

REACTIVATE



DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

REACTIVATE



REACTIVATE GUIDE & JOURNAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

WELCOME LETTER 2

PRAYER GOALS & MEDITATIVE SCRIPTURES 6

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL 8

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Greetings to each of you,

I'd like to personally thank each of you for joining me in Deactivate 2 Reactivate. During this specified time, we will step away from social media and use that time for reading, journaling, studying, and consecrating ourselves through prayer and God's Word. I am anticipating an awesome move of God among us as people from all over the United States have committed to join us in ending this year strong, clearing away the debris of life, and reinvigorating our passionate pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and direction from God.

On Monday, 1/5/15 at 12am, we will deactivate our social media accounts. Before you do so, **I'd like everyone to post #deactivate2reactivate in your updates and tweets.** Also, when you deactivate your Facebook and other social media accounts, please choose the "other" option and type "deactivate2reactivate" as the reason code. I am also asking you to encourage others to go to my website to join us and download this guide.

A daily journal has been provided for you. Each time you would have updated your status or social media account, use that time to journal your thoughts, feelings, and prayers. You have also been provided a devotional for your studies, weekly prayer goals and scripture focus, and biblical study term

Again, I'm excited and honored that you will take this challenge with me!

Pastor Timothy Findley Jr.



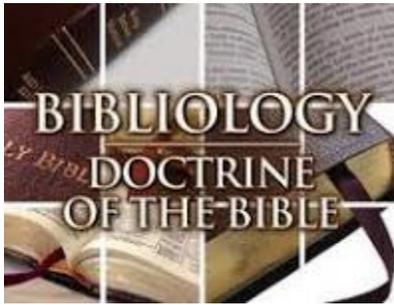
DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

11 Simple Theological Terms We All Need to Know

Tyndale Theological Seminary

Deriving from two Greek words, *theos* (God) and *logos* (word or discourse), the term *theology* simply refers to *the study of or discourse about God*. For students of the Bible, theology is the product of Bible study. In other words, it is not something we should read into the Bible or even use as a grid for understanding the Bible. Instead, we should come to the Bible objectively, letting it say what it says. The resulting body of knowledge, derived solely from the text, we could call a *Biblical theology*.

A next and helpful step (after studying the Bible in context) is to systematize the teachings of the Bible, or to categorize them, so that we can understand all of what the Bible teaches on a particular topic. Systematization can help us to avoid making big assumptions about narrow contexts. The product of systematizing Biblical theology into categories is often referred to as *systematic theology*, and there are eleven basic categories of systematic theology representative of a truly Biblical theology.



1. Bibliology

From the Greek *biblios*, bibliology is the study of the book, or more specifically, the study of the Bible. This topic deals with issues of definition, authority, and interpretive method. It is vital to have a solid bibliology, because if we don't approach the Bible properly, then we have no real authority to speak on any of the other areas of systematic theology. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21 are good passages to study related to bibliology.

2. Theology Proper

The term *proper* is used in the sense of a proper noun, so theology proper refers to the study of the person of God. This study considers the person, and attributes and character of God. Oftentimes, this study will include discussion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though Son and Spirit are often considered as separate studies altogether. Issues like the holiness of God, and the doctrine of the trinity are considered in theology proper. Job 38-41, Isaiah 6, 40, and 48, and Revelation 4 are great passages for learning about theology proper.

3. Christology

From the Greek *christos*, christology is the study of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The study focuses on his roles as God and man, and as prophet, priest, and king, and introduces His work on the cross. Isaiah 53, and 61:1-2, Luke 4:18-19, John 1:1-18, Colossians 1:15-20, Philippians 2:1-11, the book of Hebrews and Revelation are a few definitive passages regarding christology.

4. Pneumatology

From the Greek *pneuma*, meaning spirit, pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit. Pneumatology discusses the person and work of the Holy Spirit, especially in respect to His work in revealing Scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21), how He seals believers, guaranteeing their eternal life (Ephesians 1:13-14), how He brings people into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), and how He helps believers to grow and bear fruit (Ephesians 5:17-18 and Galatians 5).

5. Angelology

From the Greek *angellos*, we get our English word angel. Angelology is the study of angels, and includes demonology (study of demons) and satanology (study of Satan). Satan, for example, is discussed at length in passages like Genesis 3, Job 1, Ezekiel 28:11-19, Ephesians 6:13-17, 1 Peter 5:8, and Revelation 20.

6. Anthropology

Anthropos in the Greek is translated *man*. Anthropology is the study of humanity. This study considers humanity's creation and initial condition (Genesis 1-2), fall and condemnation (Genesis 3, Romans 5), and ultimate need for God's grace (Romans 3, and Ephesians 2).

7. Hamartiology

The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*. Hamartiology is the study of sin. Of special emphasis in this study is how sin began (Ezekiel 28, Genesis 3), and its universal effects on humanity (Genesis 2:17, Romans 1:18-21, 3:23 and 6:23).

8. Soteriology

From the Greek word *soteria*, meaning *deliverance* or *salvation*, soteriology is the study of salvation. Thankfully, God provided a solution to the problems discussed in hamartiology. Salvation is and always has been by grace through faith in Him (Genesis 15:6, Habakkuk 2:4, and Ephesians 2:8-9), and results in a new position for believers (2 Corinthians 5:17, and Ephesians 1), provides the opportunity for a new walk (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-3), and a new ultimate destiny (John 3:16, 17:3, 1 Peter 1:3-5).

9. Israelology

This topic of theology is an important one, because God created and chose Israel for a special purpose (Genesis 18:19), made promises to the nation (Genesis 22:16-17, and Jeremiah 31:31-

34), and has a future for Israel (Jeremiah 33:21-22, and Romans 9-11), and will be glorified through Israel (Jeremiah 14:21, and Romans 11:25-36).

10. Ecclesiology

This is the study of the *ekklesia*, or the assembly—the church. Ecclesiology considers the beginning of the church (Matthew 16:17-18, and Acts 2), its makeup (Ephesians 2:13-22), its relationship to Christ (Ephesians 5:21-33), its blessings (Ephesians 1:3), and its future (John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, and Revelation 19:11-14).

11. Eschatology

From the Greek term *eschatos*, meaning *last things*, eschatology is the study of last things. Its focus is on still yet unfulfilled prophecy to Israel (Jeremiah 31, and Daniel 9), to the nations and to unbelievers (Revelation 4-19, 20:11-15), to the church (John 14:1-3, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), regarding Christ and His kingdom (2 Samuel 7, and Revelation 20-22), Satan and judgment (Revelation 20:10), and the renewing of all things (Revelation 21-22).

When reading the Bible, it is helpful to think about which of these categories is being discussed. In doing so, the observant Bible student will begin to realize how interrelated are the books and teachings of the Bible—they are cohesive and connected. Consequently, what we understand in one area will necessarily influence (or even dictate) what we understand in another area. So it is vitally important that we be aware of the various issues discussed in the Bible, and to be aware of their relationships.

RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR THE MONTH

"The Discipline of Grace" by Jerry Bridges ISBN# 0-89109-883-6

"The Attributes of God" by Arthur Pink ISBN#978-0-8010-6772-3

"Biblical Stewardship" by Alfred Martin ISBN-13: 978-1593870409

PRAYER GOALS & MEDITATIVE SCRIPTURES

WEEK 1

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Grow in Grace 2 Peter 3:18

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity."

Live in the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

WEEK 2

Grow in Prayer Philippians 4:6

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Commit to Fellowship Hebrews 10:25

"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

WEEK 3

Share the Gospel Matthew 4:19

"And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'"

Worship God John 4:23

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."

Be Filled With the Spirit Ephesians 5:18

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

Pray for Revival Habakkuk 3:2

"Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy."

Give Biblically Proverbs 3:9

"Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce."

Walk in Holiness Leviticus 20:26

"Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine."

Walk in Forgiveness Ephesians 4:32

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Pray for Our Leaders Proverbs 21:1

"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Week 1: Repentance & Death to Self Repentance

Religion vs. Repentance

- Many think the word repent means "to get your act together" or to "get religion" or "fly straight"; as if we could. Repentance requires taking in a whole new point of view; *looking at it God's way*. God simply asks us to **turn**. This is the way we accept His gift. When we do, certain outcomes are promised. If we don't, or we "turn back", alternate outcomes are promised.

Look And Live

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Numbers 21:8-9 (NIV) The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can *look at it* and live." ...Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

- Let's imagine ourselves in this situation. Poisonous snakes have bitten everyone, and while we are not dead yet, the prospects do not look good. Suddenly a voice yells out: "We must do something. We must save ourselves!" But how? Various ideas surface such as: "If you run around in frantic activity it will work out the poison!" A few people try this, and die trying. Others, by staring at their bites, go totally berserk into a frenzy of panic. Alternately, some try to convince themselves that they are not bitten, or that the snakes were not poisonous, and form little groups to delude each other while dying. And here's a person selling "snake oil" which purports to be an antitoxin, but makes people even worse.

- Enter Moses who says, "If you look at the bronze snake that has been lifted up on this pole, you will live. If you do not, no matter what else you do, you will die." Now let's really picture how we might react, having been given this revelation. "He must be kidding," we would think. "Do nothing? Just look? How insulting a solution! What part do we play in it?" Moses responds, "Cease your activities. Just look, and live!" Really now, if you had been there, would you have believed it? Do you believe God's solution today?

John 3:14 (NIV) [Jesus:] "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up."

- We all have been bitten, and sin is coursing through our veins. It will most certainly lead to death. There is only one solution, but it is an offense to our ability to save ourselves. John 6:40a (NIV) "For my father's will is that everyone who *looks to* the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life."

John 6:29 (NIV) Jesus answered, "The *work* of God is this: to *believe* in the one he has sent."

Turn Or Burn

Luke 13:3b (NIV) "But unless you repent, you too will all perish." [This is often termed the "Turn or Burn" passage.]

Matthew 4:17 (NIV) From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matthew 3:2 (Phi) "You must *change your hearts and minds*, for the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived!"

Mark 6:12 (TEB) So they went out and preached that people should turn away from their sins.

Acts 2:38 (NIV) Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The Two Ways

- The "way" we are looking: 1) will **make sense** if we look long enough; 2) will **create desire** to move in that direction; and 3) will **lead to** something. First, we will look at how this applies to man's way.

Proverbs 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that **seems right** to a man, but in the end it **leads to** death.

- If our line of sight is along our own way, or the way of the world, then this will begin to make sense to us as we continue to meditate on it, even if the way we are looking is really stupid. With this mind set, desire will spring up, which is the fuel that will lead us to destruction.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- Any sin would do as an example, but let's take bitterness. If someone has done evil to us, the more we think about it, the more it will make sense to hate them, to burn with anger, to feel again the hurt. As we focus on the way of revenge, desire takes root and bitterness sets in. And where does this all lead?

James 1:14-15 (NIV) But each one is tempted when, by his own evil **desire**, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to **death**.

Ezekiel 18:23-31 (NIV) "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" declares the Sovereign Lord. "Rather, am I not pleased when they **turn from** their ways and live?... Because he considers all the offenses he has committed and **turns away from** them, he will surely live; he will not die... Repent! **Turn away from** all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

Ezekiel 33:11 (NIV) ... "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they **turn from their ways** and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!..."

Man's Way And God's Way Contrasted

Ephesians 4:17-24 (NIV) So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the **futility of their thinking**. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ **that way**. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful **desires**; to be made new in the **attitude of your minds**; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (Phi) You were spiritually dead through your sins and failures, all the time you followed **this world's ideas of living**, and obeyed the evil ruler of the spiritual realm, who is indeed fully operative today in those who disobey God. We all lived like that in the past, and followed **the desires** and imaginings of our lower natures, being, in fact, under the wrath of God by nature, like everyone else.

Galatians 5:16 (NIV) So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify **the desires** of the sinful nature.

What Are You Looking At?

- It has been said that "a righteous man does whatever he wants , but only wants to do the will of God." The "only wants" part comes from reckoning our carnal selves crucified with Christ. We do this by quickly repenting when we are caught meditating on sin, turning to God. If we do not, and give the "way of the world" its chance, our desire to sin will grow. Unconsummated carnal desire is corruption and death, even if we do not actually commit the sin.

Matthew 5:28-29 (NIV) "But I tell you that anyone who **looks at** a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."

- Desire itself is not the problem. The problem is the object of our desire. Desires are meant to be consummated, not to burn on uncrucified or spent on sin. Knowing how we function, God promises and gives us **new desires** by His Spirit, which makes righteousness an "easy yoke" to the repentant. We turn; He empowers. We lose "our" lives; He makes us new creations with a new mind, new desires (heart), and new works (fruit).

Romans 8:5-9 (NIV) Those who live according to the sinful nature have their **minds set** on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their **minds set** on what the Spirit desires. The mind of the sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.

Looking At It God's Way

- So how can we break out of the death-spiral of the way of sin **seeming right, creating desire,** and **leading to destruction**? We must repent; we must turn or perish. But to what? If we turn to just another of "man's ways" we have just set our sights down another road to death. Instead, we must find out what God's will, God's way, is and turn to that.

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NIV) Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but **understand what the Lord's will is.**

- Back to our example of bitterness, if we turn from fantasizing about actually hurting the perpetrator in some vengeful way to just wallowing in hurt, pain, and pity instead; this is not repentance. Repentance is **taking in God's point of view**; looking at it His way.

Ephesians 5:8-10 (NIV) For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and **find out what pleases the Lord.**

- Note that if God by His grace reveals something to us that we can turn to, it may not make sense **right away**. In our example of bitterness, God's will is forgiveness! "Ridiculous, that would not be right," is our first reaction. (Again, any sin will do as an example.) But if we do not allow our eye to flinch as we take in God's perspective, if we **keep staring at it**, we will find that it is good, pleasing, and perfect. Beyond "seeming right", it really *is* right.

- In our example, if we move from bitterness to forgiveness, we find out that God's way is the best "revenge", that forgiveness is like "pouring coals over the heads" of our enemies. If we forgive instead of wallowing in bitterness, the perpetrator's grip over us is broken, and we find that we were only hurting ourselves. If we continue to take in God's point of view, then after time we will look back at *the old way* and say "What was I thinking? Ridiculous!" So do not grow impatient if God's way does not immediately appeal to you; keep staring at it.

James 1:25 (Phi) But the man who **looks into** the perfect law, the law of liberty, and **makes a habit of so doing**, is not the man who hears and forgets. He puts that law into practice and he wins true happiness.

Ps 34:5,8 (NIV) Those who **look to** him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame... Taste and see that the Lord is good.

The Gift Of God That Goes With Repentance: New Appetites

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

1 Peter 2:2 (NIV) Like newborn babies, **crave** pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Ps 119:104-105 (NIV) I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore, I **hate** every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Ps 16:11 (NIV) You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal **pleasures** at your right hand.

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV) His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his **very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil **desires**.

Rom 12:1-2 (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his **good, pleasing, and perfect will**.

Warnings To Those Who Hanker To "Look Back"

Isaiah 30:15 (NIV) This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."

Philippians 3:19 (NIV) Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is their shame. Their **mind is on** earthly things.

2 Peter 2:21-22 (NIV) It would have been better for them not to have known **the way** of righteousness, than to have known it and then to **turn their backs** on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "A sow that is washed goes back to wallowing in the mud."

Luke 9:62 (NEB) To him Jesus said, "No one who sets his hand to the plow and then **keeps looking back** is fit for the kingdom of God."

The Urgency Of Repentance

Isaiah 55:6-7 (NIV) Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake **his way** and the evil man **his thoughts**. Let him **turn to** the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Rom 2:4 (Phi) Are you, perhaps, misinterpreting God's generosity and patient mercy towards you as weakness on his part? Don't you realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

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

James 5:19-20 (Phi) My brothers, if any of you should wander away from the truth and another should **turn him back** on to the **right path**, then the latter may be sure that in turning a man back from his wandering course he has rescued a soul from death, and in so doing will "cover a multitude of sins."

Rev 3:3 (Phi) "Remember what you were taught. Hold to those things and repent."

The Object Of Desire

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

1 John 2:15-17 (Phi) Never give your hearts to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world-system, based as it is on **men's desires**, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself. The world and all of its passionate desires will one day disappear. But the man who is following **God's will** is part of the permanent and cannot die.

Matthew 6:32-33 (Phi) That is what pagans are always **looking for**; your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **Set your heart** first on his kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course.

Col 3:2 (NIV) Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Ps 101:3a (NIV) I will set before my eyes no vile thing.

Rom 13:14 (NIV) ... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and **do not think about** how to gratify **the desires** of your sinful nature.

Ps 105:4 (NIV) **Look to** the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

Ps 119:36-37 (NIV) Turn my heart toward your statutes and not towards selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

Acts 2:38 (TEB) Peter said to them, "Turn away from your sins, each one of you, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit."

Turn Or Burn

2 Tim 2:19 (NIV) "The Lord knows those who are his," and "everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must **turn away** from wickedness."

- When at first we hear "repent or perish", it seems harsh. But as we turn, we see that it is an incredible gift to have something to **turn to**. If not for God's love, our only option would be to perish. But the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has appeared. To have the option to turn is sweet indeed.

Acts 3:19 (NIV) "Repent, then, and **turn to** God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

Hebrews 12:2a (NIV) Let us **fix our eyes** on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Week 1: Repentance & Death to Self

Death to Self

Take Up Your Cross

Mark 8:34-35 (NIV) Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- Bible Knowledge Commentary: "When the Roman Empire crucified a criminal or captive, the victim was often forced to carry his cross part of the way to the crucifixion site, carrying his cross through the heart of the city."

Luke 9:23-24 (NIV) Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

- NIV Study Notes: "The picture is of a man, already condemned, required to carry the beam of his own cross to the place of execution. Disciples from Galilee knew what this meant, for hundreds of men had been executed by this means in their region."

Mat 10:38 (NIV) ... anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Are We Really Following Christ?

- The modern equivalent would be to walk down a hallway toward an electric chair. Death is the destiny, and we are in a grim death procession. At least we are not first and, hopefully, we are not alone. If we "deny ourselves", and commit ourselves to death, we can no longer place *any hope* in this world. By "taking up our cross", it is as if all our natural passions and desires are doomed.

Luke 14:25-33 (Phi) "If anyone comes to me without 'hating' his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even *his own life*, he cannot be a disciple of mine. The man who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps cannot be my disciple. If any of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn't he first sit down and work out the cost of it, to see if he can afford to finish it? Otherwise, when he has laid the foundation and found himself unable to complete the building, everyone who sees it will begin to jeer at him, saying, 'This is the man who started to build a tower but couldn't finish it!'... So it is with you; only the man who says good-bye to his possessions can be my disciple."

- A.W. Tozer: "Among the plastic saints of our times, Jesus has to do all the dying, and all we want to hear is another sermon about his dying."

The Death Sentence

Gal 5:24 (Jer) You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.

Gal 5:24 (TEB) And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature, with all its passions and desires.

1 Pet 2:24a (Phi) And he personally bore our sins in his own body on the cross, so that we might be *dead to sin* and be alive to all that is good.

Consider Yourself Dead

- T. Austin-Sparks: "We have not to die; we are dead. What we have to do is to accept our death... [In] baptism... we simply step in there and say, 'That position which God has settled with reference to me is the one which I now accept, and I testify here in this way to the fact that I have accepted God's position for me, namely, that in the Cross I have been brought to an end.'"

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Col 3:3-7 (Phi) For, as far as this world is concerned, *you are already dead*, and your true life is a hidden one in God, through Christ. One day, Christ who is your life, will show himself openly, and you will all share in that magnificent revelation. *Consider yourselves dead* to worldly contacts: have nothing to do with sexual immorality, dirty mindedness, uncontrolled passion, evil desire, and the lusts for other people's goods, which amounts to idolatry. It is because of these very things that the holy anger of God falls upon those who refuse to obey him. And never forget that you had your part in those dreadful things when you lived that old life.

Rom 6:11a (KJV) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead...

Rom 6:11a (TEB) Think of yourselves as dead to sin.

Rom 6:11 (NIV) In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Rom 6:11-14 (Phi) In the same way, look upon yourselves as *dead to the appeal and power of sin* but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Do not, then, allow sin to establish any power over your mortal bodies in making you give way to its lusts. Nor hand over your bodily parts to be, as it were, weapons of evil for the devil's purpose. But, like men rescued from certain death, put yourselves in God's hands as weapons of good for his own purposes. For sin can never be your master; you are no longer living under the law, but under grace.

Rom 7:4-6 (Phi) So, my brothers, the death of Christ on the cross has made you "dead" to the claims of the Law, and you are free to give yourselves... to another, the one who was raised from the dead [Christ], that we may be productive for God. While we were "in the flesh", the Law stimulated our sinful passions and so worked in our nature that we became productive--for death! But now that we stand clear of the Law, the claims which existed are *dissolved by our "death"*, and we are free to serve God, not in the old obedience to the letter of the Law, but in a new way, in the Spirit.

Rom 8:12-13 (NEB) It follows, my friends, that our lower nature has no claim upon us; we are not obligated to live on that level. If you do so, you must die. But if by the Spirit you *put to death* all the base pursuits of the body, then you will live.

Death To Self is NOT Optional for Christians

Jn 12:24 (NIV) "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Rom 12:1-2 (Phi) With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed.

- T. Austin-Sparks: "The unalterable basis of an open heaven is a grave, and a crisis at which you come to an end of your own self-life. It is the crisis of real experiential identification with Christ in His death."

Rom 6:2-4 (Phi) We, who have *died to sin*--how could we live in sin a moment longer? Have you forgotten that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were, by that very action, sharing in his death? We were dead and buried with him in baptism, so that just as he was raised from the dead by that splendid revelation of the Father's power, so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether.

Gal 6:14 (Phi) Yet God forbid that I should boast about anything or anybody except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which means that the world is dead to me and *I am a dead man* to the world.

"Dead Men"

- Let the appeal of sin strike you like it would a corpse.

Rom 6:5-7 (Phi) If we have, as it were, shared his death, we shall also share in his resurrection. Let us never forget that our old selves died with him on the cross that the tyranny of sin over us might be broken, *for a dead man can safely be said to be free from the power of sin.*

Rom 6:8-10 (Phi) And if we were *dead men* with Christ we can believe that we will also be men alive with him. We can be sure that the risen Christ never dies again; death's power to master him is finished. He died, because of sin, once; he lives for God forever.

Rom 6:11 (LB) So look upon your old sin nature as *dead and unresponsive to sin*, and instead be alive to God, alert to him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Life After Death

Col 2:12,14,20 (Jer) You have been buried with him, when you were baptized; and by baptism, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead... He has overridden the Law and canceled every record of the debt that we had to pay; he has done away with it by nailing it to the cross... If you *really died* with Christ to the principles of this world, why do you still let rules dictate to you, as though you were still living in the world?

2 Tim 2:11 (Phi) I rely on this saying: "If we died with him we shall also live with him."

2 Cor 5:15,17 (Phi) We look at it like this: if one died for all men, then, in a sense, they all died, and his purpose in dying for them is that their lives should now be no longer lived for themselves *but for him who died* and was raised to life for them... For if a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether; the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new.

Titus 2:11 (NIV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Eph 4:22-25 (TEB) So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to, the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new. You must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy. No more lying, then! Everyone must tell the truth.

Gal 2:19-20 (Phi) For under the Law I "died", and *I am dead* to the Law's demands so that I may live for God. I died on the cross with Christ. And my present life is not that of the old "I", but the living Christ within me. The bodily life I now live I live believing in the Son of God who loved me and sacrificed himself for me.

Col 3:1 (NIV) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above.

• Counting The Cost, By C.S. Lewis:

"The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self--all your wishes and precautions--to Christ.

"Christ says 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work. *I want You.* I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked--the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: My own will shall become yours.'...

"When I was a child I often had toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother--at least not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this. I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain, but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie. If you gave them an inch they would take a mile.

"Now, if I may put it that way, our Lord is like the dentists. If you give Him an inch, He will take a mile. Dozens of people go to Him to be cured of some one particular sin which they are ashamed of... or which is obviously spoiling daily life (like bad temper or drunkenness). Well, He will cure it alright: but He will not stop there. That may be all you ask; but if once you call Him in, He will give you the full treatment. That is why He warned people to 'count the cost' before becoming Christians. 'Make no mistake,' He says, 'If you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less or other than that.'

"Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life... whatever it cost Me, I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect--until my Father can say without reservation that He is well pleased with you, as He said He was well pleased with me. This I can do and will do. But I will not do anything less.'

"The goal toward which He is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection; and no power in the whole universe, except you yourself, can prevent Him from taking you to that goal. That is what you are in for. And it is very important to realize that. If we do not, then we are very likely to start pulling back and resisting Him after a certain point. I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel (though we do not put it into words) that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted Him to do. And we should be obliged if He would now leave us alone.

"But this is the fatal mistake... The question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what He intended us to be when He made us....

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you know that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of--throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. *He intends to come and live in it Himself!*"

Week 2: The Disciplines & The Power of Grace

The Power of Grace

John 1:16 (NAS) For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

The Grace Gifts

1 Cor 14:1 (NIV) Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts...

- Many Christians know that "gift" in Greek is *charisma*, as in charismatic. Grace in Greek is *charis*. They are nearly the same word, and are very closely related.

Rom 12:6 (NIV) We have different gifts [charisma], according to the grace [charis] given us...

- To be sure, grace is more than just the gifts of the Spirit, it also produces *fruit* of Spirit. Yet grace [charis] and the gifts [charisma] are near synonyms, and this word-play is heavily exploited throughout the New Covenant.

1 Pet 4:10 (NIV) Each one should use whatever gift [charisma] he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace [charis] in its various forms.

The Fruit Of The Spirit

Col 1:6 (NIV) ... All over the world this gospel is *bearing fruit* and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace *in all its truth*.

- More important than the gifts of the Spirit (which are temporary, can be faked, even sourced by Satan) are the fruits of the Spirit. The ability to produce godly fruit by the power of the resurrected Christ in us is *grace in action*.

Gal 5:22-23 (NIV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Mat 3:8 (NIV) "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance."

Acts 26:20 (NIV) "...they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."

Mat 7:19-21 (NIV) "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who *does* the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Grace Works!

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Rom 5:1-2 (NAS) Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

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

- Picture a concept "abounding". Then try picturing "fire insurance" "abounding". Such scriptures cannot be understood as conceptual grace. Grace must be real--it must touch ground in good fruit and works--or it is not grace at all, but a vapor of words.

Acts 4:33-34 (NIV) With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them...

Grace In Action Through The Gifts

Acts 6:8 (NIV) Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

Rom 1:5 (NIV) Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people... to the obedience that comes from faith.

Eph 3:2,7-8 (NIV) Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you?... I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his *power*. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

1 Cor 3:10 (NIV) By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder...

1 Tim 1:14 (TEB) Our Lord poured out his abundant grace on me and gave me the faith and love which are ours in union with Christ Jesus.

Rom 12:3 (NIV) For by the grace given me I say...

Rom 15:15 (NIV) I have written to you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me.

Specific Grace

2 Cor 8:7 (NIV) But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

Col 4:6 (NIV) Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt...

1 Cor 1:3-9 (NAS) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace [charis] of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift [charisma], awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Gift is The Righteousness of Christ By The Holy Spirit

Rom 3:22-24 (NIV) This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

1 Thes 2:13 (NIV) And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Titus 3:4-8 (NIV) But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become *heirs* having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to *doing* what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

2 Cor 12:9 (NIV) But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

In Christ, And Christ In Us

Eph 1:7-11 (Phi) ... It is through him, at cost of his own blood, that we are redeemed, freely forgiven through that free and generous grace which has overflowed into our lives and given us wisdom and insight. For God has allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposed long ago in his sovereign will that all human history should be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth should find its perfection and fulfillment in him. In Christ we have been given an *inheritance*, since we were destined for this, by the one who works out all his purposes according to the design of his own will.

Phil 2:12-13 (NIV) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

The Experience of Grace In The Moment

Titus 2:11-12 (NIV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

2 Tim 1:8-9 (NIV) ...Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the *power* of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

Col 1:10-12 (NIV) And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing *fruit* in every *good work*, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all *power* according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Heb 13:9b (NAS) It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace...

Phil 4:13 (Wey) I have strength for anything through Him who gives me power.

2 Tim 2:1 (Phi) So, my son, be strong in the grace that Christ Jesus gives.

Surprised By Grace

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

2 Tim 1:8-9 (Jer) ...Bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy--not because of anything we ourselves have done, but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace had already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time.

Eph 2:8-10 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God *prepared in advance* for us to do.

- There is a distinct experience of stepping into one of these "good works" moments; as if it were *waiting* for us before the foundation of the world and we have just now *slipped* into it, sort of like a hand popping into a glove. "It was for this we were made," seems to be the feeling when the life of Christ bursts forth from within us; even if what is being done is a small thing in the eyes of men. It might be swallowing pride, it might be turning the other cheek, it might be dying to a carnal instinct, it might be helping someone with a spiritual gift, it might be leading someone to Christ. But when we find ourselves obedient *by grace*, it is an experience far removed from legalistic, religious effort. It is an "easy yoke" (Mat 11:30) indeed, since He is in it with us. We are "surprised by grace" in the moment of obedience--to what we long knew God wanted--and we also have a strong sense that *this moment has been waiting for us* since time began. Have you ever experienced this?

Consecrated By Grace

Eph 2:10 (Wey) For we are God's own handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works which He has predestined us to practice.

- We are His workmanship, and He will guide us into glorious episodes of obedience *by grace through faith* in the only One who is approved of the Father, even Jesus Christ, who has generously offered His very life to us to live in each and every moment.

2 Tim 2:19-21 (Jer) ..."The Lord knows those who are his own" and "All who call upon the name of the Lord must avoid sin." Not all the dishes in a large house are made of gold and silver; some are made of wood and earthenware, some are kept for special occasions and others for ordinary purposes. Now, to avoid these faults... is the way for anyone to become a vessel for special occasions, fit for the Master himself to use, and kept ready for any good work.

Heb 12:28 (Jer) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have *grace*, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Php 2:12-13 (Wey) ...Labour earnestly with fear and trembling... to make sure of your own salvation. For it is God Himself whose power creates within you the desire to do His gracious will and also brings about the accomplishment of the desire.

By Grace We Stand

Col 1:6 (Jer) The Good News which has reached you is spreading all over the world and is producing the same results as it has among you ever since the day when you heard about God's grace and understood what this really is.

2 Pet 1:2-3 (Phi) May you know more and more of grace and peace as your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord grows deeper. He has by His own action given us everything that is necessary for living [a godly life] in allowing us to know the one who has called us to him, through his own glorious goodness.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

1 Pet 5:8-12 (Phi) Be self-controlled and vigilant always... and after you have borne these sufferings a very little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to share his eternal splendour through Christ, will himself make you whole and secure and strong. All *power* is his for ever and ever, amen! I am sending this short letter... to stimulate your faith and assure you that the above words represent the true grace of God. See that you stand fast in that grace!

Week 2: The Disciplines & The Power of Grace

The Disciplines

John 10:10 (NIV) I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

1 Jn 2:29, 3:2-3 (Phi) You all know that God is really good. You may be just as sure that the man who leads a really good life is a true child of God... Here and now, my dear friends, we ARE God's children. We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is! Everyone who has at heart a hope like that keeps himself pure, as Christ is pure.

The Easy Yoke

Mat 11:29-30 (NIV) "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Luke 6:40 (Jer) "The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will be like his teacher."

- Dallas Willard: "We can become like Christ--by following the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe *He knew how to live*. What activities did Jesus practice? Such things as fasting, solitude, watching, praying, intense study and meditation upon God's Word and God's ways... Some of these will certainly be even more necessary to us than they were to him, because of our greater need. The secret of the easy yoke, then... is to live and *prepare* ourselves for life as he did, so that we can be the kind of people who behave 'on the spot' like Christ."

Following Christ

Mat 28:20 (Phi) "Teach them to obey all that I have commanded you..."

- A.W. Tozer: "To escape the error of salvation by works we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without obedience."

Rom 6:16-19 (Phi) You "belong" to the power you choose to obey. Thank God, that you, who were at one time the servants of sin, honestly responded to the impact of Christ's teaching when you came under it's influence. Then, released from the service of sin, you entered the service of righteousness. (I use an everyday illustration because human nature grasps truth more readily

that way.) In the past you voluntarily gave your bodies to the service of vice and wickedness—for the purposes of evil. So, now, give yourselves to the service of becoming truly good.

No Pain, No Gain...

- For those who are out of shape physically, to begin training requires enduring significant pain. But after the initial "start up" pain, training becomes a sort of pleasure. This is because disciplined training leads to physical agility, strength, and health. Those in shape physically are more likely to take part in, excel at, and truly enjoy physical activities; but by comparison, spiritual fitness is even more important.

1 Tim 4:7-8 (Phi) ...Take time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit. Bodily fitness has limited value, but spiritual fitness is of unlimited value, for it holds promise both for this present life and for the life to come.

1 Cor 9:24 (Jer) All the runners at the stadium are trying to win, but only one of them gets the prize. You must run in the same way, meaning to win.

Spectator Or Participant?

1 Cor 9:25-27 (Phi) Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains—for a fading crown of leaves. But our contest is for a crown that will never fade. I run the race with determination. I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight! I am my body's sternest master...

Luke 14:27-30 (Phi) "The man who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps cannot be my disciple. If any of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn't he first sit down and work out the cost of it, to see if he can afford to finish it? Otherwise, when he has laid the foundation and found himself unable to complete the building, everyone who sees it will begin to jeer at him, saying, "This is the man who started to build a tower but couldn't finish it!"

Seizing The Prize Without Running The Race? (2 Tim 2:5)

Heb 12:1 (NIV) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

- M. Scott Peck: "There are many people who... want, and believe it is possible, to skip over the discipline, to find an easy shortcut to discipline. Often they attempt to attain it by simply imitating the superficialities of saints... Some even believe that by such imitation they have really become saints and prophets, and are unable to acknowledge that they are still children and face the painful fact that they must start at the beginning and go through the middle."

Heb 5:12-14 (Phi) At a time when you should be teaching others, you need teachers yourselves to repeat to you the "ABC" of God's revelation to men. You have become people who need a milk diet and cannot face solid food! For anyone who continues to live on "milk" is unable to digest what is right—he simply has not grown up. "Solid food" is only for the adult, that is, for the man who has developed *by experience* his power to discriminate between what is good and what is evil.

The Disciplines Must Be Led By The Spirit

- Oswald Chambers: "The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of principles to be obeyed apart from identification with Jesus Christ. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is getting his way with us."

2 Tim 1:7 (NIV) For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Gal 5:22-23,25 (NIV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

1 Thes 4:4-8 (Phi) Every one of you should *learn to control* his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect, and never allowing it to fall victim to lust, as do pagans with no knowledge of God. You cannot break this rule without cheating and exploiting your fellow-man. God will punish all who do offend in this matter, as we have plainly told you and warned you. The calling of God is not to impurity but to the most thorough purity, and anyone who makes light of the matter is not making light of a man's ruling but of God's command. It is not for nothing that the Spirit God gives us is called the 'Holy' Spirit.

Practice What You Are Not Good At...

- Dallas Willard: "People who think that they are spiritually superior because they make a practice of a discipline such as fasting... are entirely missing the point. The need for extensive practice of a given discipline is an indication of our weakness, not our strength. As a rule of thumb: *if it is easy for us to engage in a certain discipline, we probably don't need to practice it.* The disciplines we need to practice are precisely the ones we are not 'good at' and hence do not enjoy."

Disciplines of Abstinence

- The spiritual disciplines of abstinence reveal the nature of the battle between the flesh and the spirit. By abstaining from food, social interaction, or sleep, we are "exercising" our spiritual muscles against the lower nature. It is like lifting weights; silly in itself, but useful to prepare us for *real* physical tests in the future. The things we abstain from in the spiritual disciplines are not evil; it is for the sake of the exercise that we deny ourselves; to prepare us for real temptation--tomorrow, or the next day.

1 Cor 6:12 (KJV) All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

- The disciplines of abstinence give us much needed experience and insight into the spiritual battle going on within us, and the lessons learned *cannot be taught any other way.* What is it like to say "No" to the lower nature? What tricks will it play? The way in which desire, habit, distraction, and other factors effect *you* will not be like anyone else. You must learn *by doing* how to live in holiness before God in *your* body. The disciplines of abstinence are an opportunity to *train in safety.*

1 Pet 2:11 (Phi) I beg you, as those whom I love, to live in this world as strangers, and "temporary residents", to keep clear of the desires of your lower natures, for they are always at war with your souls.

1 Pet 1:13 (NIV) Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled...

Disciplines of Engagement

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- Dallas Willard defines the spiritual disciplines of engagement as the routine Christian activities of prayer, study, and meditation that are especially powerful in combination with the disciplines of abstinence. Disciplines of abstinence counteract tendencies to sins of *commission*, disciplines of engagement counteract tendencies to sins of *omission* [James 4:17]. They are often mentioned in combination in Scripture. "This is the outbreathing and inbreathing of spiritual training." Gal 5:16-17 (Phi) Here is my advice: Live your whole life in the Spirit and you will not satisfy the desires of your lower nature. For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature. Here is the conflict, and that is why you are not able to do what you want to do...

Rom 8:12-13 (Phi) So then, my brothers, you can see that we owe no duty to our sensual nature, or to live life on the level of instincts. Indeed that way of living leads to certain spiritual death. But if on the other hand you cut the nerve of your instinctive actions by obeying the Spirit, you will live.

2 Tim 2:21 (NIV) If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

- Following is a biblical sampler of three of the main disciplines of abstinence: fasting, solitude, and watching.

FASTING: Abstinence from Food

Ester 4:16 (NIV) ...Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king...

Luke 5:35 (NIV) "But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, in those days they will fast."

Mat 6:16-17 (RSV) "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."

Acts 13:3 (NIV) So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

SOLITUDE: Abstinence from Social Interaction

Mark 1:35 (NIV) Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mark 6:46 (RSV) And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

Isa 30:15 (NIV) ...in repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength...

Mat 12:19 (Phi) He shall not strive or cry aloud; Neither shall anyone hear his voice in the streets.

Mark 6:31 (NIV) "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

WATCHING: Abstinence from Sleep

Luke 6:12 (NIV) One of those days Jesus went out into the hills to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Mat 26:38,40 (Phi) ...he told them, "stay here and keep watch with me."... He spoke to Peter, "Couldn't you three stay awake with me for a single hour? Watch and pray, all of you, that you may not have to face temptation. Your spirit is willing, but human nature is weak."

Luke 22:45-46 (NIV) When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

Col 4:2 (Jer) Be persevering in your prayers and be thankful as you stay awake to pray.

Luke 12:37 (NIV) "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes..." [watching here, and in the next verse, is used figuratively.]

Mark 13:36-37 (NIV) "If he comes suddenly, don't let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

- Other disciplines of abstinence include: silence, frugality, chastity, and sacrifice.
- Next we will look at three disciplines of engagement: prayer, study, and meditation.

PRAYER: Conversing with God

1 Pet 4:7 (NIV) The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Eph 6:18 (Jer) Pray all the time, asking for what you need, praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all the saints.

Acts 1:14 (Phi) By common consent these... devoted themselves to prayer.

Deut 4:7 (NIV) ...The Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him...

1 Thes 5:17,19 (Phi) Never stop praying... Never damp the fire of the Spirit.

STUDY: Seeking/Searching for God

Acts 17:11 (LB) ...They searched the Scriptures day by day to check up on Paul and Silas' statements to see if they were really so.

1 Thes 5:21 (LB) But test everything that is said to be sure it is true, and if it is, then accept it.

2 Tim 2:15 (KJV) Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Mat 7:7 (NIV) "Ask and it will be given unto you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened."

Heb 11:6 (Phi) ...The man who approaches God must have faith in two things, first that God exists and secondly that God rewards those who search for him.

2 Tim 3:16-17 (Phi) All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work.

MEDITATION: Waiting and Reflecting on God

Ps 119:97 (NIV) Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Ps 48:9 (NIV) Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

Ps 145:5 (NIV) ...I will meditate on your wonderful works.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Ps 130:6 (NIV) My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen wait for the morning...

Ps 27:14 (NIV) Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Ps 46:10 (NIV) Be still and know that I am God...

Week 3: Discernment & Hearing God

Discernment

1 Cor 2:15 (KJV) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things...

Mat 7:1 (KJV) "Judge not, that ye be not judged..."

- F.F. Bruce: "Judgment is an ambiguous word, in Greek as in English: it may mean sitting in judgment on people (or even condemning them), or it may mean exercising a proper discrimination. In the former sense judgment is depreciated; in the latter sense it is recommended."
- NIV Study Notes: The Christian is not to judge hypocritically or self-righteously, as can be seen from the context. [But] Scripture repeatedly exhorts believers to evaluate carefully and choose between good and bad people and things. The Christian is to "test everything": 1 Thes 5:21 (Phi) "By all means use your judgment, and hold on to whatever is good."
- A.W. Tozer: "Among the gifts of the Spirit scarcely one is of greater practical usefulness than the gift of discernment. This gift should be highly valued and frankly sought as being almost indispensable in these critical times. This gift will enable us to distinguish the chaff from the wheat and to divide the manifestations of the flesh from the operations of the Spirit."
- For clarity, let's use the word *discern* for the judgment that God encourages, and *criticize* for inappropriate judgments. By context, try to identify whether the word judgment, when used in Scripture, means discernment or criticism.

Spiritual Malpractice

Luke 12:57 (NIV) "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?"

Hosea 4:6 (NIV) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

- It is important that we judge things properly, or *discern*. If a person with appendicitis is diagnosed as having an ulcer, it may seem a mere matter of terminology, but if judged improperly, treatment could lead to death! If a baby has a fever, you wouldn't put it in the freezer to cool it down. Treating the symptom may make the problem worse! Discernment by outward appearances, out of ignorance, confusing cause and effect, symptom with problem, can be devastating--even with the best of intents.

2 Cor 10:7 (NIV) You are looking only at the surface of things.

Why Are Our Prayers And Ministry So Ineffective?

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- Consider our lack of discernment: Of the causes mentioned in Scripture of God, the world, the flesh, the devil; each Christian sect seems to focus on one and ignore the others. Diseases are assumed to be demons and "rebuked" without discernment or effect. Demons are assumed to be sickness, and "treatment" is attempted. God's discipline is attributed to Satan, and made light of. The obvious promptings of the flesh are assumed to be the spirit, or even of the soul. The soul is confused with the flesh and spirit. A mere matter of terminology, right? With such faulty diagnosis, we attempt "ministry", to no effect, and often to great harm. Is this ministry? Is this us?

John 7:24 (Phi) "You must not judge by the appearance of things but by the reality!"

John 7:24 (NIV) "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a *right judgment*."

Counterproductive Ministry

- If a medical doctor were to make such outlandish mistakes, we would put a stop to his "practice". But the modern church carries on in this "anti-ministry", leaving behind a wake of damaged souls. It is a very bad symptom when we don't care if our prayers and ministry are effective; it shows that the object of our "spirituality" is self-glory and not love. We don't dare look to see for fear of realizing how badly we are doing. Ignorance is bliss. Clearly, we need to learn to judge properly before we act. We need discernment.

Prov 19:2 (NIV) It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.

1 Cor 4:5 (Phi) "The moral of this is that we should make no hasty or premature judgments."

- If we were willing to ask, willing to wait, willing to listen, we might gain discernment, so that we could "know", and not have to waver. We might achieve real faith. We would see past the surface, into reality. Our prayers and ministry would be effective. We could know God's will and see it done.

James 1:5 (NIV) If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given unto him.

Jesus On Discernment

Luke 11:9 (NIV) "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Mat 16:3 (KJV) "...It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering.' O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

Isa 11:2-3 (NIV) The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him--the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord--and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears.

John 8:15-16,26 (NIV) "You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do *judge*, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent me... *I have much to say in judgment* of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world."

John 12:48 (NEB) "There is a judge for the man who rejects me and does not accept my words; *the word that I spoke* will be his judge on the last day."

Heb 4:12 (NIV) The word of God is living and active... *it judges* the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Our Destiny

Mat 19:28 (NIV) Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his throne in heavenly glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Luke 22:30 (NIV) "so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Discernment In The Church

- Are we to "judge" teachings, situations, and even people in the church? Many Christians are fearful of making judgments, and unclear if this is the mission and duty of the church. After all: "Judge not!..." (We will consider hypocritical judgment, or criticism, in a moment.) This fear of using proper judgment may come from a simple lack of understanding of God's will, or from superstition (Col 2:18-19), or even from a lack of the Holy Spirit (Jude 17-19). Scripture is useful for correcting such conditions (2 Tim 3:16-17).

1 Cor 5:12-6:6 (Phi) Those outside the church it is not my business to judge. But surely *it is your business to judge those who are inside the church*--God alone can judge those who are outside... When any of you has a grievance against another, aren't you ashamed to bring the matter to be settled before a pagan court instead of before the church? Don't you know that Christians *will some day judge the world*? And if you are to judge the world do you consider yourselves incapable of settling such infinitely smaller matters? Don't you know that we shall judge the very angels themselves--how much more then matters of this world only! In any case, if you find you have to judge matters of this world, why choose as judges those who count for nothing in the church? *I say this deliberately to rouse your sense of shame*. Are you really unable to find among your number one man with enough sense to decide a dispute between one and another among you, or must one brother resort to the law against another; and that before those who have no faith in Christ!

1 Cor 5:3,12 (NIV) Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have *already passed judgment* on the one who did this, just as if I were present... What business of mine is it to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

1 Cor 6:2-3 (NIV) Do you not know that God's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

The Difference Between Old Testament Prophets and New

1 Cor 14:24-25 (NIV) But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be *convinced by all that he is a sinner* and he will be *judged by all*, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. He will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

- In Israel, prophets were rare and held to a high standard. You were 100% correct or "stoned". For the church, the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts to many, and we must learn and grow into the proper use of the gifts, prophecy included. We have quantity, but not necessarily quality. Thus, the burden is on the listener to discern, or judge the prophets. Simon Peter makes a good example of the inconsistency of the church prophets. (For an after Pentecost situation, see Paul "judging" Simon Peter in Gal 2:11.)

The Case of Simon Peter

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Mat 16:16-17 (NIV) 22-23 (Phi) Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in heaven..." Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

- Amazing how the same mouth that spoke a "word of revelation" was "in the flesh" just a few moments later. The gift is great, but the "in the flesh" part can be a real problem for others. Jesus, who had discernment, openly "judged" Simon Peter, moments after praising him. For most of us, we will not have to openly judge, but simply decide for ourselves whether or not the "prophetic" message is from above or from below.

The Case of Simon The Sorcerer

Acts 8:9-10 (NIV) Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic.

Acts 8:19-23 (Phi) "Give me [Simon the Sorcerer] this power too, so that if I were to put my hands on anyone he would receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "To hell with you and your money! How dare you think you could buy the gift of God for money!.. your heart is not honest before God... repent of this wickedness of yours and pray earnestly to the Lord that if possible the evil intention of your heart will be forgiven. For I can see inside you, and I see a man bitter with jealousy and bound with his own sin!"

How To Discern Real Prophecy From What "Simon Says"

Mat 7:15-16,22-23 (NIV) "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. *By their fruit* you will *recognize them*... Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

1 Jn 4:1 (TEB) My dear friends: do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but *test them* to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false prophets have gone out everywhere.

1 Cor 14:29 (NEB) Of the prophets, two or three may speak, while the rest exercise their *judgment* upon what is said.

1 Cor 14:29 (TEB) Two or three who are given God's message should speak, while the others *judge* what they say.

Acts 17:11 (NIV) Now the Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day *to see if what Paul said was true*.

Criticism in The Church

Mat 7:1-2 (Phi) "Don't criticize people, and you will not be criticized. For you will be judged by the way you criticize others, and the measure you give will be the measure you receive."

Mat 7:3-5 (Jer) "Why do you observe the splinter in you brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How dare you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye *first*, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye."

- This is not inconsistent with other Scriptures that instruct us to "judge" and help others be delivered from sin. The message here is to make sure you have been delivered first! Then, and only then, will you be effective at ministering to others. "Splinter removal", after all, is an important work of the church.

Mat 7:5 (NIV) "...*first* take the plank out of your own eye, and *then* you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

- Sin can be debilitating and painful, like a splinter in the eye. But removing a splinter from your own eye may be impossible. Often, we need each other for this type of healing. For removal, the "healer's" hands must be clean, the environment must be full of light, the approach must be sensitive and reassuring. This should never be attempted by the self-righteous, in an environment of darkness, or with dirty hands.

"Judges" With Dirty Hands

James 4:8,11-12 (Phi) ...You are sinners: get your hands clean again. Your loyalty is divided: get your hearts made true once more... Never pull each other to pieces, my brothers. If you criticize your brother and judge your brother you have become a critic and judge of the Law. Yet if you start to criticize the Law *instead of obeying it* you are *setting yourself up* as a judge. There is only one Judge, the One who gave the Law, to whom belongs absolute power of life and death. How can you then be your neighbor's judge?

Rom 2:1-3 (Phi) Now if you feel inclined to *set yourself up* as a judge of those who sin, let me assure you, whoever you are, that you are in no position to do so. For at whatever point you condemn others you automatically condemn yourself, since you, the judge, commit the same sins. God's judgment, we know, is utterly impartial in its action *against such evil-doers*. What makes you think that you, who so readily judge the sins of others, can consider yourselves beyond the judgment of God?

Don't Judge Anyone But Yourself In Disputable Matters

1 Cor 11:31 (NIV) But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

Rom 14:1,4-5,10,12-13 (NIV) Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else's servant?.. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind... You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat... So then, everyone will give an account of himself to God. Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another...

Col 2:16-17 (NIV) Therefore *do not let anyone judge you* by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

1 Cor 4:5 (Jer) There must be no passing of premature judgment. Leave that until the Lord comes: He will light up everything that is hidden in the dark and reveal the secret intentions of men's hearts...

1 Cor 4:6 (NIV) ..."Do not go beyond what is written."...

Personal Judgment: Discernment or Criticism?

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

1 Sam 16:7 (NIV) "...Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

- Suppose you think that you have "discerned" something. A good test of whether this "realization" is from above or from below is: *what you feel*. Does your discernment lead you to help, heal, love, share? Does it lead towards purity of the body, towards Christ? Then the Holy Spirit may have given you a taste of His perspective: the truth, with love. Your actions will prove the validity of what you think, and deeper fellowship and/or humility will be the result.
- But if *what you feel* in your heart as a result of the discernment is superiority, scandal, bitterness, or a desire to detach yourself from the body of Christ, then it is not of God. Whether it is correct, or not, is not the issue: The "knowledge" comes from below, not above--as judged by its fruit. God looks at the heart. If what you "know" about others isn't useful to them or you, forget what you "know". It's poison.

The Gift Of Discernment

Phil 1:9-10 (NIV) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able *to discern* what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.

Phil 1:9 (TEB) This is my prayer for you: I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment...

1 Ki 3:9 (NIV) So give your servant a *discerning heart* to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong...

1 Cor 12:10 (KJV) ...to another prophecy, to another *discerning* of spirits...

1 Cor 12:10 (Phi) ...to another the ability to *discriminate in spiritual matters*...

Heb 5:14 (NIV) But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to *distinguish good from evil*.

Prov 15:14 (NIV) The discerning heart seeks knowledge...

1 Cor 4:6 (Jer) ...(remember the maxim: "Keep to what is written")...

John 7:24 (NEB) "Do not judge superficially, but be just in your judgments."

God's Thoughts

1 Cor 2:10 (NIV) ...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

1 Cor 2:14-16 (NIV) The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man *makes judgments about all things*, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment... we have the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 10:15 (NIV) I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.

Week 3: Discernment & Hearing God

Hearing God

Rev 3:22 (NIV) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

• Sandy Gregory's Story Of The Remote Employee

Imagine you are hired to open up an office in Anchorage, Alaska. Your new boss gives you a high-tech looking two-way radio, a policy and procedure manual, and tells you that you will receive instructions once you arrive, and off you go. Upon arrival you hear your boss's voice over the radio, saying, "I will communicate to you through this radio unit. But take note: our competitors, our enemies, also have access to this channel. They will try to impersonate my voice with false messages to thwart our purposes." "Oh no!" you panic, "Then how will I know if it is you or the enemy giving me instructions?"

Your boss's voice comes back over the radio: "Three ways. First, considering the situation, *check every message* supposedly from me against the policy and procedure manual. Since I wrote it, I'm not likely to ask you to violate it, right? Also, if I am not talking, don't focus in on the noise, pretending that I am. If I am not speaking, let the manual be your guide. Don't let any impersonating voice mislead you, or your own overactive imagination."

"Second, since the Manual does not cover every situation, you will have to *get to know my voice*. I know, this will take time, and so I am not likely to ask you to do anything radical until we both have some low-risk successes under our belts. Remember, I understand the situation perfectly well, so I'll go slow at first. A time will come when I will be able to tell you to do the wildest things, and you will know it is me. In the short-term, you must be trained through low-risk experience."

"Third, over time, *my overall purpose* for your work will begin to come into focus. You will begin to see the grand strategy in the policy and procedure manual, and the overall pattern of my true instructions. When this happens, you'll know instantly if what you hear through your unit is 'of me', just your imagination, or enemy misinformation. False instructions will begin to appear silly to you then. So take heart, and get to work."

After reflecting on this a few moments, you hear your boss's voice again on the radio unit. "Take all of the money from petty cash and give it the next person that walks in, no questions asked." Hmm... You look in the policy and procedure manual, and this is specifically forbidden. Besides, you know your boss wouldn't tell you to do something that risky right off. And also there was an certain "twang" to the voice, an appeal to something different within you, and a plan that was not in the long-term interests of the company. So, even though you are on a hostile channel, you are beginning to have hope that you can indeed do this job.

Hearing Things...

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- God speaks to us through our minds and hearts. God occasionally speaks audibly to His children when *He has placed them* in situations that require great faith. Thus, the miraculous aspect of a physical voice coming from nowhere *allows us to believe* in situations that are beyond us.

John 12:28 (NIV) [Jesus prayed,] "Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine."

- Why did Jesus go out of His way to point out that the voice was not for His benefit? Because He heard God *all the time*. He was in constant communion with the Father. But the disciples needed to hear it, so they could have faith to believe. Remember, Jesus was about to be rejected by the religious establishment, taunted and humiliated, and executed. So God spoke audibly. God knows when we need a sure word, and works around our lack of maturity in times of great need. 2 Pet 1:16-19 (NIV) We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when *the voice* came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

God Will Do What He Says

Rom 4:17 (NIV) As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Gal 4:22-23,29 (NIV) For it is written that Abraham had two sons [Ishmael first, and then Isaac], one by the slave woman [Hagar] and the other by the free woman [Sarah]. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way [the flesh]; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise [the Spirit]... At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

- You know the story. God promised Abraham a son in Gen 15:4. The problem came when after receiving this promise, Sarah suggested an idea to move ahead *in the flesh* and "assist" God. The "Ishmael" mistake of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar is not uncommon. We are often deceived into thinking that God needs our help. What is praiseworthy of Abraham and Sarah is that after this *false start*, they remembered God's promise and got back to simple faith and obedience, believing that God would help them... and not vice-versa.

Num 23:19 (NIV) God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

- God calls Isaac "Abraham's only son" in Gen 22:2,12,16. From God's point of view, "the flesh counts for nothing" (John 6:63). God did not remember Abraham's sin, only his faith, which was credited to him as full righteousness before God (Rom 4:3). His mistakes were forgotten (Micah 7:19). Like Abraham, we need to enter into God's rest, knowing that what God says *He will do*. For he who enters into rest has ceased from his own works (Heb 4:10).

Isa 55:1-11 (NIV) "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, *listen* to me,

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live..." Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon... "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but *will accomplish* what I desire and *achieve the purpose* for which I sent it."

Discerning God's Voice

Isa 42:1-2 (NIV) "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets."

Mat 17:5 (NIV) While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

- Outside of miraculous visitations and audible voices, our general problem is one of hearing God's "still small voice". What would the Spirit have us do next? This leadership comes through "promptings" to our hearts or minds, which are generally low-risk until we mature. God tells us to call someone late at night; to give someone the money in our pocket; to offer to pray with someone about something very specific that we couldn't have known. Often, we'll go wrong, but if we humbly reflect on our errors we can gain confidence for future promptings.

Prov 14:15 (NIV) A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.

- The problem is that we are on a hostile channel. Our minds can be prompted by God, from our own carnal desires, or from unclean spirits. Some ignore this and naively believe that anything they think or feel is from God, without humility or reflection. This may seem a silly error, but it can become serious when such a person thinks God has told them to "go kill someone". Manson, who still claims to be a Christian, heard from his "god" in this fashion many times.

2 Cor 11:3 (NIV) But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

2 Tim 3:13-17 (NIV) ...evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it... you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- Beyond demonic promptings, our routine problem is *the flesh*. We want to look spiritual, we covet something, we want to defend ourselves. These often get blamed on God, and acted upon. These seemingly silly errors can lead to as much *spiritual* mayhem and abuse as Manson's delusions did *physically*. We must learn to walk a straight line before attempting to tightrope across Niagara Falls. Our problem is *lack of reflection* on past performance.

Rom 7:21-23 (NIV) So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging *war* against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

2 Cor 10:3-5 (NIV) For though we live in the world, we do not wage *war* as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish *arguments* and every *pretension* that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every *thought* to make it obedient to Christ.

- If we have learned to discern God's voice in small things by acting on God's *low-risk promptings* and finding them validated with fruit that lasts, then God may prompt us to "tell that person I am going to heal them". At this point of maturity, those practiced at knowing God's voice need not pretend or merely hope. They can speak with authority, conviction, and results (Rom. 12:2). They need not be double-minded or resort to psychological gymnastics (James 1:5-8). They can pray in real faith (James 5:15). For "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the *word of God*" (Rom. 10:17).

Who's Not Listening Now?

Jer 6:10 (NIV) "To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the Lord is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it."

Zech 7:11-13 (NIV) "But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen... So the Lord Almighty was very angry. "When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, *I would not listen,*" says the Lord Almighty."

Mat 13:12-17 (NIV) "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables: [from Isa 6:9-11] 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.' In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become callused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

Obeying The Father's Voice

- Often we ask God to speak to us, only to hear back, "if you are so interested in what I think, then why didn't you do the last thing I told you?" Obedience is the response that keeps the dialog going. If we refuse to do what God tells us in the little things, we risk deafening our spiritual ear. If we refuse to do what God speaks in the big things, we risk his active rebuke.

1 Sam 15:22 (NIV) ..."Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings ...as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice..." (Mat 21:28-31)

- Imagine your own son coming to you in great earnestness and saying, "Father, please speak to me. What would you have me do?" You respond, "I would like you to clean your room." Thrilled at the sound of your voice, the child goes off elated, but does not clean the room. Later, he approaches again, "Father, please disclose your will to your humble child." You tell him again, "Go clean your room." Pleased, he withdraws himself again, but does not do what you asked. Yet again, your son comes to you, "Oh great father, I long to do your bidding! Grant me the favor of

your wisdom and direction." What would you do at this point? Perhaps a stare would suffice...
What does God do when we play this game with Him?

James 1:22 (NIV) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Orders From On High

Isa 30:20-21 (NIV) Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice *behind you*, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

John 10:2-5 (NIV) "The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Week 4: Faith & The Gospel

Faith

Luke 18:8b (NIV) When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Believing The Truth

- Faith is believing in what is true. Faith has two elements: 1) being convinced of the truth, being certain of reality, having evidence of unseen things, and 2) believing, hoping in, embracing, seizing the truth.

Heb 11:1 (KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Heb 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Heb 11:1 (NEB) Faith... makes us certain of realities we do not see.

Heb 11:1 (Mof) Now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.

Heb 11:1 (Wey) Now faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- While faith requires being convinced that what we believe in is true, just knowing the truth is only half of faith. God's word must be hoped for, embraced, seized!
Luke 17:5 (NIV) The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."
- Believing is not exactly the same as faith. For belief to be faith, it must light on what is certainly true. Yet Scripture gives examples of situations where belief alone is required, even commanded. There's *no time* for evidence collection, to wait, to hear, for certainty. Just believe. Like Peter walking on the water--don't think, act! God even requires us to believe in him when, temporarily, the evidence looks bad: to trust. [We will study *belief* and *trust* separately.] God requires belief and trust in moments of human weakness, but faith is what makes us strong. Faith is the state of being convinced about what we hope for.

How To Get More Faith

- Contrary to popular teaching, faith is not mental delusion, presumption or self-deception, but a work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.
Rom 10:17 (NIV) Faith comes by *hearing the message*, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.
Rom 10:17 (Phi) Faith, you see, can only come from hearing the message, and the message is the word of Christ.
Rom 10:17 (Wey) And this proves that faith comes from a Message heard, and that the Message comes through having been spoken by Christ.

New-Age Faith

Eze 13:6 (NIV) ... they expect *their words* to be fulfilled.

- C.S. Lewis: "We must not encourage in ourselves or others any tendency to work up a subjective state which, if we succeeded, we should describe as "faith", with the idea that this will somehow insure the granting of our prayer.... The state of mind which desperate desire working on a strong imagination can manufacture *is not faith* in the Christian sense. It is a feat of psychological gymnastics."
- Websters: CREDULITY \ kri-du-let-ee, CREDULOUS \ krej-u-les 1) Naive, not critical, believing on slight or uncertain evidence. 2) A tendency to believe too readily, especially with little or no proof.
- Belief detached from the truth is not faith. Believing in what is not from God, not true, believing in "the word of your own imagination", or even the "word of Satan", is *deception* pure and simple. Calling this deception "faith" does not make it so.
- A.W. Tozer: "I do not recall another period when "faith" was as popular as it is today. If only we believe hard enough we'll make it somehow. So goes the popular chant. What you believe is not important. Only *believe*... What is overlooked in all this is that faith is good only when it engages truth; when it is made to rest upon falsehood it can and often does lead to eternal tragedy. For it is not enough that *we believe*; *we must believe the right thing about the right One*.
2 Thes 2:10b-11 (NIV) They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.

- "It is no sin to doubt some things... it may be fatal to believe everything. Faith never means gullibility. Credulity never honors God. The healthy soul, like the healthy blood system, has it's proper proportion of white and red blood cells. The red corpuscles are like faith: they carry the life giving oxygen to every part of the body. The white cells are like discernment: they pounce upon dead and toxic matter and carry it out to the drain. In the healthy heart there must be provision for keeping dead and poisonous matter out of the life stream. This the credulous person never suspects. He is all for "faith".

The Way Of Faith For Thomas... And Us

Rom 14:5b (NIV) Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Mat 24:4-5 (NIV) Jesus answered: "*Watch out that no one deceives you.* For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."

Mark 13:5-6 (Phi) "*Be very careful that no one deceives you.* Many are going to come in my name and say, 'I am he', and will lead many astray.

Luke 21:8 (Jer) He said, "*Take care that you are not misled.* For many will come claiming my name and saying 'I am he'."

John 20:25-28 (NIV) When the other disciples told him [Thomas] that they had seen the Lord, he declared, "... I will not believe it." A week later... Jesus... said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:31 (NIV) These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Believing The Gospel Truth

Col 1:5b-6 (Phi) ... that *hope* that first became yours when you heard the message of *truth*. This is the Gospel itself, which has reached you as it spreads out all over the world. Wherever that gospel goes, it produces Christian character, and develops it, as it has done in your own case from the time you first *heard* and realized the *truth* of God's grace.

Col 1:23 (Phi) This reconciliation assumes that you maintain a firm position in the *faith*, and do not allow yourselves to be shifted away from the *hope* of the gospel, which you have *heard*...

- C.S. Lewis: "The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotions and imagination on the other.... Supposing a man's reason once decides that weight of evidence is for Christianity. I can tell that man what is going to happen to him in the next few weeks. There will come a moment when there is bad news, or he is in trouble, or is living among a lot of other people who do not believe it, and all at once his emotions will rise up and carry out a sort of blitz on his belief. Or else there will come a moment when he wants a woman, or wants to tell a lie, or feels very pleased with himself, or sees a chance of making a little money in some way that is not perfectly fair: some moment, in fact, at which it would be very convenient if Christianity were *not true*."
- "Now faith... is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.... Make sure that, if you have once accepted Christianity, then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day. That is why daily prayers and religious reading and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life...."

- "If you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply *drift away*?"

Heb 2:1-3 (Phi) We ought, therefore, to pay the greatest attention to the *truth* that we have *heard* and not allow ourselves to *drift away* from it. For if the message given through angels proved authentic, so that defiance of it and disobedience to it received appropriate retribution, how shall we escape if we refuse to pay proper attention to that greater salvation which is offered us? For this salvation came first through *the words* of the Lord himself.

2 Tim 2:15-17 (Phi) For yourself, concentrate on winning God's approval, on being a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, and who knows how to use the *word of truth* to the best advantage. But steer clear of these unchristian babblings, which in practice lead further and further away from Christian living. For their teachings are as dangerous as blood-poisoning to the body, and spread like sepsis from a wound. Hymenaeus and Philetus are responsible for this sort of thing, and they are palpable traitors to the truth...

2 Tim 1:12b-14 (NIV) I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you, guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit that lives in us.

Abraham, an Example of Faith

Rom 4:18-21 (Phi) Abraham, when hope was dead within him, went on hoping in faith, believing that he would become "the father of many nations". He relied on the word of God which definitely referred to "thy seed". With undaunted faith he looked at the facts--his own impotence (he was practically a hundred years old at the time) and his wife Sarah's apparent barrenness. Yet he refused to allow any distrust of a definite pronouncement of God to make him waver. He drew strength from his faith, and, while giving the glory to God, remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promise.

Rom 4:22-25 (Phi) This was the "faith" which was counted unto him for righteousness. Now this counting of faith for righteousness was not recorded simply for Abraham's credit, but as a divine principle which should apply to us as well. Faith is to be reckoned as righteousness to us also, who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered to death for our sins and raised again to secure our justification.

Faith To Crucify The Flesh

- A.W. Tozer: "The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian.

- "True faith requires that we believe everything God has said about Himself, but also that we believe everything he has said about US. Until we believe that we are really as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down."

Luke 9:23-24 (NIV) Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

John 11:25-26 (NIV) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. *Do you believe this?*"

Gal 5:24 (Jer) You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.

- As God calls each Christian to "die to self" and promises "new life", the flesh protests: "What if it doesn't work? What if I'm left empty-handed? What if God isn't faithful?" But we have the gripping example of Jesus's faith--when He let the life drain out of Him on the cross--with the attitude, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And about that much easier thing His Spirit is convicting you to give up now, this same Jesus says from the cross: "Follow me!" Heb 12:1-3 (Phi) Surrounded as we are by these serried ranks of witnesses, let us strip off everything that hinders us, as well as the sin that dogs our feet, and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. For he himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his suffering; and he is now seated at the right hand of God's throne. Think constantly of his enduring all that sinful men could say against him and you will not lose your purpose or your courage.

A Life Of Faith

Heb 11:6 (NIV) Without faith it is impossible to please God....

Heb 11:24-27 (Phi) By faith... Moses... refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He preferred sharing the burden of God's people to enjoying the temporary advantages of sin. He considered the "reproach of Christ" more precious than all the wealth of Egypt, for he looked steadily at the ultimate reward. By faith he left Egypt; he defied the king's anger with the strength that comes from obedience to the invisible king.

Heb 10:32,35-39 (NIV) ... in the face of suffering... do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

2 Cor 4:8-10 (Phi) We are hard-pressed on all sides, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but are never deserted; we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out! Everyday we experience something of the death of Jesus, so that we may also show the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives.

2 Cor 4:16-18 (Phi) This is the reason we never lose heart. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain. For we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory: it is the invisible things that are really permanent.

1 Pet 1:6-7 (Phi) This means tremendous joy to you, even though at present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials. This is no accident--it happens to prove your faith, which is infinitely more valuable than gold, and gold, as you know, even though it is ultimately perishable, must be purified by fire.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Eph 6:16 (Phi) Above all be sure you take faith as your shield, for it can quench every burning missile the enemy hurls at you.

Heb 11:1 (Phi) Faith means that we have full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see.

Rom 4:16 (Phi) The whole thing, then, is a matter of faith on man's part and generosity on God's. He gives the security of his own promise to all men...

Job 13:15 (NAS) Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him....

Job 19:25 (NAS) I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Week 4: Faith & The Gospel

The Gospel

2 Tim 2:8 (NIV) Remember **Jesus Christ, raised** from the **dead**, descended from David. This is my **gospel**.

- The gospel is a message. It is also referred to in Scripture as a "word", a "doctrine", a "seed", the "good news", "the truth". Because God uses the message of the gospel to reconcile men to himself, it must be taught, heard, understood, believed, confessed and defended.

The Message is That Jesus is The Christ, that He Was Crucified, and Rose Again!

1 Cor 15:1-4 (NIV) Now, brothers, I want to remind you of **the gospel** I preached to you, which you have received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was **buried**, that he was **raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures.

The Message Must Be Taught

Rom 10:14 (NIV) How, then, can they call on one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

The Message Must Be Heard

Rom 10:17 (NIV) Consequently, faith comes from hearing *the message*, and the message is heard through *the word* of Christ.

The Message Must Be Understood

Mat 13:17-23 (Phi) "Believe me, a great many prophets and good men have longed to see what you are seeing, and they never saw it. Yes, and they longed to hear what you are hearing, and they never heard it. Now listen to the parable of the sower. When a man hears *the message* of the kingdom, and does not grasp it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is like *the seed* sown by the roadside. The seed sown on the stony patches represents the man who hears the message and eagerly accepts it. But it has not taken root in him and does

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

not last long--the moment trouble or persecution arises through the message, he gives up his faith at once. The seed sown among the thorns represents the man who hears the message, and then worries of this life and the illusions of wealth choke it to death and so it produces no 'crop' in his life. But the seed sown on good soil is the man who both hears and understands the message..."

The Message Must Be Believed

Heb 4:2 (Phi) For we too have had a gospel preached to us, as those men had. Yet *the message* proclaimed to them did them no good, because they only heard and did not believe as well.

The Message Must Be Confessed

Rom 10:8-9 (NIV) But what does it say? "*The word* is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, *the word* of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is *Lord*," and believe in your heart that God *raised him* from the dead, you will be saved.

The Message Is Foolishness To Some, Good News To Others

1 Cor 1:18,21-23 (NIV) For *the message* of the **cross** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach **Christ crucified**: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

1 Cor 2:2 (Phi) ...It was my determination to concentrate entirely on **Jesus Christ**. and the fact of his **death** upon the **cross**.

The Message Is True, and It Works

Col 1:5-6 (Phi) ...that hope that first became yours when you heard *the message of truth*. This is *the Gospel* itself, which has reached you as it spreads out all over the world. Wherever that gospel goes, it produces Christian character, and develops it, as it has done in your own case from the time you first heard and realized *the truth* of God's grace. (1 Thes 2:13)

The Message Was a Secret, But it is Now Fully Revealed

Col 1:25-26 (Phi) ...that I might fully declare God's *Word*--that sacred mystery which up till now has been hidden in every age and every generation, but which is now as clear as daylight to those who love God.

2 Cor 4:2-4,18 (Phi) ...We speak the plain *truth* and so commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel is "veiled", the veil must be in the minds of those who are spiritually dying. The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, and prevents the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, the image of God, from shining on them... For we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the *invisible*. The visible things are transitory: it is the invisible things that are permanent.

The Message Is Valuable, and Vulnerable; It Must Be Guarded

- Because the gospel is an invisible *message*, it is thus vulnerable to attack. Jesus labeled Satan the "father of lies" (John 8:44-45,47). Satan's agents are "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Mat 7:15,22-23). Satan's efforts are to "infect" the gospel with lies (Act 13:9-10). Much of the New Testament is written to instruct and encourage us to protect *the message* (Eph 4:14-15).

Heb 2:1-3 (Phi) We ought, therefore, to pay the greatest attention to *the truth* that we have heard and not allow ourselves to drift away from it. For if *the message* given through angels proved authentic, so that defiance of it and disobedience to it received appropriate retribution, how shall

we escape if we refuse to pay proper attention to that greater salvation which is offered us? For this salvation came first through *the words* of the Lord himself.

Mark 13:22-24 (NIV) "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect--if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time."

2 Tim 1:13-14 (NIV) What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of *sound teaching*, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the *good deposit* that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

2 Cor 10:3-7 (NIV) For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish *arguments* and every *pretension* that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ... You are looking only on the surface of things...

Strong Words About The Danger Of Corrupting The Message

1 Tim 4:1-3,6-7 (Phi) God's Spirit specifically tells us that in later days there will be men who abandon the *true faith* and allow themselves to be spiritually seduced by teachings of demons, teachings given by men who are lying hypocrites, whose consciences are as dead as seared flesh... You will be a faithful minister of Christ Jesus if you remind your church members of these things. You will show yourself as a man nourished by the message of the true faith and the *sound teaching* he has followed. But steer clear of all these heathen old wives' tales.

Gal 1:6-9 (Phi) I am amazed that you have so quickly transferred your allegiance from him who called you by the grace of Christ to another "gospel"! Not that it is another gospel, but there are men who are upsetting your faith with a travesty of the gospel of Christ. Yet I say that if I, or an angel from Heaven, were to preach to you any other gospel than the one you have already heard, may he be damned! You have heard me say it before and now I say it again--may anybody who preaches any other gospel than the one you have already heard be a damned soul!

False Teachers Either: 1) Add-To Or Modify The Message, or 2) Are "Antichrist"

Gal 3:1-5 (Phi) O you dear idiots of Galatia, who saw Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you? I will ask you one simple question: did you receive the Spirit by trying to keep the Law or by believing *the message* of the gospel? Surely you can't be so stupid as to think that you begin your spiritual life in the Spirit and then complete it by reverting to physical observances? Has all your painful experience brought you nowhere? I simply cannot believe it! Does God, who gives you his Spirit and works miracles among you, do these things because you have obeyed the Law or because you have *believed the gospel*?

Gal 2:4-5 (Phi) In fact, the suggestion would have never arisen but for the presence of some pseudo-Christians, who wormed their way into our meeting to spy on the liberty we enjoy in Christ Jesus, and then attempted to tie us up with rules and regulations. We did not give in to them for a moment, for *the truth* of the gospel for you and all the gentiles was at stake. (Gal 5:1-10)

Gal 2:21 (Phi) I refuse to make nonsense of the grace of God. For if righteousness were possible under the Law then *Christ died* for nothing.

Rom 1:16-17 (NIV) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because *it is* the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

2) The "Antichrist" in Scripture is Any Minister Who Denies Jesus as The *Christ*

1 Jn 2:18-22 (Phi) ...You have heard of the coming of antichrist. Believe me, there are antichrists about already, which confirms my belief that we are near the last hour. These men went out from our company, it is true, but they never really belonged to it. If they had really belonged to us they would have stayed. In fact, their going proves beyond doubt that men like that were not "our men" at all.

1 Jn 4:1-3 (NIV) Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every Spirit that acknowledges that Jesus *Christ* has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Hollywood Terminology and The Undiscerned Infection...

- Hollywood has used the term "Antichrist" to refer to what Scripture refers to as "the Beast", and Christians have picked this up. The shoe fits, and we all know who is being referred to when the term "Antichrist" is used: "the Beast" of Scripture. But by misunderstanding the biblical meaning of antichrist, we may miss the important point that the enemy is *within our camp*.

2 Cor 11:13-15 (Phi) "God's messengers?" They are counterfeits of the real thing, dishonest practitioners masquerading as *the messengers* of Christ. Nor do their tactics surprise me when I consider how Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is only to be expected that his agents shall have the appearance of *ministers* of righteousness--but they will get what they deserve in the end.

Notice The Motive, And The Result

2 Pet 2:1-3 (NIV) But there were false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies... Many will follow their shameful ways and bring *the way of truth* into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.

1 Tim 6:3-5 (Phi) This is the sort of thing you should teach and preach, and if anyone tries to teach some doctrinal novelty and does not follow *sound teaching* (which we base on our Lord Jesus Christ's own *words* and which leads to Christlike living), then he is a conceited idiot! His mind is a morbid jungle of disputation and argument, things which lead to nothing but jealousy, quarreling, insults, and malicious innuendoes--continual wrangling, in fact, among men of warped minds who have lost their real hold on *the truth* but hope to make some profit out of the Christian religion.

Who Causes Division?

Rom 16:17-18 (NIV) I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and who put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord *Christ*, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

Jude 1:19 (NIV) These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

Jude 1:16-19 (Phi) These are the men who complain and curse their fate while trying all the time to mold life according to their own desires. They "talk big" and pay men great respect if it is to their own advantage. Now do remember, dear friends, the words that the messengers of Jesus Christ gave us beforehand when they said "there will come in the last days mockers who live

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

according to their own godless desires." *These are the men* who split communities, for they are led by human emotions and never by the Spirit of God.

- Are we "causing division" to rebuke false teachers; or are we obeying God?

Titus 3:10-11 (NIV) Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

1 Tim 1:3-4 (NIV) ...command *certain men* not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. *These* promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith.

Spiritual Aids?

- The Body of Christ, functioning properly, should be excising these false teachings and standing against the "wolves" (Titus 1:9). But somehow Satan has duped us into believing that if we obey God's instructions, *we are the ones* "causing division", instead of the false prophets and teachers (wolves) we are commanded to rebuke (Titus 1:11-2:1). Satan has attacked the church's "immune system", and we accept the wolves, who take advantage of the flock, in as "brothers" (2 Jn 7-11).
- 2 Thes 2:10 (NIV) ...They perish because they refuse to love *the truth* and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe *the lie*...

Biblical Examples of Rebukes & Principles for Protecting *The Message*

2 Tim 2:15-17 (Phi) For yourself, concentrate on winning God's approval, on being a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, and who knows how to use *the word of truth* to the best advantage. But steer clear of these unchristian babblings, which in practice lead further and further away from Christian living. For their teachings are as dangerous as blood-poisoning to the body, and spread like sepsis from a wound. Hymenaeus and Philetus are responsible for this sort of thing, and they are palpable traitors to *the truth*...

2 Tim 4:14-15 (NIV) Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our *message*.

Are We As Concerned About The Problem As The Writers Of Scripture?

2 Tim 4:2-5 (NIV) Preach *the word*; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with *sound doctrine*. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from *the truth* and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (Titus 2:15a)

Hold On...

2 Thes 2:15 (NIV) So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to *the teachings* we have passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

Heb 13:9 (NIV) Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.

Check It Out

1 Thes 5:21 (NIV) Test everything. Hold onto the good.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Acts 17:11 (NIV) Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received *the message* with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

1 Tim 4:11,16 (NIV) Command and teach these things... Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The Role of The Holy Spirit in The Discernment of False Teaching

- While only some believers have the special spiritual gift of discernment, all believers have the ability by "the Spirit of Truth" to detect a false gospel. This is not dependent on knowledge or intelligence, it is a basic "smell test" of anyone who has received the Holy Spirit.
- God has not promised us that He will tell us who to marry, what to do next, etc., although He may. But He has promised that He will *always* allow us to detect lies that would lead us astray. If we have really received the Holy Spirit, He will teach us which teachers are false and true, and this will be confirmed by others. Are we listening to the Spirit of *Truth*?

1 Jn 2:20-27 (NIV) But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know *the truth*. I do not write to you because you do not know *the truth*, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. See that what you have heard *in the beginning* remains in you... I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him.

John 16:13 (Phi) "Yet when that one I have spoken about comes--the Spirit of *truth*--he will guide you into everything that is true."

Our Commission

John 5:24 (NIV) "I tell you the truth, whoever hears *my word* and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

John 8:31-32 (NIV) ...Jesus said, "If you hold to *my teaching*, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and *the truth* will set you free."

Luke 24:45-47 (NIV) Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The *Christ* will *suffer* and *rise* from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Mark 16:15-16 (NIV) He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach *the good news* to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

John 3:16 (KJV) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Col 1:23 (Phi) This reconciliation assumes that you maintain a firm position in the faith, and do not allow yourselves to be shifted away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard...

Week 5: The Armor of God & The Cross

The Armor of God

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Spiritually Dressed For Success

Pr 20:18 (NIV) Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.

- The purpose of this Bible Study is to consider and meditate on the Scriptural meaning of **each piece** of the armor of God, so that we might stand firm in the battles of life.

Eph 6:10-17 (NIV) ...Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on *the full armour of God* so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to *stand your ground*, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with **the belt of truth** buckled round your waist, with **the breastplate of righteousness** in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from **the gospel of peace**. In addition to all this, take up **the shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take **the helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God.

Why Spiritual Armor?

Rom 13:12 (NIV) The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Jer 46:3-4 (NIV) "Prepare your shields, both large and small, and march out for battle! Harness the horses, mount the steeds! Take your positions with helmets on! Polish your spears, put on your armour!"

1 Cor 14:8 (GLT) For if a trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will *get himself ready* for war?

Stand!

Luke 21:36 (NIV) "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Mal 3:2 (NAS) But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?..

1 Cor 10:12-13 (NIV) So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can *stand up* under it.

Jude 1:24 (Wey) But to Him who is able to keep you safe from stumbling, and cause you to stand in the presence of His glory free from blemish and full of exultant joy...

Jas 4:7 (NAS) Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

The Belt of Truth

Eph 6:14 (NRS) ...fasten the belt of truth around your waist...

Isa 11:5 (NIV) Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist.

Ex 12:11 (NIV) This is how you are to eat it [the passover lamb]: with your cloak tucked into your *belt*, your *sandals on your feet* and your staff in your hand...

1 Kings 18:46 (NIV) The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Eph 4:25 (NKJ) Therefore, put away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor."

- Ray Stedman: "No Christian has the right to a private life. Our lives are to be lived openly before all men, transparent, a spectacle unto all the world. We have no private lives and we must not expect to have. This is basically and fundamentally wrong. Christians are to be demonstrations of the truth."

John 4:24 (NIV) "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Col 3:8-10 (NIV) But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. *Do not lie* to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

2 Th 2:10 (NIV) ...They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Php 3:9 (NRS) ...Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

Isa 59:16-17 (NAS) ...Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him. He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head...

Ex 28:15 (NIV) "Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions... Make it like the ephod..."

1Ki 3:9 (NIV) So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.

Ps 94:15 (NIV) Judgment will again be founded on righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

Pr 2:7-8 (NIV) He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair--every good path.

Standing on The Gospel

Eph 6:15 (NIV) ...your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Eph 6:15 (Wey) ...as well as the shoes of the Good News of peace--a firm foundation for your feet.

Rom 10:15 (KJV) ...As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

- Imagine yourself standing barefooted in a rocky climate, like in the Middle East. You could move--ever so carefully--but without shoes you would be useless in battle. The weight of the other pieces of armor would only make your feet more sensitive if you had no protection. You would be a "push-over" for the enemy, as you would have no agility and be wincing in pain every time you attempted to move. This is why it is essential to have our "feet shod with the gospel of peace".

1 Cor 15:1-4 (Wey) But let me recall to you, brethren, the Good News [Gospel] which I brought you, which you accepted, and on which you are *standing*, through which also you are obtaining salvation, if you bear in mind the words in which I proclaimed it--unless indeed your faith has been unreal from the very first...-- that *Christ died* for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that He was *buried*; that He *rose to life* again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- This is the gospel as we have received it. It is foolishness to many, but life and light to those who believe in it and are willing to *follow* and be "included in" Christ's death. In practice, the Gospel means we are dead to our self-life with all of its lusts and instincts, and alive with new life in Christ. The good news is that by considering ourselves "dead men" in Christ, we can be put at *peace* with God in Christ. If we have truly died to self, then over time our instincts will be "dead" to the rocks and glass and thorns of this world which used to move us. Those standing on the gospel will not *react* in the flesh. Instead, we will move by God's Spirit with a *protected disregard* for such "fleshly" considerations, being "readied" by the "shoes" of the "death, burial, and resurrection of Christ", which is the Gospel that brings peace.

1 Pet 2:11 (NAS) Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

Gal 5:16-17 (NAS) But I say, *walk* by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Rom 8:5-13 (NAS) For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ...the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are *in the flesh* cannot please God... But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Isa 52:6-7 (NIV) "Therefore my people will know my name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation [Yeshua, Jesus!] who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"

The Helmet Of Salvation [Jesus]

Isa 59:16-17 (KJV) And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation [Yeshua] upon his head...

1 Th 5:8 (NAS) But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love; and as a helmet, the hope of *salvation*.

Ps 140:7 (NAS) "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation [Yeshua], You have covered my head in the day of battle."

- Jesus--Yeshua in Hebrew--means "Salvation". Salvation is Jesus Christ.

Col 1:18 (NKJ) And He is the head of the body, the church...

1 Cor 2:16 (NIV) "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have *the mind of Christ*.

Php 2:5 (NKJ) Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...

1 Pet 4:1 (NKJ) Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the *same mind*, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

2 Cor 10:3-5 (NRS) Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy *arguments* and every proud obstacle raised up against the *knowledge of God*, and we take *every thought captive* to obey Christ.

Eph 4:14-16 (NKJ) ...We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

The Sword of The Spirit - The Word of God

Isa 49:2 (NAS) He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver.

- Matthew Henry: "To the Christian armed for defense in battle, the apostle recommends only one weapon of attack; but it is enough, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It subdues and mortifies evil desires and blasphemous thoughts as they rise within; and answers unbelief and error as they assault from without. A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, at once destroys a temptation or an objection, and subdues the most formidable adversary."

Heb 4:12-13 (NKJ) For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

2 Cor 6:7 (NIV) ...in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left...

Ps 149:4-6 (NIV) For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. Let the saints rejoice in this honour and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands.

The Shield of Faith

Eph 6:16 (Wey) ...take the great shield of faith, on which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the Wicked one.

Ps 35:1-3,9 (NIV) Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation." ... Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation [yes, Yeshua again].

Ps 3:2-3 (GLT) Many are saying of my soul, There is no salvation for him in God. Selah. But You, O Jehovah, are a shield around me; [you are] my glory and He who lifts up my head.

1 Pet 1:5 (NAS) ...who are *protected* by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Ps 33:20 (NIV) We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

1 Tim 6:12 (NIV) Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

1 John 5:4-5 (Wey) For every child of God overcomes the world; and the victorious principle which has overcome the world is our *faith*. Who but the man that believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world?

Pr 30:5 (NIV) "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

Be Strong In The Lord, By the Power of Grace

1 Cor 16:13 (NIV) Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

2 Tim 2:1 (GLT) ...Be empowered by grace in Christ Jesus.

Eph 3:7 (GLT) ...I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of His power.

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

Col 1:11 (Wey) Since His power is so glorious, may you be strengthened with strength of every kind, and be prepared...

Php 4:13 (NAS) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

The Battle is The Lord's

1 Sam 17:47 (NKJ) [David, speaking to Goliath] "Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for *the battle is the Lord's*, and He will give you into our hands."

Deut 20:3-4 (NIV) ..."Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be faint-hearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."

Ps 18:32-35 (NIV) It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to *stand* on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great.

Zec 4:6 (NIV) ..."Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty."

Rom 11:36 (GLT) Because of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.

Week 5: The Armor of God & The Cross

The Cross

The Missing Message In The Modern Church...

Phil 2:8 (NIV) And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!

Mark 8:34-38 (NAS) And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Luke 9:23 (KJV) And he said to them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

The Full Gospel

1 Cor 15:1-4 (Wey) But let me recall to you, brethren, the Good News [the gospel] which I brought you, which you accepted, and on which you are standing, through which also you are obtaining salvation, if you bear in mind the words in which I proclaimed it--unless indeed your faith has been unreal from the very first. For I repeated to you the all-important fact which also I had been taught, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that He was buried; that He rose to life again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Luke 24:7 (NIV) "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."

Mat 16:24 (KJV) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

But That's Condemning, Brother!

1 Cor 2:2 (Phi) ...It was my determination to concentrate entirely on Jesus Christ himself and the fact of his death upon the cross.

- A.W. Tozer: "The old cross is a symbol of death. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again in newness of life. God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It always stands at the far side of the cross."

God Has Passed Sentence On The Carnal Man. Will We Agree?

- Before God can give us new life "in Christ", we must participate in His death. God will not tolerate sin in the long run, so the carnal man is condemned. To be condemned is to be sentenced to death. While we all know this (what the "wages of sin" are) we'd just as soon not hear any more about it. It's sounds so negative! How are we going to attract people with this kind of offensive stuff? Let's skip straight to the encouraging part and mis-apply all the Scriptures to our flesh, instead of allowing the Spirit to be born in us through the condemning message of the gospel.

Rom 8:1,3 (NIV) Therefore, there is now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus... For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he **condemned sin** in sinful man...

- Those who are resistant to the gospel often quote the "no condemnation" part of the above verses, not reading on to how this is achieved: by "condemning sin in sinful man". The only way we can be "in Christ Jesus" is by experientially participating in His death, daily, so that we might receive new life.

2 Cor 1:9 (Wey) ...We had, as we still have, the sentence of death within our own selves, in order that our confidence may rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

2 Cor 2:15-16 (NKJ) For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life...

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Rom 8:1,3 (NRS) There is therefore now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus. For... to deal with sin, he *condemned sin* in the flesh.

- A.W. Tozer: "Why do we build our churches upon human flesh? For we teach men not to die with Christ but to live in the strength of their dying manhood... If I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it."

Save Yourself! Come Down Off That Cross... And We Will Believe!

Mat 27:40 (NIV) [the mockers to Jesus at the Crucifixion:] "...Save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

Mat 27:42 (NIV) "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him."

Gal 6:12 (NAS) Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Luke 14:27 (Phi) "The man who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps cannot be my disciple."

Condemnation: Now Or Later?

- Whenever God manifests himself to sinful man through the Holy Spirit, it means condemnation for the flesh. If we will quit squirming off the alter, there is new life offered--after death. The only way the Spirit can come alive in us--is through us agreeing with God's "death sentence" (what *condemnation* means) on our sinful nature now, rather than later.

Mark 8:35 (NAS) "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it."

1 Cor 11:31-32 (Phi) If we were closely to examine ourselves beforehand, we should avoid the judgment of God. But when God does judge us, he disciplines us as his own sons, that we not be involved in the general condemnation of the world.

- A.W. Tozer: "There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us. We must bring our self-sins to the cross of judgment." Phil 3:18-19 (Phi) For there are many, of whom I have told you before and tell you again now, even with tears, whose lives make them the enemies of the cross of Christ. These men are heading for utter destruction--their god is their own appetite, they glory in their shame, and this world is the limit of their horizon.

The Old Rugged Cross Versus The New "Nerf Cross"

- A.W. Tozer: "All unannounced, and almost undetected, there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles... The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. The new cross, if understood aright, is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure.

- "That this world is a playground rather than a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of fundamentalist Christians. They are facing both ways, enjoying Christ and the world too."

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Mark 15:30 (NKJ) [the mockers] "Save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

Following Christ, Or A New "Un-Condemning" Gospel?

- A.W. Tozer: "The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect... Christ calls men to carry a cross; we call them to have fun in His name... We want to be saved but we insist Christ do all the dying. No cross for us, no dethronement, no dying. We remain king within the little kingdom of Mansoul and wear our tinsel crown with all the pride of a Caesar; but we doom ourselves to shadows and weakness and spiritual sterility."

John 12:48 (NIV) "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."

Luke 24:25-26 (Wey) [Jesus:] "O dull-witted men," He replied, "with minds so slow to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Was there not a necessity for the Christ thus to suffer, and then enter into His glory?"

Want To Know The Future?

- The prophetic fact is, if we will not agree with God's sentence of condemnation to all that is sin within us now, then we will be condemned eternally later. We must choose the pain of temporary condemnation now, or permanent eternal condemnation later. If you want to save your life--you will lose it.

- God has told us the end from the beginning, and the way to Him. It is the way of the cross. "Follow me" Jesus says, and He proved it worked. This is the gospel as we have received it, and we have been warned not to change or alter it. There is no other way to eternal life. God "encourages" us to participate with Him in a life of condemnation to all that is carnal. He promises new life--a very encouraging message, but only through death, a very condemning message.

Mat 23:33 (NIV) "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

- The ultimate prophecy about any of us is that we are either headed to heaven or hell. Will we continue to despise (1 Thes 5:19) the most personal of prophecies--that we are going to be eternally condemned if we continue to refuse the temporarily condemning message of the Gospel now? Will we continue to collect to ourselves teachers who "are not condemning" to our flesh? Will we reject the Spirit of prophecy, the Spirit of Jesus, telling us the truth--that condemnation is now or later, temporary or permanent? Who then will save us? Who then will be our advocate? Luke 6:46 (NKJ) "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

One Way

Mark 8:34 (NAS) And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Mat 10:38 (NIV) "And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

- A.W. Tozer: "The man who is crucified is facing only one direction... He [cannot] look back. The crucified man on the cross is looking only one direction and that is the direction of God, and Christ and the Holy Ghost... The man on the cross... has no further plans of his own... Somebody else made his plans for him, and when they nailed him up there all his plans disappeared... When you go out to die on the cross you bid good-bye--you are not going back!"

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

- "If we would preach more of this and stop trying to make the Christian life so easy it's contemptible--we would have more converts that would last. Get a man converted who knows that if he joins Jesus Christ he's finished, and that while he's going to come up and live anew, as far as this world is concerned he is not going back--then you have a real Christian indeed." 1 Pet 4:1 (Phi) Since Christ suffered physical pain you must arm yourselves with the same inner conviction that he had. To be free from sin means bodily suffering.

Been There, Done That?

- Having been made holy by participating with Christ unto death, by accepting God's condemnation of sin in us now, we are included "in Christ" and will escape God's eternal condemnation. But are we holy yet? Have we been through the whole treatment? Or are we deluding ourselves that we are completely "in Christ" while still partially "in the flesh"? 1 Jn 3:5-6 (NIV) ...In him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Rom 6:5-8 (NIV) If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

- A.W. Tozer: "Our uncrucified flesh will rob us of purity of heart, Christ-likeness of character, spiritual insight, fruitfulness; and more than all, it will hide from us the vision of God's face, that vision which has been the light of the earth and will be the completeness of heaven."

Through The Cross...

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

Rom 5:16,18 (Wey) And it is not with the gift as it was with the results of one individual's sin; for the judgment which one individual provoked resulted in condemnation, whereas the free gift after a multitude of transgressions results in acquittal... It follows then that just as the result of a single transgression is a condemnation which extends to the whole race, so also the result of a single decree of righteousness is a life-giving acquittal which extends to the whole race.

Gal 2:20 (Wey) I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me; and the life which I now live in the body I live through faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up to death on my behalf.

Gal 5:24 (NIV) Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Good News?

- A.W. Tozer: "The man who takes his cross and follows Christ will soon find that his direction is away from the sepulcher. Death is behind him and joyous and increasing life before." 2 Cor 13:4 (NIV) For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him...

John 5:24 (NIV) "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

Heb 12:2 (Phi) Let us run the race we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the source and goal of our faith. For he himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his suffering; and he is now seated at the right hand of God's throne.

1 Cor 1:18 (Phi) The preaching of the cross is, I know, nonsense to those who are involved in this dying world, but to us who are being saved from that death it is nothing less than the power of God.

• **Ray Stedman On The Cross:**

"[Crosses] had only one purpose... to bring an end to an evil man! Those who were crucified had no life in this world beyond that point... This is what God does with evil people: he puts them to death. Thus, in the cross of Christ, God took all that we are in Adam, all our natural life with its dreams and hopes and resources and brought it to a crashing end by the dying of Jesus.

"I must clearly understand that it is not up to me to put this natural life to death... I am only expected to agree with the rightness of that execution and stop trying to make it "live" again before God... Thus when I cease trying to justify myself and excuse the activities of the flesh and agree with God that it is rightfully under sentence of death, then I ...'carry in my body the dying of Jesus.'

"If I welcome the cross and see that it has already put to death the flesh... then I find myself able to say no to its cry for expression. [We must] agree with the implications of the cross in terms of actual experience.

2 Tim 2:11 (NKJ) This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.

"Throughout Scriptures the order never varies. First death, then life. Death [leads to] resurrection. When we consent to death, then the life of Jesus can flow unhindered from us. It is never the other way. We cannot claim resurrection life first, and then by means of that put the flesh to death. We must first bow to the cross, then God will effect the resurrection.

"The key to experiencing the life of Jesus is our willingness to accept the implications of his death. We will not discover the glory of the treasure and power within us until we are ready to accept in practical terms the result of the dying of Jesus."

Luke 24:25-26 (NIV) He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

Luke 9:23 (NAS) ..."Follow Me."

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE

DEACTIVATE 2 REACTIVATE