

Life Book
Volume 2

by
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Life Book
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[pullquote]A Self-study guide for personal and ministry development

Introduction

God has gifted you and called you by His grace. Indeed, you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. It is vitally important that you seize the opportunities of these historic days.

To rise to the challenges of our time, we must be leaders with vision, anointing and an ever-deepening relationship with God. These are the themes of Volume 2 of the **LifeBook**. Like Volume 1, this small book is meant to be a manual for personal and ministry development.

There are seventeen lessons in this book addressing three vital subjects:

- The vision God has given you for your life and the ministry He has placed in your stewardship,
- Living and serving in the power of the Holy Spirit, and
- Changing nations through intercession, spiritual warfare and worship.

As with Volume 1, we offer these suggestions for receiving the most benefit from this volume of the **LifeBook**:

- *Pray as you read.* Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you and help you put into practice the truths you learn.
- *Study the **LifeBook** along with an open Bible.* Passages from the Bible are intentionally not printed in the *LifeBook*. Only the verse references are given. Looking up the passages in your Bible will help you become more familiar with the powerful truth in God's Word.
- *Study one session each week.* Reading the same lesson daily for a week will help you lodge the key truth and main ideas in your mind and your spirit.
- *Memorize the Bible verse at the end of each lesson.* One of your greatest tools as a minister is your knowledge of Scripture. The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God you have hidden in your heart.
- *Meditate on the key truth in each lesson.* These truths can change your life. Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you by putting these life-giving concepts deep in your spirit.
- *Make a plan to act on what you learn.* Each lesson's action steps are your opportunity to turn life-giving truth into life-changing actions! Determine that you will act on what you learn.

I am grateful and privileged to have had a very capable writing partner for this second volume of the **LifeBook**. Dale Evrist pastors one of the healthiest, most vigorous churches I've seen. He is a church planter, a discipler of many young people in ministry, and a compassionate pastor to his flock. I extend my deep thanks to him for writing about half of the lessons in this volume.

May God bless you – and change you – as you interact with Volume 2 of the **LifeBook**. May you be focused by God's vision, empowered by His Spirit and changed through His presence.

David Shibley
President, Global Advance

[pull quote pg 1:] **Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. John 13:16-17**

[pull quote pg 2:] **And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:18**

WEEK 16

A SLAVE BY CHOICE

Read Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-26; John 13:12-17; Revelation 19:5

When Bill and Vonette Bright began the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ in 1951, they signed a written contract to become slaves of Jesus Christ. For over fifty years, Dr. and Mrs. Bright started every day by offering themselves to serve their Master in any way He desired.

Many times throughout the Bible the writers speak of being “*servants of God*” and “*servants of Jesus Christ*.” (Read Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1.) Those whose lives are not under the lordship of Christ are “*slaves to sin*” (Romans 6:17), “*slaves of uncleanness*” (Romans 6:19) and “*slaves of corruption*” (2 Peter 2:19). Now that we belong to Christ we are to be “*slaves to God*” and “*slaves of righteousness*.” (Read Romans 6:16-23.)

Ultimately we *will* serve someone: God, the devil or ourselves. Whose slave are you? As a minister of the gospel, you are called both to lead and to serve. We lead by serving, and there can be no better model than Jesus Himself.

1. Jesus is the model servant-leader. He is our example of how to minister, how to serve God and how to serve people. (Read 1 Peter 2:21.) God the Father calls His Son, Jesus Christ, “*My servant . . . in whom My soul delights*” (Isaiah 42:1). As we bring every part of our lives under Christ’s lordship and serve as He served, we, too, can delight the heart of our heavenly Father. (Read Zephaniah 3:17.)

In his book, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, Chuck Colson writes that Jesus “served others first; He spoke to those to whom no one spoke; He dined with the lowest members of society; He touched the untouchables. He had no throne, no crown, no bevy of servants or armored guards. A borrowed manger and a borrowed tomb framed His earthly life.” We are to follow the example of our Lord and serve God by serving people. (Read Matthew 10:24; 1 Peter 2:21-23.)

2. True spiritual leaders are slaves by choice. *Involuntary* slavery is one of the worst possible sins against humanity. But knowing who we are in Christ, we can *voluntarily choose* to serve others. We serve willingly because we know the dignity of who we are in Christ. We are sons of God and Christ’s ambassadors. (Read John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:20.) God has given us this exalted position. From that secure position, we can choose to serve. Paul often referred to

himself as a “bond-slave of Jesus Christ.” (Read Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1.) A bond-slave was a slave by choice. Under the Old Covenant, a Hebrew servant had the option to leave his master after a time of service to him. There were times when the slave would choose to stay and volunteer to freely serve his master for the rest of his life. He did this because he loved his master and had found security in his house. In the same way, out of our love for Christ we freely choose to serve Him and His purposes for the rest of our lives. (Read Exodus 21:1-6.)

3. God is fashioning a new kind of leader for this new season. The leadership style that Jesus modeled and ordained for His kingdom is exactly the opposite of the heavy-handed leadership often seen in the world. In Christ’s kingdom, it is the meek, not the oppressors, who will inherit the earth. (Read Matthew 5:5.) Under the world’s system, people lead by threats and force. In Christ’s kingdom, we lead by humbling ourselves and serving. (Read James 4:6,10.) The new leader God is fashioning has anointing without arrogance, boldness without brashness, and power without pride. (Read Philippians 2:5-8.)

4. Servant-leaders lead from the heart. Many non-Christians have excellent leadership skills. These skills, though important, do not qualify you for spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership flows from a deep, personal relationship with Christ. Spiritual authority is a result of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. A servant-leader delights in glorifying God and lifting other people. He serves Christ by serving needy people. (Read Matthew 25:34-40.) A Christ-honoring leader esteems others more highly than himself. (Read Philippians 2:3-4.) Like his Lord, he is willing to lay down his life for others. (Read John 10:11.) Jesus displayed His servant’s heart by washing his disciples’ feet. (Read John 13:1-17.) John Maxwell calls this the “law of connection: Leaders touch the heart before they ask for a hand.”

5. Servant-leaders humble themselves in child-like trust and obedience. Reggie McNeal in his book, *A Work of Heart*, observes, “Instead of studying rulers for leadership insight, [Jesus] suggested that his disciples should learn from children.” (Read Matthew 18:1-4.) Just as children are trusting and obedient, we are to trust God and His ways with us and obey all He speaks to our hearts.

6. As bond-slaves of Jesus Christ, we must be good teachers without entering into quarrels. Godly leaders are prohibited by Scripture from entering into arguments. They only lead to contention with unbelievers. Rather, we are to faithfully teach God’s Word and trust the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to those who hear us. (Read 2 Timothy 2:23-25.)

7. As bond-slaves of Jesus Christ, our highest desire must be to please God. We should be friendly and kind to people. This will help bring people to Christ. (Read John 13:20.) At the same time, we cannot be concerned with whether or not we please people. We must be gracious, even with those who oppose us. (Read Galatians 1:10; 1 Peter 2:21.)

8. As bond-slaves of Jesus Christ we are not to judge other believers. They are “someone else’s servants” (Christ’s servants). Since they will answer to Him, not us, we should not judge their service. (Read Romans 14:4.) We should defer all judgment to the Judgment Seat of Christ, where all our works and the motives behind them will receive their true value. (Read 1 Corinthians 4:2-5.)

9. God takes excellent care of His servants. He delights in prospering them. (Read Psalm 35:27.) Faithful servant-leaders will be rewarded with a crown of glory by the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. (Read 1 Peter 5:2-4.)

Make the commitment to become a growing servant-leader.

* * * * *

MEMORIZE: *Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for man (Mark 10:43-45).*

KEY TRUTH: You can choose of your own free will to be a bond-slave of Jesus Christ for your entire life.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Are you serving your own desires or God and His purposes?
- Have you volunteered to be Christ's bond-slave for the rest of your life?
- In what specific way can you display servant-leadership today?

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me,” says the Lord. Isaiah 54:17

[pull quote pg2] For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5

WEEK 17

STEPS TO GREATER INFLUENCE

Read: Joshua 1:1 – 5:15

The first five chapters of Joshua give at least ten important principles for effective leadership. These chapters also provide insight on how to move from minor leadership to major leadership. Here are ten important insights from Joshua’s preparation for greater influence.

1. Spiritual leaders do not live in the past. *“Moses My servant is dead” (Joshua 1:2).* Our world is changing rapidly. This new day in ministry requires new methods. God’s Word never changes, but our methods should change and adapt to the realities of our time and culture. Leaders do not live in the past. They act in the present and their vision sees into the future.

2. Walk out your spiritual inheritance. *“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you” (Joshua 1:3).* Every Christian has a “realm” of influence for Jesus Christ. Your area of potential impact may be much larger than you realize. That is why you should daily pray, as Jabez prayed, that God would increase your influence. (Read 1 Chronicles 4:10.) Do not settle on a small corner of your spiritual inheritance. Explore the very limits of the influence God has given you. This will require that you walk by faith into new territory spiritually.

3. Be bold in the face of opposition. *“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life” (Joshua 1:5).* This does not mean that we are unkind to our critics or that we do not learn from them. But we must not receive criticism that is intended to hurt or destroy. (Read Isaiah 54:17.) As a leader you should expect opposition. True leaders attract opposition because they move people beyond what they have known and what is comfortable. You can be bold when people oppose you, knowing that God has given you the victory.

4. Be assured of God’s presence. *“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5).* No matter where you are, no matter what you do, God is with you! You can live confidently because you know God is with you and He is for you. Claim the promise of God’s presence. Jesus is Emmanuel, God is with us. He will never leave you! (Read Hebrews 13:5.)

5. Always act with courage. *“Be strong and very courageous.” (Read Joshua 1:6,7,9).* Bill Bright often said, “You cannot be a leader and a coward.” Leadership requires courage. As a leader you will make difficult decisions. Some of your decisions will be unpopular. In the midst

of conflict and challenges, you can always exhibit courage, *“for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:9).

6. Obey God’s Word. *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”* (Joshua 1:8). God’s formula for success is, first, to confess His Word with your mouth. (Read Mark 11:22-24.) Then meditate on God’s Word in your heart. (Read Psalm 119:97.) Finally, obey God’s Word with your life. (Read Psalm 119:97-100.)

7. Take a big step of faith. Joshua went from minor to major leadership in a single day. (Read Joshua 3:7; 4:14.) The day he took charge and modeled courage for the people to get beyond what had always blocked them from their inheritance – *“on that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel”* (Joshua 4:14). Joshua could put his foot in the water, but only God could part the water. Take a step of faith; do what you can do. Then trust God to do what only He can do. The river represents what separates you from God’s promises to you and your inheritance. What “Jordan” seems impassible to you? Take a big step of faith and God will display His miracle power for you.

8. Let your life be marked by God. *“Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you’”* (Joshua 5:9). Under the Old Covenant physical circumcision was the sign that a man was in covenant with God. In the New Covenant we can experience a spiritual “circumcision of heart.” (Read Colossians 2:11-12.) As a careful surgeon, the Holy Spirit wants to cut away anything that would disqualify us from God-honoring spiritual leadership. God wants to mark our lives in such a profound way that we will never be mistaken for a person who is not in a covenant relationship with Him. Allow the Holy Spirit to mark you as a covenant person. This spiritual surgery may be painful, but it is necessary before we can truly represent the Lord on the fields of spiritual conflict. (Read Joshua 5:1-9.)

9. Think and believe in terms of abundance. *“Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land”* (Joshua 5:12). The manna God daily provided for His children was just enough. Once it was eaten, there was nothing left. Yet God had promised that Abraham’s offspring would bless all nations. (Read Genesis 12:1-3.) They did not have resources to bless others as long as they were dependent on manna. In the same way, God brings His leaders to a point when the “manna” stops. He does not do this to harm us. He is moving us from “just enough” to abundance. Now we have a surplus so we may be a blessing to others! God wants you to be more than just a consumer. He wants you to be a producer in His kingdom and fulfill your covenant destiny to bless the nations! Now that you are a mature believer, provision will no longer just “drop out of heaven.” Now you will work with God in receiving provision, even if it means picking fruit in enemy territory! As a leader in covenant with God, we are blessed in order to bless others, even blessing all the peoples of the earth.

10. Have a new encounter with the Commander. *“And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’”* (Joshua 5:14). Before we go to claim our spiritual inheritance, we need a fresh experience with our Commander, the Lord Jesus Christ. In God’s army there is only one commander. We are to be

leaders of people, but we are followers of our Lord. (Read 1 Peter 2:21.) We follow in His footsteps and we are under His absolute authority. Joshua took off his shoes as a sign of reverence, in obedience and honor to his Commander. (Read Joshua 5:15.) May obedience to your Commander, the Lord Jesus Christ, mark your life as well.

MEMORIZE: *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).*

KEY TRUTH: You can move to major leadership by taking a big step of faith.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Are you facing a “Jordan” that seems impassable? How will you respond?
- Have you allowed God to mark your life?

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] For I know the thoughts I think towards you,” says the Lord, “thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

[pull quote pg 2] Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. Psalm 2:8

WEEK 18

FOCUSING YOUR VISION

Read: Proverbs 28:19; Habakkuk 2:2

Vision sees God’s hand in history and moves the future toward the unrivaled rule of Jesus Christ. Godly vision is rock-solid hope anchored in God and His promises. A leader sees farther and more clearly than others. A leader is required to convey what he sees to those who follow him.

God-given vision calls to you in the night and focuses you in the day. Your vision for ministry is a reflection of what God wants to accomplish through you. Spiritual vision occurs when God conveys to you His will for the future. Then, by the Spirit’s power, you are responsible on a human level to make the vision a reality. You are a steward of the vision God puts in your heart. (Read Acts 26:19.)

In *A Work of Heart*, Dr. Reggie McNeal writes, “Those called to be spiritual leaders feel connected to the big picture of God’s movement, His kingdom agenda. They feel personally responsible for partnering with God in his mission. They may work in very obscure places, but changing the world is their aim. This concern is not fitted in around the edges of life; it is the preoccupation of the called.” A clear vision from God helps create the future.

1. Vision confirms leadership. Aubrey Malphurs defines Christian leaders as “godly people (character) who know where they are going (vision) and have followers (influence).” First, God requires that we be godly people who cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. (Read Galatians 5:22-23.) Then He points us toward the destiny He has for our lives. (Read Jeremiah 29:11.) Finally, as we share God’s vision, He brings people who embrace the vision and help make it a reality. (Read Nehemiah 4:6.)

2. Vision comes from God. A vision *from* God will be preceded by a greater vision *of* God. The often quoted vision verse, Proverbs 28:19, could be translated, “Where there is no continuing redemptive revelation of God, the people of God are in a state of wasting away.” The vision God gives is always larger than our human abilities. Only God’s grace can make the vision a reality. In the same breath we cry, “*Who is equal to such a task?*” and “*God has made us competent for the task!*” (Read 2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5-6.)

3. Your church’s vision should be connected to God’s kingdom vision. God is pointing His leaders today beyond the temporal to the eternal. (Read Philippians 3:2.) He is stretching us beyond a merely local vision to a global vision. (Read Isaiah 11:9.) Any church that is not seriously committed to helping fulfill the Great Commission has forfeited its biblical right to

exist. Your local church's vision should be tied to the greater vision of God's eternal kingdom and the worldwide worship of His Son.

4. Your vision should be large enough to honor God and attract people. A wise man once told me, "Always dream big dreams. It doesn't cost any more to dream big dreams than to dream little dreams, and you will never realize a dream you do not have." God is at work changing people, nations and the entire world. If we truly grasp His heart, our vision will be large. (Read Psalm 2:8.)

5. Vision and faith go hand in hand. Vision inspires faith and faith, in turn, enlarges vision. God gave a faith-building exercise to Abraham when he told him to count the stars. (Read Genesis 15:5.) God was strengthening Abraham's faith to inherit the promise He had given him. (Read Romans 4:18-21.)

Many factors in leadership may be beyond your control. But the single greatest factor in Christian leadership is entirely up to you. Only you will determine how much you will choose to believe God. Missionary to China Hudson Taylor said, "We have heard of many people who trusted God too little, but have you ever heard of anyone who trusted Him too much?" We are invited to earnestly desire the best gifts from God. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:31.) Every leader should earnestly desire the gift of faith.

6. Clear vision mobilizes people to act. If the *people* perish without a vision, how much more does the *leader* perish without vision! Without vision life has no grand focus. But with clear vision everything on the inside of you stands at attention and reports for service. George Barna reflects, "Vision becomes a bold reason for living. It is a badge of purpose that the bearer wears proudly and courageously." Many churches are weak in evangelism simply because they have not been challenged to "lift up their eyes and look on the fields." (Read Matthew 9:37-38.)

7. Vision brings priorities to your life. Paul's life was focused by the vision God gave him. Men of vision are men of "one thing," not many. (Read Philippians 3:13.) Vision affects the choices we make. Time management moves from theory to necessity. Without a clear vision we tend to make choices based on what is pressing us at the moment. With a clear vision we make long-term choices that produce genuine change. We stop *reacting* to circumstances and begin to *act* in light of the compelling vision. It is important to note that the greater the vision, the fewer your options. The greater your vision and leadership, the more your days and minutes are determined. Useless activity diminishes in direct proportion to the size and clarity of your vision.

8. Vision does not diminish risk; it increases risk. God-given vision moves us past what is comfortable. In my own life, God's plans for me have always been greater than my human or financial resources. New vision always requires more energy and more money than I currently have. I am forced to exercise faith in God and His promises! Since vision literally changes the future, risk is inevitable. In most ventures, risk is in direct proportion to the size of opportunity. Francis Drake's prayer should be ours, too: "Disturb us, O Lord, when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, when we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore."

9. A healthy vision has healthy components.

- *A healthy vision is clearly understood.* The common people heard Jesus gladly. (Read Mark 12:37.) Every school age child in your church should be able to comprehend the vision of the church. Vision is sustained by seeing it clearly, saying it continually and showing it continually.
- *A healthy vision is possible.* Although a healthy vision stretches us, it is possible. It can be done! (Read Numbers 13:30.)
- *A healthy vision is passionate.* Mike Downey says, “Passion is to a Great Commission Christian what money is to a banker.” It is the “currency” we use to do kingdom business. The vision becomes like Jeremiah’s fire in his bones. (Read Jeremiah 20:9.) Even when you are exhausted and tempted to quit, the vision remains a fire in the leader’s heart that cannot be put out. A heaven-sent vision burns inside you as the kind of future that *must* come to pass.

Ask God for a clear, possible vision that comes from Him. Then write it down, read it and run to see it fulfilled!

* * * * *

MEMORIZE: *Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it” (Habakkuk 2:2).*

KEY TRUTH: A clear vision from God is essential for Christian leaders.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Do you have a vision you can clearly and simply state?
- If not, determine to get alone with God to receive His vision for your life and the ministry in your stewardship.
- As God instructed Habakkuk, write the vision in a clearly worded statement.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

[pull quote pg 2] Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

WEEK 19

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Read: Mark 11:22-24; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:1,6

God honors faith.

All effective Christian leaders exercise their faith. Many factors influence leadership. You may have little control over some leadership factors including your family background, nationality or your abilities. But there is one vital component to leadership that is entirely up to you: Only you will decide how much you choose to believe God and act on His promises.

The essence of faith is simply believing what God says and acting on His promises. It is an absolute confidence of those things we hope for. Faith trusts God to honor His word. Faith sees the unseen; it is a firm assurance that what we do not yet see physically will be reality. (Read Hebrews 11:1.)

Faith is the foundation of spiritual leadership. Yes, there are other qualities required of Godly leaders, but faith supports all these qualities. (Read 2 Peter 1:5-7.) We cannot please God without it. (Read Hebrews 11:6.)

You started your relationship with God by faith. You believed on Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. (Read John 3:16.) Notice that salvation also requires a verbal confession of faith. (Read Romans 10:9-10.) That same, child-like faith is to keep on guiding you in your walk with the Lord. (Read Romans 1:17; Colossians 2:6-7.)

Through faith in Jesus Christ we have become spiritual children of Abraham. (Read Galatians 3:29.) As the father of the faithful, Abraham's faith is an example for us. (Read Romans 4:1-3.) When God cut covenant with him, He called on him to walk in total dependence, trusting Him for the destination. (Read Genesis 12:1-3.) We also are called to follow His direction and walk by faith, not by what we see. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:7.) As J. Oswald Sanders wrote, "True faith is content to travel under sealed orders."

Here are some observations on living by faith.

1. God has given every Christian a measure of faith. (Read Romans 12:3.) You exercised faith by trusting in the finished work of Christ for you, which brought you salvation. (Read Galatians 2:8-9.) There is also a spiritual gift of faith. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:9.)

2. Nourish your faith every day. Each day brings fresh opportunities to increase our faith, placing our faith in His promises and believing Him to accomplish His purposes through us. You can strengthen your faith daily in the following ways:

- *Invest time alone with God.* Doubt cannot live in the presence of Almighty God. No circumstance is too great for Him. (Read Jeremiah 32:17.) As we commune with the Lord all fear melts away and faith is renewed.
- *Hear God's Word.* God's Word is eternally alive. (Read Hebrews 4:12.) His Word is so powerful that even the hearing of it sparks faith. (Read Romans 10:17.)
- *Memorize God's Word.* God's Word, hidden in your heart, is a powerful weapon. This is how Jesus defeated the devil when He was tempted in the wilderness. Our Lord's constant response to the enemy was, "It is written." (Read Mark 4:1-11.) God's Word in your in your mind an heart is also an effective deterrent against sin. (Read Psalm 119:9, 11.)
- *Speak God's Word.* Faith is to the Word what leaven is to dough. You mix faith with the Word by what you say. James reminds us that your words can set the course for your life. (Read James 3:6.) The reason we speak and meditate on God's Word is so we will obey what He says. (Read Joshua 1:8.)

No word of God will ever fall to the ground. His eternal word can spring to life at any time; it is an "*incorruptible seed.*" (Read 1 Peter 1:23.) Trust God's Word to do its work.

The Greek word *logos* refers to God's eternal Word. John referred to Jesus as the eternal Word. (Read John 1:1.) The *logos* is also God's written Word, the Bible. Another Greek word, *rhema*, is when a particular Scripture or truth the Holy Spirit breathes to life a particular Scripture or truth for our maturity or ministry. You can trust the *rhema* of God to you. Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth with a Mission, observes, "We create with God when we speak the words that God has given us to declare by faith."

3. Take a big step of faith. William Carey, the trail blazing missionary to India, challenged Christians in his day to "attempt great things for God and expect great things from God." Faith is like a muscle; if we exercise our faith, it will grow. If we do not use our faith, it will atrophy and grow weak.

There is a spiritual inheritance God has given you. As He did with Joshua, God is now calling you to walk out your inheritance. (Read Joshua 1:3-4.) Some pastor reading this right now is asking God for new land. I encourage you to literally walk out your inheritance.

4. Anticipate resistance. When God calls you to a new level of faith, you can be sure you will meet opposition. There will be resistance from the devil. Just as the serpent did with Eve in the Garden, the devil will try to make you doubt God's word to you and His good intentions toward you. (Read Genesis 3:1-4.) There will also be the mocking, sometimes even from friends, who will try to dissuade you from believing God's promise. Stand firm in faith against any attack on your faith. This will bring honor to Jesus Christ. (Read James 4:7; 1 Peter 1:7.)

5. Sow a seed of faith. Sowing and reaping is a cycle God has put in universe. Sowing *always* precedes reaping. Faith is like a seed. (Read Matthew 17:20.) When we sow seeds of faith we should expect to reap. (Read Luke 6:38.) Like a farmer, we should expect a crop as a result of the good seed we have sown. We can sow love, prayer, time or money and fully expect to reap. When we bring God the smallest of our strength, resource and ability – sowing it like a seed – there is guaranteed fruitfulness and harvest. Charles Spurgeon said, "Seedtime and harvest are tied together in a sure knot." (Read Genesis 8:22.)

In truth, when we sow seeds of kindness we are giving to the Lord. (Read Matthew 25:40.) Then we should give God a chance to act. Elisha asked a desperate, poor widow to give something first before attending to her own needs. He knew that only those who give will receive. (Read 1 Kings 17:8-16.) And as we give, like King David, we should bring an offering that is worthy of our wonderful Lord. (Read 2 Samuel 24:24).

6. Expect God to act. Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision, noted, “Nothing is a miracle until it reaches that area where the very utmost that human effort can do is not enough and God moves in to fill that space between what is possible and what He wants done that is impossible. That is God Room.” Placed as a mathematical equation, trust + expectancy = faith. Oral Roberts said it well when he challenged believers to “expect a miracle!” (Read James 5:15.)

7. Never surrender your vision. Vision and faith go hand-in-hand. (Read Galatians 6:9). Keep the vision and call of God fresh and clear in your heart. Faith holds on to God’s promises. (Read Hebrews 10:35-38.)

8. Write the vision. To keep the vision clear and ever before you, write it down. This is exactly what God told a discouraged prophet to do. God has an appointed time to unleash His purposes for your life. Trust Him, and trust His timing. (Read Habakkuk 2:2-4.)

Throughout my life I have found that God responds to my faith and is grieved by my fears. Faith activates His power; unbelief prevents us from experiencing His might. (Read Psalm 78:41; Matthew 13:58.) We have a great heritage of heroes of faith. (Read Hebrews 11.) We have a great covenant assignment – a Great Commission – to bring God’s blessing to the nations. (Read Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 28:19.) This requires faith and abundance, both of which God delights to give. (Read Luke 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 9:8-10.)

Jack Hayford encourages us to greater faith. “Our outlook is too small,” he writes, “but that smallness can be shaken off in answer to our Lord Jesus, who has called us to be *big* people. Big in our world view. Big in our love for the lost. Big in our giving.”

May our confession be the same as Paul’s: “*Take heart, men, for I believe God*” (Acts 27:25).

MEMORIZE: *Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them (Mark 11:24).*

KEY TRUTH: Faith in God and His Word will bring His blessing on your life.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- What big step of faith do you need to take?
- Clearly write the vision God has given you.
- Is there a faith-filled “prayer walk” you need to take? Begin to walk out your spiritual inheritance.

NOTES

**[pull quote pg 1] Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth.
Isaiah 41:15**

WEEK 20

RECOVERING YOUR CUTTING EDGE

Read: 2 Kings 6:1-7; Isaiah 41:15

The church father Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is man fully awake.” Yet Christian leaders often find that their lives and ministries have become dull and unfruitful. They are not fully awake to God’s promises or their potential.

God wants your work for Him be sharp and effective. (Read John 15:8.) Tragically many Christian ministers lose their “cutting edge” of effectiveness. They continue to go through the motions of ministry, but the sharp edge that cuts through opposition is no longer present.

This is what happened to a young prophet in 2 Kings 6. It was a time of expansion. The current facility was no longer large enough. (Read 2 Kings 6:1.) This young prophet was under proper spiritual authority. He asked Elisha, his mentor, to oversee the project. (Read 2 Kings 6:2-3). The young preacher was joyfully at work for God in a growing ministry, but somewhere in his busy service the “axe head” was dislodged.

His effectiveness was lost. It is very difficult to try to cut down trees with axe handles instead of axe heads! Yet many pastors find that dullness has set in to their ministries. They are still very busy for God, but it is as if they are trying to cut down trees without an axe head. They become discouraged because there is no progress, no “teeth” in what they are trying to accomplish.

Have you felt that way? Do you feel you have lost your “axe head” of effectiveness? The young preacher was very concerned when he realized the axe head had been dislodged. He knew he was no longer effective. He also knew that the axe was not his, it was borrowed. (Read 2 Kings 6:4-5.) In the same way, our effectiveness in ministry is not in the skills or tools we possess. We draw upon the sharpness of God’s gift to us.

Are you fully effective in your work for the Lord? Do you feel that your effectiveness has been dislodged? There are steps you can take to recover your “cutting edge.” They are the same steps the young prophet took in this story.

1. Go back to the place where your effectiveness was lost. Elisha asked the young prophet, “*Where did it fall?*” (2 Kings 6:6). Activity is not necessarily accomplishment. This young man was busy for God yet ineffective. You must honestly face the issue of where your effectiveness was lost. There are many ways you can lose effectiveness, including the following:

- *A secret sin.* Have you allowed a secret sin in your life? Is there unconfessed sin in your life? Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to search your heart? Have you

repented of every known sin? (Read Psalm 66:18.)

- *Unforgiveness.* In ministry you can be sure that someone will hurt you. Someone will come against you and say unkind, untrue things about you. When this happens you have an opportunity to take your next step in leadership by taking the high road of forgiveness. It has been said that forgiveness is setting a prisoner free and then discovering that the prisoner was you. (Read Ephesians 4:31-32.)
- *Too busy for God.* The devil's strategy is to keep us so busy doing things for God that we become too busy for God Himself. The work of the Lord crowds out time for the Lord of the work. God does not call us first to a ministry; He calls us to Himself.

2. Apply the cross of Christ to the place of lost effectiveness. Once the young prophet had identified the place where his effectiveness had been lost, Elisha "*cut off a stick, and threw it in there*" (2 Kings 6:6). This large stick of wood can be a type of the cross of Christ. By illustration, Elisha applied the cross to the place of futile work and dullness. In the same way, when we apply the cleansing power of Christ's blood to the place of our failure, sin and dullness, our "cutting edge" will resurface! (Read Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:7-9.)

There was another time in Scripture when a man of God did something similar. The children of Israel were desperate for water. They came upon a beautiful pool of water at Mara, only to find that the water was bitter and contaminated. Moses cast a tree into the bitter waters and "*the waters became sweet*" (Read Exodus 15:22-24.) Just so, when you apply the cross of Christ to the bitter experiences of your life, the bitter taste of those experiences becomes sweet by His transforming power.

3. Expect the miracle of resurrection. When Elisha threw the large stick of wood into the water, "*he made the iron float*" (2 Kings 6:6). Against all natural laws the iron floated to the top of the water! In the same way, everything in the natural order may say that your effectiveness will never resurface, but God can and will do the impossible.

Your effectiveness for God is not lost, it is just submerged. It has been stuck in the mud of discouragement and perhaps your own shame. But in Christianity, the cross is never the end of the story. Always, after the cross there is the resurrection; after death there is life. We apply the cross to our submerged effectiveness by repenting and believing that the blood of Jesus will cleanse us and make us fruitful once again. If you have identified the place where your fruitfulness was lost, and if you have applied the blood at that place, you should expect a resurrection of your "cutting edge!" (Read Isaiah 61:7; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:4-6.)

4. Reach out and take it. There was one more thing the young prophet had to do to see his fruitfulness restored: he had to reach out and personally receive the miracle. God had graciously resurfaced his cutting edge, but the young prophet had to extend the hand of faith and take it. (Read 2 Kings 6:7.) You, as well, must reach out the hand of faith, receive your recovered fruitfulness, "put the axe head back on the handle," and go back to work for the Lord – not in your own strength, but in the power of His life-giving Spirit.

Oswald Chambers said, "My life as a worker is the way I say 'thank you' to God for His unspeakable salvation." May you be "*a worker who does not need to be ashamed,*" "*a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth,*" and may you "*bear much fruit*" for Jesus Christ! (Read 2 Timothy 2: 15; Isaiah 41:15; John 15:8.)

MEMORIZE: *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples (John 15:8)*

KEY TRUTH: God wants your work for Him to be sharp and effective.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Is your present work for God sharp and effective or have you lost your “cutting edge?”
- What steps will you take – starting today – to recover your effectiveness?

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] **And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Ephesians 4:23**

WEEK 21

KEEP GROWING!

Read: Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Peter 3:18

Everything that is healthy is also growing. If you are healthy as a new creation in Christ, you will constantly be growing.

John 1:12 says that those who receive Christ are given the right “to become children of God.” When we yield to the Holy Spirit we are continually “becoming,” continually being transformed.

When the worm is transformed into a butterfly through the process science calls metamorphosis, it is literally transfigured – changed into something entirely different than it was previously. In that process there is a time when the creature is hidden. While in the cocoon the worm literally falls apart, only to reemerge as a beautiful butterfly.

It is often the same as God changes us. We go through a time when we are hidden, as the Holy Spirit crafts a very private transformation. During this time we may feel that we are of little use. The stretching into new dimensions may lead us to believe that, like the changing worm, we are falling apart. But there comes the day when we reemerge, so beautifully transformed that we bear almost no resemblance to our former self.

Never stop growing! Keep adding knowledge. (Read 2 Peter 1:5.) Always be “becoming.”

1. The agent of change is the Holy Spirit. No wonder Jesus referred to salvation as being “born again!” (Read John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:23.) It is the Holy Spirit who shows us our need of Christ and draws us to Him. (Read John 3:6; John 16:7-14; Titus 3:5.) As a believer in Jesus, your ultimate destiny is to become like Jesus. The Holy Spirit uses each circumstance in your life to conform you steadily into the image of Christ. (Read Romans 8:28-29.) And the Holy Spirit continues to change us daily as we yield to Him. He looses us from what we have been and frees us to be more and more like Jesus. (Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.)

One dramatic example of change was in the life of King Saul. As the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he was literally changed into a different man. (Read 1 Samuel 10:6-9.) Another example is Jacob. After wrestling with the angel for a blessing, he was so thoroughly changed in his character that his very name was changed. (Read Genesis 32:24-30.)

We are called to an ever-deepening relationship with God through His Spirit. (Read 2 Corinthians 13:14.) My father often said to me, “Son, it is more important what God does *in* you than what He does *through* you, because the quality of what He does through you will be determined by what He does in you.” Allow the Holy Spirit to continue to change you this very day. Let Him conform you more into the image of Christ. Just as the trigger on a gun releases the strength of the blast, God has provided us “triggers” for change. The “trigger” for releasing the Holy Spirit to change you is a yielded heart.

2. The arena for change is the presence of God. There is a “transformation chamber” where change occurs most rapidly. It is the holy place where we experience the presence of God. This

is why continual worship is vital to our ongoing transformation into the image of Christ. Worship is far more than music, although music is one of the most beautiful expressions of worship. For the Christian, *everything* we do can be an act of worship. (Read Colossians 3:17.) The trigger for strengthening our inner, spiritual man is to pray in the Holy Spirit. (Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Jude 20.)

3. The attitude of change is a mind invigorated by faith. The biblical idea of repentance comes from two Greek words meaning “to change the mind.” Our minds are cleansed and changed by the washing of God’s Word. (Read Ephesians 5:26.) Our words, thoughts and actions are to be brought under the spotlight of Scripture. All change begins with choices and Christ-honoring choices are the result of a disciplined will and a renewed mind. A renewed mind is a renovated mind, energized by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. (Read Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23.) We are to choose daily to clothe ourselves in the new creation life of Christ. (Read Romans 13:14; Colossians 3:9-10.)

As we fill our minds with God’s Word we build our faith. Faith then becomes the trigger for believing and receiving the promises of God to us. (Read Romans 10:17.) One way to meditate on God’s Word is to let Scripture fill your thoughts as you drift off to sleep at night. Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, maintained a habit he called “HWLW” – “His Word the last word” before he fell asleep. You as well can meditate on God’s Word as you prepare for sleep. (Read Psalm 1:2; Psalm 63:6.)

4. Jesus grew in every aspect of life. We should follow our Lord’s example. In His humanity Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially. (Read Luke 2:52.) We should commit to a life that is constantly growing to the glory of God.

As Frances Kelly said in *Better Than I Was*, “I’m not all that I ought to be, but I thank God I’m not what I used to be. If I keep praying and asking God to make me to be what He wants me to be, some day I will be what I need to be . . . I’m not saying I’m better than others -- I’m just better than I was.”

5. Growth is a daily process. Dr. Joseph Stowell suggests a good strategy for continual growth:

- *Renew daily.* Every day renew your spiritual passion in God’s presence through His Word, worship and prayer.
- *Refresh weekly.* Take time each week to enjoy the good things God has given in life. Invest time with your spouse to just enjoy being together.
- *Retreat monthly.* Commit at least half of one day every month to the spiritual discipline of solitude. Get alone with the Lord and reflect on what He is doing in your life and what He is speaking to you for the future.
- *Review annually.* At the end of each year review your progress. Are you growing in your walk with the Lord? Be sure to surrender all your hurts, anger and disappointments. Take spiritual inventory and be sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life. Enter the New Year forgiving and forgiven! In God’s presence set clear personal and ministry goals for the coming year.

MEMORIZE: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).*

KEY TRUTH: God calls us to keep growing by His Word and His Spirit.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Be honest with yourself. Are you a growing person, or have you ceased to grow in some areas of your life?
- What steps will you take *starting today* to grow in every area of your life? Remember, you are responsible to choose to grow!

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Mark 1:8

WEEK 22

FILLED WITH HIS SPIRIT

Read: Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18

Jesus wants to fill you with the person and power of the Holy Spirit to make you an effective witness for Him in the world. Just before Jesus was taken up into heaven He told His disciples two very important things. The first was to “*go...and make disciples of all nations.*” (Read Matthew 28:1.) The second was that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they were “clothed and filled” with the power of the Holy Spirit from heaven.

In essence Jesus was saying, “Until your filled with the Holy Spirit *don’t go!* After you are filled with the Holy Spirit *don’t stay!*” So let’s learn what it means to truly be *appointed* and *anointed* by Jesus our Lord through the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

1. The agent of Holy Spirit filling: Jesus. Yes, Jesus is the one who fills you and anoints you with the power of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said the Savior who was coming would fill people with the power of the Holy Spirit. (Read Mark 1:8.) He is our king and He desires to empower us to be ambassadors for His kingdom wherever we go. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.)

2. The purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit: authority and power. When Jesus was still on earth He anointed and sent out His disciples. They were to go *declaring* the gospel of the kingdom and *demonstrating* its power by the Holy Spirit. He gave them both the legal authority to speak and act in His name, as well as the dynamic power to defeat the devil and to deliver people from his power. And so it is with us today. We need King Jesus to powerfully anoint us to go forth and advance the kingdom of God over the forces of hell and into the hearts of people. Jesus told His disciples that they would receive explosive power to go and be witnesses for Him in the earth. (Read Acts 1:8) That is what being filled with the Holy Spirit is all about. (Read Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-9.)

3. Receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit: Asking in passionate faith. As stated earlier, Jesus had instructed His followers to wait until they received the power of the Holy Spirit they needed. One hundred and twenty obedient followers assembled in an upper room of a house in Jerusalem. For ten days they worshiped, prayed, fellowshiped, and waited for what Jesus had promised them. They believed what He had said to them, they loved Him passionately, and desired to have everything they needed to remain close to Him and share Him with others. They expected to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit because they trusted Jesus and took Him at His word. God rewarded their passionate faith when, on the Day of Pentecost, the power and filling of the Holy Spirit came. They experienced the sound of a powerful wind. Tongues of fire appeared over each person’s head. They spoke in languages they had never learned and poured

out into the streets with powerful preaching that drew 3000 people to Christ. All of this was the work of the Holy Spirit. (Read Acts chapters 1 and 2.)

We, too, will receive the filling of the Holy Spirit when we ask in passionate faith. If we earnestly desire to be anointed by Jesus, our King, He will pour out His Spirit on and into our lives. If we ask Him for the Holy Spirit, He will not deny us. (Read Luke 11:13.) Here were some of the results in the lives of the disciples from being filled with the Holy Spirit. These will be evident in our lives, as well, when we allow God's Spirit to fill and control us:

- *The release of passionate faith*
- *Prayerful expectation*
- *Full place given to the Holy Spirit*
- *The filling of the Holy Spirit*
- *Supernatural manifestations*
- *Powerful witness for Christ*
- *Significant fruitfulness*

4. The Signs of a Spirit-Filled Life. After we are filled with the Holy Spirit we need to stay filled by giving ourselves to prayer, worship, growing in the Word, and ministering to others. (Read Ephesians 5:18-20.) We also should help others experience the filling of the Spirit and encourage them in daily Spirit-filled living. We can confidently expect these signs in our lives when we are filled with His Spirit:

- *An anointing with dynamic power.* (Read Acts 1:4-6.) Jesus told His disciples that they would be “*endued with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49). To be “endued” means to be “clothed” or “covered.” So one of the signs of being filled with the Spirit is that we are anointed with the power of Jesus Christ to do the works of Jesus. We, too, are called and equipped to heal the sick, hear God's voice and follow His direction. We are also anointed to cast out demons and defeat the schemes of the devil. Powerless Christianity will produce very little to advance Christ's kingdom and fulfill Christ's Great Commission. But people who know Jesus intimately and are anointed by him powerfully will be used to truly “*proclaim liberty to the captives.*” (Read Luke 4:18,19.)
- *The release of spiritual language.* (Read Acts 2:4; 10:44-47; 19:6.) Another resource available to Spirit-filled believers is a spiritual language given by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual language or “tongues” is given for personal edification, expanded prayer beyond our human ability, expanded praise and worship beyond our human ability, a divine message that edifies the church, and a sign to unbelievers. When unbelievers hear “*the wonderful works of God*” spoken in their language even though this language has not been learned by the speaker, this sign is a powerful witness to them. (Read 1 Corinthians 14.)
- *Increased courage and boldness.* Another sign of the Spirit's fullness is a supernatural confidence to face whatever challenges, threats, or hardships that come our way. Peter and John were threatened by religious leaders for preaching in Jesus' name. Their companions prayed for them and they were filled with holy boldness. They continued preaching and ministering to others in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Read Acts 4:1-31.)
- *Evangelistic passion.* After Saul of Tarsus was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit he preached the gospel with a passion to see Jesus exalted and people come to faith in Him. (Read Acts 9:17-22.) People who are truly filled with the Holy Spirit will win the lost with passion and zeal.

- *The release and overflow of praise, worship, and thanksgiving.* When someone is truly filled with the Holy Spirit he will sing and shout for joy in the Lord. A “river” of gratitude and praise will flow freely from our hearts as the Holy Spirit leads us in declaring the greatness of God, our Father, and Jesus Christ, His Son. (Read again Ephesians 5:18-20.)

* * * * *

MEMORIZE: *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)*

KEY TRUTH: Jesus wants to fill you with the person and power of the Holy Spirit to make you an effective witness for Him in the world.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- If you are not filled with the Holy Spirit, ask the Holy Spirit in faith to fill and control you. (Read Luke 11:13.)
- Every day ask the Holy Spirit for a fresh filling for your life and ministry.
- Minister the filling of the Holy Spirit to others who have not been filled.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Ephesians 5:8

WEEK 23

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Read Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:8-10

The Holy Spirit comes to form the character of Jesus Christ in us. Christ's life in us is manifested as spiritual fruit that blesses those we touch. This fruit is produced as we choose to remain in an intimate and loving relationship with our Lord. This is what the Bible calls "*abiding*" in Christ. (Read John 15:1-8.) Bearing spiritual fruit is the result of an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ through the person and power of the Holy Spirit at work in us. (Read Galatians 5:22-23.)

1. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

God's love in us is infinitely beyond the scope of human ability. God's Word commands us to love with a love that is unceasing and never failing. (Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.)

This would be impossible in our own strength but we have, by the Holy Spirit, an unending flow of the supernatural love of God that enables us to love others continually.

This love originated in the heart of God. The love that we are to walk in cannot be produced in the heart of man. It is produced in God's heart and poured into our hearts as we receive Him and continue to abide in Him by His Spirit. (Read 1 John 4:7-19.)

God's love is clearly seen in the gift of His Son. The apostle John tells us that the manifestation or open display of the love of God can most clearly be seen in God sending His Son to sacrifice His life to pay for the sin of the world. God did this because of His infinite love for all people. (Read 1 John 4:9-10.)

2. The fruit of the Spirit is joy.

Joy is delight and satisfaction in the human soul that grows out of an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus. It is a sense of gladness and well being that becomes something too wonderful for words. (Read 1 Peter 1:8.) This Spirit-given joy releases strength for life and service. (Read Nehemiah 8:10.) Joy is also the atmosphere of God's kingdom, *ever present* where Jesus is *very present*. (Read Romans 14:17.)

This joy is beyond circumstances. Natural joy and happiness are based on happy events such as births, weddings or holidays. These things are wonderful and hold an important place in our lives. But life's circumstances are often trying and difficult and nothing in our lives is permanent. The supernatural joy of the Lord as a fruit of the Spirit's work in our lives is always present, regardless of the circumstances, good or bad. In the Scriptures Jesus' followers were full of His joy no matter what they faced. (Read Acts 5:40-41; 16:22-25; Philippians 1:18.)

3. The fruit of the Spirit is peace.

God-given peace produces undisturbed composure and contentment. God desires for us to live without fear and anxiety. God's peace, produced by the Holy Spirit, supplies the inner serenity we need to stay anchored to God's promises. Paul the apostle, though writing from prison, wrote of the great contentment and peace he experienced because of the strength of Christ through the Holy Spirit. (Read Philippians 4:6-13.)

A peace with God, self, and others. We have peace with God because Jesus, through the cross, put to death the sin that separated us from God. (Read Colossians 1:20.) This supernatural peace with God now enables us to have peace with ourselves and to live in peace, harmony, and unity with other believers. (Read Ephesians 2:14-18.)

4. The fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering.

Longsuffering is the ability to patiently bear with a difficult person or situation. God uses us to help difficult people and bring resolution in difficult situations. He uses these people and situations to work depth and maturity in us. The longsuffering of the Spirit gives us the grace we need to stay strong in the process. (Read Colossians 3:12-13.)

Longsuffering is the ability to wait until God's will and good purpose are revealed. God's plans are always ultimately good and fruitful. The Holy Spirit gives the strength to patiently endure until the end. (Read Romans 8:28.)

5. The fruit of the Spirit is kindness.

Kindness is love and goodness in action. It is the willingness to become involved in meeting the needs of others with love and grace, regardless of their response. (Read Titus 3:4-5.)

Kindness flows out of the riches of God's grace. God extended His kindness to us by His grace in the lavishly generous gift of His Son, Christ Jesus. (Read Ephesians 2:6-7.)

6. The fruit of the Spirit is goodness.

Goodness is love heaping blessings and benefits on others. As an outgrowth of the Spirit and with God as our pattern, goodness will produce a life of generosity towards those around us. (Read Psalm 107, Romans 2:4.)

Spiritual goodness will produce practical results. Scripture says that Barnabas was a "good man" (Acts 11:24). We see the results of this goodness in sacrificially meeting the needs of others. (Read Acts 11:23-30.)

7. The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness.

Our faithfulness is founded and rooted in God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness to us is both the model and the means by which we are able to be faithful to Him and to others. (Read Psalm 40:10; Lamentations 3:22-25.)

Faithfulness is submission to God in action. True submission and obedience to God's Word, will, and ways is demonstrated by consistent faithfulness in whatever God has called us to. (Read Hebrews 3:1-6.)

8. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.

Gentleness is strength under restraint. Gentleness and meekness go together. But meekness is not weakness. Jesus was strong in every way yet He ministered in a sensitive gentleness to all He touched. (Read Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 5:5; 11:28-30.)

The goal of gentleness is to bring about redemption, restoration, and release. This sensitive strength is to be used in a way where people receive the *teaching* and *touch* they need for growth, maturity, and understanding. It is also used to bring loving correction in the lives of others. (Read Galatians 6:1; Philippians 4:1-5.)

9. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

Self-control is the ability to have power and governance over one's self by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides us and gives us the capacity to control and govern our thoughts and behavior under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. (Read Galatians 5:24-25.)

Self-control is the ability to say "no" to all that God forbids and "yes" to all He permits and ordains. The ability to say "no" and "yes" by the Spirit is a major key in living a successful, victorious Christian witness. (Read 1 Corinthians 9:25-27; Read 2 Peter 1:5-8.)

MEMORIZE: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).*

KEY TRUTH: The Holy Spirit comes to form the character of Jesus Christ in us. This is manifested as spiritual fruit that blesses those we touch.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- As you meet with God each day, ask Him for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit.
- Throughout your day be mindful of yielding to the life and strength of the Holy Spirit in every situation.
- Examine your life carefully, looking for the Spirit's fruit in your words, thoughts and actions.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them... Romans 12:6

WEEK 24

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Read Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to every born again believer. These gifts of divine grace give us the ability to accomplish the supernatural ministry of Jesus in our world. The Holy Spirit uses each of us, as He wills, to be effective ministers of Christ's authority and power. The following spiritual gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

1. The word of wisdom. This is an inspired message that reveals God's plan for the wisest and most effective way to approach a given situation. There was a problem in the church in Jerusalem regarding whether Gentile believers would be required to be circumcised and live according to the law of Moses. The leaders received divine wisdom on how to deal with this problem. (Read Acts 15:28-29.)

2. The word of knowledge. This is an inspired message of knowledge concerning a person or situation that could only be revealed by God. In the early days of the church, a couple named Ananias and Sapphira lied about an issue of property and money. It threatened the purity and power that was present in the church. The Holy Spirit gave Peter knowledge of their deception. This led to greater holiness in the church and many new believers being added to them. (Read Acts 5:1-16.) Sometimes a word of knowledge is given to show someone that God knows exactly what his need is and demonstrate God's willingness to meet that need.

3. Faith. The gift of faith is a supernatural confidence and trust that God is going to act in a powerful or miraculous way. One day Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. At the gate called Beautiful sat a man who had been lame from birth, begging for whatever people might give him. When Peter saw him, he was filled with faith. In the name of Jesus he commanded the lame man to rise and walk. The man was immediately healed by God's power. (Read Acts 3:1-10; 16.)

4. Gifts of healings. Gifts of healings release God's power causing people to be restored to health physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. There was a great move of God's Spirit in the city of Samaria under the ministry of Philip. The gospel was being preached, people were being saved and gifts of healings were being released in the lives of many who were physically broken and spiritually bound. (Read Acts 8:4-8.)

5. Working of miracles. A miracle is an event in which people or circumstances are affected and changed in supernatural ways by God's power working through believers. The healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful is clear example of a miracle. The power of God brought life and strength into his withered legs. He walked and leaped and praised God in the presence of many people. This sign and wonder of healing was seen by all the people. (Read Acts 3:1-10.) Even the religious leaders had to admit that this was a "*notable miracle*" – something that brought glory, honor, and praise to Jesus. (Read Acts 4:15-16.)

6. Prophecy. Prophecy is speaking forth a message from God for the church in order to edify, exhort, or comfort His people. Prophecy can be the foretelling of some future event that helps people better obey God and know His will for their lives. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached and prophesied to the thousands of people gathered there. He explained that the outpouring of God's Spirit that day was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. (Read Joel 2:28-32; Acts 16:17-21.) He also told them of things to come and how to respond to God in order to receive His promises. He edified them (built them up), exhorted them (stirred them up), and comforted them (lifted them up). (Read 1 Corinthians 14:3; Acts 2:1-42.)

7. Discerning of spirits. This is inspired understanding of whether an activity is of the Holy Spirit, the human spirit, or a demonic spirit. There was slave girl following the Apostle Paul and declaring that he and his companions were "*servants of the Most High God*" (Acts 16:17). Even though some her words were accurate, Paul discerned that she was possessed with a spirit of divination. He commanded the spirit to come out her and she was delivered. (Read Acts 16:16-18.)

8. Different kinds of tongues. Speaking in different kinds of tongues is a Holy Spirit-given ability to speak in a language, of heaven or earth, which has not been learned by the speaker. On the Day of Pentecost 120 people were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in languages they had never learned. People from around the world who were in Jerusalem for the feast heard these people praising God in their own languages. It was a sign and wonder to them causing many to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Paul told the Corinthian believers that there was another kind of language that no one understands. It must be interpreted by the Holy Spirit. This spiritual language was to be used for prayer, praise, and to deliver messages from God through interpretation. (Read Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 14:2-5.)

9. Interpretation of Tongues. This is the Holy Spirit-given ability to speak in the language of the listeners the meaning of the message given in an unknown tongue. Paul taught that while prophecy was to be greatly desired because it brought understanding to the church, spiritual language being spoken with interpretation was equivalent. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 26-28, 39.)

The Holy Spirit has come into our lives to fill us with the life of Jesus. He has come to give us His gifts of divine revelation and divine power. These gifts enable us to enter into the same type of life changing ministry as our Lord. We must not neglect nor refuse these gifts of grace. Rather, we should passionately desire the release of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If we are open and willing, He will use us to minister powerfully to the needs of those we are called to serve.

To be effective in prayer, preaching, witnessing, counseling, and serving the needs of our broken and bound world, we must operate with every spiritual tool we have been given by God.

MEMORIZE: *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all (1 Corinthians 12:7).*

KEY TRUTH: We have been given gifts of divine grace by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the supernatural ministry of Jesus in the world.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Spend daily time alone with God listening for Him to speak to you about your life and ministry. Write down what you believe He is saying to you.
- Commit to having more times of praying for the sick and believing for healing.
- In your church services allow the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be released through your people.
- Prayerfully determine your primary spiritual gifts. Determine to cooperate with the Holy Spirit cultivating these gifts.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.
Colossians 2:6

WEEK 25

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT

Read Galatians 5:16 - 25

Living by the leading of the Holy Spirit will enable you to live a life of focus, freedom, and fullness. Once we are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit we must then learn how to abide in the Spirit moment by moment, day by day. We are not called to live or minister in our own strength, but in the power and strength of God's Spirit. He desires to be our constant companion and helper, leading us into the will of God and giving us the spiritual strength to see it come to pass. When God's people were rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, God spoke these words through Zechariah: "*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.*" (Read Zechariah 4:6-9.) Having started our life and ministry in Christ by the work of the Spirit we must now continue to live by the Spirit, seeing God's plans for us realized. (Read Colossians 2:6-7.)

1. The walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is submitting to the *person, purpose, and power* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God in us, helping and guiding us to discover God's will and purpose by His infinite power. (Read John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13-14; 1 John 4:4.) Walking in the Spirit is a partnership between the Holy Spirit and us. We yield to Him in faith and obedience and He supplies everything we need to be fruitful and productive believers and ministers. He leads us as we study God's Word, giving us revelation and insight. (Read John 16:13-15.) He helps us in our human weaknesses to know how we should pray. (Read Romans 8:26-28.) Paul told the Ephesian church that he was praying for them that they would understand the power of this kind of living. In so doing they would find themselves strengthened by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit in them, rooted and grounded, full and satisfied in the love of Christ and the knowledge of His passion and purpose for them. (Read Ephesians 3:14-21.)

2. The way of the Spirit. The way of the Spirit is about a new kind of living. It is the way of abundant life and glorious liberty. (Read John 10:10; Romans 7:4-6.) The Holy Spirit desires to set us free from trying to do what is right in our own strength. The Holy Spirit comes free us from the guilt, penalty, and shame of sin. He does this by delivering us from the power of sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us. (Read Romans 6:11-14.) By the Spirit we are now free to serve and obey God on His terms according to the truth and direction of His word. As we abide in Him and trust His strength we have the supernatural ability to live for God and obey Him in everything. What a joy! And what a tremendous way to live and minister!

3. The work of the Spirit. The work the Holy Spirit desires to accomplish in us is a work of purity, passion, and power. Remember, He is called the *Holy* Spirit. He brings the purity of God's presence into our lives so that we can "*be holy, even as our Father in heaven is holy.*" (Read 1 Peter 1:16.) This is not self-righteousness. In fact, it is the very opposite; it is the very righteousness of Christ operating in us by His Spirit. As Oswald Chambers said, "The Holy Spirit does in me subjectively all that Jesus did for me objectively."

The Spirit also produces in us a deep, abiding passion to love Jesus and seek to please Him in everything. Paul told the Philippians to "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (*Philippians 2:12*). This simply means we are to see the work of salvation have its complete

and ultimate impact in our lives. He also shared this important truth with them: Both the *passion* and the *power* to see this accomplished was already in them by the Holy Spirit. (Read Philippians 2:12-13) What an incredible truth! God in us by the Holy Spirit has come to see the full work of salvation in body, soul, and spirit become a blessed reality.

Consider the following truths concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in us:

- *He makes us spiritually new. (Read Titus 3:5.)*
- *He fills and empowers us to minister like Jesus. (Read Acts 2:33.)*
- *He is the presence of the Father and the Son in us. (Read John 14:15-18.)*
- *He produces the fruit of godly life and character in us. (Read Galatians 5:22-23.)*
- *He leads and guides us into the perfect will of God on a daily basis. (Read John 16:13-14.)*
- *He satisfies the deepest needs in our lives. (Read John 7:37-39.)*
- *He fills us with the love of God. (Read Romans 5:5.)*
- *He gives us supernatural gifts and abilities. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:11.)*
- *He helps us pray with precision and power. (Read Romans 8:26-28.)*
- *He opens our eyes to understand spiritual things. (Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.)*
- *He produces unity with other believers so we can live in peace and love. (Read Ephesians 4:3-4.)*
- *He supplies the breakthrough power of the kingdom of God to overcome all the power of the kingdom of darkness. (Read Matthew 12:28.)*

No wonder we are called in the Word to “*walk in the Spirit.*” (Read Romans 8:1-4.) It is the truly wise and wonderful way to live. By walking in the Spirit we partner with our living Lord Jesus in what He is doing around the world. We enjoy sweet fellowship with God. God opens our eyes to see what He intends to do in our times and how He intends on accomplishing it, by His Spirit. Living by the Spirit is the most fulfilling and exciting way to live. Let this grand adventure with God begin and never let it end!

MEMORIZE: *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25).*

KEY TRUTH: Living by the leading and the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to live with focus, fullness, and freedom.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- In what areas of your life are you living by the Spirit?
 - What areas do you feel you are living too much in your own strength?
 - What will you do to bring these areas under the control and power of the Holy Spirit?
- Write it out and commit it to prayer every day.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] **Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Matthew 26:41**

WEEK 26

THE HOUR THAT CHANGES YOUR LIFE

Read Matthew 26:40-41; Luke 18:1; John 10:24; James 5:16

Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote, “More things are wrought through prayer than this world dreams of.” When Jesus died, He cried out, “*It is finished!*” It is a single word in the original language that literally means, “Paid in full!” (Read John 19:30.) The complete payment had been made to take away our sins. At that moment the thick curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom. This veil separated people from God’s presence. The sacrifice of Jesus for our sins secured the way for people to come without hindrance or fear immediately into the very presence of God. (Read Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-20.)

Prayer is our great privilege as believers in Jesus. All the world longs to come to God. Jesus is the door into His presence. (Read John 10:9.) He has purchased access to God for us by His blood. (Read Revelation 5:9.) Most Christians live far below their privileges because they do not seek God in prayer. John Wesley said, “God will do nothing but in answer to prayer.”

The Holy Spirit helps us in our praying. (Read Romans 8:26-27.) God is clearly more interested in the intensity of our prayers than their length. In fact, Jesus encourages us to be specific, not lengthy, when we pray. (Read Matthew 6:7.) Here are three short, specific prayers that can change your life.

1. The prayer of intimacy. (Read Ephesians 3:16-21.) One of the highest forms of prayer is to personalize Scripture and offer it to God. I encourage you to pray this passage as a personal prayer every day for a month. You will be amazed at the results in your walk with the Lord. Personalize this passage by praying in this manner, “Father, grant me, according to the riches of Your glory, to be strengthened with might through Your Spirit in my inner man.” Then continue to personalize each petition in this passage. Intimacy with Jesus precedes influence for Him.

2. The prayer for influence. The prayer of Jabez was a prayer for increased influence. Jabez prayed with focus and God granted his four clear requests. (Read 1 Chronicles 4:10.) Here is what Jabez asked of God:

- *Favor me.* He cried out to God, “*Oh, that You would bless me indeed.*” Jabez was asking for the favor that was rightfully his as being a man in covenant with the one true God. (Read Genesis 12:1-3.)
- *Increase me.* He asked God to enlarge his territory. This was a prayer for increased influence and increased authority. This requires a stretching of our faith, to believe God in dimensions that will honor Him.
- *Accelerate me.* Jabez asked for God’s hand to be with him, providing holy momentum. Throughout the Bible God’s hand is either positioned *against* people or *with* them. If God resists us, our strongest efforts are futile. But if His hand is with us, we are speeded along in all we do in His name. We experience supernatural favor and great things can be done in a short time.

- *Protect me.* He prayed that God would keep him from evil. Jabez desired God's protection from sin. He knew that the sad results of sin would be pain in many lives.

3. The prayer of increase. (Read Psalm 67:1-2.) As a person in covenant with God you have the right to ask for God to bless you. The greatest blessing of all is not His gifts, but the joy of knowing Him personally. (Read Genesis 15:1.) God's blessings are given to us so that they may be extended to others. This blessing of being in relationship with the one true God is to reach to every nation. (Read Galatians 3:13-14.)

Leaders should model a life of worship and prayer. Here is a model you can use to pray for an hour. God delights in our fellowship, whether we pray for an hour or just for a few seconds. As leaders, however, we should model lives devoted to prayer and worship. We should lead the way in devoting at least an hour each day to prayer. Here is a model you can use to pray for an hour. Simply take five minutes praying over each of the following twelve biblical requests. We are specifically told to pray for each of these topics. This hour spent in prayer can change your life and change the world.

- *Pray for more workers.* (Read Matthew 9:37-38.) The spiritual harvest is ripe. Jesus calls Himself "*the Lord of the harvest.*" He is in control of His own harvest! We are to ask Jesus to send more workers to reap a global harvest of souls.
- *Pray for those in authority.* (Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4.) In this passage Paul indicates that a peaceful climate is most conducive for evangelism. Christians should be both prophetic and winsome when dealing with those in government.
- *Pray for open hearts and a rapid spread of the gospel.* (Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1.) J. Sidlow Baxter wrote, "Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons – but they are helpless against our prayers."
- *Pray for open doors.* Jesus opens doors for us to extend His love and grace. He also closes doors to direct us to other opportunities He has ordained for us. (Read Acts 16:9-10; Revelation 3:8.) God will continue to sovereignly open doors of ministry in answer to prayer (Read 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:1.)
- *Pray for boldness.* When New Testament believers began to be persecuted they responded by asking God for boldness and a revelation of His mighty power. Their short, specific prayer for boldness was answered dramatically as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness for Christ and display His power. (Read Acts. 4:29.)
- *Pray for divine direction and revelation.* (Read Acts 13:2-5; 16:9.) Paul was sovereignly led by the Holy Spirit on his first missionary journey. Although Paul simply wanted to obey Christ's commission and spread the gospel, the Holy Spirit prohibited him from going to certain places while pointing him in another direction. (Read Acts 16:6-10.)
- *Pray for the prosperity of God's people.* As God's covenant people we are blessed to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. (Read Genesis 12:1-3.) To fulfill this covenant assignment we must receive the resources promised to us as covenant people. (Read Psalm 67:1-2.)
- *Pray specifically for nations and yet unreached peoples.* God is passionately committed to ensuring that His Son is known and loved by every tribe and nation. (Read Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 9:7; Revelation 7:9-10.) On Christ's behalf, we petition the Father that the peoples of the earth be given to His Son. (Read Psalm 2:8.)
- *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* (Read Psalm 122:6.) One day our Lord's global rule will extend from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. (Read Isaiah 62:6-7.) Today the

citizens of that city are from many cultures and ethnic backgrounds. We should pray that peace will prevail in Jerusalem (and in our own cities) as Jesus, the Prince of Peace, rules in the hearts of the people of the city. (Read Jeremiah 29:7.)

- *Pray for the exaltation of Jesus among every tribe, language and nation.* (Read Psalm 57:5, Philippians 2:10-11.) Just prior to Jesus receiving worship from His completed church, comprised of redeemed men and women from every people and nation, a presentation is made to Him. The Lamb of God is presented “*golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints*” (Rev.5:8). The worship from every tribe does not come to Him – indeed, it *cannot* come to Him – until the bowls of incense, the prayers of the saints, are full. Prayer is the great condition of the Great Commission. (Read Revelation 5:8-9.)
- *Pray for worldwide revival.* (Read Habakkuk 3:2.) We should pray for fullness (revival in the church) and fulfillment (completing the Great Commission). (Read Psalm 85:6; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.)

We are to pray in faith, believing that God will answer our requests. (Read Mark 11:24; James 1:6-7.) Paul E. Billheimer believed prayer is God’s way of giving the church “on-the-job-training” in overcoming evil forces hostile to God. In *Destined for the Throne*, he wrote: “This world is a laboratory in which those who are destined for the throne are learning, by actual practice in the prayer closet, how to overcome Satan and his hierarchy.”

Begin the practice today of an hour daily in God’s presence. It is the hour that will change your life.

MEMORIZE: *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7).*

KEY TRUTH: Spending an uninterrupted hour daily in communion with God will change your life.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Starting today, will you commit to spend an hour each day with the Lord? This commitment to a daily time with God will change your life.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] Is it not written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations”? Mark 11:17

[pull quote pg 2] Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

WEEK 27

MAKING YOUR CHURCH A HOUSE OF PRAYER

Read Mark 11:17

Jesus desires to see your church become a “*house of prayer for all nations.*” (Read Mark 11:17.) This includes being available to pray in compassionate faith for any in your immediate sphere of influence and responsibility, as well as developing a plan to pray that the nations of the earth would come to know the same Savior that you know and love. John Wesley said, “God will do nothing but in answer to prayer.” Prayer that touches heaven and changes earth is not only a possibility for your church, but a promised reality. If you will make a commitment to the privilege-responsibility of a life of prayer, you will see God’s “*kingdom come, and will be done*” in your church and around the earth, “*as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10).

Here are some ways to help make your church a true house of prayer.

1. Personal prayer. Jesus modeled a personal, private prayer life that produced amazing results. His prayer life was so compelling that His disciples implored Him to teach them to pray as He did. He gave them a pattern for prayer that should be followed by all believers. (Read Matthew 6:9-13.) Teach people this pattern and the principles contained within it. Model for people a life of daily prayer and lead them into their own lives of personal, passionate, and powerful prayer.

2. Corporate prayer. In addition to having a personal history with God in prayer, we need to come together corporately in faith and agreement. This will bring your praying to the next level of strength and effectiveness. When Peter and John were threatened by religious leaders of the day they went to their companions and shared their story. They all began to pray together, the place where they were was literally shaken, they were freshly anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit, and the move of God continued to flow unabated. (Read Acts 4:23-33.) Make sure you bring the people you lead together regularly for times of corporate prayer.

3. Prayer for the nations. We must learn to take the needs of the world to God in prayer. Our God is the God of the nations. He desires to see worshipping communities of disciples in every ethnic group in the world. (Read Matthew 28:19.) Pray for the nations where missionaries you know are serving. Pray for nations God lays on your heart. Pray that the light of the Gospel would overcome darkness in those nations. Pray for nations that are currently in crisis. Teach your people that they can travel around the world in prayer and receive the nations as their “*inheritance.*” (Read Psalm 2:8.)

4. Prayer for healing. We are promised that “*the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up*” (James 5:13-16.) Jesus not only died to take away our

sins, but our sicknesses, as well. (Read Isaiah 53:5.) People have needs for physical healing and often the means God uses to heal them is by believing prayer and “gifts of healings” coming through the church. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:9.) Invite people to come with their physical needs and be prayed for. Take authority over the sickness and pray for them in the name of Jesus. Teach people to pray for others who are sick and in need. Turn your church into a “house of healing.” People in need will come to a church that has spiritual resources for meeting their needs.

5. Prayer for filling with the Holy Spirit. People in your church need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to live fully in the anointing and power of Jesus Christ. (Read Acts 1:8.) For this to happen you need to have people who are trained and committed to seeing the full power of the Holy Spirit present in the lives of every believer. Then give regular opportunities for people to be prayed for to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Read Acts 8:14-17.) Spirit-filled believers will make a tremendous impact for the kingdom of God.

6. Prayer for freedom and deliverance. In order for people to find their freedom in Christ there needs to be a dynamic partnership with other believers to see demonic bruising healed and demonic bondage broken. (Read Luke 4:18,19.) We have been given authority over all demons and all works of darkness. (Read Luke 9:1-2.) But this authority does us no good if we don’t use it. We must teach people to “*resist the devil*” in prayer. You can partner in prayer with your church family, confronting darkness with authority and power to see any demonic grip broken and removed. (Read James 4:7.)

7. Prayer for evangelistic breakthrough. Paul prayed that a door for the gospel would be opened to him. (Read Colossians 4:2-4.) Lost people’s spiritual eyes need to be opened for their hearts to be opened to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.) Encourage your people to pray for specific non-Christian people, asking God to open their eyes, and that the truth of the gospel would find its way into their hearts.

8. Prayer for provision. Your church has real material and financial needs. It is vital that you and your ministry team learn to pray in faith for an outpouring of God’s provision. Jesus told us that we were to “*ask,*” “*seek,*” and “*knock*” and we would receive whatever we needed. (Read Matthew 7:7-11.) When you face a need, bring a team together. Begin in praise and worship, thanking God for all He has done for you. (Read Psalm 68:19.) Then begin to call out to Him in prayer, “*making your requests known unto God*” (Philippians 4:6-7). Then wait in faith for the provision to arrive. God has promised He will abundantly meet all your needs. (Philippians 4:19).

9. Prayer for protection. The world is a dangerous place. We need the protection of the Lord over our lives and the lives of those we lead. We must teach our people to pray in faith for one another for their safety and security. One good way to do this is by praying according to God’s promises to protect and deliver us in scripture. Read Psalm 91 and make this psalm a personal prayer for protection.

10. Prayer for direction. Where does God desire to take your church? What is His will for your life and the life of your church body? You must find out, and you can find out. If you will seek God for direction towards His purpose and plan for you He will clearly and openly reveal it to you. God’s will for Barnabas’ and Saul’s lives was revealed as church leadership sought God’s face in prayer. (Read Acts 13:1-3.) This will be true for everyone in your church as they learn to desire God’s will above their own and are committed to seeking Him for it.

MEMORIZE: *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16).*

KEY TRUTH: Corporate prayer that touches heaven and changes earth is not only a possibility for your church, but a blessed privilege and responsibility.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Meet with God every day in personal prayer.
- Gather with your church's leaders and get their ideas on how to have a more effective prayer ministry.
- Adopt a nation or nations and an unreached people group to pray for on a weekly basis.
- Keep a journal of prayer requests and answered prayer.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. Psalm 2:8

[pull quote pg 2] Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Matthew 9:38

WEEK 28

PRAYING IN THE HARVEST

Read Psalm 2:8; Matthew 9:37-38

Prayer brings heaven's will to earth. It is the awesome privilege of every believer to have instant access to God because of the new and living way Jesus has opened for us. (Read Hebrews 10:19-22). A. T. Pierson said, "There has never been a spiritual awakening in any nation or any locality that did not begin in united prayer."

Are you praying? Are you leading *your church* to be a praying church? Are the *churches in your city* uniting in prayer for revival?

As God's loving heart gathers in this generation, we will see the transformation of cities and nations. We will see entire nations come under the influence of the Gospel in a single day of triumph for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Read Isaiah 66:8.)

Too often we live as though the devil, not Jesus, were in charge of the harvest of souls. We minister as though Satan as the keys of hell and death. But this simply is not correct. Jesus is Lord over His own harvest. (Read Matthew 9:37-38.) And Jesus has the keys! (Read Revelation 1:18.)

The Old Covenant was inferior to the privileges we have in the New Covenant of grace. Yet even before the victory of Christ through His sacrifice, resurrection and ascension – even under the lesser Old Covenant – the Bible says that the earth belongs to the Lord, not the devil. (Read Psalm 24:1.) Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the potential of salvation reaches the entire human race. (Read Hebrews 2:9.) This does not mean that everyone is automatically saved. However, it does mean we can pray with boldness and great hope, realizing that by every right humanity does not belong to Satan but to Jesus.

Andrew Murray wrote, "There is a world, with its needs entirely dependent on and waiting to be helped by intercession; there is a God in heaven, with His all-sufficient supply for all those needs, waiting to be asked; there is a church, with its wondrous calling and its sure promises, waiting to be roused to a sense of its wondrous responsibility and power."

Here are some principles for effective prayer that will result in a great spiritual harvest.

1. Pray with boldness and authority. We are in a global spiritual conflict. The Bible describes it in many ways: light against darkness (John 1:4-5; 3:19), life against death (Deuteronomy 30:19), the Spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17), and Christ against Satan (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Gordon Lindsay believed that “every Christian should pray at least one violent prayer every day.” (Read Matthew 11:12.)

2. Pray for peace to preach the gospel. Paul said that a peaceful social climate aids the church in evangelism. He urges believers to pray for their leaders so that the church can be free to do its work of evangelizing and discipling the nations. (Read Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4.)

3. Pray that God will heal the spiritual blindness of those who do not know Jesus Christ. Satan, the god of this world system, has blinded their spiritual eyes so they cannot see the light of the gospel. Prayer can penetrate the veil of darkness. Dick Eastman says, “I am convinced that no one is saved except in answer to someone’s prayer.” We are to pray in faith that the veil of unbelief will be lifted so that Christ can be revealed to them. (Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.)

4. Pray specifically for boldness when being persecuted. In Acts 4 the early church was experiencing large-scale persecution for the first time. Their response was to pray for boldness and for the victory of God’s purposes over all designs of the devil. In unity together these first century believers prayed a focused, short prayer in response to the attacks against the gospel. (Read Acts 4:24-30.) Their prayer was less than a minute yet it was a history-shaping prayer. It is not the *length* of our prayers but the *strength* of our prayers that gets heaven’s attention. The result was that “*they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness*” (Acts 4:31). They received exactly what they requested.

5. Pray with tears and deep sincerity. Tears plus the seed of the gospel always produces a harvest. (Read Psalm 126:5-6.) New spiritual births are the result of prayerful travail for souls. (Read Isaiah 66:8.)

6. Pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers. The devil is not in charge of the harvest of humanity. Neither are we. This is “*His harvest*” (Matthew 9:38). Notice this is a title He confers on Himself, Lord of the harvest. The problem in world evangelism is not a sparse harvest. “*The harvest truly is plentiful.*” The problem is there are not a sufficient number of workers to reap this colossal harvest. In proportion to the size of this great spiritual harvest, “*the laborers are few*” (Matthew 9:37). What is the solution? “*Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Matthew 9:38).

7. Prayer with fasting brings spiritual breakthroughs. This sacrificial form of prayer produces powerful results. (Read Ezra 8:21-23; Isaiah 58:6.)

8. Believe God to bring in a harvest of souls. Evil spirits attempt to hinder people coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus has given us authority of all demons and all the works of evil. (Read Luke 9:1; 1 John 4:4.) In that authority we can come against any demonic forces that would hinder people from receiving the gospel. (Read Isaiah 43:5-7.)

David Yonggi Cho, founder of the world’s largest church, has written in *Prayer: Key to Revival*, “Our goal is that all may come to know the saving grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. . . . We bathe our plans in prayer so that God may breathe His breath of life into our efforts and they will be fruitful. . . . There is no question in my

mind that what has been done in Korea can also be duplicated in every part of the world. The key is prayer!” I will always remember the thrill of preaching at an all-night prayer meeting in that great Korean church. At 11:00 P.M. the auditorium was jammed with 20,000 praying Christians. No wonder they are impacting their nation for Christ.

There is a massive global harvest of souls that is coming! But there is a direct correlation between the releasing of the final harvest and the prayers of the saints. (Read Revelation 5:8-9.) I encourage you to join with Global Advance and the Global Pastors Network in embracing *the Bill Bright Initiative* – believing God for one billion souls and five million new churches! It can happen. It *must* happen.

But to whom will this harvest be given? Today as always, God seeks “*for a man . . . who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it*” (Ezekiel 22:30). For that person, God will go to the limits of this planet to reveal Himself as the wonderworking, almighty God. (Read 2 Chronicles 16:9.)

Believe God for the harvest – for your church, your nation and your world. Jesus promised that the prayer of agreement brings amazing results. (Read Matthew 18:19.) Will you be the one to bring pastors in your area together to pray for the harvest? As E. M. Bounds said in his classic book, *Power through Prayer*, “The great need of the church in this and all ages is men of such commanding faith, of such unsullied holiness, of such marked spiritual vigor and consuming zeal, that their prayers, faith, lives and ministry will be of such a radical and aggressive form as to work spiritual revolutions which will form eras in individual and Church life.”

MEMORIZE: *then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).*

KEY TRUTH: Prevailing prayer is absolutely essential to a global harvest of souls.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Begin today to pray for a great harvest of souls for your church, your city, your nation and the world.
- Pray specifically for unsaved friends and family to come to faith in Christ.
- Is God calling you to establish a pattern of fasting?
- Consider bringing the pastors in your area together for regular seasons of prayer for revival and evangelistic breakthroughs.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16

WEEK 29

THE LORD'S MISSIONARY PRAYERS

Read Matthew 6:9-13; John 17:1-26.

No one could be a better teacher of prayer than Jesus.

He taught by His own example of constantly seeking time with His Father. He prayed before daybreak. (Read Mark 1:35.) He prayed before He chose His disciples. He prayed before He performed miracles. He prayed after He performed miracles. He separated Himself for seasons of fasting and prayer. (Matthew 4:2.)

The two prayers of Jesus recorded in Scripture clearly emphasize world harvest. (Read Matthew 6:9-13; John 17:1-26.) The prayer of Matthew 6 (also recorded in Luke 11:2-4) is often referred to as The Lord's Prayer. Christ's prayer in John 17 is His intercessory prayer for those who would love and follow Him. It is His prayer for us. Both prayers have a strong emphasis on the world and the purpose of God to fill the earth with His glory.

1. Christ's Intercessory Prayer. (Read John 17:1-26.) Jesus' tender yet strong intercessory prayer for those who would believe in Him is interlaced with global evangelistic intent. In John 17:23 He specifically prays for unity among believers for the clear purpose "*that the world may believe*" and "*that the world may know that You have sent Me.*"

- *Jesus prayed for Himself.* (Read John 17:1-5.) His primary petition was, "*Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You*" (John 17:1). The Bible teaches that as believers we are "in Christ." (Read Ephesians 2:4-10.) His concerns are ours; His future is ours. So on His behalf we too can pray that the Son of God will be glorified to the ends of the earth.
- *Jesus prayed for His disciples.* (Read John 17:6-19.) Jesus prayed that His disciples would be preserved as His followers. (Read John 17:11.) We too should pray that God would keep us from every falling away from following Jesus. (Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Jude 24-25.)
- *Jesus prayed for all believers.* (Read John 17:20-26.) Jesus asked that the love of the Father would be in us. (Read John 17:26.) He prayed especially that all believers in Him would experience a spiritual unity. This unity is to be a visible testimony to the world that will result in all people knowing that Jesus was sent by God to be the Savior of the world. We too should pray for this biblical unity of all Christian believers to be manifested to the world. (Read John 17:21.)
- *Jesus prayed for the world.* Jesus expressed His evangelistic heart "*that the world may believe*" and "*that the world may know that You have sent Me*" (John 17:21,23).

The call of the Holy Spirit to believers today is for reconciliation. We are to be reconciled with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Then we are to be ministers of reconciliation to the world. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:19-20.)

2. The Model Prayer. Jesus taught his disciples to pray using the model prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. Each phrase of the prayer is full of world missions passion. Jesus said we should pray “in this manner.” In other words, we should do more than merely recite this beautiful prayer. We can use each phrase of the prayer to develop our own personal intercession to our heavenly Father.

“*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*” This is the *focus* of missions. Pray that the name of the Lord will be worshiped in those places where He is not currently known and worshiped. This is not only a statement of praise, it is also a cry from the heart and a prophetic declaration with a missions focus.

“*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” This is the *goal* of missions. This is a double statement of a single desire. The verbs appear in the imperative mood of the original language. By making this statement we are declaring His lordship will cover the entire earth. (Read Isaiah 11:9.) Pray that God’s will, which is already enforced throughout the rest of the universe, will be done on earth. “*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*” (Habakkuk 2:14).

“*Give us this day our daily bread.*” This is the *resourcing* of missions. One of the great challenges to the advance of the gospel is adequate finances. Pray that God will provide all that is needed – spiritually, physically and financially – to enable us to fulfill His purposes. (Read Philippians 4:19.)

“*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*” This is the *problem* of missions. Notice Jesus’ sober warning that our own forgiveness is based on our willingness to forgive those who have wronged us. (Read Matthew 6:14.) Unforgiveness cripples us emotionally and spiritually. When we refuse to forgive those who have wronged us, we block the flow of the Holy Spirit through us. This is a prayer for freedom from the chains that come from being unforgiven or unforgiving. (Read Ephesians 4:32.)

“*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*” Here Jesus spotlights the *warfare* of missions. (Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.) We are to be free from the devil’s clutches so we may liberate others. (Read Romans 13:12-14.) Each day we should clothe ourselves in the spiritual armor of Christ. (Read 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 6:11-18.)

“*For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*” This is the *completion* of missions. One day the Great Commission will be the Great Completion! Jesus will reign over all the nations and peoples of the earth. Yes, His kingdom is coming, but Jesus already rules in our hearts. Wherever you go, you become an outpost for God’s kingdom rule. One day the hope of His kingdom will be a reality worldwide. “*The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord*” (Habakkuk 2:14). But even now our hearts are filled with His glory. (Read Revelation 11:15; 15:4.)

A final word should be said about the tone in which Jesus prayed. The Bible says that He often punctuated His prayers with cries and tears to God. (Read Hebrews 5:7.) As our Lord prayed, we should also pray with intensity and fervency. (Read James 5:16.) Neither God nor the devil are moved by how loud we pray. Although the volume of our voice may be affected by our intensity, it is the volume of our spirit that impresses God.

Nor is it the *length* of our prayers as much as it is the *fervency* of our prayers that moves the heart of God. (Read Hebrews 5:7; James 5:16.)

MEMORIZE: *That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me (John 17:21).*

KEY TRUTH: The Lord's model prayer and intercessory prayer provide examples of how to pray effectively for God's global purposes to be realized.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Begin today to use the Lord's missionary prayers as a basis for praying effectively for God's will to be accomplished in you and in the entire world.
- You can "pray around the world" using the Lord's model prayer. For further information on Great Commission praying access the Global Advance training web site, www.2tim2.org.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! Psalm 46:10

WEEK 30

WORLDWIDE WORSHIP

Read Psalm 46:10; Revelation 7:9-10

Jesus said that the greatest commandment of all was the command to worship. (Read Matthew 22:37-38.) He said our highest calling is to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” (Mark 12:30.) This is a summons to intimate, passionate worship. Richard Foster says, “Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father.” Because of God’s great love for us, we draw near to share our great love for Him. The Holy Spirit calls us into the depths of knowing God intimately through personal worship. He also compels us to become an army of “worshipping warriors” – gratefully redeemed people who are overcoming every obstacle to see a community of worshipers among every people group on earth.

You can prepare now for His future worldwide worship. And you can help bring it into reality.

1. Becoming a whole-hearted, fully engaged worshipper. Worship is a comprehensive concept. Worship is not only singing our songs and lifting our hands, as important and wonderful as that is. Worship is also about living a life that is humbly and fully submitted to God. Then everything we do becomes an act of loving worship. Worship is all about loving a personal God personally in everything. (Read Romans 12:1-2.) Learn to live not so much by a work ethic, but rather by a “worship ethic.” If you will make everything God calls you to a loving act of worship, then you will be like a living “altar of incense,” offering praise and worship to God continually. (Read Hebrews 13:15.)

2. Becoming a worshipping community of faith. The ancient nation of Israel was originally created to be a community of passionate worshippers of their covenant-creating, covenant-keeping God. (Read Psalm 105:1-6.) Under the New Covenant, the early church assembled regularly to worship Jesus Christ and glorify His name together. (Read Acts 2:46-47.) We continue in that unbroken flow of worship from His covenant people today. As a leader, seek to create an environment and context for vibrant praise and worship. “*Make His praise glorious,*” as the Bible commands. (Read Psalm 66.) When a church truly becomes a worshipping community, passionately devoted to Jesus Christ, then that worship and those worshippers will spill out into your town or city, taking Jesus’ love and power wherever they go.

3. Taking worship to your city. When King David brought the Ark of the Covenant back into Jerusalem the city was transformed. The glory of God returned again to the city. Righteousness and order were restored. (Read 1 Chronicles 15:1-16:6.) The streets of the city were filled with the praise of almighty God. The same can be true in your city. Events like the Global Day of Prayer “fill the earth” and its cities with prayer

and praise. Planning worship services in public places, where permitted, introduces people to “sounds of heaven” they may have never before heard. In most cities people play and sing in subways, bus stations, parks, or on the street. Why should not the “singers of the Lord” openly praise the God of heaven in these public places? Most importantly, when the people of God worship Him in song, and word, and deed in the “marketplace” – the places where they live, work, study and conduct their daily affairs – then the city will be filled with praise and worship every day.

4. Taking worship to the ends of the earth. After the city of Jerusalem had been impacted by God’s presence among them, David began to prophesy in song concerning taking the praise and worship of God to the rest of the world. (Read 1 Chronicles 16:7-36.) David looked to a time when all peoples of all nations would worship God and give Him the glory due His Name. How would this happen? It would be because the people of God would go and “*declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among the peoples*” (Psalm 96:3). As we answer the missions mandate of the Great Commission we are to worship as we go, declaring in song, word, and deed the greatness and the beauty of our God and the glory of His grace. As we express our deep love for God throughout the earth the people of the earth will be drawn to the God we love. (Read Psalm 40:3.) As His presence is poured out in response to our worship, they too will desire to worship Him “*in the beauty of holiness*” (Read Psalm 29:2.)

In his book, *Let Us Worship*, Judson Cornwall wrote, “Since, as we have learned, worship is a response to a person, it will require such a revelation of God the Father in order to produce world-wide worship in the church; but God has promised it, history requires it, and our experiences long for it.”

5. Making worldwide worshipping communities of faith. Jesus, our Bridegroom, is worthy to have a “global bride,” made up of a passionate people with love in their hearts and praise on their lips for the Beloved One. In the Revelation we see a heavenly scene of worshippers gathered around the Lamb in praise and adoration. These worshippers are “*out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9). Nothing less than communities of worshippers in every people group in the world will do. Nothing but this will bring about the fulfillment of John’s heavenly vision. When Jesus tells us that we are to “*go . . . and make disciples of all the nations,*” we are being called to make dedicated, devoted followers of Jesus Christ who worship Him lovingly, passionately, and constantly. (Read Matthew 28:18-20.) God then places these disciples in Christian communities, called congregations, where they grow and become a part of a church family that serves God with great zeal. So beginning with our own lives of dedicated worship we move with God around the corner and around the world to win a “world of worshippers” for the King and His glorious Kingdom.

MEMORIZE: *And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).*

KEY TRUTH: Jesus, our Bridegroom, is worthy to have a “global bride,” made up of a passionate people with love in their hearts and praise on their lips for the Beloved One.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Write down some ways you can improve your “worship ethic.”
- Pray for ways to take worship into your city and for a plan from God to see this come to pass.
- Be part of a team, or send a team to another culture with praise and worship as one of their primary ministry objectives.

NOTES

[pull quote pg 1] Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in the heaven saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” Revelation 11:15

WEEK 31

YOUR KINGDOM COME

Read Matthew 4:23; 6:10, 33; 16:13-19; Luke 9:1-2.

We are to live under the rule of our King, Jesus Christ, and extend His rule throughout the earth.

The Bible teaches that Jesus went everywhere “*preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*” (Matthew 4:23). Jesus taught His disciples that they should pray, “*Your kingdom come. Your will be done*” (Matthew 6:10). Jesus sent His disciples out “*to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick*” (Luke 9:2). Jesus told many stories, or parables, about the kingdom of heaven to explain how His kingdom functioned and how it would be advanced on earth. (Read Matthew 13:1-52.) So it is very important to understand what the kingdom of God is and how to function powerfully and fruitfully in it. This lesson shows how God wants to use your life to help see Christ’s kingdom mission fulfilled in the earth.

1. The meaning of the kingdom. Missions author Steven Hawthorne defines the kingdom of God as “the exercise of God’s kingship, His authority, His right to rule based on His might, power and glory.” In this age we are not to view the kingdom of God in terms of a *domain* (a physical place), but rather of a *dominion* (God’s absolute rule in our hearts). It is not so much a physical *realm* as it is a *righteous reality*, a dynamic power released to defeat hell and deliver fallen humanity. (Read Luke 17:20-21.)

2. The message of the kingdom. The subject of God’s kingdom invading the kingdom of darkness and defeating it was central to all of Jesus’ teachings. He called His followers to advance His kingdom into the hearts and lives of people wherever they ministered. (Read Matthew 12:22-30.) John the Baptist came commanding people to “*repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 3:2). He was announcing that the power of the age to come had invaded this present evil age in the person of the King, Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist was put in prison “*Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’*” (Matthew 4:17). This message was the prevailing theme of Christ’s ministry and mission. It should be our prevailing theme, as well.

3. The mission of the kingdom. Jesus told Simon Peter and His other disciples that He was giving them “*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*” in order to do the work of the kingdom of heaven on earth. (Read Matthew 16:13-19.) Jesus was giving His disciples *kingdom authority*. When a person gives keys to someone else, he is giving them the right of entry and access. Jesus gave His followers the right of entry and access into the redemptive resources of His kingdom. They would have Christ’s very authority as their own. The counsels and strategies of hell would never be able to prevail against those believers who walk in the knowledge, wisdom, strength and power of Jesus Christ.

This same kingdom authority is ours by faith. We have been given the privilege and responsibility to “bind,” or forbid, what God forbids and to “loose,” or permit, what God permits. (Read Matthew 16:19.) These keys are to be used by us to advance God’s plans and purposes on the earth.

4. The present and future kingdom. In his book *The Gospel of the Kingdom* George Eldon Ladd writes that we are living in a kingdom that is both “already” and “not yet.” He asserts that “the kingdom of God has present realities and future expectancies.” The kingdom of God actually appears twice. The first coming of His kingdom was to destroy the power of Sin and Satan. (Read 1 John 3:8.) The second coming will be to completely restore righteousness on the earth. (Read Revelation 11:15; 12:10.)

Steven Hawthorne views the kingdom victory of God being accomplished in three great acts:

- Christ’s first coming: *breaking Satan’s power*. This was Jesus’ mission on earth by His life, death and resurrection.
- Between His comings: *undoing Satan’s works*. Jesus continues His mission with His church to all nations.
- Christ’s second coming: *destroying Satan’s kingdom*. Christ comes in His full glory and reign over the earth.

5. The mandate of the kingdom. A mandate is an official and often a royal command. Jesus gave His followers this command to help focus our lives: “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33). It is so easy in our lives and ministries to get our priorities out of place. We often treat secondary things as primary, and primary things as secondary. Jesus, our King, is very clear concerning our primary purpose. We are to advance the kingdom of God in the hearts of people everywhere, making sure that the spiritual, eternal rule of Christ and His redemptive purpose are at the forefront of our faith and focus. Jesus means for His redemption to touch every strata of society and every part of our lives. His promise is that if we will “put first things first,” all our other needs will be met by Him. (Read Matthew 6:33.) When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, He was entrusting to them what was the focus of His heart for all the peoples of the earth. (Read Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.) These *final words* of Jesus must be our *first works*.

6. The miracle of the kingdom. This miracle of Christ’s kingdom is that it is a supernatural, Holy Spirit-infused, irresistible force in the earth. It simply cannot be stopped by any human or demonic enemy. Jesus promised, “*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed . . . when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree*” (Matthew 13:31,32.) He further said, “*The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened*” (Matthew 13:33.) Jesus was assuring us that though our efforts in advancing the kingdom of God may look small or insignificant, there is divine potential that causes our simple acts of obedience to grow and multiply greatly.

The expansion of Christ’s kingdom through His church has been resisted severely over the centuries. Yet nothing and no one has been able to long withstand the flood and force of God’s liberation and life. So, go forward for Jesus Christ with the *meaning, message, mission* and *mandate* of His kingdom. As you go, know that you are advancing a

miraculous kingdom – existing, empowered and expanded by the power of the Holy Spirit, all for the glory of King Jesus.

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

KEY TRUTH: It is vitally important to understand what the kingdom of God is, to know how to operate powerfully and fruitfully in it, and to commit to seeing the King's kingdom mission fulfilled in the earth.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Meditate on what it means to “seek first the kingdom of God.” Ask the Lord to reveal to you places where you are placing secondary things first.
- As you daily go to God in prayer, picture yourself having the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” as a gift of privileged power to exercise Christ’s authority on earth.
- Since unity in the Body of Christ, the church, is necessary to seeing the kingdom of God strengthened and advanced, make a point to develop nourishing relationships with Christian leaders in other groups or denominations.
- Wake up every day declaring that this day is dedicated “to the King and His Kingdom!”

NOTE

[pull quote pg 1] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Ephesians 6:11

WEEK 32

VICTORIOUS SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Read Ephesians 6:11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 12:9-11

The devil, your enemy and mine, is waging war against us. He is trying to destroy our families, ministries and our very lives. He strategizes carefully, looking for ways to *accuse* us unto discouragement, *attack* us unto surrender, *tempt* us unto failure, and *deceive* us unto confusion. He has declared war on the people of God. The people of God must fight back! We must declare war on him and his demonic hordes. We must learn to use the resources of heaven to defeat the forces of hell. We must realize that this is a spiritual war that must be fought by the Word and the Spirit. The Scriptures are filled with principles and plans for engaging the enemy in spiritual warfare and fighting on to victory, extending and expanding the kingdom of God as we go.

1. A spiritual war. Paul told the Ephesian church that they were engaged in a spiritual conflict. There were not battling people, they were fighting the devil and demonic forces. So, they needed to engage this spiritual enemy with spiritual weapons. (Read Ephesians 6:10-12.) He told the Corinthians that these spiritual weapons were “*not carnal [of the flesh], but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds*” (2 Corinthians 10:4). We are to be engaged in the conflict to see the will of God done in the earth. We are to use the spiritual weapons God has given us to defeat a spiritual enemy who desires to pollute the earth with sin and evil and destroy men’s lives in whatever ways possible.

2. The keys of the kingdom. If someone gives you their keys they are giving you the right of entry into whatever they possess. Jesus has given us the right of entry into the power and authority of the kingdom of heaven! Jesus said we were to join Him in building His church in the earth in the hearts of redeemed men and women. He promised that the counsels of hell would not be victorious over the church. (Read Matthew 16:18-19.) We have the responsibility and authority to open a place for what God desires and to forbid and cast out what He does not desire.

3. A house united. One day Jesus healed and set free a horribly demonized man who could neither see nor speak. While some thought this could be evidence that He was the Messiah, others thought He did it by the power of Satan. Jesus was quick to remind them that a “*house divided against itself will not stand.*” He then said that “*if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself.*” Jesus went on to say, “*But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.*” (Read Matthew 12:22-28.) He was stating that “Satan’s house” was united in its pursuit to destroy the work of God. “God’s house” must be united in its commitment to destroy the wicked schemes of the devil to keep men in darkness and despair.

4. **A common enemy.** Satan and his demonic followers are the common enemies of all true Christians. The Body of Christ must be united, not fighting one another, but fighting the true enemy of the Lord Jesus and His church. (Read Ephesians 6:12.)
5. **A common energy.** Our common energy is the person and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, released in and through a life yielded to the lordship of Christ, that will defeat hell's darkness every time. (Read John 1:5; John 8:12; Romans 8:2-4.)
6. **A common enterprise.** Our common enterprise is to see the kingdom of God "come upon" every person and every situation as it develops and grows in the hearts of people around the world. (Read Malachi 1:11; Acts 26:18; 1 John 3:8.)
7. **Ministering in an opposite spirit.** One of the most powerful things we can do in spiritual warfare is to establish a spirit that is opposite to the spirit of the world. Love rather than hatred and fear. Servanthood as opposed to selfishness. Giving rather than greed. Forgiveness rather than unforgiveness. Humility rather than pride. When we walk in peace the enemy is disarmed. (Read Romans 16:20; James 3:16-18; 1 John 5:1-5.)
8. **The whole armor of God.** When Roman soldiers went into battle they were clothed from head to toe with protective armor. They had a shield to prevent enemy arrows from piercing them and a sharp sword to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. These soldiers were fierce fighters with the weapons they needed to ensure victory. Paul used this as a picture of what a fully armored believer looks like. He shows how to use this "armor" and gain victory over the "*schemes of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11.) When we stand strong in our identity in Christ, when we speak the promises of the Word of God and pray in faith, we will always be victorious over the devil. (Read Ephesians 6:11-18.)
9. **Resisting the devil.** James tells us to "*submit to God,*" "*resist the devil*" and when we do this "*he will flee from you.*" (Read James 4:7.) This is a great and precious promise. But at times the enemy will see if there is any way to cause us to give up and give in to his assaults against us. This is why Peter tells us that we are to resist the devil steadfastly. (Read 1 Peter 5:8-11.) So, when we *resist* and the enemy *insists*, we then *persist* unto victory.
10. **The blood of the cross.** Jesus won a resounding victory on the cross of Calvary. His shed blood atoned for the sins of all those who confess Him as Savior and Lord. Laying claim to the blood of Jesus and the victory of the cross enables us to enforce the finished work of Christ in every situation we encounter. (Read Hebrews 2:14-18.) Not only did Jesus take away our condemnation on the cross, He "*disarmed principalities and powers*" and "*made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them*" (Read Colossians 2:14-15). To be truly effective in spiritual warfare, we need to change our vantage point. We're not fighting *for* victory as much as we are fighting *from* victory. We must recover our identification with an almighty Christ. (Read Revelation 12:11.)

MEMORIZE: *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (2Corinthians 10:4).*

KEY TRUTH: We must learn to engage in victorious spiritual warfare and use the resources of heaven to defeat the forces of hell.

YOUR RESPONSE:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas in your life where you need to gain greater victory over the schemes of the devil.
- In meeting with God every day speak out the pieces of the armor of God and your commitment to appropriate them in your life.
- Remind yourself daily of the authority and power you have in Christ Jesus and walk in it.

NOTES