

UNIT ONE: THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

KEY SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR UNIT ONE

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. - 1 Corinthians 3:11

CLASS 1: IT IS FINISHED!

1 Reading, 1 Exercise

Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. He is the promised Messiah of Israel who fulfills the prophecies of Scripture and the seed of Eve who crushes the head of the serpent. Through faith in Him, we are saved from sin, redeemed from the curse, and granted eternal life with God. Learn who Jesus is and what He did for us!

CLASS 2: ESTABLISHED BY FAITH

1 Exercise

By grace through faith in Jesus, we receive His perfect record of righteousness. We can stand before God free of guilt, shame, and accusation, ready to receive all of His blessings!

CLASS 3: NO MORE RELIGION

1 Readings, 1 Visual Aid, 1 Exercise

We receive salvation and all of its benefits by grace through faith, not by what we do or do not do. Either Jesus finished it or we have to. Our only job now it to receive God's grace freely by faith.

CLASS 4: SERVING FROM LOVE

1 Reading, 1 Worksheet, 1 Exercise

We worship God by offering our lives in service to Jesus, not to earn anything from Him but out of gratitude for what He has done for us and a willful desire to partner with His purposes.

KEY QUESTIONS

GROUP EXERCISES

IT IS FINISHED!

Jesus Christ, the one and only begotten Son of God, was born of a virgin into the lineage of King David of Israel. He was crucified, died and was buried, He descended into hell and was resurrected from the dead on the third day by the power of God. He ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God with all power and authority in heaven and on earth and under the earth. After ascending to heaven, He poured out the Holy Spirit into all who believe in Him so that Jesus Christ now dwells in us by faith. He is coming back to judge the living and the dead, to avenge all evil, and to restore all things to God's design.

The Gospel is more than just Good News. The Gospel changes everything. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God established a new people in a right-standing relationship with Him. To know how something has changed, we need to know how it began. So let's start at the beginning.

ADAM IN EDEN (GENESIS 1-2)

In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens, the earth, and every living thing. Then, God made man in His own image, like a son bears the image of his father so that man could rule over everything that He had created. In Hebrew, the word for *man* is *Adam*. God formed Adam out of dust. Adam was not born, he was formed as a grown man in the same way that a potter or an artist forms something of clay. Then, God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, and he became a living being. Adam lived in paradise, and there was only one rule. While Adam was still alone, the Lord commanded him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (See Genesis 2:16-17.)

But it was not good for Adam to be alone. He needed a helper for ruling over God's creation, so God put Adam into a deep sleep and made a woman from his rib. Adam's wife was not born, she was built out of Adam's rib in the same way that a building or a temple is built from raw materials. Adam could tell that this woman was made just like him – bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. (See Genesis 2:23.)

Adam and Eve were completely innocent, unashamedly naked, and shared unhindered fellowship with each other and with God. They were one flesh – male and female of the same kind of species on the earth. They lived in paradise, in perfect bodies, in a perfect creation, where everything worked exactly as God designed it. God's purpose for creating man was for him to rule over His creation as God's appointed king and queen.

Genesis 1:28: God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

In Hebrew, the word used for *subdue* in this passage is the word *kabash*. It means *to tread with the feet, to put into subjection, to make subservient*. You may have heard the expression *put the kabash on it* pertaining to getting a situation under control, or according to Urban Dictionary, *To squash something from a position of strength*. So to paraphrase, God told the man and Eve to fill the earth with people like them and *put the kabash* on all of creation. Moreover, the word for *rule over* in this passage also means *to tread with the feet* or *to have dominion*. In no uncertain terms, God was telling them that He had given

them all authority over everything that He had created. Because of their innocence, they wouldn't abuse this authority and because they had an unhindered relationship with God, they would rule things exactly the way God wanted them. At least this was the plan.

ADAM'S DISOBEDIENCE (GENESIS 3)

But along came the serpent, who is the Devil, and God's adversary. (See Revelation 20:2.) He was a part of God's creation which Adam and Eve had complete authority over. The serpent deceived the woman and she ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, even though she knew that God had said not to eat of this tree. She then handed some to Adam who also ate. As soon as Adam ate from the forbidden tree, everything changed. By not exerting their God-given authority over the serpent, they became subject to him. When explaining to God what they had done, the woman admitted that the serpent had deceived her. The Hebrew word for *deceived* in this passage means *to put into debt, to become a creditor, to lend with interest and usury*, stemming from a Hebrew root word for deceptive practices. Essentially, like being trapped by a loan shark with astronomical interest rates, Adam and Eve were now slaves to the devil. (See Proverbs 22:7.) There was no hope of paying their way out.

Adam sinned by disobeying the one command God had given him. The consequence was exactly what God had said from the beginning – death. However, this did not mean instantaneous death of the body as we would think of it but more an explanation of death coming about. When God said, “you will surely die,” die or death is the same expression that would be used to say that someone is *dying of thirst* except in this case, Adam and Eve are dying of sin. Through disobedience, they separated themselves from fellowship with God, who is the source of life and consequently, their bodies would eventually die because of it. This death also denotes premature death, something that was not originally intended or, like the example of dying of thirst, could be remedied if only a drink of water were available. The bottom line is that because of their sin and without a God-given remedy, physical death was going to happen to both of them and everyone who descends from them, which includes all of us.

I say again, as soon as Adam ate from the forbidden tree, everything changed. Their eyes were opened, and their entire consciousness was changed from innocence to shame. They immediately knew that they were naked, and they tried to hide from each other and from God. There was no remedy for what had happened, there was no drink of water for this thirst, and there was no way for them to pay their way out of debt to the evil one or the consequence of death. They were stripped of their authority in the earth because they had now become the subjects of a new master. They lost their position of unhindered fellowship in the presence of God, and they and all of their descendants were now under a curse. Instead of freedom, authority and life, there was fear, subjection, and death. Through his choice, Adam went from innocent to guilty. His nature or his “internal operating system” so to speak, proved not to be good but evil, not righteous but sinful, and not blameless but rebellious against God.

Adam was now cursed to die and return to the dust out of which God had formed him. In fact, because of Adam's error, all of creation was placed under a curse. However, in spite of all this, we do see the first glimmer of some good news to come. Because the serpent had deceived the woman, God cursed the serpent and promised that someday the offspring of the woman would crush the adversary forever.

*Genesis 3:15: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he will crush your head**, and you will strike his heel.*

JESUS' OBEDIENCE

Fast forward to the days of Jesus. Jesus was not formed by God like Adam, and He was not built by God like Adam's wife. Rather, He was born of a woman, a descendant of Eve, just like you and me. After Jesus was born, He grew from infancy, to boyhood, to manhood in the same way that you and I grow up. Later,

in the days of His ministry, Jesus' favorite way to refer to Himself was the Son of Man. Since the word for man in Hebrew is Adam, Jesus called Himself the son of Adam.

However, Jesus was not conceived by a man of natural descent or in the natural way. Jesus was born to a young woman named Mary who was a virgin. Moreover, He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, Jesus' nature from conception in His mother's womb was the perfect nature of God Himself. His "operating system" was the same as God's because He was the Son of God. By the miracle working power of God, Jesus was both the Son of Man and the Son of God in one package.

*Luke 1:30-35: But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him **Jesus**. He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**. The Lord God will give him the **throne of his father David**, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; **his kingdom will never end**." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "**since I am a virgin**?" The angel answered, "The **Holy Spirit will come on you**, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. **So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God**."*

Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph. Both Mary and Joseph could trace their family lineage directly back to King David of Israel, the one whom God had promised a descendant to sit on the throne for eternity. (See 2 Samuel 7:11-16.) This also means that Jesus was Jewish, born into the people of Israel, the only people on earth in covenant with the God who is the Creator of heaven and earth.

The Jewish people all have one common ancestor, a man named Abraham. God promised Abraham that He would make a special nation out of Abraham's descendants and that they would own a special land – the land we know of today as the land of Israel. Abraham believed God in spite of the fact that even one descendant was totally unlikely because his wife was barren. Then, God did exactly what He promised, and Abraham's wife gave birth to a son named Isaac. Isaac was the only son of Abraham who inherited God's special promise. In due course, Isaac had a son named Jacob, and Jacob inherited God's promise of a nation made of his descendants. Jacob proceeded to have twelve sons, and after that, God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob's sons had families which became tribes and were collectively known as the twelve tribes of Israel. After a while, there was famine in the land, so they moved to Egypt. (see Genesis 12–50) Over the course of time, all the people of Israel became subjected to harsh and oppressive slavery by the Egyptians and this went on for about four hundred years. But God appointed a man named Moses, an Israelite from the tribe of Levi, to confront the king of Egypt and lead the people of Israel to freedom. After they were freed from the Egyptians, Israel had become a nation of people descended from Abraham, just as God had promised. (see Exodus 1–15) At that time, God gave Moses and the nation of Israel His Law; the perfect standard of conduct, obedience, and sacrifice which He required for maintaining a right relationship with Him. Israel was the only nation on earth with God's Law and commands which, if obeyed, resulted in God's abundant blessing. In fact, the promises obtained through obedience to these laws are righteousness, blessing, and life from God. (See Deuteronomy 6:25, 11:26-28, 30:19, 32:47.)

Read in your Bible, from the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 28, verses 1-14, which describes the blessings promised by God for obedience to His commands.

Unfortunately, no one in history has ever been able to live up to God's perfect standard. Why? Because, regrettably, ever since Adam rebelled against God, his rebellious nature has been inherited by all of his descendants, meaning all of mankind, including Abraham and his descendants. This inherited internal operating system of Adam is completely opposed to the Law of God with its underlying pride, selfishness, and evil desires which lures each and every one of us into sin. Nobody has ever been able to obey God's Law perfectly, and everyone has fallen short of God's standard. (See James 1:14; Romans 3:23.)

However, recall that Jesus was born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, Jesus had the nature of God within Him. Therefore, everything Jesus thought and did was a perfect demonstration of God's thoughts and actions. Because of this, Jesus lived a perfect life and fulfilled the requirement of God's Law. Jesus was never lured into sin because He did not have the nature of Adam. Although His divine nature was tested in every possible way, Jesus never sinned. He did everything the way that God wanted it done.

*Matthew 4:1: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil. (See also Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2.)*

*Hebrews 4:15: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been **tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin.** (See also 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5.)*

During His years of ministry, Jesus did many things which proved that He was sent by God and the Son of God living in human flesh. He performed many miracles that no one on earth had ever performed. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, caused the lame to leap, cast demons out of people, and every funeral that He attended, He raised the dead. He had authority over all creation including the weather, the seas, and multiplication of food. Everything about Him brought life, peace, wholeness, and restoration. He taught the Word and ways of God with authority and demonstrated the power of God through miracles. Jesus revealed the life and authority which God had intended for all of mankind to have when He created Adam way back in the beginning. It was like heaven on earth.

JESUS' SUFFERING AND DEATH

In spite of this, the religious leaders of Israel and the rulers of the world rejected Jesus. They planned and plotted and arrested Jesus because of false accusations, and sentenced Him to death through an illegitimate trial for a crime that He did not commit. They crucified Him.

Jesus knew in advance that this would happen, and He told His followers several times that He would have to suffer and die. In fact, this had been God's design since the earth was even formed. (See Revelation 13:8.) This means that Jesus' life was not taken from Him because neither man nor the devil has any power or authority over Him. (See John 14:29-31, 19:11.) Jesus laid His life down willingly to do the will of God and in order to fulfill the Scriptures concerning the Messiah of Israel. (See Matthew 21:42, 26:53-54; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Psalm 118:22.) This was the only way to remedy the problem that Adam had created at the beginning. Jesus, the only one who had earned through His obedience the right to righteousness, blessing, and life, would instead willingly suffer exile, curse, and death.

*Matthew 16:21: From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that **he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things** at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that **he must be killed** and on the third day be raised to life. (See also Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:21-27.)*

*Matthew 20:18-19: "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. **They will condemn him to death** and will hand him over to the Gentiles **to be mocked and flogged and crucified.** On the third day he will be raised to life!" (See also Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34.)*

*John 10:17-18: The reason my Father loves me is that **I lay down my life**--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but **I lay it down of my own accord.** I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.*

God's Law requires a blood sacrifice to atone, forgive, and cleanse from sin. This sacrifice must be unblemished without any defects as a substitute for the defects of the person who had fallen short of

God's standard. Without going into too much detail, the Law required an animal sacrifice of a bull, a lamb, or birds, depending on what the person could afford. Through the shedding of the animal's blood, the sin of the human offender was forgiven. The sacrifice of an innocent life restored an individual person or the whole community of Israel to right standing with God.

Because of Jesus' perfect, unblemished life, He was completely without defect by God's standard. As such, He offered Himself as a sacrifice to pay for all of our sin. He offered a sacrifice of the highest value, far beyond the value of any animal. Jesus sacrificed human life, the life of a Son of Man, which has more value than a bull or a goat. He also sacrificed the life of the Son of God which has infinite inexplicable worth. This makes the value of His sacrifice incalculable. Through this, He paid our debt and created a way for the whole world to be restored to right standing with God.

*John 1:29: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the **Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" (See also Hebrews 10:5-10.)*

*Hebrews 9:22: In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [of sin.]** (See also Leviticus 17:11.)*

But that's not all. By hanging on a tree, according to God's Law, Jesus also became a curse. The curse of God's Law is written out in great detail in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 and Leviticus 26:14-46. The curse includes every form of sickness and disease, every kind of lack and hunger, all relational problems between people and nations, all forms of oppression by every kind of enemy, and separation or exile from God. On the cross, Jesus received the full punishment and consequence for every disobedient act of all of mankind throughout the course of history.

*Galatians 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law **by becoming a curse** for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." (Quoting Deuteronomy 21:23.)*

But that's not all. When Jesus died, we also died with Him. In another passage Jesus said:

*John 12:32-33 NASB: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men to Myself.**" But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.*

Let's consider what Jesus, who was a Hebrew, was really saying. Remember that *man* in Hebrew translates as *Adam*, so when Jesus said *I will draw all men unto me*, He meant that He drew all of Adam, meaning every single one of Adam's descendants, the whole of mankind onto Himself on the cross. This includes me, you, and everyone we know who has been afflicted by our inherited sinful nature. He was the Son of Adam, embodying each and every one of us in His death. Like a giant magnet, Jesus drew the soul of every person ever born into His death with Him. Like pin-the-tail on the donkey, every descendant of Adam was pinned up with Jesus in this miraculous working of God's power.

*Romans 6:6: For we know that our **old self was crucified with him** so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--*

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

*Colossians 3:3: **For you died**, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Also Colossians 2:20; 2Corinthians 5:14.)*

Read in your Bible from the Book of Isaiah, chapter 52, verses 13-15, and all of Isaiah chapter 53. You will see in this passage Isaiah's description of God's Suffering Servant. This Isaiah passage begins with the very phrasing Jesus used to describe to His followers the way He would suffer and die. Jesus' words were:

*John 8:28: So Jesus said, "When you have **lifted up** the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. (See also John 3:14-15, 12:32-33.)*

Read in your Bible, all of Psalm 22. You will see that the first and last verse of Psalm 22 are the "bookends" of what Jesus uttered when His time on the cross began and finished.

*Matthew 27:46: About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**")*

*John 19:30: When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

But that's not all. Here is the best part! In both Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22, there is a shift from suffering to praise. Why? Because this has all been God's plan from the beginning and in spite of the most upside down looking circumstances, the will of the Lord is being put into effect! Jesus knew that God had accepted His sacrificial offering and had heard His cry for help. It was FINISHED!

RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

Jesus died on the cross and at His death, His soul descended into the pit of Hell while His body went into the grave. But God had indeed accepted Jesus' sacrifice. Therefore, God raised Jesus from the dead.

*Acts 2:24: But **God raised him from the dead**, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

*Acts 13:32-34: "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my son; today I have become your father.' **God raised him from the dead** so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.' (See also Romans 1:4.)*

In resurrection, Jesus was not formed out of dust like Adam, and He was not born of a woman as He had been before. When God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus was begotten again by God, as His Son. In the genealogies of Scripture, you will read things like "Abraham begot Isaac," meaning Isaac was Abraham's son, produced by Abraham's seed. Jesus had already been born by the seed of God into human flesh and God had already acknowledged Him as His begotten Son. (See Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Mark 1:11, 9:7; Luke 3:22, 9:35.) However, this time, instead of being born by God through a virgin, Jesus was begotten again by God out of the pit of Hell and by God's absolute miracle working power. Jesus' soul returned to His body, and the life giving power of the Spirit of holiness transformed His perishable body to an incorruptible body which will never perish.

But that's not all. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus crushed the head of the serpent. Recall the promise God made to Eve back in the beginning. The resurrection proves that mankind's cruel oppressor could not keep Jesus captive in death. Jesus conquered the evil one, stomped on the serpent's head, trampled him with His feet, and *put the kabash* on him. Jesus is now alive eternally, never to die again. Death has been overcome and the enemy has been defeated. Hallelujah!

After the resurrection, Jesus revealed to hundreds of people that He was indeed alive. Then, clouds lifted Jesus into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God. Jesus now has all power and authority to rule, reign, *put the kabash* on all of God's creation, and to be its King forever.

*Mark 16:19: After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, **he was taken up into heaven** and he sat at the right hand of God. (See also Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9.)*

*Philippians 2:9-11: Therefore **God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name**, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

A NEW ADAM

Undoubtedly, Jesus is King. But yet, it is equally true that evil still exists in the world. This is because even though the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice are available to everyone, only those who know that Jesus is Lord and believe in their hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead are included in relationship with God. When we believe Jesus, we become part of a new people, a new generation, a new Adam. This means that on the earth today, there are only two kinds of people: First Adams and Second Adams.

All of us were born the first time by our natural mother and biological father, descendants of the First Adam. For those of you who do not yet believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, you are still part of the First Adam. You are still spiritually separated from God, in darkness, and dead. Whether you believe it or not, apart from faith in Jesus, there is no form of religious observance or spirituality that can give you access to the Most High God, and no amount of good deeds can give you right standing with God.

But when you believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead, you are born again, begotten again by God who is now your Father. The seed of God (the Holy Spirit) comes to dwell in your heart. When you believe, you are spiritually transferred from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, and from separation from God to restored fellowship with Him. You become part of the Second Adam and one of God's beloved children.

*John 1:12-13: Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to **become children of God**-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but **born of God**. (See also 1 John 5:1.)*

*John 3:3-6: Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are **born again**. ... no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are **born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit**.*

*1 Peter 1:3, 23: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he **has given us new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ... For **you have been born again**, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

When we are baptized, we demonstrate what we believe in our hearts, and we are symbolically entering into the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, being begotten again by God.

*Colossians 2:12-13: having been **buried with him in baptism**, in which you were also **raised with him through your faith in the working of God**, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made you alive with Christ**. He forgave us all our sins, (See also Romans 6:4.)*

*Colossians 3:1: Since, then, **you have been raised with Christ**, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

*Ephesians 1:3, 13: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ**... For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and **brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves**,*

But that's not all. There are some obvious realities that haven't been addressed yet. Even people who believe Jesus still live in bodies that die, on earth and not in heaven, and still make mistakes and fall short of God's perfect standard.

When Jesus was on earth, He functioned in flesh like ours but with the operating system of God's nature. After Jesus ascended into heaven, He poured out the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 2:33.) When we believe Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and becomes our new nature. We now have the Holy Spirit in us as our new operating system even though we are still in our earthly bodies. When we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives, we live the way that Jesus did when He was in flesh. Through faith and obedience to the Holy Spirit within us as our new operating system, we can live in constant and unbroken communion and communication with God, and we can demonstrate the perfect will of God.

*2Peter 1:4: Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them **you may participate in the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

Think of it this way: God formed the first man out of dust and breathed life into him – a natural Adam – and his wife was in him when he was formed. Then, God built Adam's wife out of his rib to be just like him, to be one flesh with him, and to help him fulfill God's purpose in the earth. When Jesus was born again in resurrection, God breathed again the Holy Spirit into Him, forming a whole new type of Adam – a spiritual Adam – and his Bride was in Him when He was born again. Now, God is building Jesus' Bride, which is us who believe, aka the Church. God is building Jesus' Bride out of His own spiritual substance, His Body, to be just like Him, to be one flesh with Him, so that God will have made male and female of the same kind of species, to fulfill God's purposes in the earth. Everyone who believes that Jesus is Lord is a new species, a born again species, a spiritual species, a heavenly species even though we still live in earthly bodies. God formed the first Adam like a potter or artist forms a vessel of clay, and the first Adam's wife was taken out of him. God made the second Adam like an artist or a poet creating a masterpiece, and we who believe are part of this new creation. (See Ephesians 2:4-10.)

*2Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come**: The old has gone, the new is here!*

But, let's be real. We all still sin and make mistakes and fall short of perfection. Yes, this is true, but this is where the news gets really good! Through faith in what Jesus did on our behalf, we receive His perfect record as if we had never sinned. By faith, the blood of Jesus purifies us and we are perfect in God's sight.

*1John 1:7 AMP: But if we [really] walk in the Light [that is, live each and every day in conformity with the precepts of God], as He Himself is in the Light, we have [true, unbroken] fellowship with one another [He with us, and we with Him], and **the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin [by erasing the stain of sin, keeping us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations]**.*

Therefore, no matter what we may have done in our past, no matter what we may have done an hour ago, no matter what we may do tomorrow or next week or five years from now, Jesus' blood and death has already paid for it. There is no reason for us to ever hide from God as Adam and Eve did, there is no reason for shame, and there is nothing which can keep us from having unbroken fellowship with God who is our Creator and our Heavenly Father.

Think of it this way: when God made the rule about eating from the wrong tree, it was a rule between Him and Adam when Adam was alone. Adam's wife had not been built yet. Eve was the first one who ate from the wrong tree, but nothing actually changed for them until Adam ate it because God had made the rule with Adam. It was Adam's disobedience which caused the change in their position before God. In the same way, but reversing this error, Jesus re-established our right standing with God through His perfect obedience to God's Law. Therefore, in the same way that Eve eating from the wrong tree did not change their status with God, our errors against the Law of God do not change our status with God. We stay in right relationship with God no matter how much we mess up because the rule was established between God and Jesus who never sinned.

That's really good news!

JESUS IS COMING BACK

Jesus died to save us from death. He became sin to save us from sin. He became a curse to save us from the curse. He became man to save us from ourselves. He's coming back to save us from God's wrath.

*Hebrews 9:27-28: Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and **he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.***

When Jesus comes back, everyone who believes in Him will be clothed with an imperishable resurrection body just like His. Those whose bodies have already died will be raised from the grave, and those who are still alive when He returns will be instantly transformed. We will all be taken up into the air to meet Him and be with Him forever. (See 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.) But those who do not believe Jesus is Lord will be subject to eternal judgment, condemnation, and hell. The wrath of God will be poured out on the earth to avenge all evil. We don't want anyone we know to be subject to this. Importantly, we don't know when He is coming back. Therefore, we do everything that we can to share Jesus and the hope of salvation with everyone we know. (See 2 Peter 3:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11.)

Think of it this way: God told the first Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply in the natural way, through giving birth to natural children. Now, God through Jesus tells us to be fruitful and multiply in a spiritual way, by making disciples of Christ.

*Matthew 28:18-20: Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them** to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

In fact, to complete our assignment, Jesus gave us authority in the same way that Jesus had authority when He was on the earth. The Holy Spirit gives us power to do miracles, heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, and command creation the same way that Jesus did when He was on the earth.

*John 14:12: Very truly I tell you, **whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father.*

But that's not all. Jesus came in the flesh the first time to make reparation for the First Adam's error. Jesus is coming back to fulfill man's assignment to *put the kabash* on all evil for the rest of eternity. After that, all of creation will be restored to God's design. It will be like Eden all over again and we will live with God in our perfect bodies for all eternity. (See 1 Corinthians 15:25-26.)

*Revelation 21:1-8: Then I saw "**a new heaven and a new earth**," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**" He who was seated on the throne said, "**I am making everything new!**" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. **Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.**"*

We want everyone we know and love to be with us in heaven and on the new earth in the age to come. Therefore, until Christ returns, we have an assignment. We take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth with signs and wonders following so that everyone may come to know Jesus is Lord and receive their eternal inheritance.

Ok, that's all... for now.

INVITATION

If you have not yet placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you desire to be included in the salvation you've just learned about, then all that you need to do is believe. If you are ready for the Gospel to change your life and make you new, then pray this prayer out loud and from your heart.

Prayer: *God, I am by nature a sinner and I believe that you sent Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins. I believe that You raised Jesus from the dead to everlasting life. I repent of my sins and I make Jesus Christ my Lord. Send the Holy Spirit into my heart and make me a new creation. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Hallelujah! Jesus is King! Welcome to the family and salvation of God!

Basic Training Exercise

FAITH

Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV – Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

DESCRIPTION

Faith is what we do when we believe that God is real and true to His word. God's desire is for us to trust Him with our whole heart in every aspect of our lives. In fact, Jesus said that the only work God requires of us is to believe in the One that God sent. It is not always easy to trust in a God we cannot see in favor of reliance on our own ideas, abilities, money, resources, or remedies for our situations and problems. Furthermore, our lives are multifaceted and while we may have great faith in one area we may be weak faith in another. This said, whatever we truly believe in and depend upon is revealed by the actions we take. The practice of Faith is about trusting God with our lives, our situations, our relationships, until every facet of our being relies upon Christ alone.

TALK WITH GOD

In your life, what has been your experience of trusting God rather than your own understanding? There is a saying that, "God helps those who help themselves." Do you believe this is true? Why or why not? What is God sharing with you about his? Are there areas of life that you find it easier or more challenging to trust God? Talk to Him about this. How is God inviting you trust Him more or in new areas of your life?

PRAYER

Father, I believe, help my unbelief. I want to trust you more and in more aspects of my life. Show me how to trust you more, and how to make reliance upon you my way of life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Category: Basics

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PURPOSE:

To grow in faith and application of trusting God in our lives.

To increase in obedience and understanding of God's will and ways.

To identify and prune our lives of areas of faithlessness.

SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Faith and faithfulness.

Repentance from self-reliance over trust in God.

Purified motives.

Reduced manipulation of situations (i.e. trying to control outcomes.)

Experience of God's ways and work on our behalf.

PRACTICE

1. Invite the Holy Spirit to highlight an aspect of your life in which God desires for you to walk in greater faith. Examples include:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Finances | Family |
| Work/Career | Marriage/Romance |
| Social/Friends/Fun | Health/Sickness |
| Location/Living Place | School/Education |

2. As you move forward in faith in this area, commit to doing the following:

- Ask God what He wants you to do rather than telling Him what you want Him to do.
- Release back to God things you have initiated or are sustaining in your own strength. Allow God to prune you.
- Listen to God in prayer and do what He says.
- Place your faith in the power of God and not the wisdom of this world.

3. As you walk by faith in this area, take note of the following:

- What is your typical response when faced with an issue?
- In what ways might you be presuming you know what God's will is rather than asking Him?
- In what ways are you relying on your own abilities rather than trusting in God's ability on your behalf?
- In what ways are you trusting in other people's counsel rather than personal prayer and revelation from the Lord?
- In what ways do you need to let go and let God?
- What feelings come up in you as you begin to trust God?
- What doubts come up in you as you begin to trust God?
- How does the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ dispel your doubts? How is God calling you to trust Him more?

4. Praise God for His faithfulness even as you grow in faith.

NOTES:



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

- Hebrews 11:1, 6
- James 2:17-18
- Colossians 2:8
- 1 Corinthians 1:24, 2:5
- Romans 1:16-17
- Genesis 15:6
- Habakkuk 2:4
- John 6:29

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ESTABLISHED BY FAITH

By grace through faith in Jesus, we receive His perfect record of righteousness. We can stand before God free of guilt, shame, and accusation, ready to receive all of His blessings!

Use the worksheet on next page as a guide for this chart.

 CORNERSTONE COURSE <i>We Live to Manifest Our King</i>		
Transformed through Faith in the Gospel		
The Old You	Forgiven & Set Free by Christ's Death & Resurrection	New Creation
Nature of Sin Generations from Adam	Anything you were born into. Examples: Race, nationality, tribe, gender, genes, height, age, family patterns, selfishness, depravity, etc.	Divine Nature The Holy Spirit Born Again in Resurrection
Acts of Sin Trespasses Iniquities	Anything have done, including motives. Examples: Lying, cheating, moral failures, addictions, sexual immorality, slander, covetousness, hatred, etc.	Righteousness Purity, Holiness Spiritual Fruit
Curse Afflictions Exile from God	Any limitation on your ability to receive blessing. Examples: Lack, defeat, sickness, inability to get ahead, subjugation, broken relationships, miscarriages, etc.	Blessings Victory, Health Access to God
Kingdom of Darkness False Spirituality Religion	Any participation with works of darkness. Examples: The occult, idol worship, curses, consulting spirits and the dead, witchcraft, astrology, religious legalism, karma, vows, wisdom of man, tradition, etc.	Kingdom of Heaven Light of the World Total Freedom
Personal Attributes Advantages/ Disadvantages	Anything that you have going for you or against you. Examples: Birthrights, experiences, marital status, wealth or poverty, education, successes or failures, strengths/weaknesses, the way that you were raised, etc.	Child of God Living Hope Eternal Inheritance

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TRANSFORMED THROUGH FAITH WORKSHEET

Accompanies Transformed through Faith Chart

To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. ... In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you. - Isaiah 54:9, 14-15

1. In your life so far, what has been your biggest struggle area? Find it below and in **Column One**.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sin Nature, Generational Curse | Cursed Life, Can't Get Ahead | Pride in Personal Strength |
| Sinful Acts and Behavior | Darkness and False Spirits | Self-Pity in Personal Weakness |

2. In what ways do you still need to repent or turn from wrong ways/ideas in this area? Use **Column Two** to prompt your reflection.

3. Submit these things to God and ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing.

4. Select a Scripture from the Scripture list to pray for yourself on this issue. Slowly read this Scripture out loud three times. What does this say about what Jesus did for you? How does this impact your life?

5. How is God asking you to walk in freedom from sin, the curse, flesh, and darkness?

6. What does this mean about your new identity as a New Creation? Use **Column Three** to aid reflection.

7. Praise God for what He has done for you. Jesus is King!



NO MORE RELIGION: LAW TO GRACE*

After being raised from the dead, Jesus explained to His disciples that through His life, death, and resurrection, He fulfilled the Old Covenant. He also established and sealed the New Covenant with His blood. He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, which we know of as the Old Testament, particularly the writings of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, to reveal what had been accomplished by God's power through His suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus also told His followers to wait for power from heaven which would institute a whole new way of doing things. (See Luke 24:45-49.)

*Matthew 5:17: Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.***

*Matthew 26:28: This is **my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

*Hebrews 8:13: **By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.***

FROM OLD TO NEW

The Old Covenant is the Law of God which required measuring up to God's standard through perfect obedience to God's requirements in order to earn right standing with God and access to God. The Law of God is called the Torah and is found in the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch. It contains God's requirements for obedience, righteous behavior, and the blood sacrifices to atone for sin and errors. If God's standard was not met, the community or individual remained under a curse and deserved the death penalty for rebellion against God.

Without Jesus, we are spiritually living in the kingdom of darkness which is the domain of the evil one. The only way to regain access to God is through perfect obedience to His required standard which He expressed in the Law. Without Jesus, the only blessings we have access to are the ones God chooses to bestow upon us out of His own good will towards us because we are incapable of deserving them through our own attempts at righteousness.

*Matthew 5:45b: He [God] **causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.***

However, Jesus' perfect obedience to God's Law makes Him the only person ever in history to measure up to God's standard of perfection. Jesus' sacrifice paid the price for all of our errors, mistakes, and rebellion against God. Therefore, when we believe Jesus, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light – the Kingdom of Heaven where we are already spiritually seated with Christ.

*Colossians 1:13-14: **He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

*Ephesians 2:6: And God raised us up with Christ and **seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus***

The New Covenant is the way of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Believers receive right standing with God as a free gift and access to Him along with all the blessings this entails. In other words, when we believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we are no longer required to measure up to God's standard because Jesus measured up for us. In the New Covenant of Christ, we are not blessed or cursed because of our own obedience or lack thereof. We are blessed by God because of Christ's obedience which satisfied the Old Covenant requirement completely.

*Romans 5:1-2: Therefore, since **we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace** in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

By faith, we enter into the cleansing from our own unrighteousness and by faith, we receive Jesus' perfect record as if it were our own. We have been set free from the Law of sin and death!

SET FREE FROM STRIVING

Think of it this way: have you ever parked your car in a parking garage where there is a fee for parking? If so, then you know that there is a difference between when you have to pay to leave the parking garage and when you have visited the right person who can offer parking validation. When your parking ticket is validated, you do not have to pay because your ticket has been stamped PAID by the person you visited. This is what happens through faith in Jesus. Everyone since Adam has had an un-payable parking fee and has been stuck in the oppressive and miserable "parking lot" of the evil one's domain. Under the Old Covenant, the Law was the fee schedule for paying our way out of the parking garage and perfect obedience was the only way to be released. Nobody in all of history had ever been able to pay the fee and leave. However, through the New Covenant in Christ, we receive a PAID stamp on our lives because Jesus' perfect obedience PAID the fee for everyone who will believe. Therefore, we are free to leave the "parking garage" of the evil one's control over our lives once and for all. Jesus PAID for our freedom forever from all oppression of any sort including everything we may have done in our past, bad circumstances, sickness, poor relationships, poor self-image, all demonic oppression through evil spirits, and everything else included in the curse of the Law of God. (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Leviticus 26:15-39.) We stand justified before God as if we never had a parking fee at all because our ticket is stamped PAID. We are totally free in Christ.

This transfer from Law to grace could also be called graduating from Romans chapter 7 to Romans chapter 8. In Romans 7, the apostle Paul described how, when he lived under the Law, the Law invoked in him an uncanny war between what he knew was the right thing to do and what he actually did. It seemed that the more he tried to do what was right, the more wrong he did. He said, in effect, "I do what I don't want to do, and I don't do what I do want to do." Finally, in exasperation, he gave up and denounced himself as a wretched man. (See Romans 7:15-24.) I call this getting stuck in the *do do*, pronounced *doo doo*. For those of you who don't know, in my culture *doo doo* is an expression used for excrement, like the kind from a dog that we might accidentally step in from time to time. Getting stuck in the *do do* is no fun for anyone much like life under the Law because we can never measure up by what we *do do*. But Paul used this demonstration from his own life to guide us into the glorious freedom from the Law which we now have through faith in Christ. He graduated from Law-mindedness in Romans 7 to grace and Holy Spirit-mindedness in Romans 8. He then boldly declared that those who have placed their faith in Christ are not in the *do do* anymore. Why? Because we no longer live as those who are measured by what we *do* but as those who have direct access to God because of what Jesus *did*. Accordingly, we no longer strive to obey God's Law to be good or to measure up through our conduct. Rather, now we strive to rest in Jesus' perfect obedience on our behalf and to obey the Holy Spirit within us.

*Romans 8:1-2: Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.***

Significantly, this will also change the way we live and the way we pray. When we live according to the Law, the only thing to pray for is God's mercy because we can never and will never measure up and deserve curse over blessing. Typically, this leaves us looking for new methods or techniques of prayer or piety in order to attain what we seek and we are never quite sure of God's goodness or willingness to fulfill His promises.

However, when we live as those who have been established in the righteousness of Christ, we know that God's mercy is never failing because Jesus took the penalty we deserve. Therefore, we can pray boldly and confidently for God, our Father, to bring His kingdom to earth *as it is in heaven* as an extension of God's grace, mercy, and fulfilled promises to everyone who will receive it by faith.

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

GRACE TO LOVE

Thayer's Greek Lexicon definition of God's grace includes the fact that we receive favor and preferential treatment from God that we do not deserve but also describes God's grace as, "the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues." This means that through the transfer from Law to grace, not only does God not hold our imperfections and weaknesses against us – His grace gives us power to do His will.

This is important because the commands of the New Covenant are slightly different than the Law. Under the Old Covenant, the Law commands us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself." (See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27; quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18.) When we function from a Law mindset, we are constantly trying to prove our love by working really hard in our own strength to show off our righteousness or try to do enough good deeds to earn His blessing. Our focus remains entirely on ourselves and developing our own righteousness, no matter how much we try to convince ourselves that we are loving and serving other people.

However, Jesus gave us a new command in the New Covenant: to love others as He has loved us.

*John 13:34: **A new command I give you:** Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

*John 15:12, 17: **My command is this:** Love each other as I have loved you. ... **This is my command:** Love each other. (See also 1 John 3:23, 4:10)*

Now instead of striving, we can rest in Christ's love for us. Then, we can love others the way that He loves us by the power of God's grace working within us and through the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us. Our focus shifts off of ourselves and on to Jesus who gives us what we do not deserve and guides us in loving others with grace that they do not deserve.

In short, if we are working to be good or to prove our love for God or for others, then we are not truly doing good works for Christ. In fact, if we are working with a motive of attaining right standing with God, it means that we are still operating under the old way of doing things rather than the new way which Christ established for us. Christ followers have been transferred from old to new, from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from darkness to light, and from Law to grace.

TRANSFERRED

Post Card Handout

The image shows two postcard handouts side-by-side, both with a teal border and a background of a cloudy sky transitioning from dark on the left to light on the right.

Top Handout: RELIGION
Based On What You Do
A teal double-headed arrow spans the width of the handout. The word "Variable" is written in the center of the arrow. Below the arrow, it says "Sanctification = increases or decreases according to your performance".

Bottom Handout: Grace
Based on What Christ Did
A teal arrow points from left to right. The word "Finished: Transferred" is written in the center of the arrow. Below the arrow, it says "Sanctification = increasing revelation of what has already been done for you".

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It is Finished

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
Col 1:13-14

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
Heb 10:14

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him
Col 1:21-22

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."
Rom 1:16-17

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light
Eph 5:8

Scriptures are ESV translation www.activatedchurch.com

REST & REMEMBER

Deuteronomy 5:15 NIV – Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

DESCRIPTION

Rest is very important to God. Even God rested on the seventh day after He finished all of His work. Through faith in Christ, God invites us to enter His rest because Jesus finished all of the work of our salvation and redemption.

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, subjugated and driven by harsh task-masters. But by the blood of the Passover lamb, God delivered them out of slavery. Their historical reality gives us a beautiful prophetic picture of how we were slaves to sin, to this world, and to the evil one. But now by the blood of Jesus, we have been set free.

God called the Israelites to rest as a way of remembering that His leadership is not like the slave-masters they had experienced in Egypt. In fact, He had rescued them from that kind of abuse.

Therefore, practicing Rest & Remember is about stopping to rest from our tasks in order to remember the ways that God has redeemed us and set us free from the bondage this world, from our own nature, and from the evil one.

MEDITATION

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you and read the Deuteronomy passage above and the Additional Scriptures listed on the next page.

What stands out to you in these passages? How do these passages give you freedom for rest?

How have you viewed God as a harsh task-master?

How is serving Him supposed to be different than this?

What else do you sense the Lord speaking to you?



PURPOSE:

To enter into the rest that Jesus provides for our souls.

To recognize in our own lives how God has delivered us from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

To deepen our understanding of what Jesus has accomplished for us.

SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Deeper rest in Christ.

Greater trust in God.

Increased peace in our hearts.

Genuine thankfulness and joy for what God has done for us.

More recognition of the work of Jesus.

PRAYER

Father, thank you sent Jesus to be my Passover Lamb who delivers me from the flesh, the world, and the devil. Help me to remember the ways that I was in bondage and the ways that you have rescued me and changed my heart since the day I first placed my faith in you. Fill me afresh with wonder at your mercy and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRACTICE

1. Stop and rest (literally) from the demands of life including business, community, household, family, and even ministry or church-related duties. If needed, schedule a time.
2. Consider your life before Jesus (i.e. your way of life, behavior, trusts, addictions, the path your life was on, etc.) Use the following questions as a guide for reflection:
 - What or who were you enslaved to before Jesus entered your life? How has God rescued you from this?
 - In what ways are you different now than your former life? How has life with God changed you?
 - How has God delivered you from subjugation to evil? Addictions? Oppression? Demons?
 - How has God delivered you from over-working or the burden of providing, performing, or producing to take care of yourself?
 - How has God saved you from the need to be busy or task-driven to feel accomplished or useful?
 - How has God freed you from finding your legitimacy in your work or in your ability to meet certain standards?

3. Take time to praise God for His mercy and kindness towards you. Praise God that He is a kind and loving leader, not a harsh task-master. Thank God for your new life with Him.
 - Begin afresh and enter into the rest (physical and spiritual) that God has provided for us in Jesus. Trust Him to continue His work in your life.
 - Considering your answers to these questions, in what areas is God calling you a deeper level of rest, trust, deliverance, and freedom in Him?

NOTES:



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

- Genesis 2:2
- Hebrews 4:1-11
- Romans 4:1-8
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Philippians 1:6
- Psalms 127:1-2
- Isaiah 55:1-3
- Revelation 21:6
- Mark 6:31-32
- Psalms 23
- Psalms 81
- Matthew 25:24-25

NEW COVENANT WORSHIP: SERVING FROM LOVE

When Jesus first called His disciples, they were going about their ordinary lives, working in their normal jobs to make a living like regular people. It was what they had always done and most likely, what their father's and families had done for generations. But Jesus beckoned them to follow Him.

*Matthew 4:18-20: As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.***

*Matthew 4:21-22: Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. **Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.***

*Matthew 9:9: As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **"Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.***

These ordinary men immediately dropped everything right in the middle of their work day. Without ifs, ands, or buts, their lives changed in an instant as they received a new purpose – to follow Jesus. Three years later after Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead, some of the disciples figured they would return to normal life and go back to their family business. But Jesus explained to them why His suffering had been necessary to fulfill the Scriptures, atone for sin, and pay for the redemption of mankind. They worshiped Jesus in awe of all God had done for their salvation. Then before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His disciples to go into all the world to tell people about what God had done for them. A second time, Jesus was beckoning them to give up their plans and everything they had ever known in order to fulfill the plan of God. Nothing about their lives would ever be ordinary again.

LIVING SACRIFICE

What the first disciples did is our example of New Covenant worship. They recognized that nothing on earth could possibly compare in significance, value, or appeal to the privilege of knowing Jesus and walking with Him. The same is still true for us today because Jesus is still worthy of our worship, our devotion, our love, and our lives.

*Romans 12:1: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, **in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.***

In this verse, *worship* is defined as "service rendered for hire including ministry in service to God and sacred services according to His will." Another word used to describe *worship* means to "kiss the hand in token of reverence or to kneel or prostrate oneself to express respect."

In the Old Testament, worship service to God very literally consisted of priestly service in the Tabernacle or Temple which fulfilled God's regulations for sacrifice and consecration. In those days, only specially designated people were anointed to serve God, enter into His presence, and hear His voice. Priests were

set apart from everyone else and dedicated exclusively to their God-assigned duties. They worshiped God by serving Him. Through serving Him, they served others.

Now, in the New Covenant, we are called by God to bow our knee to Jesus and lay down our lives for Him in order to fulfill God's Kingdom purposes. Sometimes, like the first disciples, this means we have to drop everything we are doing and leave behind life as we know it in order to follow Him fully.

A heart positioned towards God in adoration that is ready and willing to do whatever He may ask of us is the very heart that God has been seeking from the beginning of mankind. Unfortunately, this was impossible for any human to achieve. Adam bowed his knee to the deceiver by eating from the wrong tree because Adam did not love God more than he loved himself. He selfishly wanted to be exalted rather than showing honor and reverence for God who had created the whole world for him. The love of the Old Testament priests grew cold because they did not love God more than self-righteousness, ritual, and status. They selfishly wanted to benefit from their position rather than being awed at God's kindness in choosing them. No one in history has ever been able to love God more than they love themselves.

Except for Jesus. He never bowed His knee to the tempter, and His love for God never grew cold. He willingly offered all of Himself in obedience to God in order to give God what He desired most – mercy. He loved God more than His own life. This was His form of worship, even unto death.

*Hebrews 10:5-7: Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, **but a body you prepared for me**; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. **Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, my God.'**" (Quoting Psalm 40:6-8.)*

*Hosea 6:6: For **I desire mercy**, not sacrifice, and **acknowledgment of God** rather than burnt offerings. (See also Proverbs 21:3; 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11.)*

The Hebrews passage above is quoting Psalm 40. In the original Psalm, the verbiage used is, "sacrifice and offering you did not desire, *but my ears you have opened.*" Jesus lived His life in absolute devotion to God, acknowledging God through everything He did and every word He said. (See John 5:19-20.) His ears were open to hear what God wanted Him to do and He loved God enough to do what God said.

Now that we are indwelt with the same Spirit that Jesus had, we can worship God the way that Jesus did. Our spiritual ears have been opened so that we can listen to the Holy Spirit and obey God's guidance for our lives. Each one of us is a priest called by God to worship Him, stand in His presence, and hear His voice. (See 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10; Hebrews 4:16.) If we truly appreciate what Jesus has done for us, then like Him, we will say, "*Here I am – I have come to do your will, my God.*" We will offer God our bodies to be used for His purposes no matter what He might call us to do. We will not waver in double-mindedness or selfish thoughts for our own provision or exaltation in order to make God and His Kingdom the first and highest priority of our life.

*Romans 6:13: Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather **offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.***

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20: Do you not know that **your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit**, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.***

*Matthew 6:25, 33: Therefore I tell you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ... But **seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

WORSHIP AND LOVE

Typically when we think of worship, we think of singing songs of praise and adoration and exaltation. This is also valid and true. Jesus is our King. If we were to worship and exclaim our praise for a king of this world, we would pay our respects to him out of reverence for his majesty, his position of power and authority, and out of any thankfulness we felt for how well and justly he ruled us or the kindness he showed us. We worship King Jesus this way, it's just that His throne is in heaven rather than on earth. This said, heaven has been worshipping Jesus for a very long time.

Worship in heaven sounds like this:

*Revelation 4:8b: Day and night they never stop saying: " **'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'**"*

*Revelation 4:11: "**You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.**"*

*Revelation 5:9: And they sang a new song, saying: "**You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.**"*

*Revelation 5:12: In a loud voice they were saying: "**Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!**"*

*Revelation 5:13: Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "**To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!**"*

If we truly believe these exclamations of God's worthiness and glory then our lives must be altered from what they were before we knew Jesus. For example, believers in the Book of Acts were singularly devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and their lives were consumed with worship for their eternal King. Nothing else mattered. They devoted their lives to prayer and eagerly waited for His prompting through the Holy Spirit to direct their hearts and their lives. They willingly fasted to humble themselves before Him, increase their sensitivity to His Spirit, and to become vessels of His power. They studied the Scriptures night and day to receive new revelation of all that He had accomplished for them. They took communion together to celebrate their bond with one another in Him as a special people of God.

*Acts 1:14: They all **joined together constantly in prayer**, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

*Acts 2:41-42: Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. **They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.***

*Acts 4:32: **All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.***

This is because worshipping Jesus in heaven and serving His Body on earth are inextricably intertwined. As the Old Covenant priests demonstrated, when we worship God by serving Him then, through serving Him we serve others. When we offer our lives to God in worship as His New Covenant priests, He will, undoubtedly, lead us to reach out to those who do not know Him and love other believers deeply from the heart. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commands." His command is to love one another the way Jesus loved us – by living selflessly for God as we open our ears to stay in step with His voice.

*Philippians 2:3-8: **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests***

of the others. *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, **did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death--even death on a cross!***

We do not worship for show, or sacrifice to pay our way into blessing. We do not serve others out of obligation to God. The only reason to worship, sacrifice, and serve God is out of genuine love for Him. If we do not love Him, our priestly service has grown cold and is worth nothing.

SURRENDER & TRANSFORMATION

The Apostle Paul's transformation story is probably the most dramatic conversion in the New Testament. Interestingly, Paul, who had been called Saul, did not receive the Gospel message the first time that he heard about Jesus. Quite the contrary, it infuriated him. He had been the most aggressive religious zealot in his day against Jesus and all of His claims of Lordship and had persecuted Christians, approved of their assassinations, and tried to force Christ's witnesses to deny that Jesus is the Messiah. But then, when Paul was on his way to Damascus on a mission to find, imprison, and kill more Christians, he had an encounter with the Jesus, and his life was changed forever.

*Acts 26:14-15: We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, '**Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.**' Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.*

"Kicking against the goads" was a proverbial expression for resisting the obvious to the point of self-destruction. A goad is an iron tool used to prod cattle along in the way that their masters want them to go. The Scriptures and prophecies of Scripture all point to Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, but Paul resisted.

When Paul finally became a believer, he had to rethink everything he had ever known about God in order to actually know Him. As Paul's approach to life was completely renovated to follow Jesus, he was rejected by almost everyone, lost almost everything he had, and forfeited the status he had attained for his zeal and expertise. For about ten years, Paul became a nobody. But Paul considered all of this a small price to pay because of the price Jesus had paid for him. This was his mindset:

*Philippians 3:7-9: But **whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.** What is more, **I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage,** that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*

God changed Paul's heart. He no longer resisted God but instead, went on to be the most influential advocate for Christianity the world has ever known. Paul proclaimed Jesus, established many churches, wrote a large portion of what we know of as the New Testament, and endured through persecution, and chronic near death experiences. Paul offered his life as a living sacrifice to serve King Jesus. Eventually, he gave his life for Jesus and was martyred, beheaded for proclaiming a King other than Caesar.

Not everyone is called to martyrdom, but every believer is called to take up their cross and follow Jesus. Not everyone is called to give away everything that they own, but every believer is called to love nothing more than Jesus and to cling to nothing of this world. Not everyone is called to be like the Apostle Paul but every believer is called to be like Jesus. Each one of us has a role and a purpose in God's Kingdom. Will you fulfill yours?

PROCESS WORKSHEET

ALIGNING WITH GOD



INSTRUCTIONS

Sometimes, we find ourselves wanting or needing to align or re-align our lives with God and His purposes. It is important to seek God's guidance and be willing to do whatever is required of us to get in step with Jesus.

Use the following as a guide to help you pray and seek God. Write down a summary of your perception of God's responses of each of the following questions/prayers.

What is God's purpose for you?

- i Prayer:** God, show me Your purpose for me. Show me where my life is out of alignment with Your purposes and help me to align with Your will for me. Guide me, protect me, and give me the strength and courage to submit myself to Your will for me, no matter what it takes.

Philippians 2:13 - For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Psalm 37:23 NLT - The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.

How has your unique journey/history prepared you for God's purpose?

- i Prayer:** God, show me how You can use the experiences I have had so far for Your Kingdom. Thank You that You are redeeming my past to bring You glory. Thank You that nothing is ever wasted with You and You are always moving forward.

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

How has God designed you? What has He designed you for?

- i Prayer:** God, You created me and You know me better than I know myself. Show me what You designed me for and what You have called me to be and to with my life.

Psalm 139:13-16 - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Where does God want you to be?

- i Prayer:** God, where do You want me to be in this stage of my life? Is there anywhere You want me to go short-term, long-term or permanently?

Isa 30:21 - Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

How does God want you to interact with your family, spouse, children, etc?

i Prayer: God, show me how to be a better spouse and parent. Show me how to honor my parents.

Colossians 3:18-21 - Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Ephesians 6:2 - "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise.

What are the recurring difficulties in your life? How does God want to stop this cycle?

i Prayer: God, show me my unique pattern of temptation and my areas of weakness. Forgive me for my errors and sins. Break me free from myself. Strengthen me to make new choices to honor You.

1 Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

How does God want to release you from burdens, bitterness, or wounds from the past?

i Prayer: God, help me to forgive those who have hurt me. Help me not to hold a grudge. Wash me so I can be clean. Heal my heart and heal my body.

Psalms 34:18 - The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

1 Peter 2:23-24 - When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

How does God want you to balance work/tasks and rest?

i Prayer: God, show me the rhythm You want for my life and how to fulfill my responsibilities. Help me to say "no" to things You do not want me to do and "yes" to things You want me to do.

Matthew 11:28-30 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

How will God provide for this?

i Prayer: God, give me the faith to know that You will provide for me when I am aligned with You.

Matthew 6:33 - Seek first his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.

Romans 13:8 - Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.

What is the next step God wants you to take?

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WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS

Mat 6:19-21 NIV - Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

DESCRIPTION

Jesus was not afraid to talk about money. In fact, He said that how we spend can reveal what we love, prioritize, and esteem as important. How we handle our finances can also be an indication of how much we truly trust God's ability or desire to provide for us and how much we truly involve Him in our daily lives. At times, our spending might be heavy in a certain category because we are obeying God's will. But at other times, we have given high priority to something that God does not value as highly as we do. All the same, where our treasure is reveals where our heart is. The practice of Where Your Treasure is examines our spending to shed light on how we are using our money and if it accurately represents our heart for God.

CONSIDERATIONS

What has been your experience with money? Did you grow up rich or poor? How has your financial life changed over the years?

What challenges you most about the subject of money? What "issues" do you have about it?

How involved do you think God wants to be in your finances? How involved do you want Him to be?

PRAYER

Father, I want my heart to be with you in every aspect of my life. Show me where my treasure is and how it is a reflection of the state of my heart towards you. Help me to align my heart and my treasure with your will and purposes. In Jesus' name, Amen.



PURPOSE:

To grow in trusting God in our finances.

To discern and align our priorities with God and His purposes.

To turn our financial decisions over to God.

SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Repentance from self-reliance and the love of money.

Proper stewardship of the resources God has given us.

Increased trust in God's provision for our needs.

PRACTICE

- Look back on the past week (or month) of your spending and prepare an outline of what you spent money on.
 - If this information is not readily available, journal or write down everything you spend for one week.
 - If you had any major and/or irregular expenses in the past week (or month) do not include them in this exercise.
- Group your spending into major categories.
 - For example, categories might be Food, Household Bills, Education, Debt Repayment, Offerings, Ministry, etc.
- Where is your treasure?
 - Calculate your total spending in each category.
 - Put the categories in order from most spending to least.
 - What category did you spend the most in? The least?
- Where is your heart?
 - What does this snapshot of your spending reveal about what is important to you?
 - Do you feel that this spending snapshot demonstrates how important God is to you? His Kingdom? Ministry?
 - Do you think that this spending snapshot accurately represents the season or stage of life you are in? How so?
 - If a stranger were to look at your spending, what would they see as your highest priority? Would that be an accurate assessment of your heart? Why or why not?
 - How much did you involve God in your spending?
- Ask God to help you align your spending with His will for you
 - Ask Him if there to reveal any "obligations" you have entangled yourself with that were not His will for you. Ask Him to begin to show you how to untangle it.
 - Repent from the ways you have not involved God in your spending or justified your spending apart from Him.
 - Receive the Lord's forgiveness. Listen to His voice. Do what He says.

NOTES:



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

- Matthew 13:22
- 1 Timothy 6:9-10
- Luke 16:13
- Luke 12:13-21
- Matthew 7:9-11
- Philippians 4:11-19
- Hebrews 13:5
- Proverbs 23:4
- Proverbs 19:17
- Proverbs 28:27

UNIT ONE – KEY QUESTIONS

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Use this worksheet to test your grasp of the material and exercises of Unit One.

What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (in your own words)	
Who is Jesus?	What did Jesus do for us?
What are some examples of the benefits of faith in Jesus?	How do we receive the benefits of what Jesus did for us?
What do we have to do to continue in God's blessing?	Why do we serve Jesus? How do we serve Jesus?
What is one thing you learned that you did not know before?	What questions do you still have about this subject?

UNIT ONE: GROUP EXERCISES

Using the Transformed through Faith Chart and Worksheet, have each person in the group share a personal and specific testimony of how Jesus saved or delivered them.

AND/OR

Using the Aligning with God Worksheet, have each person in the group share how God is aligning their lives with His purposes.