

FIRST
PRINCIPLES

A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST

RESURRECTION LIFE

BOOK SIX

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Hebrews 6:1-2 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

We are in the midst of laying a firm foundation in our lives. If we are living what we have been taught, then we have repented from dead works and have placed our faith in God. We have been baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. We know the importance of laying on of hands. Basically, we are fully empowered to live an abundant, victorious, overcoming life by the grace of God. Yet there remain two foundational principles with which we need to be equipped in order to walk rightly before God and our brethren.

INTRODUCTION

This section of First Principles is called Resurrection Life. In it we will deal with the Hebrews 6 principle of "resurrection of the dead" as well as specific areas of our walk such as family and church relationships, prayer and dominion, and communion. These lessons will make a tremendous difference in our lives and our relationships when applied by the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for resurrection is "anastasis" which simply means "to make to stand or rise up again." Resurrection is a rising to life again after death, but it is more than that. Specifically, it is the beginning of glorification, or the changing of the physical body to share in the glorious redemption provided for the whole man by Christ.

DEFINITION OF RESURRECTION

There are three resurrections we need to understand: the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the present resurrection life for the believer and the future resurrection of the dead. We will discuss each one separately.

IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

In the debate with the Sadducees over the resurrection Jesus said, *"But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"* (Matthew 22:31-32). The concept "God of the dead" implies a blatant contradiction to our faith. If God assumed the task of protecting the patriarchs from misfortune during the course of their life, but failed to protect them from extinction, then His protection would have been of little value. In quoting Exodus 3:6, Jesus showed how resurrection faith is linked in a profound way to God's covenant faithfulness and character. **He is God of the living!** We are His covenant people.

The resurrection of Jesus is the most important event in all history. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, it would have shown that His sacrifice was not accepted for our atonement. Our faith would be in vain and there would be no salvation from our sins nor any hope of eternal life.

Therefore, His resurrection is connected inseparably with His virgin birth and sacrificial death. There is no gospel without all three miraculous events. Without

RESURRECTION LIFE

the resurrection of Christ, Christianity is just another religion rather than "a way of living."

1 Corinthians 15:13-14 *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.*

Resurrection is the great and central hope of Christianity. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 Paul addressed the believers concerning the resurrection of the dead and the second coming of Christ. He encouraged them not to sorrow as those who have no hope, for Jesus died, rose again and is coming again.

Man has an innate desire for immortality and a fear of death as a result of being spiritually dead. The revelation of the resurrection of the dead removes the fear of death for the believer. God does not want any of us who are in Christ to suffer the bondage that fear of death brings upon us. Jesus has already removed death's sting, demonstrated that the grave has no lasting victory, and destroyed the one who for so long tormented man with threats about death--Satan himself. This means that we can live with reckless abandonment for Christ since we no longer fear death.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ... *"Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Hebrews 2:14-15 *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Although the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of the Gospel, it is important for us to realize that His resurrection provided more than a historical and scriptural basis for the Christian faith. Actually, Christ's resurrection opened the way for countless resurrections to follow. The Bible teaches that all believers experience the "**resurrection life.**" This lesson will center on this point.

Jesus Himself teaches of the future resurrection of the dead: "... those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). Paul speaks of that time when "... the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:52-53). John also writes, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ...." (Revelation 20:6).

WHAT ABOUT THE DEAD?

The bodies of the dead are in the grave. The inner man, or the soul and spirit, of the righteous are present with Christ immediately at death. The souls of the ungodly are in Sheol (or Hades), their temporary abode.

The bodies of the dead are in the grave. The inner man, or the soul and spirit, of the righteous are present with Christ immediately at death. The souls of the ungodly are in Sheol (or Hades), their temporary abode.

2 Corinthians 5:8 *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

Luke 16:23 *"And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."*

Acts 7:59 *And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*

John 10:10 *"... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

1 Corinthians 15:45 *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*

Scripturally, resurrection is always linked to life-newness of life. Jesus was raised to life, glorified and seated at the right hand of the Father, thereby releasing the life of God to those now living so they have eternal life **now**. His resurrection declares there is new life in the believer, new life to the entire being now and eternally! This life is a completely different "kind" of life, not just extended life, but something entirely **new**.

A seed has dormant life in it. Place that seed in the soil and it dies, but at the same time a completely new kind of life springs forth from that death. Jesus is the seed who died in order to give life to others (John 12:24).

In John Chapter 11 the Lord Jesus Christ did not declare that He would raise Lazarus from the dead, but instead simply declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life. We believe the Lord did raise Lazarus from the dead, but the emphasis was on having the Lord Himself. Many people believe the Lord Jesus is the life-giver, but to believe He is life is quite another matter. You see, life is a person!

However, there is another side of the resurrection. Resurrection means something is dead! In order to be resurrected, something must have died. The cross came before the resurrection. As stated earlier, the two events are inseparable. Likewise, the two events are inseparable in the life of the believer; abundant resurrection living is the result of death to the self-life.

Resurrection speaks of that which passes through death, but which is not held by death. Resurrection is the life which was put to death and is alive forevermore. Our Lord Jesus is life because He was dead yet is alive forevermore. Death had no power to hold Him in its grip.

**JESUS CHRIST –
THE
RESURRECTION
AND THE LIFE**

THE RESURRECTION LIFE

It is possible to know the historical Christ without having any real power in our lives. It is not enough to know facts about His life, death, resurrection and ascension. Participation with Christ's death changes all this, for on the life-side of the cross, the Holy Spirit reveals the risen Lord, and He is known "after the Spirit" as the living One.

In the Spirit we have been identified with what Christ has done. When He died, our old "self" died with Him. When He was buried, our old "self" was buried with Him. When He came out of the grave, spiritually speaking, our new "self" came out of the grave with Him. The death and resurrection of Christ are not mere historical events to be religiously celebrated. They have powerful, spiritual application for our lives today.

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Philippians 2:5, 8 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Colossians 3:3 *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. .*

In order to mature in our faith we must have a continuous knowing that we are crucified with Christ along with a steadfast dependence upon the Spirit of God. As we do, He will work in us the separating power of His death and the quickening power of His life.

However, we need to completely understand the practical outworking of this death in our life. What does it mean that I have been crucified with Christ? It is probably best demonstrated in our closest family relationships. How strong is our self-life within these relationships? When our responses are not Christ-like, without thinking more highly of the others than ourselves, then we are not "dead" to our self-will. Granted, this is a process, a working out in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit which must be appropriated moment by moment and not accomplished in our own strength. Most of us want the abundant resurrection life without the dying.

Matthew 16:24-25 *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."*

We must come to the place again and again where we realize, not only as an admitted principle but in actual fact, that we cannot depend upon our own strengths or resources.

2 Timothy 2:11 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.*

Philippians 3:10 ... *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...*

How do you know when you are dead to self-life? I John 3:14 states, *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."*

We must be careful to pick the right focal point because we become what we focus on. We do not want to focus on the cross alone because that brings death. We want to focus on the resurrection life of Christ that flows on the other side of the cross. The point is that **we are dead, we died with Christ**, but we do not focus on this truth. We focus on Jesus.

Philippians 1:21 *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

For me to live is Christ! At the beginning of our Christian life, we saw how the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that by His death we were delivered from death, our sins were forgiven, and we were condemned no more. Here Paul tells me that because Christ lives in me, I am delivered from living life on my own. As He died on the cross for me, **so now – he lives in me in my place**. This is the secret of the abundant, overcoming life. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20). Therefore God's way and His secret for me is not in asking me to imitate the Lord Jesus nor parceling out power to me in response to my begging that I may be like Christ. God's way for me is what Paul expressed:

2 Corinthians 4:10-11 ... *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

2 Corinthians 13:4 *For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.*

Paul prayed that believers would know *"... the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places..."* (Ephesians 1:19-20). We need to experience the resurrection life daily. The same power which raised Christ from the dead dwells within us, bearing witness that we are the children of God and giving our lives a supernatural quality.

Romans 8:11 *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

Living the resurrection life is not based on performance – striving to produce life or good works. It removes the pressure of having to "perform" because it allows the Lord Jesus to live His life through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Resurrection power is the ability to do what we cannot do in our own strength.

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The resurrection life is also a continuous one. It is not an experience which we passed through at some crisis long ago. Instead, the living Christ, the Resurrection and the Life, abides in us and releases His power through us as we fulfill the conditions which permit Him to do so. Moreover, this life cannot be copied or brought into being apart from Christ. Thanks be to God, the life in union with Christ is real life. It brings the soul into such a living relationship with the risen Christ that we know something of the "... *powers of the age to come...*" (Hebrews 6:5). Resurrection life causes us to see the things of time from the standpoint of eternity, and to lift us above the attractions and absorbing interests of things on the earth. It is only as we choose Jesus, the true vine, and abide in Him that we have the resurrection life flowing through our veins (John 15:4-5).

LIVING UNTO CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

"The love of Christ compels us." This love is the motivating power of our new life in union with the Living Lord, a love shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit, a love which casts aside all self-love and self-interest and completely holds the soul in its power.

We who have "died" with him now "live" in His life. We realize that it was for **our sakes** He died, for **our sakes** He lives, so for **His sake** we gladly consent no longer to live unto ourselves but unto Him. We see that we have been crucified with Him and now He who died and rose again fills our whole vision, constraining us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, "... *holy, acceptable to God...*" which is our glad and "...*reasonable service...*" (Romans 12:1).

RESURRECTION LIFESTYLE

To know "... *the power of His resurrection...*" (Philippians 3:10) is to live a paradox. It seems contradictory to say that we must die in order to experience resurrection life. However, Jesus said that we can do **nothing** without Him. Every aspect of our life **must** flow out of His strength. We depend on His strength, wisdom and love rather than ours. We look to His indwelling life for whatever is needed at any given moment.

It is when we are the most insufficient that this powerful life of the Lord is demonstrated through us, because when we are weak, then we are strong (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). When we reach the place of so abiding in Him that our every move is consumed with the harmony of His will, then we are capable vessels of the resurrection life of Lord Jesus Christ. This place of abiding is the place of receiving life, just as the branch receives its life from the vine (John 15:4-6). When we realize our life is "... *hidden with Christ...*" (Colossians 3:3), then we can live in a way that reflects the glory of God to a world that needs to know Him and His love.

Colossians 1:27 *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

In context, the statement "*... be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*" (Ephesians 6:10) is the opening sentence on spiritual warfare. Actually, the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection established dominion over all the forces of the kingdom of darkness, receiving "all power" (Matthew 28:18). God "*... made us alive together with Christ ... raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...*" (Ephesians 2:5-6) where we carry on spiritual warfare in the power of his might. Resurrection living includes taking the dominion of the Kingdom of God into any area where He leads. Actually we might think of it like this: Jesus is the Head and we are His body (collectively), His instruments to accomplish dominion resulting in Jubilee-deliverance and restoration (Luke 4:18-19). Hallelujah!!

With our lives so ordered and empowered by the Lord, the rise and fall of the so-called normal Christian spiritual life is eliminated and we are filled with the joy of the Lord. In fact, He promised that our joy would be full as a result of abiding in Him (John 15:11).

Another characteristic of the resurrection lifestyle is peace. Since we have ceased from our labors and works, relying instead on His, we enter into that rest of God promised to those enter by faith in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-10).

In summary, we must be conscious of the divine life inside us and not substitute our ability for His enablement, nor our energy for His strength. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to provide the life of Christ and to quicken that life to us (John 16:14). There is a freedom and liberty here that we cannot obtain in any other way of living (Romans 8:2, 13). As we each live in the light of the glory of the Lord, we, as His body, will bring the revelation and manifestation of Christ to the world.

RESURRECTION LIFE

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is resurrection?

Resurrection is a rising to life again after death.

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*

Question 2: What are the three main resurrections mentioned in the Bible?

- a. The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:18 *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore... ."*

- b. The future resurrection of the dead.

John 5:28-29 *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*

- c. The resurrection life in believers now.

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Question 3: What does it mean to die to self?

Dying to self means to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Matthew 16:24 *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."*

Question 4: What are the results of resurrection life?

- a. Resurrection life results in the manifestation of the power of God.

2 Corinthians 13:4 *For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.*

- b. Resurrection life results in the manifestation of the love of God.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.*

- c. Resurrection life results in the manifestation of the life of God.

2 Corinthians 4:10-11 *... always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

HOMEWORK

1. Why is the resurrection of Jesus the most important event in all history?

2. Jesus called himself the Resurrection and the Life. Why?

3. When there is a resurrection, what must have preceded it?

4. For there to be a resurrection life, what must precede it?

5. What is the secret to the abundant, overcoming life?

6. Are you experiencing resurrection life now?

One of the great truths of the Bible is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Incarnation literally means "to embody in the flesh." In other words, it means to become a human being. In regards to Jesus, He was "*God ... manifested in the flesh...*" (1 Timothy 3:16). In Jesus "*... dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (Colossians 2:9). Jesus Christ incarnate was not half-man/half-God; He was totally God and totally man.

While on earth, Jesus was limited to His physical body. He got tired and hungry and could only be one place at a time. However, after the resurrection, Jesus had a glorified body that was not subject to normal human limitations. He remained on the earth for 40 days revealing Himself to His disciples (Acts 1:1-3). He then ascended bodily to heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19, Ephesians 1:20).

Jesus said that it was necessary for Him to go away so that He could send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15). The Holy Spirit was given to indwell and empower all believers. Now, instead of Jesus ministering on the earth limited by a physical body, there is a vast multitude of believers who are baptized into the body of Christ and baptized in the Holy Spirit who cover the earth and do the works of Christ (John 14:12). The body of Christ is the expression of Christ on the earth.

When we were born again we changed kingdoms and became part of the family of God and the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is the Head and all true believers are part of His body. Each one of us has a particular place in the body (1 Corinthians 12:18). Being a member of a body means that we are not only intimately related to Jesus, but that we are also intricately connected to the rest of the body. The Bible states it this way, "*... we are members of one another*" (Ephesians 4:25). Each one of us is an important part of the body of Christ. We are all called to express the resurrection life of Jesus. One of the ways we can do this is through communion.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ... *the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

Jesus Christ offered His body and blood as a one-time sacrifice that is sufficient for the sins of all men who will repent (Hebrews 10:10-14). However, He gave us a way to remember and express His sacrificial death for all time by instituting the ordinance which we call communion. The historical setting of this ordinance was the last night of Christ's earthly life. He was in an upper room where He shared the Passover meal with His twelve disciples. This is commonly called the Last Supper. The Last Supper became the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper. This is why communion is also known as the Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of Bread, and the Eucharist (from the Greek word "eucharistos," which means "to give thanks").

INTRODUCTION – THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE ORDINANCE OF COMMUNION

THE PASSOVER

In order to fully understand communion we must understand what the Passover meant to the Jews and the early church. The Passover meal was an annual celebration and remembrance of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Passover is the central focus in Jewish history and worship. In reality it commemorates the redemption of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage and brings a remembrance of God's love for His chosen people.

The story of the first Passover is found in Exodus 12:1-14. Each Hebrew household was to sacrifice a perfect yearling lamb and sprinkle its blood on the lintel and doorposts of their house. As God's judgment came upon Egypt and every firstborn male was slain, God's death angel "passed over" those households protected by the blood of the lamb. They were delivered from death unto life through the sacrifice of innocent blood. Likewise, we believers were in bondage to sin and slaves to the world. We have been redeemed and set free by the blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 ... *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

1 Peter 1:18-19 ... *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

Jesus and His disciples shared the Passover meal, celebrating God's people being delivered in order to serve (worship) Him (Exodus 8:1, 9:1, 10:3, 12:3 1). During this Passover meal, Jesus initiated the New Covenant meal which celebrates His sacrifice and our deliverance to worship God freely!

THE ELEMENTS OF COMMUNION

God gave a specific order for the celebration of the Passover meal. Likewise, He has included essential elements – the table, the bread and the cup – for the celebration of communion.

1. **THE TABLE.** The table of showbread in the Tabernacle of Moses was a place of servanthood for the priest (Leviticus 24:5-6). At other times the table was a place of spiritual feeding for strength (Psalm 23:5) and a place of divine fellowship (Revelation 3:20). Significantly, when we are gathered in His name around His Table, He has promised to be there in our midst (Matthew 18:20).
2. **THE BREAD.** God supernaturally gave His people bread (manna) for forty years in the wilderness (Exodus 16). Through it they received nourishment and divine health. In the Tabernacle of Moses the showbread is known as the "Bread of the Presence." There are many instances in the New Testament when Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it for nourishment to the people (Matthew 14:19, 15:36, 26:26). The breaking of bread described in nourishment and divine health. In the Tabernacle of Moses the showbread is known as the "Bread of the Presence." There are many instances in the New

Testament when Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it for nourishment to the people (Matthew 14:19, 15:36, 26:26). The breaking of bread described in Luke 24:30-31 was not a normal breaking of bread, for "... *their eyes were opened and they knew Him... .*" In John 21:12-13 the resurrected Jesus said, "*Come and eat*" and broke bread for His disciples. Each time Jesus broke bread there was a deeper revelation of Him. We receive a greater understanding of Jesus as we break bread together. God desires to manifest His Presence in the breaking of bread in communion as He does in praise and worship. In the early church, believers went from house to house breaking bread, "...*praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

John 6:48-51, 58, 63 *"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world... This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever... It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."*

These verses do not deal with the topic of communion, but with the necessity of receiving Christ to be born again. So, what is the significance of Jesus' words? He is asking, "What is reality? What gives life?" It is Jesus giving of His body that brings forth spiritual life in another body-the body of Christ. It is not physical bread that gives life to us but His spiritual flesh! Jesus is that seed that falls to the ground, dies and brings forth much fruit (John 12:24). When we look at the verses in this way, we see that Jesus is the bread which came down from heaven and when we eat of this bread, His flesh, we live forever.

The bread of the communion table does not actually change substance, but, as we partake of that bread, Jesus supernaturally imparts life. The Lord Jesus is present at His table; and by His grace we experience strength and health.

3. **THE CUP.** The cup is representative of the blood of Jesus which He shed for us. The life of Jesus was in His blood which He gave to redeem us. It is a principle: "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood...*" (Leviticus 17:11). We were bought for the price of His blood, therefore we do not belong to ourselves. We are covered by his blood that our former sins might be "passed over." We share His blood, His life.

We are taught that there is forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. This is absolutely true, but before we can realize His forgiveness, we must experience His presence in the bread. Which did you realize first? Is it not true for all of us that we had a revelation of Jesus, His holiness and His perfection, before we experienced forgiveness? As we partake of communion as a time of cleansing and purity of the body, we realize His presence in the bread and receive revelation of forgiveness in the cup.

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

After God gave the Ten Commandments and the Law (Exodus 20-23), He gave instructions to Moses concerning the reading of the "... words of the Lord..." to all the people (Exodus 24:1-4). Sacrifices were made, the blood was collected, and the covenant law was read to the people.

Exodus 24:7-8 *Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."*

This is the sealing of the Old Covenant by the blood of the covenant. Notice the similarity with the words that Jesus spoke in establishing the new and better covenant: ... *"This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood"* (Luke 22:20 NAS).

After the sealing of the covenant with the blood, Moses, the priests and the seventy elders drew near to God and partook of a covenant meal (Exodus 24:9-11). During the last supper the Lord Jesus shared the bread and the cup with His disciples, signifying the covenant meal of the New Covenant. With the bread and the cup Jesus is signifying that He is entering into everlasting fellowship and intimate relationship with us and we with each other.

Luke 22:16, 18 *"...for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God... for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

The Lord Jesus Christ said that He would not eat the Passover meal anymore until the Kingdom of God came to men on earth. When did the Kingdom of God come on earth? It came when the way was made for King Jesus to reside in the hearts of His people; for where the King is, there is the Kingdom and the authority of God. Now each time we take communion, we are taking it with Jesus in the Kingdom of God just as He said. He is there! Praise the Lord! Not only is this true, but also the fact that we are ratifying anew the covenant and the family relationship that He has established for us and with us. Hallelujah!

COVENANT FAMILY

The Body of Christ is a covenant family. We need to understand fully this family relationship as we gather around the communion table. We are sons and daughters of the Most High God (2 Corinthians 6:18). This family is a covenant family established by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself is not ashamed to call us "brother" (Hebrews 2:11). Those members that God has placed together in the local church are joined in an eternal bond. In each local church this family relationship is demonstrated by spiritual brothers and sisters who truly love and care about one another.

Jesus spoke strongly of the division that would come to some natural families as a result of the gospel (Matthew 10:21, 34-37). He said that some believers would be disowned by their natural families when they chose Christ and came into the family of God. However, He promised that they would receive a hundredfold

return. We know this is true because many of us now have more fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers in the local body than we had before. When Jesus spoke of the division between saved and unsaved family members, He placed great importance upon God's covenant family.

More evidence for this truth can be seen by looking at the Greek word for communion – "koinonia." This word is used biblically as "fellowship" and "communicate," but it also means "partnership or participation." It comes from a root word meaning "a sharer." This means that we come together as covenant partners to participate and share in covenant life together. This was best expressed by Jesus in His prayer in John 17:21 "...that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You..." We also see this same oneness in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, comparing the "one bread" of communion to the "one body" of Christ in which we participate.

Because of this special spiritual bond between members of the local body, we come to communion as a family to celebrate Jesus and love one another. Communion actually strengthens the covenant ties between us, allowing us to be accountable to one another in our life together.

When Paul quoted Jesus' words, "... do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24), he used an interesting Greek word, "anamnesis." The meaning of this word is "past history becoming alive and real right now." For us it speaks of a continual recognition or coming face to face with the cross each time we take communion. In giving the cup to the disciples Jesus said, ..."*Drink from it, all of you*" (Matthew 26:27). This is indicative of all the provisions that His blood has provided for us. The salvation that Jesus provides is an ongoing process and His blood has provided for that process and its fruit: atonement, redemption, justification, forgiveness, cleansing, deliverance, sanctification and boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies. Communion should bring us face to face with the cross and all its provisions. When this takes place, thanksgiving and celebration result.

REMEMBRANCE

Many times in Scripture a pile of stones or altar was erected as a memorial (Genesis 28:18; Joshua 4:4,7). In the same way the communion is our pile of stones. Each time we come to communion, we are calling to remembrance the victory that Jesus won through the cross and the fact that we share in that victory now. As a result, we can rejoice and celebrate!

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*

FELLOWSHIP

Have you ever wondered why we do not partake of communion alone in our own home? It is significant that the body of believers come together to partake of the Lord's Supper. Paul speaks here of the "communion" of the blood of Christ and of the body of Christ. The Greek word here is "koinonia" which is translated

"fellowship" other places. *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). Communion or fellowship is not a social activity, but an interacting relationship energized by the Holy Spirit. Biblically, the sharing of a meal was a very special time for relationship. There seems to be a bonding together like Jonathan and David experienced. God would have us approach our meals in the same spirit. In sharing the communion bread and cup we who are members of the local body are spiritually bonded together by the Spirit through the common experience.

Jesus had one body which was broken and given for many. The communion table is a picture of that – one loaf of bread broken and given to many. Then, we who are many become "one bread" because "we are all partake of that one bread."

In 1 Corinthians 10:19-21, Paul states that things sacrificed to idols are really sacrificed to demons, i.e., the whole idea of idol worship was the work of demons. Actually, the one participating in idol worship was really fellowshiping with demons. He warns that one could not partake of both tables (v. 21). This establishes a principle: if a man has handled the body and blood of Jesus Christ, there should be things which he cannot touch nor partake of. This separation produces unity when a separated and sanctified body of people come together to fellowship in the presence of the Lord.

GRACE IN THE LORD'S TABLE

In speaking to the Canaanite woman concerning her daughter's healing, Jesus made a very outstanding statement. He said, *"... It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"* (Matthew 15:26). His meaning was that the children's (God's covenant family's) **bread** (all the benefits of the kingdom) was not to be taken from the **table** and given to the dogs (Gentiles). Although Jesus came to demonstrate the kingdom of God to the Jews, He commanded His disciples to take it to the seed of Abraham. In these statements Jesus links together the bread of the table with healing grace. When we come to the Table of the Lord, we can expect to receive healing for our soul and body. Whatever the need, it is the children's bread to receive it.

With the understanding of Passover as a type of the redemptive work of Christ, we may further add that the benefits of Passover are a type of the benefits of the redemptive work of Christ. The Hebrews came out of Egypt in health: *"...and there was none feeble among His tribes"* (Psalm 105:37). Likewise, we experience healing and health as a result of the atonement. Communion, being our covenant meal, provides health and healing to our bodies through the presence of the Lord Jesus among His people (Matthew 18:20; Revelation 3:20). Our experience is that we receive healing and continued health as we join together to break bread on a regular basis. Praise the Lord for our health which He purchased with His body!

When the body of Christ gathers around the Table, we are remembering the body and blood of Jesus and what He accomplished on the Cross. We can rejoice each time because Jesus has freed us from sin and bondage, reconciled us to the Father, and given us a purpose to live. Coming to His Table, we rejoice in all that Jesus has done for us. As we eat the bread, drink the cup and rejoice together, He gives life to us, both spiritually and physically.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 *Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep*

Paul warns of those who partake **unworthily**. To partake “in an unworthy manner” means not giving full weight or worth to the meaning of the new covenant Table. Do not get religious at the Table by just joining in because it is the thing to do or because you have always done it. Do not let it become just a symbolic religious ritual to be performed. When the believer takes the Lord’s Supper with an unprepared heart and an flippant attitude, he eats and drinks judgment to himself.

The key to the passage above is the phrase, “discerning the Lord’s body.” The word “discerning” means “to have complete understanding and revelation.” “Discerning the Lord’s body” may have two meanings. First, we must discern the body of Christ, the Church. One should not come to the Table with fellowship broken with another member. This is to dishonor the body. Seeking fellowship with the Lord when one has broken relationship with a brother is hypocrisy. For this reason Paul writes, “*for if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*” (1 Corinthians 11:31). We must judge ourselves and make things right with our brother.

Second, the phrase means to discern the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Is there hidden sin in one’s life that cost Jesus His body and blood to cover? To approach the Table of the Lord with hidden sin is a grievous thing. One is simply playing games with the body and blood of Jesus. This should be repented of immediately. We discern the body and blood of Jesus when we appropriate them to cover our sin, forgive our sin and break the power of that sin in our lives.

Paul states that the penalty for not discerning the Lord’s body is very serious.

1 Corinthians 11:30 *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*

The worshipper must discern or judge the body of Christ and the sacrifice Christ has made. When the believer takes the Communion with an unprepared heart and an indifferent attitude, he eats and drinks judgment: weakness, sickness and death.

However, a positive meaning may also be given Paul’s phrase “discerning the body.” If failure to discern brings chastening, then thoughtful discernment should bring blessing. The Lord’s Table is a place of worship, praise, celebration, thanksgiving, reconciliation, loving and even learning. Amen!

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What attitudes should we have in coming to the Lord's Table?

- a. We should come to the Table with a desire to participate.

Luke 22:14-15 *When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer... ."*

- b. We should come with thanksgiving.

Luke 22:17 *Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves... ."*

- c. We should come remembering

1 Corinthians 11:24-25 *... and when He had given thanks, he broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

- d. We should come as a Body.

1 Corinthians 10:17 *For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*

- e. We should come partaking together

1 Corinthians 11:33 *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.*

HOMEWORK

1. The Last _____ became the last _____ and the first _____ .
2. What did Jesus initiate at the last Passover Supper?
3. What is the meaning of the covenant meal?
4. Communion should bring us _____ with the cross and _____ .
5. How is fellowship established by Communion?
6. What graces and blessings may be received by participating in Communion?
7. What are the two meanings of “discerning the Lord’s body?”
8. Are you personally benefiting more from the Communion now?

There is one Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many different denominations, fellowships and local church bodies, but only one universal church. It is composed of all true believers, no matter what local body they are in. Each local church seems to have its own doctrines, government and order. With all the differing opinions, the question may arise: “Has God established any kind of order in the Church or are we each free to do our own thing?” To answer that question we ask “What does the Word say?” Has God spoken any kind of order in the Bible? It is our responsibility to find out what God has spoken and to obey His commands.

Throughout the Scriptures we find that order is an integral part of God’s design. As God spoke the universe into being, He established natural order in the world, the plant and animal life, the lights, and the nature of things (Genesis 1:6-21). God gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle and its instruments (Exodus 25:9). He spoke to Moses to count Israel in an orderly fashion (Numbers 1:2-3) and to arrange the camp about the tabernacle in an orderly manner (Numbers 2:1). When the mixed multitude became too much for Moses to handle alone, he appointed 70 elders to rule and judge (Deuteronomy 1:9-17). God established order in the family by creating the husband with the natural function of head and provider and the wife as a suitable helper. In the heavenly vision of John there is order about the throne of God with the 24 elders, their seats, the seven lamps, the four beasts and the worship (Revelation 4). Thus, there is order to everything in God’s domain and He intends for the church to have order also.

1 Chronicles 15:2 *Then David said, “No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.”*

When David became king of Israel, he desired to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. On the way Uzza was killed attempting to steady the ark. This caused David to seek the Lord for the reason. The verse above gives the reason – “*no one may carry ... but,*” – proper order had not been followed. The ark of God was not to be transported on a cart, but was to be carried by the Levites in a specified manner.

Likewise, there must be proper governmental order if the Church is going to maintain the presence of God and bring the body to maturity. When there is order and the eldership is in place to bear the presence of the Lord before the people, unity and security is formed within the people. As a result, unscriptural teaching can be dealt with and church discipline can be practiced. The Church stands because of God’s governmental order.

The main purpose of church life is to worship in the manifest presence of God. Just as Israel wanted to bring in the ark of God, our goal is to bring in the presence of God. We are to worship God until His presence is revealed and He supernaturally does what we cannot do alone. As we do this, God accomplishes His purpose through us to spread His kingdom around the world.

THE RULE, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD

Psalm 145:13 *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

Psalm 24:1 *The earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.*

God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being and perfections. Since He is the Creator and Preserver of the universe, He is its absolute sovereign ruler. Does not the Creator of all have the right to reign over all? God did not create the universe and leave it to govern itself. Instead, He is intimately involved in preserving and ruling over all that He has created.

Psalm 103:19 *The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.*

All authority issues forth from the throne of God. No one else has the dominion that resides in His nature. *"His throne is in heaven"* is an expression that signifies that authority of God, His power of reigning and judging from on high. Although God's throne is in heaven, His kingdom rules over all, including the earth and all who live on it. God is the sovereign Lord and King who exercises dominion over both heaven and earth. In this we can rejoice – God is in control!

Authority and dominion are resident in the nature of God and have always existed with Him. Any authority outside of God is authority that He has delegated. For example, the angels have certain authority which He has given to them. When God delegates any portion of His authority, He establishes government. Therefore government is inseparably linked to authority. Where you find one, you find the other.

When God made the earth and the universe, everything was under His authority and control. However, in keeping with His eternal purpose, God chose to share His rules with His creation. God delegated a measure of authority to man and gave rulership and dominion into the hands of man (Genesis 1:28). Since the creation of man, God has chosen human instruments through whom He exercises His rulership in the earth. Since the kingdom is the Lord's, He can give rulership and deliver the kingdom into the hands of whomever He will. The instrument that God uses to demonstrate His kingdom in the earth may change, but His purpose remains the same. Although God's kingdom is one everlasting kingdom, He has used various instruments or channels for the demonstration of the kingdom on the earth. These have included the patriarchs (Genesis 9:1-2, 12:1-3), the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:2-6, Deuteronomy 7:6-8), the Gentile world (2 Chronicles 34:22-23), Jesus (Revelation 19:11-16), and the Church (Ephesians 3:10-11).

THE CONFLICT OF THE AGES

The account of the original state of God's government is found in Ezekiel 28:11-19. While the king of Tyrus was a historical person, the terms in this passage could never have been employed to describe any mere human being. This is what is known as a double reference. These verses refer not only to the king of Tyrus, but also to Lucifer.

In verse 13 he is spoken of as being in the garden of God. Satan was indeed there, not as a minister of God, but as an apostate and malignant spirit seeking the ruin of the new creation. Therefore, the Eden of this passage must have been of a far earlier date. The latter part of the verse reads “...*the workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day that you were created.*” This refers to the music which surrounds the throne of God. This and the following verses lead us to conclude that Lucifer was the worship leader around the throne of God. He held this royal archangel position to direct all worship to God.

In verse 14 we see the priestly role of Lucifer. He is called the “...*anointed cherub who covers.*” “Anointed” means “consecrated by the oil of anointing.” This is connected with induction to an office and is apparently a reference to God’s appointment of Lucifer to fill a certain position. The cherubim appears to be the highest rank of heavenly being, sitting nearest the throne of God and leading the worship of the universe (Revelation 4:9, 10; 5:11-14). The words “*who covers*” allude to the cherubim that overshadowed the ark of the covenant. This gives us a picture of Lucifer’s nearness to the presence of God as a guard and protector of the throne of the Most High. He was the prime minister or vice-president in God’s government.

In the statement “*I established you*” we see that Lucifer came to this position by the gift of his divine Creator, not by inherent right or by struggle. He is said to have been upon the holy mountain of God which is the place of God’s presence in visible glory. Here God’s anointed High Priest would stand before Him to minister. The mountain is a symbol of God’s power, government and eternal throne. The whole passage suggests a position of great authority for which Lucifer was created and anointed. In fact, we may state that Lucifer held the three anointed offices of prophet, priest and king in the kingdom of God.

Additionally, Lucifer was full of wisdom (verse 12), perfect in beauty (verse 12, 17), and perfect in his ways (verse 15) until he chose to sin (verse 15, 16). In verse 16 the statement “*by the abundance of your trading*” indicates that Lucifer took something for himself rather than being a channel. He received the worship of all the angelic beings unto himself and pridefully desired to be worshipped “*like the Most High*” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Satan’s purpose had now changed from bringing glory to God to trying to receive it for himself.

This led to a war in heaven in which God cast down Lucifer and a multitude of the angelic host which sided with him (Revelation 12:7-9). Evil in the form of pride and rebellion was found in heaven. The significance of Lucifer’s rebellion is that it hit right at the throne of God. The most beautiful, righteous, anointed, wise, near, and authoritative being ever created had rebelled before the very eyes of God. The impact was felt throughout all heaven. This had never happened before; possibly as many as one third of all creation fell into the same sin (Revelation 12:4). Where there had been only one will in the universe, there were now two. The conflict of the ages had begun over the issue of worship and authority. Whom are you going to worship? To whom are you going to bow the knee? These are questions which every person must answer.

The fall of Lucifer left a void in heaven. The position that he once occupied in the government of God became empty. However, this did not alter God's plan which was in His heart from the very beginning (Ephesians 1:4).

God's plan of restoration began with the re-creation of earth (Genesis 1). Man was created and given authority and dominion over it. When he was faced with the question of whom to bow the knee to, he chose against God and lost his dominion. Of course, God was not caught by surprise. In His wisdom and foreknowledge God knew what man would do. God, in Jesus Christ, redeemed man and regained all authority and dominion from Satan (Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 1:20-23). The Lord Jesus Christ is building His Church through which the "...*manifold wisdom of God...*" will be made known to "...*the principalities and powers in the heavenly places...*" (Ephesians 3:10). In other words, the purpose of God will be demonstrated to all authorities in creation.

The body of Christ, the Church, now fills the void left by Lucifer's fall. We fulfill the **prophetic** role by speaking God's words of reconciliation to the peoples and nations of the world. We are a kingdom of **priests** who minister to our God (1 Peter 2:9). By taking dominion where we live, we extend the government of God and fulfill our **kingly** position. All the qualities and ministry functions that God bestowed on Lucifer in the beginning are now bestowed upon the Church. The Church is full of wisdom (Acts 6:3, 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, Ephesians 3:10), perfect in beauty (Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 21:9, 19), and anointed of the Lord in power (Acts 1:8) and authority (Ephesians 1:20-23, Revelation 1:6).

THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Romans 13:1-4 *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

Whenever God delegates a portion of His authority, He establishes government. He does so in order to fulfill His purpose. One of the general provisions of government is **protection**. The ruler is a minister of God to restrain evil and provide security for the citizens to live in peace. In the family the husband provides protection and security for his wife and children. In the body of Christ the overseer watches over the soul of the saints (Hebrew 13:17).

The structure of government establishes **form** and **function**. No living being can have two heads. Without form and function there is no order, and God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 11:3, 14:40).

Government assists in providing **unity**. When everyone does what is right in their own eyes, there is anarchy and no common goal or purpose can be achieved. When God delegates authority and establishes government, He speaks vision and purpose to the people which results in unity.

1 Chronicles 15:3 *And David gathered all Israel together at Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord to its place, which he had prepared for it.*

UNITY

King David gathered all Israel together to bring in the presence of the Lord. When the delegated authority of God speaks to the people to gather themselves together, the shared vision produces unity. As the people obey, submit and respond to the leadership, they come together in one mind, purpose and flow to accomplish what God has spoken. At the same time a work is done by the Spirit to knit their hearts together. We are still individuals, but we each have our individuality without being individualistic. We are diverse without being divisive. There is diversity within unity.

There are only two bodies on earth: the body of Christ and the body of the world. We either belong to one or the other; there is no in-between. All people on the face of the earth can be divided into two groups. The world is proud, arrogant, impatient and gets even; the world lies, steals and manipulates. The body of Christ must be in unity in the opposite spirit.

Unity is you doing what you are called to do, me doing what I am called to do, and both of us loving one another in the relationship. The place where we come together in relationship is called the joint. Not only do we each have our part to do, but the join of our relationship supplies growth for the body (Ephesians 4:16). The join is our relating in love. When you do your function and I do my function, we love one another, and our functions enhance one another and the body.

In Ezekiel Chapter 1 there is a creature that has four faces – each facing a different way, yet in some way they touch – a man in front, a lion on the right side, an ox on the left and an eagle in the back. There is a wheel and the Spirit is in the wheel. Wherever the wheel goes, the creature goes without turning. Each of these faces is symbolic of elements in the body of Christ. The man represents humanity and our relationships with one another. The eagle represents our worship of God. The lion represents our authority and dominion over the enemy. The ox represents our work and service to God and to each other.

All four of these elements are found in the body of Christ. Each one of us has a basic desire and inner attitude, called motivation, which causes us to identify with one of these four elements. We must learn that there are times when the body will not be moving in the direction we think it ought. Sometimes the Spirit will emphasize relationships, sometimes worship, sometimes service and at other times dominion. We must all remain in unity, no matter what the emphasis. We must keep before our eyes the overall vision and purpose that God has revealed to our leadership.

The Church as the body of Christ has only one head, but many members. The only head is Jesus Christ, the sovereign authority of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23). As the head, He guides, directs and controls the body.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BODY

There are two offices defined within the local church, although there are many ministries. These two are the bishops and deacons.

Philippians 1:1 *Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.*

There are three main words used in the New Testament which refer to the same person. The word “bishop” is translated from the Greek word “episcopos” which refers to the position given to the man (1 Timothy 3:1). It is also translated “overseer” (Acts 20:28). The word “elder” is translated from the Greek word “presbytuos” which means “senior” and is the opposite of “novice.” It speaks of the man. The word “pastor” is translated from the Greek word “Poimen” which means “shepherd” or “one who is a feeder.” This speaks of the work or function of the man. The relationship of these three words may be found in the book of Acts.

*Acts 2:17,28 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the **elders** [presbytuos] of the church...Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** [episcopos], to **shepherd** [poimaino] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

The five-fold ministers (Ephesians 4:11) are all elders with oversight responsibility. Their titles describe their particular work or function in the body of Christ. In the local body the elders are the leaders of the flock (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 5:17, Hebrews 13:17). One of the charges that is consistently given to the elders is that of the shepherding or tending the flock of God (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2). Lastly, elders are responsible to teach or instruct the Church (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9).

God is very particular when it comes to choosing just who is to minister in His House. It takes supernatural enablement to pastor in the House of the Lord. Without this God-given equipment, no amount of preparation or schooling will suffice.

Apart from being called and equipped by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2), there are lists of qualifications that are given as the standards for all elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). There are qualifications that all elders **must** have (1 Timothy 3:2). By the way , the word for elder is **always** used in the plural in relation to local churches.

The word “deacon” is translated from the Greek word “diakanos.” It means “minister” or “servant” and is translated that way several times. The origin of the deacons was initiated by the leadership with the consensus of the people, and they were set in by an action of the leadership (Acts 6:1-6). The general nature in the church. Deacons relieve the elders of burdens which might interfere with their ministry of spiritual oversight. The qualifications for deacons is set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

GOVERNMENT AND THE INDIVIDUAL

There is no such thing as a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ without a relationship with the body of Christ. No one can reject God’s delegated authority with one hand and receive God with the other. For authority to be expressed in

Our lives, there must be submission. Biblical subjection is concerned with being subject to the authorities established by God. If there is to be subjection, self needs to be excluded.

Each of us must face the fact that the conflict of the ages is taking place in our very life. The question is still being asked, “Whom are you going worship (serve)? To whom are you going to bow the knee? Who is in authority in your life?” Each of us must deal with this in our own heart. Individuality and the self-life must bow the knee to the head of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fullest expression of God’s authority is found in the body of Christ. All other forms of authority lie within the scope of human relationships and consequently they are temporal. God has not called the church to be an institution but an organism. He places each of us in the body just as it pleases Him (1 Corinthians 12:18). This requires our meeting God’s authority face to face in our heart and dealing with whatever rebellion may be there. It must be taken to the Cross. Only then will His resurrection life flow through us freely. Only then can Jesus be Lord and Head.

For most of us, when we reject the idea of discipline in the Church, authority is the problem. If we do not have a revelation of authority, we rebel at discipline. Generally if we have a problem with church discipline as a principle, we have a root problem with authority in general, meaning rebellion. That problem will carry over into the home, the children, on the job – against all forms of authority. However, every true believer desires to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. What must be remembered is that one cannot be a disciple without discipline.

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

Many churches today say just love the people and do not give them any discipline. However, true love includes discipline. If we love our children, we discipline them (Proverbs 13:24). God also disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6-7). The attitude that rejects discipline has produced what some call “charismatic frogs.” They do not know how to love; they do not know how to work through relationships; they do not know how to receive discipline. You touch them in just the right spot and they blow up and hop over to another church.

If we cannot receive correction, then there is something wrong within us. Always receive reproof and use it to search the heart for an area that needs change. However, there needs to be a tension between tolerance and reproof because not everyone is walking in the same truth at the same time.

There are several reasons for biblical discipline in the Church. The main objective is for the purpose of restoration. Discipline is not to be used to judge or condemn a believer, but to restore him to a place of fellowship.

Galatians 6:1 *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

Another objective for local church discipline is to bring liberty in lieu of condemnation. When a believer is in sin, he is in bondage to that sin (Romans 6:16). He sense that bondage, but cannot break out. The Holy Spirit brings conviction and guilt increases. Just like a child whose hand is continually in the cookie jar, he may need discipline to break free of the bondage.

A third reason for church discipline is to maintain unity and purity among the people of God. This assures fellowship with Christ and one another.

Romans 16:17 *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned and avoid them.*

Jesus used the word “church” only twice in the gospel record. The first was when He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom, symbolizing the authority of the Church (Matthew 16:17-19). The second time was when He established the principle of local church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17). He set forth a clear process to be followed if a brother should sin against you.

1. Go alone and tell him his sin.
2. If he listens, you have gained your brother.
3. If he will not listen, take one or two brothers with you as witnesses the second time.
4. If he will not listen to them, tell it to the church.
5. If he will not listen to the church, let him be to the church as an unbeliever.

A Church must be strong, healthy, and have a high view of authority in order to deal with discipline. Paul wrote the Corinthians that their divisions and strife opened the door to sin and weakened the discipline in the Church (1 Corinthians 5:2), for a man was living in incest. They were to gather as a body and deliver the man “...to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved...” (1 Corinthians 5:4-5). The covering and protection of the covenant family of God must be removed from the man so Satan could attack him, The Scripture is clear that this was to restore him and implies that, at a later time, he was restored (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). Correction should be handled without condemnation, gently but firmly, and with follow up and support from those who repent.

CONCLUSION

God has given us specific direction concerning order, authority and government in the life of the Church. As individual members of the body of Christ we must be aware of these directives and submit to them. As we do, God will impart vision, unity and life to the Church and to us as individuals. Church life is not a place to “do your own thing,” but it is a place where all things must be done “...*decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14:40). We must always remember that we are a part of something greater than ourselves – the body of Christ.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: Is proper order important to church life?

Yes proper order is an integral part of God's design.

- There is order in nature:

Genesis 1:14 *Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years."*

- There is order in the Tabernacle of Moses:

Exodus 25:9 *"According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."*

- There is order in the family:

Colossians 3:18-20 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.*

- There is order in church meetings:

Titus 1:5 *...you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.*

Question 2: What is the source of true authority?

All authority comes from God who rules over all.

Psalms 103:19 *The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.*

Romans 13:1-2 *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*

Question 3: Who is the head of the Church?

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church.

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

HOMEWORK

1. Why is proper governmental order necessary in the Church?
2. When God delegates any portion of His authority, what does He establish?
3. What is the conflict of the ages?
4. Name three things that government provides.
5. What are the only two offices defined in the local church?
6. Name three reasons for discipline in the Church.
7. To which of the four creatures of Ezekiel Chapter One do you relate and why?
8. Do you have any problems submitting to authority or leadership?

Romans 8:37 *...we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ... .*

James 4:7 *...Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

1 John 4:4 *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

These verses describe what the Christian life is meant to be. It is to be a life of victory rather than defeat; hope rather than despair; and faith rather than depression. God is not at the mercy of Satan. In fact, Jesus came to “...*destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8). Since God is sovereign and has provided all that is necessary for us to live a victorious life, there is therefore no excuse for us to live in defeat.

Genesis 1:28 *Then God blessed them, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

DOMINION

God created man and woman in His image and gave them authority and dominion on the earth. They were created to fellowship with God and to rule over the rest of creation. However, man and woman sold themselves into the servitude of Satan by acting independently of God’s rule. Satan, the original rebel, had tempted them to rebel against God’s authority. By giving in to this temptation, sin entered into God’s creation. This brought death with its physical and spiritual implications to the entire earth. Sin was the inroad through which the enemy gained dominion over God’s creation. The fact that Satan actually had dominion over the world can be seen in the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. The devil showed Jesus all the kingdom of the world and then said, “*All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish*” (Luke 4:6).

Fortunately, God did not leave man in his fallen condition under the dominion of Satan. Even while in the garden, God cursed the serpent and promised that the Seed of woman would bruise his head (Genesis 3:14-15). God sent His redeemer, Jesus Christ, into the world to regain dominion. Jesus became the sacrifice for man’s sin. Through His resurrection He destroyed the works of Satan and “*having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*” (Colossians 2:15). Jesus Christ absolutely defeated and disarmed Satan. He then departed this earth to be seated at the right hand of the Father, where He “*...ever lives to make intercession...*” for us (Hebrews 7:25).

We all need a revelation of the risen Christ and of our position in Him. When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God and ascended, He was seated at the right hand of the Father “*...in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named,*

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not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:20-23).

All true believers compose the body of Christ. Jesus is the rule and the authority over the body which should function according to the commands of its Head. God has put all things in subjection under His feet. Since we are His body, this means that all things are under our feet also! All things! We must not walk under subjection to the enemy. Jesus has provided the Headship and authority necessary for His body to deal with the enemy. Jesus defeated the enemy and now God is using the body of Christ to take back lost dominion, thus establishing and spreading the Kingdom of God according to God’s eternal purpose (Ephesians 1:10-11). Jesus said that upon the rock of revelation of the Son of God He would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

PROGRESSIVE DOMINION

Our perspective (worldview) determines our actions. How we perceive something determines our response to it. That is why all Christians need spiritual perception – to see from God’s point of view. To be overcomers, we must see Jesus as the victor who is “...*far above all rule and authority, power and dominion*” (Ephesians 1:21). By His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus regained legal possession of planet earth from Satan. “*Since that time he waits from his enemies to be made his footstool*” (Hebrews 10:13). The forces of evil that are scattered throughout the land must be driven out and the captives set free.

The Lord Jesus is using the Church (and each individual believer) to manifest His authority and dominion. He cannot be revealed as Lord of lords to the world until the local church submits to His lordship. He will not be seen as Lord in the local church until He first becomes Lord in each of our lives individually.

It is the believers responsibility to submit to the dominion (lordship) of Jesus Christ – body, soul and spirit. This will require being honest about one’s soul and being ruthless in driving the enemy out. Taking dominion means that sin no longer rules over you (Romans 6:12, 14). Taking dominion means that your mind and emotions are freed from the hurts of the past and the bondage of the present.

The believer must determine that Jesus has dominion over family life. The husband, as the head of the home, has a great responsibility for the spirit freedom of his family. Ideally, the home should be a refuge and sanctuary because the family takes dominion over the world, the flesh and the devil.

When individual believers take dominion in their personal lives and their family life, the church can come together as the covenant army. We are then free to band together to wage spiritual warfare against the enemy who has bound people in neighborhoods, cities and nations. When the church sets captives free, we have taken dominion. When we take dominion, the kingdom of God is come.

CALL TO WAR

Christians, we are in a war. Yes, the enemy has been defeated, but he is loose to deceive the nations while the redeemed are being saved out of them. Two of his

greatest deceptions are: 1) to believe that he does not exist, and 2) to believe that he is all-powerful, all-knowing, etc. He wants people to either think that he does not exist or to worship him as God. Either way, he wants to control. We must not go to either extreme by trying to ignore him or by being afraid of him. We must be aware of his devices and “...wage the good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18).

James 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

Before we can resist the devil we must be submitted to God. Those who are not submitted to God are like the sons of Sceva who ended up being overcome by the demons they tried to resist (Acts 19:13-17). Spiritual warfare is not the beginning or the end of the Christian life. Our walk is based on relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ. We must be dependent upon Him, remembering that it is through Him alone that any ground can be taken in restoring dominion to the Kingdom of God (Luke 10:17-21).

Jesus was a man who knew true authority. He knew the strength of the covenant better than any man alive. He knew power and understood dominion and the fullness of the Kingdom of God, yet He never moved aside from submission to God. Jesus knew the necessity of dependence upon Father God, so how much more should we as heirs to the Kingdom.

Jesus declared in John 5:19-20 that He could do nothing of Himself. He could only do what He had observed the Father doing. Jesus indicated that He could only function out of personal intimacy with His Father. He further told His disciples that He could do nothing out of His own power or initiative. He came to do the Father's will, not His own (John 6:38).

Jesus functioned in total dependency upon God. We must also be totally submitted to and dependent upon God. To function in self-dependency is to deify self. Attempting to operate the principles, power and authority of God by yourself, independent of God's personal direction, is self-idolatry and humanism. Attempting to operate God's ways independent of true relationship with Him is rebellion which, as Saul found, is witchcraft – attempting to manipulate God and man as well as creations (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

In Luke 4 we are told the immediately after water and Spirit baptism, the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The temptations were real and powerful, for He was tempted in all things as we are (Hebrews 4:15). In a weakened condition at the end of a 40-day fast, Jesus was tempted by the devil to move from dependency upon God to dependency upon His own self. Satan was confident in the knowledge that Adam had given over dominion to him through his disobedience. Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, to receive the Kingdom before God's time, and to move in supernatural power and presumption upon the Word of God. All three temptations of Satan were an attempt to move Jesus from total dependence and submission to His Father. This is the same way that Satan tempts us today. If the Son of God could not function without relying upon the Father, certainly neither can we.

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POSSESSING OUR LAND

Believers are not meant to live defeated, downcast lives. The cross of Christ purchased everything we need to live above defeat, fear, worry, bondage and confusion. Positionally we have all we will ever need to live an overcoming, victorious Christian life. A picture from the Old Testament will help us visualize the provision of the cross which must be possessed by an active faith.

In the book of Exodus, Moses led the Hebrew nation out of Egypt into the promise land, Canaan. The blood of the passover lamb had saved them from the death angel. In the same way the blood of the Lamb has saved us. They crossed the Red Sea, which is symbolic of our water baptism. At Mount Sinai they became God's special people (Exodus 19:6). The experiences of the Hebrew nation becoming God's own possession is similar to our experiences in becoming Christians.

The children of Israel eventually reached the land which had been promised to them by God since Abraham. It was their land (Genesis 17:8). The only problem was that they had to fight for it. God told them to go in and possess the land (Deuteronomy 1:8). However there were seven nations already in the land which they had to drive out in order to possess the land (Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 20:16-18).

There are two principles we see here which apply to our own Christian lives. The first principle is : **What is given by God is not automatically possessed.** Canaan was the promised land, but the Hebrews did not just walk in to take it. In the same way, believers must actively appropriate the victory of the cross. The enemy has forces scattered in the land of our mind. We have received a new heart (2 Corinthians 5:17), but we have the same old mind. That is the reason it needs to be renewed. The old man (adamic nature) has been nailed to the cross with Jesus, but the same old habit patterns, attitudes, bruises of Satan and propensity toward sin remain. There may even be demonic activity which needs to be dealt with. We do not passively possess our souls; it is not automatic.

The second principle is: **The land will not be possessed without a battle.** The children of Israel had to fight for years to take complete possession of the land which God gave them. Joshua led them in many battles, they divided up the land among the tribes and they continued the fight to free their land. Believers must fight many battles by faith to drive out rejection, roots of bitterness, unforgiveness, pride, fear, self-pity, etc. There are "giants" of addiction in the land and "kings" of stubbornness and manipulation which must be utterly destroyed. The curse on the land has been broken by our Joshua (Jesus), but the works of the enemy must be torn down and driven out. Satan is a defeated foe who has left his forces scattered in the land. We appropriate the victory of the cross by activating our wills and purposefully possessing the land of our souls.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Ephesians 6:10-13 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up*

the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*

Our warfare is not physical; it is spiritual. Likewise, the weapons of our warfare are not physical; they are spiritual. We must be aware of who our enemy is and what his strategies are. We must stand against his methods with God's methods. Although our battle may sometimes seem to involve other people, the real battle is not with them. Our battle is with Satan and his spiritual hierarchy, as listed in Ephesians 6:12.

The battlefield of spiritual warfare concerning the individual is the mind. The enemy seeks to attack or oppress through the mind through temptations, impure thoughts, vain imaginations and deceiving ideas. The believer can give the enemy access to his mind by allowing his mind to dwell upon the lusts and desires of the flesh (Romans 8:5-6) and by failing to renew his mind daily in the Word of God and in communion with God. If the believer is not abiding in the Word of God, he is not prepared to guard against the lies and deception of the enemy.

When Satan tempted Eve, he brought accusation against the Word of God by questioning it (Genesis 3:1). In the temptation of Jesus in Luke 4, Satan even quoted the Word, but he used half-truths to attempt to cause Jesus to operate presumptuously against the knowledge of God. Satan uses every means available to deceive the minds of believers to misinterpret the Word of God. His goal is to pervert the true knowledge of God by falsifying His character and His Word.

The believer who places himself in a passive state endangers himself to the onslaughts and deceptions of the enemy in the mind. The Holy Spirit works in cooperation with the submitted vessel, not through a passive robot. It is Satan who delights in a passive mind in which he can plant his thoughts. We are to bring down strongholds and imaginations and every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The enemy's goal is to pervert or destroy the true knowledge of God through these attacks on the mind of man. He blinds and deceives the mind of the unbeliever to prevent him from believing in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4).

According to Romans 8:29 the believer has been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The believer has been born again into new life, but his soul needs to be matured in the things of God. Satan's goal for the believer is to prevent this maturing in the image of Christ. He does not want us to develop into kingdom citizens who are capable of taking dominion in every sphere of influence. He does not want us to be capable of doing the spiritual warfare necessary to set captives free, bring in the harvest of unbelievers, and loose others from the bondage of the enemy.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

To “fight the good fight” we must be aware of who our enemy is and what his methods are. We must also be aware of what our position, strength and methods are. Finally, we need to know the principles of warfare as set forth in the Word of God. Before we look at these principles we must first realize that relationship with God is our first priority. 1 Chronicles 14 reveals what our attitude should be when attacked by the enemy. David inquired of God every time he was attacked and God gave him different instructions concerning warfare each time. Our first response should be to inquire of God, not to go out and fight based on our ideas or even on what God has done for us in the past. Always remember, seek God first.

Submit and resist

The believer has been given authority to resist Satan and overcome in every area of life without fear and intimidation. The believer who is fearful of the enemy or of engaging him in battle lacks knowledge of the Word regarding God’s provision. Jesus did not leave His body helpless. He delegated the power and authority to the body to accomplish His purposes on the earth. However, as we have previously seen, we must first submit to God before we can resist the devil. The word resist is from the Greek word “anthistemi” which means “to stand against, oppose, resist, withstand.” This resisting is active, not passive. The Christian who submits and humbles himself to God has obeyed only half the command. He is still responsible to resist the enemy.

Put on the armor of God

God has not left us defenseless against the onslaught of the enemy. He has given us armor in order that we may be able to stand and fight. Ephesians 6:13-17 reveals what this armor is. This armor is not something we piece together out of our own determination; it is God’s armor. First we must put on the belt of truth which guards against deception. It is truth that sets us free (John 8:32). We put on the breastplate of righteousness by realizing that our righteousness is of Christ not of ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:21). We can stand and fight because of our position in Christ as revealed in the gospel of peace. We can “...quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one...” by taking up the shield of faith. The helmet of salvation protects our minds from Satan’s deception. Lastly, “...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God...” is our offensive weapon against the enemy. The armor only works as we enter into warfare through prayer. It is not enough to have your armor on; you must stand and fight in prayer and intercession.

It is interesting to note that all the pieces of armor relate to Jesus Christ – He is Truth; He is our righteousness; He is our peace; He is our salvation; He is the Word of God. Putting on the armor is actually putting on Christ (Romans 13:14). When we have all the armor on, the enemy sees Jesus.

Praise

Psalm 149:6-9 *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and*

Punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment – this honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!

Very few believers understand that praise can be warfare. However, 2 Chronicles 20 gives us a vivid example of praise defeating the enemy. When the people praised, God fought for them and defeated the enemy. Likewise, when we are in difficult situations buffeted by the enemy, we should first submit to God by letting all that is within us praise His name. Our obedience in praising Him releases the power of God into our situation. Praise is a powerful weapon for believers today.

Overcome the enemy

Revelation 12:11 *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

This verse shows us that the basis of our overcoming life is not our strength or righteousness; the basis is the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of the Lamb is the basis for all the provision and blessing of the new covenant. The blood of Christ gives us access to the presence of God as well as authority over our defeated foe.

The word of our testimony is the Word of God on our lips. Jesus, our example, defeated the enemy by saying, “Thus says the Lord.” We must speak the Word of God, which is our sword, and apply the Word of God in every situation and circumstance. We must speak it and live it.

Not loving our lives unto death speaks of dying to self and living the resurrection life of Christ in the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. There are two different Greek words which translate into the English word “power.” The word “exousia” means “privelege, delegated influence, authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength.” The word “dunamis” means “force, miraculous power, miracle, strength.” 1 Corinthians 1:18 states that *“the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”* The preaching of the cross is the “dunamis” or miraculous power of God which gave us new life. Having been saved and maintained by the “dunamis” power of God, we are then given “exousia” or delegated authority because of our position in God through Christ. The power of God and the resurrection life of Christ flows through the vessel who reckons himself dead by taking up his cross daily. A person of prayer, intercession and spiritual warfare will not be effective as long as he attempts to function in his own intellect, logic, planning, or strength. It is only Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27) who accomplishes anything in the Christian life the brings glory to God.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What gives believers the authority to wage spiritual warfare?

- a. Man was created by God to have dominion over all things.

Genesis 1:28 *Then God blessed them, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

- b. Jesus totally defeated and disarmed the enemy.

Colossians 2:15 *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

- c. Jesus gave the Church authority over the enemy.

Ephesians 1:20-23 *...He raised Him from the dead and seated Him as His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Question 2: What is the first principle of spiritual warfare?

We must be submitted to God before we can resist the devil.

James 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

Question 3: What are some other important principles concerning spiritual warfare?

- a. We must stand and fight in the strength and the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:10-11 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

- b. Praise is a powerful weapon of warfare.

Psalms 149:6-9 *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment – this honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!*

- c. Spiritual warfare is based on the blood of Christ, not our own strength or righteousness.

Revelation 12:11 *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

HOMEWORK

1. Over what was man originally given dominion?
2. How was this dominion lost and regained?
3. What are two of Satan's greatest deceptions?
4. Give four principles of spiritual warfare.
5. Describe the armor of God. (Include what each piece does.)
6. Give an example of a time in your life when you overcame the enemy.

Genesis 1:1, 31; 2:18 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good...And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

In the beginning, God created everything and called it good. The only thing that God said was not good was the fact that man was alone. God then created woman and instituted marriage, the union of man and woman. He commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply," which means to have children. We need to see from this that God instituted both marriage and family. He also established order in marriage and in family life. Moses wrote that man was to "leave," "cleave," and "become one flesh" with the woman (Genesis 2:24). Jesus said, "*So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate*" (Matthew 19:6). God had a pattern and order for marriage and family before the Fall, before sin entered the human race. Since God created the family, we need to know what His will is concerning family life. If we will agree that the order which God established at Creation is His will for our families today, then we can extract some principles for us to live by.

"But time have changed," the world says. "You cannot order a modern family according to an outdated book." The truth is that times have indeed changed because our society has changed. There has been a wholesale shift from absolute values which were based on Truth to a relative system based on what feels good. Fifty years ago God and family were the focal point of all relationships, activities, communication, etc. The demands upon the average family at that time by vocation, society, government, and others were not as severe as now. Generally, life was slow paced and much more relaxed. Just as the speed of high-tech industry has increased, so also the lifestyle of the citizenry and with it the pressure on the family.

The things that the world considers essential to the recipe for success have actually contributed to the breakdown of the family. "You're number one!" "Be a success by the time you are 30!" "Enjoy the good life!" "Grab all the gusto you can!" These and other ads hype the materialistic hedonism (devotion to pleasure) of our society. This is the result of our denial of absolute Truth and values. Now add to the recipe the pressure to achieve, to be successful at all costs, and to be involved in everything. Throw it all together in the instant mix, "shake and bake," "why wait," "but now, pay later," easy credit system and heat to boiling point with further demands on time by organizations, schools, friends, relatives, children, mate, and chores around the house. You might even stir in church involvement, programs, and other activities done out of a legalistic sense of duty to the Lord. Is it any wonder the family has suffered a breakdown?

But that is not the end of it! There is also the satanic attack on authority as a whole, with a specific focus on the family. Professionals, doctors, educators and "Blue Ribbon Committees" comprised of experts from all fields have punched and probed at the family, explaining how it should be run. Humanists have redefined the family and declared it to be democratic and able to make its own laws. Attacks on authority, standards, and values have resulted in role confusion, role reversal, unisex, effeminacy, affairs, divorce, and husbands that are "copping

out.” Relativism, situation ethics, and moral values which derive their source from human experience and choice rather than God’s absolutes have become the norm for the society. This has produced people that are “me” centered, selfish, and individualistic. There is conflict as this overflows into the home. How is the Christian family to survive this onslaught of Satan? Only by becoming Christ-centered and following the principles that God has ordained for family life.

GOD’S ORDER FOR FAMILIES

1 Corinthians 11:3 *But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

Ephesians 5:22-25 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.*

Ephesians 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

God created and ordained the family with purpose, design and order. Please understand that order has nothing to do with rank. Proper order, whether in the church or in the family, does not mean that some are better or higher than others. It simply means that God has chosen channels of authority through which He ministers to all. We must submit ourselves to God, His Word and His delegated order.

Martin Luther said that God’s two greatest tools for our sanctification are the church and the family. By that he meant that God uses the church and the family as the central organisms for the establishment and development of fellowship and relationship, character, function, ministry, and natural and spiritual reproduction. The family is the building block of the church, community and society, and an extension of the Church (Body) into the world (community). It is the training ground for personal development in our spiritual lives and a place of healing, refreshment and rest. It is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church, which Paul called a mystery. The family itself may be likened to a small body of Christ in function, fellowship and relationship.

The bond between husband and wife called marriage is unique. Jesus taught that it was inseparable (Matthew 19:4-6). Although many call marriage a commitment or a contract, God calls it a covenant with Him (Malachi 2:14). When we begin to view marriage from this perspective, it takes on an entirely different significance from which order may be established. The Creator of the family ordained order in the family in the beginning. The fact that man was created first suggests an order of headship (1 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:13, Genesis 2:7). It is strengthened by Adam entering into dominion by naming the animals before the creation of the woman. Headship is also implied by the fact that God gave His command to Adam who had the responsibility to communicate it to his wife (Genesis 2:16-17).

GOD'S ORDER FOR HUSBANDS

There are three extremes in the relationship between the husband and wife: the so-called 50-50 marriage (democracy); marriages that do away with all authority and order and each does their own thing (anarchy); and the authoritarian approach (dictatorship). None of these are of God.

Romans 13:1 states that all authority is from God and is delegated to others according to His purpose. He delegated authority to Jesus (Matthew 28:18) and Jesus delegated authority to His Church (Matthew 28:19). God's authority remains where His order and function are maintained. Functionally, God is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3, 3:23, 15:28), Christ is the head of man and the Church (Ephesians 1:22, 5:23), and the husband is head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23).

This headship and authority is established by God, not man. No striving, harsh demands, intellectual ploys, nor physical threats can establish God's authority, for headship is not lordship – it is servanthood within the relationship. This is the headship principle: **authority comes from serving, submission and a vital love relationship with the Lord** (Matthew 7:28-29, Mark 10:43-45, Luke 22:26, John 5:19). The root of authority is the sacrifice of one's self, just as Jesus gave Himself for the Church and now exercises loving authority over her (Ephesians 5:25). This kind of behavior is not natural to carnal man and must not be worked up by the believer or the result will be dead works. The husband should humble himself and die to self (Philippians 2:5-8), letting the work of the cross have its perfect result. By this, he is loving his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Motivated by this attitude of the giving of himself to serve, the husband will have his headship established by God.

One of the ways in which headship is practically demonstrated might be called "loving leadership." Leadership is leading by example. Of course, the greatest example of "loving leadership" was Christ who motivated people to follow Him by His example (John 13:14-15) and who requires this of those who lead His people (1 Peter 5:3). The purpose of leadership is to be a channel for the authority of God. Loving leadership is motivated by a godly concern for others rather than self-seeking desires (Philippians 2:3-4). Seeking what is best for others is never easy. It takes more strength to love others into submitting to God's will than to force them into surrendering to your will.

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25-32 that the relationship between the husband and wife is the same as that between Christ and His Church. Close examination of these verses may give us examples of the proper attitude and responsibility of the husband toward his wife.

THE HUSBAND AS	RESULTS IN
<p>1. Lover, giver, savior (verses 23, 25)</p>	<p>Giving himself up for her. Laying down his life for her. Loving her as his own body. Total, unqualified commitment. Selflessness. Sensitivity to her needs and hurts: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical. Not dependent upon her submission.</p>
<p>2. Sanctifier (verses 26, 27)</p>	<p>Accepting her just as she is. Cultivating her spiritual maturity. Responsible for her spiritual health and sanctification.</p>
<p>3. Nourisher, cherisher (verses 28, 29)</p>	<p>Shepherding his wife. Feeding her spiritually. Promoting her health and strength. Cherishing her.</p>

This relationship may also be confirmed with a type from the Old Testament. God, as husband of Israel (Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 31:32), raised up the ministries of **prophet** and **priest** to guide, guard and govern her. His design was to bring forth Israel as a glorious people in the midst of the nations (Exodus 19:6). Likewise, just as Jesus is the High Priest and **King** (Head and Lord) of the Church, so the husband is prophet, priest and king to guide, guard and govern in the family relationship.

As **prophet**, the husband represents God to his family by hearing and knowing the mind and will of God for the family. As **priest** he intercedes for his family by offering prayers for their health, protection and spiritual growth. As **king** he acts as God’s representative by establishing God’s order in his home. He establishes a biblical code of conduct and sees that the family lives a Christian life.

Now read Ephesians 5:20-33 again. We find here that marriage is a showcase of God’s desired relationship to man and to the world. The world should be able to look at the Christian family and see what God is like. The world should be able to look at the Christian husband and see what Jesus is like. The world should see the way the husband loves his wife and know that is the way Christ loves them. The world should be able to see the wife responding to her husband’s love and see how the Church should respond to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we look at our Christian home in that light, we get an understanding why it is necessary for each of us to die to our own self-life in order to be a part of a much higher purpose.

Since the husband is the spiritual functional leader in the home, he is responsible to God for any lack of love or disunity. The husband is commanded to love

(agape) his wife. If there is no love in the home, it is usually because the husband is not fulfilling his responsibilities “as to the Lord.” If there is no harmony in the home, it is generally because the husband has not died to self, is not serving his wife and is not praying for her. It is time we put the principal responsibility for the relationship where it belongs – directly on the husband – and not on the unsubmitive wife. Most men have been trained by the traditions of the world to believe that it is the responsibility of the wife to love them and the responsibility of the husband is to earn a living, provide a home and protect the family if necessary. It is true that they are to care for the family, but **God commands the husband to love his wife.**

God has commanded us to love one another, but the Scriptures never specifically command the wife to love her husband. God has designed the woman to respond to the agape love of her husband. Therefore, any lack of commitment, any rebellion or any lack of submission on the part of the wife is usually a result of the husband not being like Jesus in the marriage relationship. Now you can understand the importance of the resurrection life in the home (review lesson one).

In 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul states that the woman is the glory of the man. The word “glory” here may be freely translated “showpiece” or “fruit.” Therefore the wife is to be the fruit or open display of the success of the husband **as a husband.** The wife will reflect what the husband puts into the marriage relationship. In fact, the woman has been so created by God to respond to man in much the same way the Church responds to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the marriage of the wife is the “responder.” One of the meanings of “helpmeet” is “corresponding to,” or might we say “with response to.” Therefore if the husband senses that his wife needs to display more love, he must give her more love. She will respond to that love with love. Actually, what the husband puts in will be “amplified” back to him and to others because the woman is also an “amplifier.” What is given to her is amplified back. It is the principle of sowing and reaping – sow one seed and at harvest the fruit is multiplied (or amplified!).

God made Eve as a “helper” for Adam (Genesis 2:18). The Hebrew word describes the woman as “completing, adapted, suitable, fitted to, appropriate to, corresponding to, called to the side of, a helper, an aid.” The woman is actually the “other part” of the man. There was actually something unnatural about man being alone (“not good”), suggesting the need for woman. It has been said that woman was not taken from man’s foot for him to walk on her, nor out of his head that he should rule over her, but out of his side to stand beside him. The woman is to stand alongside the man in leadership (Genesis 2:21) and in Genesis 1:28 the Word suggests that there is a need for and mutual dependence upon each other. God brings them together in a covenant relationship where they are “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Here the wife brings God-given abilities and gifts into the relationship that need to be unlocked and exercised to complete the husband. The man and woman in a sense lose their own self-dependency, independence and self-sufficiency to become one new interdependent being, the mystery of the Christ/Church relationship. It is this “oneness” or “union” that reflects God’s

ORDER FOR WIVES

Image (Genesis 1:27). It is in this relationship that God uses our mate's weaknesses as a tool to perfect our character and where our mate's weaknesses are an opportunity for us to be needed.

Much has been written about the submissive wife. Submission is a biblical principle (Ephesians 5:22, 24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1,). However, most writings put the emphasis on the wife and this should not be. **Submission is a natural response to love.** If husbands would love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, the wives would usually submit. Just ask any wife this question: "If your husband absolutely gave himself totally to you, unselfishly laying down his life for you, would you be willing to submit to him in everything as unto the Lord?" Now this is not to be used as an excuse to break the Word of God if the husband is a rebel. No husband will perfectly love as Christ loves. This is why the wife needs to die to self and partake of the resurrection life made available through the Cross. There is no other way to be submissive because submission is not a matter of "grit your teeth" obedience. **Submission is a matter of the heart.**

Submission means to yield lovingly to the authority of another. Here we are talking about the ordained function in the family; divine order, not position. The same order is established on earth in the family as in the God-head. The functions and roles of God the Son and God the Spirit are distinctly different from those of God the Father. **Biblical submission requires spiritual strength based on a firm trust in God.** If the wife cannot believe God for the perfecting of her husband, her submission will lack depth. Therefore, there must be a strong commitment to the Lord and the Word, and faith that God will accomplish His purpose in the family.

What God does in a family when the wife submits according to the Word:

1. The husband is released to lead.
2. The grace of God is released into the husband and wife relationship.
3. It sets up the creative potential for bringing every family member into their highest level of spiritual and natural achievement.
4. It sets up the conditions for blessing, health and fulfillment for all members of the family.
5. The wife is a role model of a helper for her children.
6. Others see a model of the Church's relationship to Christ.

What are the results of submission?

1. There is unity and harmony in body, soul and spirit.
2. It is the privilege and responsibility of the husband to receive the wise counsel of his wife who fully and freely expresses her thoughts
3. The best atmosphere is provided for the wife's creativity and individuality, drawing upon her gifts of intelligence, insight and judgment.
4. There is protection and a buffer from undue stress – physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual.
5. The husband and wife are a team in the leadership of the family.

There are four areas where every wife needs to be discerning about deception creeping into the marriage relationship. These are as follows:

1. **Role Reversal:** being protective of the husband who is “not spiritual enough,” acting as a buffer for him; therefore not truly being submissive although giving the appearance thereof.
2. **Wrong Motive:** trying to get the husband saved or to become more spiritual by playing the part of the Holy Spirit, playing God.
3. **Wrong Attitude:** “I’m only submitting because the Bible says I should and it had better work.”
4. **Spiritual Pride:** “I can manage the family better than he can” or “I can run the Church (or teach or preach) better than those men do. I know more than they do.” This is equivalent to the Church taking authority over Jesus.

We must remember that marriage is a covenant relationship (Malachi 2:14-16, Matthew 19:5-9). A husband and wife have entered into a binding eternal agreement with God and with each other. God’s purpose is to maintain the family unit in purity, to reflect His image (Genesis 1:26-27), to reproduce a godly heritage, and to reign over creation (Genesis 1:28).

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

Secondly, there must be a total commitment to God, to God’s purpose for the marriage covenant and to His principles. This will include Jesus being the Lord of each individual and of the marriage.

Finally, you must make a total commitment to your mate, accepting her/him as the one who perfectly completes you. **These three commitments are the foundation of the marriage.** Additionally, be aware that divorce is not an option. It would make a tremendous difference if you would say to your mate “Divorce is not an option for me.”

Communication is another important facet of marriage. Communication is nothing less than the establishing and nurturing of relationships, the interaction between human beings – their personalities, their self-images, their environment, their total being. It is through communication that we come into a blending, a unity of soul. *“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”* (Amos 3:3). How can you agree unless you communicate? It is something that must be worked at; it does not just happen. It is part of making the marriage work.

One of the big helps in communication in marriage is understanding the difference between men and women. Generally men are goal oriented, see the big picture or headline, and are interested in the essentials, the concept and the facts. On the contrary, women are detail oriented, see the fine print or little things and are interested in feelings. Men and women balance and complete one another when they communicate. Women are created by God to need relationships that are intimate enough to share their deepest thoughts, fears, visions, hopes and dreams. Men are generally project oriented, not relationship oriented. This makes

them prone to see their marriage as a project that they work on from time to time. As a result the wife can be wounded by her husband's apparent lack of desire for relationship.

Husbands need to listen to their wife with understanding. To give advice or correction when she is sharing her feelings will cause her to withdraw from the conversation. She wants you to listen and allow her to share, knowing that you are her best friend and will stand with her even when she is wrong.

The following is a checklist for establishing communication:

1. Verbalize total commitment to the marriage.
2. Be transparent before your mate and before God.
3. Submit yourself to God's view of authority.
4. Recognize that we are different; accept your mate as is.
5. Learn to listen.
6. Learn to "own the problem," i.e., make your mate's problem your own problem.
7. Take turns – listen then talk.
8. Do not misinterpret feelings.
9. Set regular times to talk, as a couple and as a family.
10. Learn how to open your wife up to share openly with you.
11. In humility discuss with your mate how you can both improve "our" communication.
12. Do not attach your spouse's character or personality.
13. Do not raise issues again that have already been settled.
14. Receive your mate as God's perfect gift for you.
15. View your mate as your sister or brother in Christ.

We must be sure that our families are ordered according to the principles revealed in God's Word. The husband must love his wife and children by giving himself to them on a daily basis. The wife must submit to her husband as unto the Lord. The children must honor, respect and obey both parents. As each one dies to self and loves others, the resurrection life of Jesus Christ will be revealed through our families.

RESPONSIVE READING

Question 1: What is marriage?

Marriage is a covenant between God, a man and a woman whereby the two become one.

Genesis 2:24 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Malachi 2:14 *...she is your companion and your wife by covenant.*

Question 2: Should there be purpose and order in family life?

Yes, God created and ordained the family with purpose, design and order.

1 Corinthians 11:3 *But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

Ephesians 5:22-25 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.*

Ephesians 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Question 3: What three commitments are essential for every marriage?

- a. There must be total commitment to God and His purposes.

Matthew 6:33 *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”*

- b. There must be total commitment to the marriage.

Matthew 19:4-6 *And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

- c. There must be total commitment to your mate, by accepting him/her as God’s perfect gift to you.

Genesis 2:22-23 *Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

HOMEWORK

1. What is headship (or leadership)?
2. What is one of the ways headship is practically demonstrated? Describe it.
3. Name some of the ways the husband should be Christlike in relationship with his wife.
4. Name some of the ways the wife should be like the Church in relationship with her husband,
5. Name the three commitments which are the foundation of every marriage.
6. Why is communication so important in marriage relationship?
7. (For marrieds only) How well do you and your spouse communicate with each other? Are you willing to verbalize a new commitment to open up the channels of communication with her/him?

(For singles only) In your relationship with others in the body, are you willing to be open and vulnerable in the communication process?

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *Pray without ceasing.*

INTRODUCTION

Luke 18:1 *...men always ought to pray and not lose heart... .*

Prayer is more than saying grace before meals, more than saying, “Now I lay me down to sleep” at bedtime, and more than asking God to bless what you have already decided to do. It is not something that is optional to the Christian life. In fact, **prayer is an absolute necessity** for the believer. Prayer is so essential that it has been described as “the breath of life.” Prayer is a life of communion with God. The depth and the effectiveness of our walk with the Lord is directly dependent upon our prayer life.

The Greek word for pray is “proseuchomai,” meaning “to pray to God, to supplicate, worship, make prayer.” It is derived from two words: “pros,” which has to do with a forward motion, direction, by the side of, a motion towards, accession to, or nearness to; and “euchomai,” which means “to wish, to will, to pray to God.” In this section we will take a closer look at the elements involved in prayer.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Simply and foremost, **prayer is communion with God:** conversing with Him, drawing near to Him, fellowshiping with Him, and spending time with Him. Prayer is multifaceted, but as its foundation is always involves time and attention turned toward God. We are told in Matthew 6:6 to go into our room, close the door and pray to our Father. Jesus spent much time, even entire nights, alone in prayer communing with His Father (Mark 1:35). His directions for life came, His disciples were chosen, and He received power from this time of prayer.

It is easy to see the importance of prayer when you see how hard the enemy fights against it. He will do anything to keep us from praying. Not only must we deal with the enemy’s attack, but also with the flesh which does not delight in praying. **Prayer is a discipline** for the believer for we must chose to yield to the Spirit rather than the flesh or the enemy. We must submit our wills and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, admit our need and acknowledge that God is our only power and solution. Prayer gives praise and honor to God by acknowledging His absolute sovereignty and greatness.

It is through the discipline aspect of prayer that the believer responds to the preaching of the cross – dying to self, to his own desires and wishes, and laying all his plans, ambitions and longings before God. It is through this discipline of prayer, worship and communion with God that we submit ourselves and He then responds. What a glorious grace to know that the prayer of the believer can and will receive a response from the great Creator!

Prayer is not one of those time-consuming things that the believer is expected to do occasionally because it is right. The Word of God commands the believer to pray (1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Ephesians 6:18). His failure to do so is a very serious neglect which will result in stunted spiritual growth and not receiving from God the things which are needed (James 4:2). Most seriously, lack of prayer is a withdrawal from God who is our Source. In short,

prayerlessness is sin (1 Samuel 12:23). It is willful disobedience to the Word of God. The believer should not justify himself with “I can’t” or “I don’t have time.” Prayer is a choice and when man seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things will be supplied (Matthew 6:33).

Prayer without ceasing involves a life lived with an ear and a heart toward God. It involves **practicing the presence of God**. It is possible for the believer to go about his daily business dealings with his heart and mind continually in an attitude of prayer and communion with God. This kind of prayer keeps the believer available at all times for God to use in intercession or spiritual warfare. Praying without ceasing truly keeps one continually in the presence of God where growth and maturity can be freely produced. This type of prayer may require thought and conscious discipline at first, but it soon becomes natural to talk to God about every detail of our lives.

PREREQUISITES FOR PRAYER

The Word of God gives us basic guidelines for effective prayer which the Christian needs to discover and practice if he is to pray effectively.

Praying in the Name of Jesus

John 16:23 *“And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.”*

Jesus taught His disciples that there would come a day when they would no longer ask Him for anything. Since Jesus is our only access to Father God, prayer should be directed to the Father through Him. As the veil in the temple was rent when Christ was crucified, so also His death and resurrection has given the believer access to the Father of Glory. All the believer does must be done in the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17). We have a hope which is an anchor of the soul, which is both sure and steadfast and which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us. He has become a high priest forever and *“therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25). The first basic thing to remember is that our access to the Father is any area (including prayer) is in the name of His Son, Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Jesus has also given us the use and authority of His name (John 14:13-14). This is the power of attorney to extend His ministry throughout the world. It does not mean that we can do our own thing in the name of Jesus. Rather, it means to do the will of God in God’s way for God’s glory. It means to do what Jesus would do in that situation. This only comes by being in union with Him, Jesus said, *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me”* (John 15:4).

Praying in Faith

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

The life and way of faith is our only means of reaching God. Everything we will ever do with and in God can be done only through faith. Faith, simply put, is believing first that God exists, and then believing that everything that He has spoken is true. If we establish in our hearts and minds that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:2) and become settled upon the Word of God, we will dwell by faith in the presence of our God. Faith is an absolute prerequisite for effective prayer.

James 1:6-8 *...ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

If the believer prays according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, there can be no place for doubt. To doubt is to question the character and faithfulness of God. Doubting places more faith in circumstances than in the God who is Lord of all. Faithless praying denies the integrity of God and results in instability and unanswered prayer. The mature Christian has settled God's Word in his heart, is satisfied in the integrity of the Lord, and believes God rather than the circumstances.

Praying According to the Word of God

Having a full working knowledge of the Word of God is a prerequisite for effective prayer. Since God cannot lie, He is Truth and the source of all truth. God is the sovereign creator and sustainer of all things and we must come to understand that He is absolute in His integrity. Since this is true, then the Word of God is the speaking forth of His character. God has magnified His Word above His name (Psalm 138:2). He has given us His Word whereby we can know Him, His plan and purpose. When we come to Him in prayer and are led to pray a specific way, we must check this leading against the Word of God. Does it agree with His character; does it agree with who He is? If it does, then we know we are praying in the will of God, that He hears us and will answer our prayer (1 John 5:14-15).

Purity

Jesus reacted with righteous anger at the pollution of His Father's house by greedy moneychangers. In Matthew 21:13 Jesus said, *"My house shall be called a house of prayer... ."* The believer is the temple of God today and is to be a house of prayer. We need the fear of the Lord and the desire to be a clean temple of the Holy Spirit. If the believer's temple is unclean, he cannot be an effective house of prayer. If Jesus was angered at the pollution of the earthly temple, how He must grieve at the pollution of the temples of His

Holy Spirit. He desires pure vessels He can call upon for prayer, intercession and spreading His kingdom.

KINDS OF PRAYER

The **prayer of supplication** is the most basic prayer since it is a fairly simple matter for every believer to ask for the meeting of his own basic needs. The Greek word for supplication is “deesis” which means “petition: prayer, request, supplication.” A Supplication is simply a request made of the Father in Jesus’ name.

The **prayer of thanksgiving** is the acknowledging of God’s goodness in answering our prayers “...*exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...*” (Ephesians 3:20). The thanksgiving prayer acknowledges that God is the source of all things and that we have nothing that was not first given to us (1 Chronicles 29:14). When we pray, it must always be with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6).

The word **intercession** is from the Greek word “entugchano,” meaning “to confer with, to entreat (in favor or against): deal with, make intercession.” Intercession is to stand between God and a person, conferring with God for the benefit of the other and making petition for them. It is also standing in the gap in spiritual warfare for the benefit of another, a group or a nation. We are told in Ephesians 6:18 to intercede for the saints. The saints, the believers in the Body of Christ, are to be in prayer always with all kinds of prayer and petitions in the Spirit. Prayer involves being alert and persevering for one another to supply the needs in the body, to protect the body, and for the growth and unity of the body.

The prayer of intercession can make a difference in what God does in any situation. God seeks for intercessors, for someone who will stand in the gap. God has chosen to work through His body on this earth, through their intercessory prayer and warfare. When the body of Christ is ignorant of intercession or will not order their lives to set a priority for intercession, the work of God is hindered.

There are two main types of intercession which may be done separately or in combination. **Intercessory petition** involves standing in the gap between God and man, requesting needs to be met for the other, requesting God to move in that life and accomplish His purpose. The Spirit will lead in specific praying for specific situations. The work of **intercessory warfare** is standing in the gap between the person and the works of Satan. The intercessory warrior uses his spiritual authority to stand against and to back off the works of darkness which have bound a person or which have come against that person in a sudden attack. The intercessory warrior does warfare on behalf of another, freeing their mind, body and circumstances so that he can then receive the work of God in his life. The vision of the one being attacked may become so clouded by the enemy that only through the spiritual warring of the intercessor can he begin to see the situation clearly and take a stand himself.

The believer is commanded to intercede for “...*all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life...*” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). The believer is also commanded to intercede for nations so that judgment will not bring total destruction (Exodus 32:9-14), so that the direction of a battle might be

changed, and that righteousness will reign (Daniel 9, Ezra, Nehemiah). Intercession is an important tool which God uses to accomplish His purposes in the earth.

Matthew 18:19-20 *“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

The **prayer of agreement** is accomplished when two or more people pray for a common purpose by laying down personal desires and prejudices, exalting the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and praying according to His will in unity and harmony. This is a very powerful type of prayer since there is strength in unity. The power is increased and multiplied through the unified work of the church.

As we have seen, God works through the Body of Christ in the earth today. The body is to be unified under the leadership of its head, Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ is not just an idea; it is a living, functioning organism. We have all seen a physical body in which there is a malfunction between the signals sent forth by the brain and the limbs which were designed to respond to those signals. When there is a rebelling, disunifying factor at work, the entire body becomes weakened. The head may be functioning perfectly, but it has little effect if the body cannot or will not respond to it. Likewise, when the Body of Christ will not follow the orders of the Head, the manifestation of His glory is limited and the world sees a divided, arguing, ineffective, powerless Church that it wants nothing to do with.

Jesus said that a nation divided could not stand but would fall (Luke 11::17). Satan works diligently to divide and separate the Body of Christ to make her ineffective in doing God’s work in the earth. So once again we see that the preaching of the cross is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). As believers die to themselves and appropriate the resurrection life of Jesus Christ, there will be unity and power to take dominion.

Preserving prayer is that prayer that does not give up, but persists to see the will of God accomplished. It does not lose heart and back down at the insistence of the enemy or the passage of time. When one persists in the prayer of faith, regardless of the time involved, there is power worked through the fruit of patience that strengthens faith. It is this kind of prayer which has weighed the consequences, examined the outcome, counted the cost, and has come to the decision to see this through to victory. Persevering prayer is tenacious, confident, unwavering, undaunted, fearless and full of faith.

Praying in the Spirit is the sure way to bypass the logical thinking that sometimes hinders effective prayer.

1 Corinthians 14:14-15 *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding.*

Praying in the Spirit is giving the Holy Spirit within the believer a direct line to God to pray the perfect will of God in a situation. It is a prayer of submission and of yieldedness as we admit we do not know how to pray and yield our tongue to the Spirit's use. We may not know with our understanding what the prayer in the Spirit is, but we trust that the Spirit of God in us is praying the most effective prayer for the situation at hand.

Another positive aspect of this type of praying is the edifying or building up of the one who prays (1 Corinthians 14:4). Praying in the Spirit builds up ourselves and our faith (Jude 20). According to Ephesians 6:18 the believer should pray "...always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit... ."

HINDRANCES TO ANSWERED PRAYER

God loves us and desires to communicate with us and bless us. The word of God clearly teaches how to have our prayers answered. If we pray according to the guidelines which He has set forth in His Word, the answers will come. Also, through the mercy of God, the Bible just as clearly shows the causes of unanswered prayer. All believers have experienced times when fervent prayer went unanswered. If we know the hindrances to unanswered prayer, then we can make the adjustments necessary to move into the place of answered prayer. Let's take a closer look at those things which will keep our prayers from being answered.

Rebellion is the most dangerous of sins against God since it is disobedience to His Word. It is rooted in pride which was the foundation of the original sin of Satan as he exalted himself and rebelled against God. He later led God's newly created humans to follow the same route.

We see in 1 Samuel 15:22-23 God's exact thoughts regarding rebellion. King Saul had received specific instructions from God through the prophet Samuel, but being moved by what he saw around him and the fact that Samuel was late in arriving, Saul took matters into his own hands. Samuel addressed Saul's disobedience with great force and finality, saying, "*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord. He also has rejected you from being king.*" Saul never manifested a true heart of repentance and God removed His Spirit from him. From that time forth Saul fell farther and farther into self-deception and spiritism, and finally died a desolate death.

Rebellion is a serious sin against God and will be a definite hindrance to prayer. Rebellion against God-called leadership, against His proper lines of authority in the family, and against His Word are all rebellion against God Himself. The believer must be diligent to search out any rebellion in his own life. It has been suggested that the best guard against rebellion is a heart wholly given to the Lord (Psalm 119:145).

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

As we have seen, **pride** is at the root of rebellion and disobedience. Pride is self-deceptive, self-centered, manipulative and unteachable. God has said that the antidote for pride is humility. Humility is teachable, other-centered, transparent and yielded to God. The Scripture says God is opposed to the proud. The word “opposed” is an active word meaning “to set oneself against.” God actively sets Himself against the believer who operates in pride. Obviously, answered prayer is hindered in this condition. One must humble himself, repent of sin, and pray according to the Word of God.

Psalm 66:18 *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.*

Unconfessed sin not only prevents answers to prayer, but actually prevents our prayers from coming before God. He is a holy God and it is only through the blood of sacrifice of Jesus Christ that man has access to God. When sin is held and covered, fellowship with God is broken and prayer is hindered. It is through confession of sin, repentance, and obedience to His Word that we have access through prayer to God.

The key to have instant access to God is by keeping “short accounts” with Him. This means to instantly acknowledge any sin, to have a repentant heart, and to receive God’s forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9).

God’s Word gives strong warnings against the sins of **unforgiveness and bitterness**. These sins are not only devastating to the believer, but can also place bondages upon the one who is the target of the unforgiveness (John 20:23).

God makes it plain that He will not forgive the person who does not forgive others. In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus gives the model prayer to the disciples and concludes in verse 14 and 15, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*

In the original Greek the word “bitterness” means “to press down.” In other words, bitterness is poison which results from pressed-down unrepented unforgiveness and resentment. Hebrews 12:15 says, *“looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”* A root of bitterness obviously endangers one of coming short of the grace of God as well as being an agent which defiles others.

Christians today tend to take lightly the serious sins of unforgiveness and bitterness, but God does not take them lightly. The Church must be to guard against the deception of the enemy in this area and to deal with these sins which defile the Body of Christ. These sins are devastating to the unforgiving person and the results may eventually be manifest in the physical body through sickness of various kinds.

Coveting is an inordinate desire for that which you do not have. The Bible calls this idolatry (Colossians 3:5). When we covet, our thoughts and goals become centered on someone or something other than God. This dethrones God from His place of Lordship to one of lesser importance. It has been said that idolatry is anything which robs God of our love and devotion. Man worships that which he desires most.

The most dangerously deceptive form of idolatry, however, is the idol that can be set up in the unsuspecting heart due to the influence of humanism in our society. The influence says “meet my needs, give me what I want.” It is a condition in which everything in the person’s life centers around himself – his own needs and desires. The God who is perceived through the type of deception is thought of as a butler, serving us and meeting our needs, which is not truly God’s character and personality as revealed in the Word of God. The person and character of this god then becomes that which is “created in our own image” and we are practicing nothing more than a humanistic religion.

The antidote for idolatry and of any type in our society today is a total commitment to Jesus Christ and His Lordship in our lives. We must submit ourselves in total yieldedness before the mighty God, asking for the fear of the Lord, and asking for the absolute truth about Himself and His Word to be revealed to our hearts. The prideful Christian, who thinks he has all the answers and who works all the principles of the Word, has laid himself open for the deception of the enemy and is holding heart idols (Ezekiel 14:3).

James 4:3 *You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Holding heart idols and **wrong motives** will obviously lead the Christian to wrong praying. James says that asking amiss is one source of quarrels and conflicts among members of the Body (James 4:1-17). He says that many times we do not have because we simply do not ask, trying other methods rather than submission to God through the channel of prayer. Other times the believer asks and does not receive because he asks with wrong motives in order to satisfy his own lusts.

If the believer walks humbly in the fear of the Lord, knows the Word of God and prays in line with the Word of God, he will not fall into the sin and hindrance of wrong praying. God only answers prayers which line up with the Word that He has spoken to us. Matthew 6:5-8 warns against praying with the wrong motive of desiring to be seen of men. If that is the motive, that also is the reward and the answer, for God will not respond.

When a husband and wife relate in an unscriptural manner with **disrespect, dishonor and misunderstanding**, their prayers will be hindered. Throughout the Bible God uses the marriage relationship to parallel and clarify the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. In 1 Peter 3:7, in the midst of an exhortation to have right marriage relationships, Peter says, “*Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*” The husband must follow Christ’s example of a life of

sacrifice, love, forgiveness and protection. This is necessary in order for him to freely receive the answers he needs as he prays.

James 1:5-7 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who **doubts** is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not the man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

In speaking of the nation of Israel in Hebrews 3:12, the writer says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief** in departing from the living God.” In Psalm 95:10-11 God said, “For forth years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways. So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.’” We see that the sin of unbelief is a serious affront against the character of God for it says “I will not believe what God says.” God said the children of Israel did not know His ways. If the believer will not get well acquainted with the Word of the living God, he will not know God’s ways and he will waver, being tossed about and overwhelmed by the circumstances. We are told that without faith we **cannot** please God (Hebrews 11:6) and our prayers will be hindered.

The solution for unbelief comes through the decision to believe that every “rhema” word that God says is true. Faith believes fully and unwaveringly in the integrity of God and makes the choice to abide in His Word that is might become a vital part of our being. It is a decision to believe God before believing what is seen in the land. Two men who pleased God, Joshua and Caleb, chose to believe what God said in the face of what they had seen. Even as Joshua and Caleb had to walk through the 40-year wilderness experience because of the disobedience and unbelief of the others, so the Christian today must consider his responsibility and the results of his actions upon the rest of the body of Christ. No Christian is or can be independent. The Christian lives by a higher law and cannot gauge his existence by the guidelines of the world (Numbers 13 and 14).

So then, the Christian who desires to have an effective prayer life must see to it that he removes all hindrances to answered prayer. Choosing to obey God’s word will remove these things, for they are clearly shown in the Word. God is a Father who dearly loves His children and desires to bless them, but He also is a Father who desires obedience to His ways. He will not conform to the ways and whims of His children. He desires disciplined and obedient children who will walk with a whole heart toward Him. Then He will honor His Word to us.

Responsive Reading

Question 1: What is prayer?

Prayer is a life of communion with God.

Ephesians 6:18 *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*

Question 2: Is prayer an option for the Christian?

No, the Word of God commands us to pray.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *Pray without ceasing*

Luke 18:1 *...men always ought to pray and not lose heart.*

Question 3: What are the basic guidelines for effective prayer?

- a. Pray in the name of Jesus

John 16:23 *“And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.”*

- b. Pray in faith.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

- c. Pray according to God’s Word.

1 John 5:14 *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

- d. Repent of any known sin.

Psalms 66:18 *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.*

HOMEWORK

1. What is the simplest definition of prayer?
2. How is prayer related to the resurrection life?
3. What are the prerequisites for prayer?
4. Describe the prayer of intercession and its importance to the Kingdom of God.
5. Name two reasons for the importance of praying in the Spirit.
6. The lesson lists several hindrances to answered prayer. How do you guard against these in your life

A Study of the Elementary Principles of Christ

This series, based on Hebrews 6:1-2, is designed to lay a firm foundation in your life. It is necessary to be grounded in these basic principles in order to “go on to maturity.” It is our prayer that God will richly bless you through your study of FIRST PRINCIPLES.

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Restoration
Vision of the Local Church
Praise and Worship
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Repentance
The New Covenant
The Father Heart of God
Forgiveness
The Lifestyle of Repentance

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Faith Toward God
The Abiding Faith
Living by Revelation
Developing Faith
The Response of Faith
The Testing of Faith

Book Four: Baptisms

The Doctrine of Baptisms
Baptism in the Body of Christ
Water Baptism
The Baptism of the Holy Spirit- Part I
The Baptism of the Holy Spirit-Part II
The Baptism in Fire

Book Five: Laying on of Hands

Laying on of Hands
Healing
The Gifts of the Spirit
The Motivational Gifts
The Five-Fold Ministry
Presbytery

Book Six: Resurrection Life

Resurrection Life
Body Life
Church Life
Overcoming Life
Family Life
Prayer Life

Book Seven: Eternal Judgement

The Eternal Perspective
The Eternal Kingdom
Eternal Judgement
The Eternal Word
Eternal Worship
Eternal Life