 14:2-3).
- Angels foretold it (Acts 1:10-11)
- Early Christians encouraged one another with it (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 1:7)

The Bible tells us clearly how Jesus will return:

- Unexpectedly to the world (1 Thess.5:1-3)
- Expected by the Church (1 Thess.5:4-11)
- Like the lightning (Matt.24:27; Luke 17:24)
- In the same way that he left (Acts 1:10-11)
- With great power and glory (Luke 21:27)
- In full view of all (Revelation 1:7)

The End of the Age

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ will mark the end of this “present age” and the commencement of a totally new age (1 Timothy 6:19). At the Second Coming, a number of dramatic events will take place:

- The mystery of the ages will be completed (Rev. 10:6-7; Romans 16:25-26)
- The Bride of Christ will be revealed to the world (Rev.19:7; 21:2-11; Eph.5:25-27)
- We will enter our full glory (Phil.3:20-21; Romans 8:19-21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-53)
- The dead in Christ will be raised (2 Cor.4:14)
- Living believers will be caught up (Matt.24:31)
- Creation will be set free (Romans 8:19-22).
- Every enemy will be destroyed (1 Cor.15:24-25; 2 Thess.1:7-10; 2:8)

- Satan will be bound (Rev.20:1-3,7-10)
- Judgment will be meted out (2 Thess.1:6-9)
- God’s kingdom will be set up (Rev. 19:15-16)

Signs of His Coming

Read Matthew 24

Jesus gave his disciples clear signs of his return:

- Worldwide war, earthquakes and famines (Mark 13:8)
- False Christs and false prophets (Matthew 24:23-24)
- Ecological disasters (Luke 21:25)
- Signs in the sky (Luke 21:25-26; Matthew 24:29-30)
- Return of Jerusalem to Jewish hands (Luke 21:24)
- The abomination in the temple (Matt. 24:15-16)
- The Gospel is preached to every nation (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10)

Alert and Ready

“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” Luke 21:28.

The reality of Christ’s return should affect the way we live on earth now. The second coming of Jesus is linked to the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose. This is why Jesus has been kept in heaven until now (Acts 3:21; 2 Pet.3:3-4, 8-9). But the Bible indicates we can “speed” the return of the Lord (2 Pet.3:11-12) by cooperating with the purposes of God in our lives.

“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” 2 Peter 3:13-14.

Project 21

Stage One: Living with God

The Call

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to his purpose” Romans 8:28.

God has a plan for the life of every believer. Not only does his call involve a wonderful purpose for us throughout eternity, but we also have an expression of that call upon the earth now. The Bible says that God has called us...

- From the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5; Matthew 25:34)
- To be separated unto him (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)
- To fulfill his purpose (2 Tim. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:14)

Our Call on Earth

The call of God has two expressions:

The General Calling

The general call is the call that is upon every single Christian, regardless of our individual gifts or talents. Each and every believer is called:

- To serve (Gal. 5:13; 6:2; Phil. 2:5-7)
- To pray (Ephesians 6:18-19)
- To worship (Jn 4:23-24; Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:9)
- To give (Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8:7)
- To encourage (1 Thess. 5:11; Eph. 4:16; 2:21)
- To teach (Col. 3:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20)
- To show hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:1-2)
- To witness (Matt. 5:16; 2 Cor. 5:18-20)

The Special Calling

Apart from the general calling upon our lives, there is also a special calling – a call that is unique to each person. This special calling is based on the particular gifts and talents that God has placed in a Christian's life. You can only move into your *special* calling as you prove yourself diligent in your *general* calling.

How Are We Called?

When God's call comes to our lives, his grace begins to shape us into a vessel that can be used for his purposes (Isaiah 49:2; 2 Timothy 2:20-21). This preparation comes in three stages:

- We are made by God (Matt. 4:19; Jer. 18:1-10)
- We are taught by God (John 14:26; 1 Cor. 2:12)
- We are sent by God (John 17:18; Mark 16:15)

Whenever God calls us, however, he always provides the grace to accomplish what he calls us to do (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Responding to the Call

“For many are called, but few are chosen” Matthew 22:14 (NKJV).

The call of God is wide and all-inclusive. He does not just call a select few, but he calls “many.” This call is expressed on two distinct levels:

The call to salvation

The first expression of God's call to our lives is to return to him. This call has gone out to every single person on the face of the earth – “the many” (Romans 10:14,18). But only those who *respond* to that call – “the few” – are chosen.

The call to the purpose

Only once we have responded to the first call – to salvation – can we respond to the second call – to God's purpose (Ephesians 1:11-12; Romans 8:28). Like the first call, the second call is wide and inclusive. This call goes out to all those who have responded to the first call – “the many” – but likewise, it is only those who respond to that second call – “the few” – who are actually chosen by God for involvement in his purposes. Which group will you belong to?

Making the Truth Mine

Write out in full the scripture from this lesson which means the most to you. We encourage you to commit the verse to memory.

Write out one statement from the study which you feel is most significant for your life.

Write in your own words how you believe you should respond to the truth of this study. Are there any decisions you should make?

You can make a difference!

For this study to have its full effect in your life, we encourage you to:

- * Read and digest the study - meditate on the Word of God.
- * Put into action what you have learnt (James 1:22).
- * Share the Word of God with others.

Your places of ministry have been pre-arranged by God: your home, the street you live on, your place of work and your church.

“I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free” Psalm 119:32