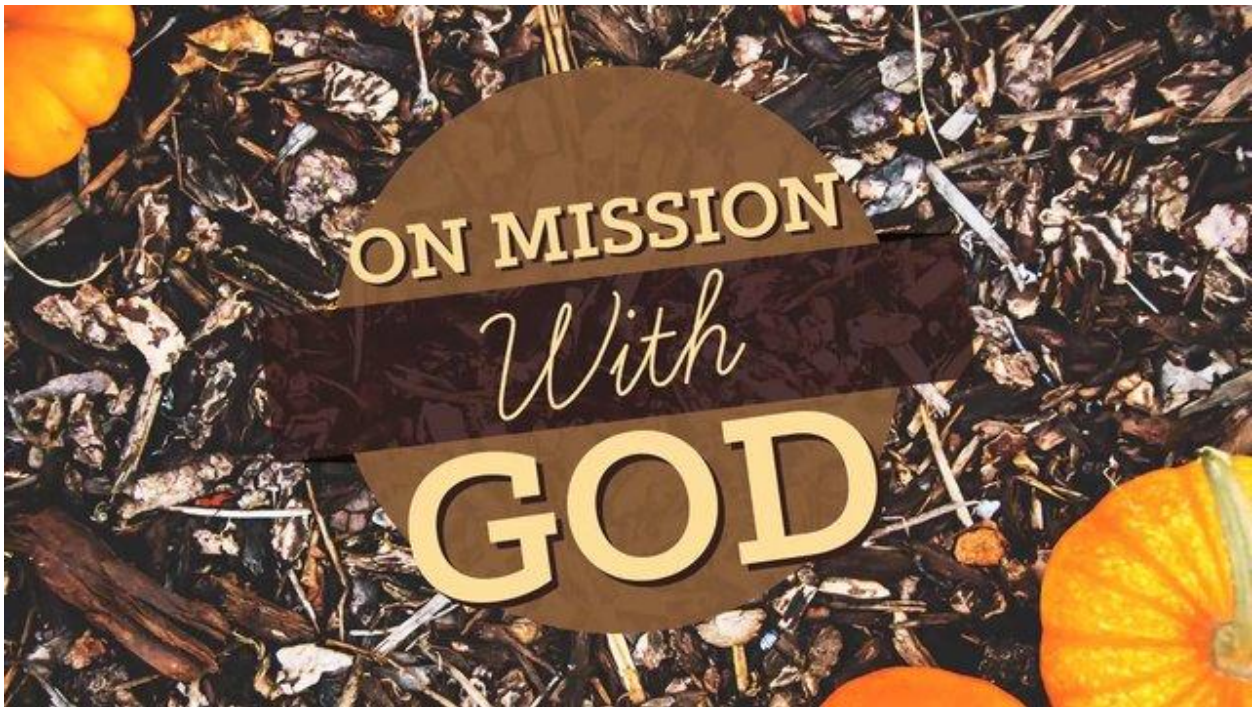


With God on Mission

2 Corinthians 6:1 NASB And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain--



Doug Kreighbaum

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1. Working With God

John 14:10 NASB "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

Example of Jesus

As Jesus walked on this earth, He was consumed with one aim, to walk with His Father and be about His business on earth.

Even at an early age Jesus was aware He came to the earth to work in the "Father's business." Even the youngest child of God should have that same awareness.

Luke 2:49 MKJV And He said to them, Why did you look for Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business

He was taken up with pleasing the Father and working with Him in every step He took.

John 8:29 NASB "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

Jesus - the Firstborn

Jesus is called "firstborn" among His household: Firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29)

When mankind fell, Jesus took His responsibility as Firstborn. As "firstborn over all creation," He laid down His life and became "firstborn from among the dead." Through His resurrection He brought many sons into glory and so became "the firstborn among many brothers" (Hebrews 2:10-11).

Having Devotions or Being Devoted

Many of God's people think in terms of "having devotions" when they hear the idea of walking with God. This is a mentality of simply giving a small part of your day (and life) to God. That is not the life God calls His people to live. We are to live devoted to God and His purposes.

Matthew 16:25 NASB "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake (cause) will find it.

We are Joined Together with God

"1 Corinthians 6:17 NASB 17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with

Through Christ we have been joined together with Him. We are in Christ and the Father. Whether we are live or die (awake or asleep) we live together with Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 NASB 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

Like Jesus walked and worked together with His Father on earth, we the church, Christ body, are called to walk and work together with Him.

By His Grace We Work

2 Corinthians 6:1 NASB And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain--

Sent into the World to Labor

We are sent into the world like Jesus was to live together and work together with Him.

John 17:18 NASB "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

John 20:21 NASB So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

The call of God is now on every believer to join with Him in His purpose to reveal His glory Eph 3:10-11, and work together with Him in the harvest to see people reached for Christ.

*Matthew 9:36-38 NASB Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He *said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

2. Our Inheritance as Firstborn

Colossians 1:15 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Luke 2:7).

The Bible uses the word "firstborn" to picture Jesus' position in regard to creation and His people in regard to others (Hebrews 1:6).

What is "The Firstborn"

The foundation of understanding of what it means to be the firstborn begins in the Old Testament. It wasn't just a matter of natural order in lineage. Not all those who were first born had the firstborn status (1 Chron.5:2; Gen.48:8-20; Psalm 89:19- 27). The birthright of the firstborn included:

- **Special Position:** He was the father's "right-hand man." He represented the father's *authority* to the family.
- **Special Inheritance:** He received a double-portion of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:15-17).
- **Special Responsibility:** He held responsibility for the welfare of the family. This was why he received the double-portion inheritance - to help any of the family in need.

The parable on Luke 15:11-32 was a story of two sons who had a wrong perspective on their inheritance. The younger son took his inheritance, even while His father was still alive, and left home with it. He didn't love his father and only wanted the blessings of his inheritance.

The older brother also had a wrong attitude toward his inheritance, his father, and his brother. He didn't enjoy life with his father as his right hand man. Because of this, when his brother repented and came back, he was unwilling to celebrate what made his father happy (Luke 15:28-32). He failed in all three areas of being "firstborn": He failed to take his position as the father's right-hand; he failed to use his inheritance; and he failed to take his responsibility for the family - *he should have gone after his younger brother to get him back.*

When the younger son finally returned home the father restored what he had squandered. (Luke 15:22). This is what God does when we turn to the Lord and are adopted by God. (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:5)

Jesus - the Firstborn

Jesus is called "firstborn" over all creation (Colossians 1:15) , from the dead (Col.1:18; Rev.1:15; 1 Cor.15:20), and the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29).

Jesus is the "firstborn over all creation." This does not mean that Jesus was created first, but that He has a special status over creation (Col.1:15-17; Heb.1:2-4). From the moment of creation, Jesus has held special *position, inheritance and responsibility*. So when mankind fell, Jesus took His responsibility as Firstborn. As "firstborn over all creation," He laid down His life and became "firstborn from among the dead." Through His resurrection He brought many sons into glory and so became "the firstborn among many brothers" (Hebrews 2:10-11).

Church of the Firstborn

Hebrews 12:22-23 "But you have come to...the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven..."

Jesus as "the firstborn among many brothers." included us in His birthright (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 2:6). In Him we now have special position, special inheritance and special responsibility. We are to demonstrate the first fruits (Jas 1:18) of being the first born. We demonstrate to a lost world what it is like to be joined to God. We also take a firstborn's responsibility to go after them. We do not want to be like the older brother who neglected the status of being firstborn and stay on the farm, miserable in our labor, only concerned about ourselves. We need to be like Jesus and go after others.

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (15:24).

The Right Attitude Toward Our Birthright

Esau and Jacob each had a different attitude toward their birthright. This attitude became the motivation of their whole lives.

Heb.12:16 "See that no one is...godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (Rom.9:13).

Esau was a man who loved himself and the things of the world. He lived for the pleasures of life *now*. His birthright meant little to him. Jacob, on the other hand, had his eyes on an eternal birthright. (Heb.11:9-10). Even though he used improper means to obtain it, he valued it more than Esau. Jacob had a heart that valued the birthright and God chose him to carry it (Genesis 25:23. The firstborn's rights involved two parts:

The Birthright and Blessing

Jacob grasped the opportunity to get the birthright from Esau (Genesis 25:29-33). When Esau sold his birthright to satisfy his physical hunger, the Bible says he was "godless." He was declaring that he placed no value on the purposes of God (Genesis 25:34).

Esau had no intention of giving up his material blessing and double portion inheritance (Gen.27:34-36; Heb.12:17). When he sold the birthright to Jacob, he did not realize he was giving up the blessing associated with it. In Christ we have the blessing associated with the birthright.

Valuing and Taking up Our Birthright

Hebrews 12:1 NASB Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Paul uses the picture of a relay race that has been in progress throughout history. The heroes of faith in the past have all faithfully fulfilled their lap of the race, and have passed the baton on. Abraham passed it to Isaac. Isaac was going to pass it to Esau, but he didn't value it. Jacob desired it more than Esau so he took it up. Down through the centuries the baton of God's eternal purpose has been passed on from one generation to another (Acts 13:36). Now it's our turn. We are completing the race which they began so that together we might reach the goal (Heb.11:39-40). We need to value the birthright like Jacob and not squander it like Esau.

Hebrews 12:16 NASB that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

3. Sent on His Mission

John 17:18-19 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Joh 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

In the same way Jesus was sent into the world on the Father's mission, we are sent into the world on the Father's mission. All ministry is based upon the fact that we have been sent by Jesus. We are commissioned by Jesus to do His work in the earth based on His authority He gave us.

Matthew 28:18-19 NASB And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore...

God desires a demonstration (His glory filling all the earth Eph 1:22-23) and a declaration of the gospel throughout the earth before He returns.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come" Matthew 24:14 (see also 2 Peter 3:11-12).

Sent on Mission with the Gospel

Our mission into the earth with the Gospel isn't about us doing something for God it is about us joining Him in His mission. It is about us coming to Christ and His house and from that base we follow Him into the earth.

Coming to Christ and His House

1 Peter 2:4-5 NASB And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:18-22 NASB for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- We are to come near to God (James 4:8; Rev.3:20; Mark 6:31).
- Come and follow Jesus (John 12:26; Mark 1:16-18).
- Come and be trained (Luke 6:40; Matthew 11:28-30).
- Come together in fellowship (Matt.18:20; 1 Cor.14:26).

As we come to Christ and His house we are equipped, disciplined in His ways (Ephesians 4:12,15-16), and built within His family from which we are sent into the earth

Sent on His mission

*Matthew 4:19 NASB And He *said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

Luke 10:2 NASB And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Romans 10:14-15 NASB How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

We are to go into the highways and byways (Luke 14:21-23).

We are to go into all the world (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Rom.15:20).

Biblical concept of Missions

Many think missions is something a few, special, gifted people do in far away places while the rest simply "go to church." Nothing is further from the Biblical design.

Our call to missions is everyday, everywhere, all the time

Many incorrectly think they are only on a missions trip when they go somewhere else. The Biblical perspective is that we are on a mission's trip everyday from the time our feet hit the floor until the time we go back in bed. Everyday when we get up and interact with our family, go to work, go to school, or go to the marketplace we are on a missions trip as ambassadors of Christ trying to demonstrate the Kingdom and see mankind reconciled to God.

2Co 5:18-20 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The call contains the idea of being salt and light

Mat 5:13-16 MKJV You are the salt of the earth, ...(14) You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden... (16) Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven

Light speaks of being sanctified and distinct (holy)

We are to demonstrate God's light through the way we live our lives and relate with people. We live differently under Christ Lordship in our attitudes, behavior, and how we relate in our families, church family, and our workplaces.

The idea of salt speaks of our contact with and influence on others

Salt had to be rubbed on things for it to do its work of preserving. We interact with people outside of Christ everyday. Our relational interactions help us rub our salt on them to influence them with the Kingdom.

We can commit two errors in this call. We can so **withdraw** from the world that our salt can't rub on them. We can also be so **immersed** in the world that we lose our distinctive light. God wants us to walk in both.

The call is both far and near

*Act 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses **both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**"*

The idea of "**both in**" Jerusalem (locally), Judea and Samaria (closer geographic area), and the remotest part of the earth (across the oceans and to far away places) means it is going a simultaneously. We are concerned and working in both near and far places at the same time, not one to the exclusion of the other. We must avoid the two extremes of the "**missionary mystique**" (missions is only at far away places that few can go to) and the "**parish mentality**" that on sees their local area and doesn't care for the ends of the earth.

The design and call to be a family on mission

In the gospels Jesus sent people out two by two. It was never God's will for man to be alone. God sends us out with a message and a friend. Jesus needed a small group of closely related people on His mission, and so do we.

*Mark 6:7 And He *summoned the twelve and began **to send them out in pairs**, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Luke 10:1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and **sent them in pairs ahead of Him** to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.*

We are to live the pattern of a family on mission. In the original creation mandate from the book of Genesis 1-2 is the foundation of mission (be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, rule over and subdue it). God's pattern in Genesis was to establish family relationships first then sends them on mission.

Traditional missions put forth an independent idea that we become superstar missionaries for Jesus. God's isn't as interested in making superstars for Jesus, but building a super people who will demonstrate and declare the gospel on mission.

There is a principle seen in the Matthew 9-11 and Luke 10. Jesus sent the seventy and the twelve out on mission trips. He sent people out in pairs and later He and the rest of the group joined them in the work.

..

Under and with Christ's Authority

Matthew 28:18-19" ...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go..."

The Great Commission is backed by the full authority of God's Throne. But to be effective in that commission, we need to come under the authority of God. This means obedience, coming and being sent as we are commanded.

Matthew 8:9" For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it".

We need to be coming to Him and His house as well as being sent on a everyday basis.

With the Message of the Gospel

Mark 1:14-15 NASB Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (see also Matthew 4:17).

The Gospel is described in many ways throughout the Bible - the Gospel of grace (Acts 20:24), the Gospel of salvation (Eph.1:13), the Gospel of peace (Eph.6:15), the Gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor.4:4) - and the Gospel of the Kingdom. The word "gospel" means "good news." The good news of God's Kingdom is based upon three solid facts:

- Satan has been defeated (Matt.12:24-29; Col.2:15).
- God's judgment has been satisfied on the Cross (Eph.1:7).
- A new life - now and in eternity - has been opened up in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:25).

Acts 26:17-18...the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (see also Colossians 1:13).

Separated for the Gospel (Holy)

Paul summed up his whole ministry as being "set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom.1:1). To be "set apart" means to be "dedicated for special use" (Acts 13:2). As we respond to the Great Commission, our lives are set apart for the purposes of God.

Acts 20:24 NASB "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

4. Being Joined with His People

Our call is to follow Christ on His mission in the earth, with His people! We are to come to Him and His house. Our mission in the earth isn't an independent endeavor. There was only one thing that God said "wasn't good" in His original creation, "It is not good for man to be alone" Gen 2:18. Aloneness is never Gods will. Our call to His mission in the earth has both individual (coming to Him) and corporate (being built together) ramifications.

1 Peter 2:4-5 NASB And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:18-22 NASB for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

We are called to be united together with His people as we engage in His mission on the earth.

1 Corinthians 1:10 NASB 10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The unity of the Church is part of the Gospel message (Eph.2:14-16; Gal.3:28). The Gospel is a contract between God and the believer. This contract has two levels of expression:

The Personal Level (united with Christ)

When we respond to the Gospel we are united to God.

- We have personal access to God (Heb.4:14-16; Eph.2:18).
- We are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom.8:29).
- We have been given gifts for ministry (Ephesians 4:7-8).
- We are each a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6:19-20).

The Corporate Level (united in His house)

The Christian life has not been designed by God to be a solitary experience (Eph.3:17-19). As individuals, we receive salvation and reconciliation to God and to His people. But in order for God's purpose to be fulfilled in our lives, we need to be connected to others in the Body of Christ. This is because when we come together:

- God blesses us in our unity (Psalm 133:1,3; 1 Peter 3:8-9).
- God manifests His presence among us (Matthew 18:20).
- We grow into the full stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
- We are a body of interdependent gifts (1 Cor.12:14-27, Rom 12:3, Eph 4:25).
- We are together being built into God's temple (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

The corporate nature of unity in the church holds a high priority in the heart of God. In fact, God has hinged His whole eternal purpose on that unity (Ephesians 3:10-11).

The unity of the Godhead seen among His People

Jesus prayed that His Church would have the same expression of unity as the Godhead. God is a united family, and in order to demonstrate His nature in the earth we must be united by Him with others in the same sort of unity.

John 17:20-23 NASB "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

God's people are to be united in life and purpose in the same way the Godhead is. Christ is the foundation of our unity and His purpose (demonstrating and declaring the Gospel in the earth), for His glory is the foundation upon which we live and are sent. (1 Cor.3:11; 2 Tim.2:19).

Romans 15:5-6 NASB Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Great Commandment is not a Suggestion

*John 13:34-35 NASB "A **new commandment** I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Many Christians prize the "Great Commission" (Mt 28) but don't value the "Great Commandment." Some Christians mistakenly think that being united with those Jesus joins us to is an option, but it is a command (John 15:12-14; 1 John 4:21; 2 John 5-6). The early Church instinctively obeyed that command

Acts 2:44-46 NASB And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

Acts 4:32 NASB And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

This verse shows three expressions of unity:

- Unity in heart - *a common Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- Unity in mind - *a common purpose* (2 Corinthians 13:11).
- Unity in life - *a common way of living* (1 John 3:16).

Barriers to Unity

Our flesh and the demonic work against our unity. If they succeed in keeping us from being united then the full nature of God will never be expressed. When there is unity there is an anointing and blessing that destroys the works of the enemy in a way nothing else can.

Psalms 133:1-3 NASB A Song of Ascents, of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing-- life forever.

Many people either fail to unite or break apart based on self interest. We go for our "sake" instead of obeying Jesus and "losing our life for His sake."

Matthew 16:25 NASB "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

When we follow self interest we will allow all the things from our flesh and the demonic to work among us to divide us.

2 Corinthians 12:20 NASB 20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

These same arguments can be found in the Church today. God is always working in and among us to break down barriers to unity such as - divisions over doctrine (Titus 3:9-11), selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:10) and exclusiveness (Romans 12:3-5; 15:7).

Maintaining Unity is Job One

Ephesians 4:3-6 NASB being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (see also Philippians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 13:11).

It is not just about asking God for unity but keeping the unity He has already made provision for in Christ. We show that unity in practical ways "the one another's" (Rom.12:9-21; Ephesians 4:2-3; Col.3:12-16; Hebrews 10:24-25). We live with the common identity of a common purpose as the body of Christ. When we live this way and are sent into the earth with grow into the fullness of Christ as His fills the earth with His glory through us.

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

Ephesians 4:13 NASB until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

5. A Body that Reveals Christ

Scripture describes the Church as the Body of Christ. It is a metaphor that describes both our relationship with Jesus (the Head) as well as how the Church is to function in the earth.

1 Corinthians 12:27-28 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (NASB)
"Now you are Christ's Body and each of you a limb or organ of it." (NEB)

His Body and the Fullness of Christ

Ephesians 1:22-23 NASB And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
Ephesians 1:23 MSG The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

Colossians 2:9-10 NASB For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

When Jesus walked the earth, His physical body housed the fullness of God - His body was a temple of the Spirit (John 2:19-21). Now the Church is His Body, the temple of God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

Two Scriptural Expressions of the Church

The Scripture speaks of the church in two ways.

The Universal Church - All believers past and present who are in Christ (Heb 11:39-12:1, Eph 1:23 etc.)

The Local Church - Believers who are joined and living their life together in a particular geographic area, under the oversight of God given leaders.

The Greek word for church (Ekklesia) is used 114 times in the Bible, 96 of those times it is direct reference to a local church. It is hard for anyone to Biblically justify membership in the universal church without being a real part of a local church.

A Body Prepared

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

Jesus said He was returning to His Father "for your good," for only then could He send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). Although His physical body was limited by space and time, His corporate Body - the Church - has no such limitations (John 14:12).

The purpose of our human body and the body of Christ is to carry and express the life within it. That life both naturally and spiritually is directed by the head (Christ). Jesus came to the earth in bodily form to

fulfill the will of His Father (John 5:19; Matthew 26:39). Jesus was God manifest in the flesh (John 1:1,14,18; 1 Timothy 3:16). Now the Church, as Christ's Body, is to express God's will on earth (Matthew 6:10) - God manifested in the earth through His body.

Ephesians 3:10-11 NASB so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

A United Body

1 Cor.12:13"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body..."

The Body has many members but are still one unit (1 Cor.12:12). We have the possibility to walk in unity because of what we have in Christ. The Body of Christ is a unit comprised of many members This unity is possible because in Christ we have:

One Spirit

The Body of Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit - also called the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:6-7; Galatians 4:6). This Spirit is the bond which holds the Body together (Ephesians 4:3-4).

One Blood

All Christians have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (1 Cor.10:16-17; Eph.1:7). This blood is the basis of our life in God and continues to nourish us (John 6:53-5 6) and cleanse us (Hebrews 9:14).

One Mind

As we come to Christ, He expresses His mind through us. It is more than just common doctrine, it is a unity based on the vision and revelation of God. For the Body of Christ to function as God intended, we must all be motivated by the heart of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8) and guided by the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Comprised of Many Parts

1 Corinthians 12:12"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ."

The Apostle Paul writes much about the design of Christ's Body. It is made up of many parts and all are important 1 Cor.12:15-27. We are never to overvalue or undervalue any member of Christ body.

Romans 12:3-5 NASB For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Placed by God

1 Corinthians 12:18-19 "But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?"

Just like our human body, Christ has wonderful diversity within the body, yet it functions as one unity. This is how He has designed His body to function.

Purpose of the Body

In God's design the purpose of His body is to express the life of God in it. The signals come from the head (Jesus) and the body carries them out on earth. The church is to manifest four aspects of God in the earth.

- The glory of God (Eph.2:21; Hab.2:14).
- The wisdom of God (Eph.3:10).
- The grace of God (Eph.2:6-7).
- The praises of God (1 Peter 2:5,9)

The Fullness of Christ

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to the world (John 16:14-15), and He does this by dwelling in the Church and manifesting Himself through her. In order to reveal the fullness of Christ, the Body must reveal Christ...

- In His character (Gal.5:22-25)
- In His power (1 Cor.12:8-10)
- In His authority (John 16:23-24).

When we consider the present state of the church in light of His great design and calling it is easy to get discouraged. Paul says something very important after spelling out God's great calling on the church in the first three chapters of Ephesians. He realizes that God will do far more than we can not only ask, but also think.

Ephesians 3:20-21 NASB Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

While we cannot build the church the way He has designed without Him, with Him we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Psalms 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain.

6. Every Believer's Ministry/Service - "Every Joint Supplies"

Ephesians 4:7 MKJV But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

*Ephesians 4:16 MKJV from whom the whole body, fitted together and compacted by **that which every joint supplies**, according to the effectual working in the measure of each part, producing the growth of the body to the edifying of itself in love.*

The contemporary church world has "over glamorized" the idea of ministry. The word translated "ministry" simply means "service." This puts the idea of ministry in the proper context. Every Christian is in the ministry, not just a select few. The responsibility of leaders is not to do all the ministry, but to lead, guide and equip each part of the Body to function in ministry - at home, at work, on the street and in the church.

Ephesians 4:11-12 "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service...."

Every believer is full-time in the ministry wherever they are a paid staff member employed by a church, or working in a regular job. There is no two tiered level of "ministry" labeled "full time" and "lay minister." Each one has a vital contribution to make to the total ministry of the Church and through the church. How do we discover our ministry gifts?

Begin with your general calling

Every person has the same general calling:

- A ministry to the Lord (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 13:15)
- A ministry to the family (1 Thess.2:11-12; 1 Tim.5:10)
- A ministry to the church (1 Corinthians 16:15)
- A ministry to the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Ministry is not about position or authority. It is about serving (1 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:5-8). If we have an attitude of serving others we will more easily be channeled into our specific area of service.

1 Pet.4:10 "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

Begin by ministering to people

It is very difficult to discover ministry/service gifts if a person is not actually serving! It is only as we operate in our general ministry that our special gifts become obvious. It is easier to steer a moving ship than one stagnant in the water.

Galatians 6:9 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Service and ministry is a people business (Matt.9:35-36). If we concentrate on ourselves - our needs, our desires - it will be difficult to discover our area of service/ministry. Far too many Christians sit around

doing little, waiting for their "ministry" to appear. This is vanity and foolishness.. As we begin to look out to meet the needs of others, our areas of ministry will come forth.

Different Expressions of Ministry/Serving

Romans 12:4. "...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

You can categorize the expression of your gifting (measure) based on four areas that point to the uniqueness of your gift/expression mix.

Capacity

Ministry gifts are distinguished by capacity. Some people have the capacity to minister to thousands, some to hundreds and some to tens, while others operate best one-on-one.

Field of labor

God assigns a field (a place of service) to our ministry (2 Cor.10:13-16). That field may be a particular location (home/neighborhood/work/marketplace), age group, sub-cultural group or ethnic group (Galatians 2:7-8).

Flow of Emphasis

Three examples of emphasis, but not limited to, the following: :

- Gathering/Evangelism/Leadership/Drawing people together
- Nurturing /Mentoring
- Teaching/Equipping

By recognizing what emphasis we have, we can focus on that ministry. Some people will gather, others will nurture believers, while still others will have a teaching emphasis - in one-on-one, in small group Bible studies and larger teaching venues. Some people have a strong emphasis in leadership; others in serving; still others in compassion.

Your Personality

Dead religion will always steal your personality and try to make "one personality" the valid expression of a gift. God gave you your personality to flavor your gift in a unique way. Your personality includes such things as your way of thinking, your sense of humor etc. As we learn to recognize "the grace given us" we can flow more easily in our sphere of ministry/serving

Romans 12:6-8. "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

The Nine Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12

The varieties of gifts and callings are many. There is a category of gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Cor 12:7-11. The Bible lists nine "manifestations" of the Spirit's anointing as we minister to people. You can group these gifts into three categories.

- *Gifts of supernatural understanding*: The word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, discernment of spirits.
- *Gifts of supernatural power*: faith, healings, miracles.

- *Gifts of supernatural speech: prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues.*

Hebrews 2:3-4 "...This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (read 1 Cor.12-14).

Variety of Gifts and Expressions

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men".

No two gifts or expressions of them are the same. There is a mix of ministry/service that includes both the gift and the vessel.. This creates a unique mix for every believer. Even the same gift operating through different vessels will cause a unique expression. .As the different ministries in the Body of Christ work together, the full ministry of Christ is expressed in His Church,

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

Ephesians 4:15-16."Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work"

7. Fellow Workers with Christ

1 Corinthians 3:9 NASB For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

John 17:18 NASB "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

John 20:21 NASB So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Each believe has been sent by God in the same way Jesus was sent. In fact, Jesus has passed on His ministry to us (John 14:12). If we are called to the same ministry of Jesus then we need to learn from His example of how He ministered.

John 14:10 "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (see v.11).

Jesus did not just work for God, God worked through Him. It was His Father's work, not His own. We expect the Father to work through us the way He worked through Jesus.

John 14:12 NASB "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.(see also 6:28-29).

Jesus' View of Ministry

Philippians 2:5 NASB Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Jesus had a certain perspective/attitude that we are to possess. It was a way of looking at Himself, His Father, and the world. If we want our service/ministry to be like Jesus we need to understand His "attitude" and seek to express the same (Matthew 11:29)..

He saw Himself Working with the Father

John 5:17 "Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.'"

He was always open to what the Father was doing. Even at times of human exhaustion needing rest (the woman at the well John 4) Jesus was looking for His Father's hand working so He could join Him in it.

He did not rely on His own abilities

John 5:19 "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." (see also verse 20)

John 6:63-65 NASB "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

Jesus did not trust in His own strength or initiative. He looked for, and did only what He saw His Father doing.

His Goal was to Please His Father

John 5:30 "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." (see also verse 36)

The main audience Jesus sought to please wasn't the multitude, or the twelve, but the Father. We need the same attitude. We are not interested in pleasing man. We want to please the Father because that is where our reward comes from. Many people who "minister" have a self focus. They are looking for recognition from men. One whose goal is to please the Father is delivered from people's opinions or expectations (2 Corinthians.2:17; 3:4-6; 4:5). We do not seek to please men, but God (Galatians.1:10; Romans.12:1; Hebrews.11:6).

Jesus pleasing the Father was something, like food that sustained Him.

*John 4:34 NASB Jesus *said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.(see also Hebrews 10:5-7).*

When we do not seek ourselves but the will of the Father, then we become like the vine, abiding in Jesus, whom the Father continually prunes to bear more fruit.

John 15:4-5 NASB "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

God's Way of Working

1 Corinthians 2:1-2 "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (see also 2 Corinthians.4:1-2)

When we work with God, not relying on our own talents and initiative, we are totally dependent on doing things His way. The Biblical definition of wisdom is "the best application of knowledge." When we work with God, we end up doing things in His wisdom. We become totally dependent on the wisdom and power of God (1 Corinthians 2:3-5). We want to things in God's way and God's timing.

This effects how we work.

We target the heart in people, not just their mind

2 Corinthians 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (see also 3:14).

The focus of Satan is to blind the minds of people against the understanding of the Gospel (Romans 1:21-28; Colossians 1:21; Titus 1:15). But God does not aim for the mind. He aims for the heart.

2 Corinthians 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

After a person receives Christ by faith, God then begins to renew the mind (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24). When we share with unbelievers, we must not try to convince them - mind to mind. Instead, we can cooperate with God and speak the words that He gives us - heart to heart.

We address the root, not just the fruit

Matthew 3:10 "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Many times we target the fruit (outward behavior) of a person's life (read Galatians 5:19-21). But the more we pick off the fruit, the more it continues to grow back. This is because the fruit of a person's life simply reveals the condition of the roots (Luke 6:43-44). God wants to target the roots of our life and others. The root problem of all wrong behavior is not walking with Him in a relationship in which He is forming you (discipleship). The same is true for a lack of fruitfulness in any area. If the roots are in the right soil (in Him daily) eventually they will bear fruit. If our roots are in Him, we will produce the fruit of His Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Working requires Walking with God

2 Corinthians 6:1 "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain" (see also 1 Corinthians 3:9; 15:58).

We need a daily walk with God if we are going to work with Him daily. We need the continual flow of grace that walking with Him brings (Acts 14:26; 1 Corinthians.15:10; 2 Corinthians.9:8; 12:9-10). Jesus said we are to live by every word that "proceeds out of the voice of God." Mt 4:4. Working with God is all about hearing from and seeing what God is doing and joining Him in His work.

Ephesians 2:10 NASB For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

8. Joining God Who Is Working

Jesus didn't do the work of God (apart from Him), He joined God in His work. This is the secret of working with God. . God is always at work.

John 5:17-19 NASB But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." ...19... Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

Ministry/Serving is all about doing what we see God *already* doing (John 14:10; 9:4; 17:4). When we speak with somebody (as we are prompted by the Spirit to do) who has not yet received the Lord, we can take assurance that God has been working in their hearts long before we arrived on the scene.

The Essential Element of the Work of God

But how do we learn to join the work of the Lord? Faith is the essential ingredient in any work of God.

John 6:28-29 NASB Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe...

1 Thessalonians 1:3 NASB 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father (Gal 5:6)

Faith is the key ingredient to working with God (1 Timothy 1:4). Faith means an intimate dependence upon God's ability, not your own. It is about hearing from and stepping out in steps of faith (acting on it) Rom 10:17. The Bible says that anything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).. Working with God requires acts of faith. Faith pleases God

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

John 14:12 NASB "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

A Valuable Lesson from Jesus

In Mark chapter 9, the disciples learned a valuable lesson from ministry/service. They had already been involved in working with Jesus as He worked with the Father. He had sent them out two by two with authority to work (Mathew 10:8). They had already experience the thrill of authority over demons (Lk 10:17). But then they found one they could not cast out.

Mark 9:14-18 NASB When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15 Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. 16 And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" 17 And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes

him mute; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it."

The disciples ask Him why in this case they could not cast out the demon.

Mark 9:28-29 NASB When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

Jesus' explanation wasn't a "formula of faith." It was about prayer. Jesus had just come down from the mountain, where He had been transfigured (Mark 9:2-13). Luke tells us that the reason He had gone up the mountain was to pray (Luke 9:28-29). When Jesus told the disciples, "This kind comes out only by prayer," He was not talking about an activity or right formula of prayer. It was about prayer that is part of our daily intimate life with the Father. It was about "prayer closet" prayer, or hidden prayer alone with the Father that was essential to Jesus' life. *Luke 5:16 NASB* But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Prayer was a characteristic of Jesus' daily life (see Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 6:12; 9:18; 11:1).. He relied on everyday interaction with the Father in which He heard from Him and it put Him in a place of seeing what He was doing.

Prayer is not a Formula but a Life/Time in The Secret Place

Jesus taught His disciples that prayer wasn't a formula but a life in the secret place of God's presence.

Matthew 6:6 NASB "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

We must walk in a hidden time with God if we are to participate in an open time of moving with Him. This is the place where experience rest from our own labor and anointing in the presence of God. Our public times of moving with God will only be as great as our hidden time with Him where we hear His words to help others.

Isaiah 50:4-5 NASB The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. 5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back.

Prayer is the foundation of all our life in working with God. As we walk with God in prayer we hear in the secret place what we will speak in the public place..

Matthew 10:27 NASB "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

In the secret place we receive communication and equipping for the public place

In the secret place He communicates and equips us with things by which we do battle and destroy the works of the enemy.

With God on Mission

1 John 3:8 NASB the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Isaiah 49:2 NASB 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.

In God's presence He prepares us the ministry/service. This place of walking and soaking in God's presence is where we learn to hear His voice and learn obedience.

The Empowering of the Spirit

In Jesus' presence we drink the Spirit from Him. As we do we come to a place where the Spirit can flow through us to a lost and dying world.

John 7:37-39 NASB Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come (keep coming) to Me and drink (keep drinking). 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given,

Colossians 1:29 NASB For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (see also Ephesians 3:7.

We are anointed for God's work by the Holy Spirit. It is not by our own might or power, but it is by His Spirit that His work is accomplished in the earth. AS we spend time with Him we are anointed to join Him in His work as He sends us on mission (to our home, neighborhood, church, school, and marketplace). Remember it isn't about a formula, but it is about walking everyday with God. Faith, anointing, and direction comes from this place in God which is the key to all ministry in the earth.

Mark 16:17-20 NASB "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." 19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.] [And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]

9. Spirit Filled Life

The empowering of the Spirit is essential to working with God in the earth. It was so important to the early church that Jesus told the disciples not to do anything until the Spirit came to fill and empower them.

Acts 1:4-5 NASB Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Jesus filled them and empowered them for ministry/service through the Spirit.

Acts 2:1-4 NASB When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place...4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Acts 4:31 NASB And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

God desires to fill us with His Spirit to empower us for ministry/service (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49). The Bible also calls this being "baptised in the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5). This is not just a one time experience, but is to be a daily part of our walk with God.(Acts 4:8; 13:9,52).

Ephesians 5:18 NASB And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be (continually) filled with the Spirit,(read Luke 11:9-13; Acts 5:32).

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:37-39 NASB Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (read Ezekiel 47, Isaiah 44:3,19-20).

We receive the river of the Holy Spirit, not just for personal blessing, but to be channels of Him as He flows into the earth to bring life to others. It is ours for others (read Ephesians 5:18-19).

Isaiah 32:2 NASB Each will be like a refuge from the wind And a shelter from the storm, Like streams of water in a dry country, Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.

Right and Wrong Way to be Ministers of the Spirit

Jeremiah 2:13 NASB "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.

Right Way - Fountains of living water

In Jeremiah's day (as well as today) God's people had turned away from God who was the fountain of living water and tried to get by on past experiences (old water) they had stored. Again they forsook the everyday experience with Him which is the source of "ministry of the Spirit."

Jeremiah 17:13 NASB O LORD, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the LORD.

Drinking the Spirit for Jesus, which is characteristic of our life in God, is like a spring of water.. It is constant, never drying up. God wants us to spend time in His presence each day, drawing from the water of His life (His Spirit).. This is the essence of Spirit filled ministry.

John 4:14 NASB but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (see also Revelation 21:6).

The Wrong Way - Storing Water in Cisterns Will Not Work

Jeremiah said that trying to store water in cisterns will not work because they are "*Broken cisterns That can hold no water.*" A cistern is like a well, but has no independent source of water. The water must be brought from another place. Our cisterns (our human flesh and abilities) are flawed. They have leaks in them. We are dependent on water flowing into us on a regular basis, if it is going to flow through us. If we don't get that source from God (keep coming and keep drinking) we will try to get by on old experiences and it will never work.

We can only truly minister out of the river of God's Spirit. If we try to minister to people in our own strength and ability, independent from God's Spirit, we will either give no life and/or burn out.

Zechariah 4:6 NASB Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.

This Spirit Filled Life begins with our Initial Filling

Biblical accounts of initial fillings

The Biblical accounts of initial fillings of the Spirit contain the Biblical ways the early church were filled with the Spirit. They contained means of filling, experiences, and manifestations we need to expect today with initial fillings.

Acts 2:1-11 The Spirit fell on them while waiting in prayer before God vs 1-4. The initial result was speaking in tongues about the mighty deeds of God vs 4,11

Acts 8:12-24 A period of days elapsed between the time they received the word and were later filled with the Spirit vs 12-17. They were filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on them vs 17. Something observable happened as a result of them being filled with the Holy Spirit vs 18.

Acts 9:1-17 A period of 3 days elapsed between Paul's Damascus road experience and being filled with the Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on him vs 17-18. We do not know what the initial manifestation of the Spirit was in Paul's life but we do know that he later operated in gifts of the Spirit, especially speaking in tongues 1 Cor 14:1-40, 18.

Acts 10:43-48 The Holy Spirit fell on them while Peter was speaking. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and exalting God vs 45-46. This event occurred before they were baptized in water vs 47.

Acts 19:1-6 Something in their experience gave Paul the indication that they hadn't received the Spirit when they initially believed vs 2. They were filled with the Spirit as Paul laid his hands on them vs 6. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Observations we can make from the facts/examples from the Biblical accounts of initial fillings

1. There is no automatic assumption that one is filled at salvation.
2. There is very clear accompanying manifestations when one is filled such as tongues, prophesy, exalting God, and boldness. The most common manifestation is speaking in tongues. We should expect accompanying manifestation when filled.
3. People were filled at times when hands were laid on them, when praying, and when listening to the word being preached.
4. It is obvious that being filled with the Spirit is not a one time only thing. These accounts along with the exhortation in Eph 5:18 to be continually filled with the Spirit shows us that it is to be continual experience.

Biblical accounts of continual fillings

From the Biblical accounts of the continual fillings of the Spirit and the river flowing we see that it is not just a one time things but something continual.

*Act 4:8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,***
*Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.***
*Act 7:54-56 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. (55) **But being full of the Holy Spirit,** he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; (56) **and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."***
*Act 13:9-10 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, (10) and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"***

It is clear that to be channels of God's Spirit we need to be filled and continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Act 13:52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 NASB And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be (continually) filled with the Spirit,(read Luke 11:9-13; Acts 5:3) Matthew Henry accurately comments on being continually filled in Eph 5:18 “The meaning of the exhortation is that men should labor for a plentiful measure of the Spirit, that would fill their souls with great joy, strength, and courage, which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any excess in our endeavours after these: nay, we ought not to be satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but aspiring after greater measures, so as to be filled with the Spirit.”

10. Channels of God's River

John 7:37-39 NASB Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Jesus' Call to Drink in and Distribute the Holy Spirit

What was the occasion of *Jesus'* call to drink the Holy Spirit from Him?

It was the last day of the Feast of Booths "the last day, the great day of the feast?" in which the people were commemorating their journey in the wilderness. On the last day the High Priest went down to the Pool of Siloam ("Sent or sending", Jesus was the sent One) and filled a flask with water which he brought back to the temple. He would circle the altar seven times then poured it on the Southwest corner of the altar. He was making a prophetic declaration that God was going to pour out His Spirit in the form of a river from the temple into a dry land.

Isaiah had predicted it and Ezekiel saw a vision of it in chapter 47. In the celebration they were anticipating at some future day that it would be fulfilled.

Ezekiel's Vision of God's River Flowing

When Jesus said, "out of your bellies would flow rivers of living water, but this He spoke of the Spirit," there was an immediate connection to Ezekiel's vision and the fulfillment of it.

Ezekiel 47:1-12 And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar. (2) He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by way of the gate that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side. (3) When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water reaching the ankles. (4) Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the knees. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the loins. (5) Again he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not ford, for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be forded...behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other... (9) "It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live.

John the Baptist had already announced that Jesus was going to be the "sent one" who would fill us with His Spirit *Mar 1:8 "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

Ezekiel's River (promised Holy Spirit) Flowed Into the early church

Jesus commanded them to wait in Jerusalem to drink from Him in anticipation of Him filling them with the Spirit

Acts 1:4-5 NASB Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Ezekiel's River (promised Holy Spirit) Flowed through the early church

As Jesus filled them the river trickled out of the Temple in heaven, into the Temple on earth

Acts 2:1-4 NASB When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

As they drank from Jesus in prayer "they were filled with the Spirit." The river began to flow into them and through them into all Jerusalem and eventually all the earth. God delights in releasing and filling the earth with Himself through Holy Spirit (His river) "through the church."

Eph 1:23...The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence

Ephesians 3:10-11MSG so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church..

The world needs the River of God and as Ezekiel said, "every place where the river goes, will live." It is only as we come and drink from Jesus through prayer, both private prayer (our prayer closet) as well as public prayer, that the river will flow into and through us (Matthew 6:6). Remember that prayer and the filling of the Spirit isn't just for personal blessing, but for a world that needs Him.

Isa 55:1 "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. Isa 44:3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants

How do we continually drink? There are several Biblical ways in which we drink of the Spirit.

- **Expressing gratefulness to God/thanksgiving**

Isa 12:2-6 "Yes, indeed--God is my salvation....(3) Joyfully you'll pull up buckets of water from the wells of salvation. (4) And as you do it, you'll say, "Give thanks to GOD. Call out his name...(5) "Sing praise-songs to GOD. He's done it all! Let the whole earth know what he's done! (6) Raise the roof! Sing your hearts out, O Zion! The Greatest lives among you: The Holy of Israel."

- **Lifting our voices/shouting**

Psa 98:1-9 (4) Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises. (5) Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, With the lyre and the sound of melody. (6) With trumpets and the sound of the horn Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.

265 times the term shout, cry out, break forth, or lift our voice is used. Only 12 times silence or being quiet is used in terms of worship, desire for, prayer before God. The other Biblical manifestations.

Playing music and instruments – 58 Times; Singing – 29 Times; Lifting our hands - 14 Times; Clapping hands – 12 Times; Bowing or kneeling 12 Times bowing down kneeling; Dancing – 9 Times; Standing – 7 Times

Bible Scholar A.S. Herbert said of lifting our voices and shouting, “Israel’s worship was distinctly vocal in character; it is to shout exultantly. It was normally accompanied with such instruments as produced a vigorous and loud noise. But the shout or cry of praise reinforced by loud instrumental noise is not an end in itself, nor is it merely expressive of strong religious emotion. The purpose of the praise cry (tehillah) or the ringing cry (rinnah) is to convey the life-soul of the worshipper to God.”

- **Get all relational offenses right**

*Eph 4:29-31 NASB Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.(James 5:16)*

- **Drink from the Spirit by singing and speaking in tongues**

*Eph 5:18-19 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled (continually filled) with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 NASB 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What is the outcome then? **I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.***

The River Overflowing Through Our Life

Biblical accounts of the River of God flowing through the early church into the earth.

- *Act 2:4 And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak** with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*
- *Act 4:8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,*
- *Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.***
- *Act 6:10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and **the Spirit with which he was speaking.***

- Act 7:54-56 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. (55) But **being full of the Holy Spirit**, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; (56) **and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."***
- Act 8:29-30 ***Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."***
- Act 9:10-17 *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and **the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias."** **And he said, "Here I am, Lord."**... (17) *So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight **and be filled with the Holy Spirit."****
- Act 10:19-21 *While Peter was reflecting on the vision, **the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. (20) "But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."***
- Act 11:12 ***"The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings.***
- Act 11:28 *One of them named Agabus stood up **and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.***
- Act 13:2-4 *While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."** (4) *So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went**
- Act 13:9-10...*Paull, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, (10) and said,*
- Act 13:52 *And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*
- Act 15:28 ***"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us***
- Act 16:6-7 *They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having **been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;** (7) and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;*
- Act 20:22-23 *"And now, behold, **bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem,** not knowing what will happen to me there, (23) except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.*
- Act 21:10-11...*a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. (11) And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, **"This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."***

The River of God (Holy Spirit) moved in the earth through the early church and continues to move in the earth through God's people who drink in the River from Jesus. The Bible records many aspects of the Christian experience that God desires to be in overflow.

- Love (Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:12)
- Joy (2 Cor. 8:2; Phil. 1:26; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 Thess.1:6)
- Peace (Jude 2; 2 Thess. 3:16; Col. 3:15)
- Hope (Romans 15:13)
- Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:5)
- Thanksgiving (2 Cor. 4:15; 9:12; Col. 2:7)
- Praise (Psalm 119:171)
- Giving (Luke 6:38)
- Grace (1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Peter 1:2)

- Blessing (John 1:16; Ephesians 1:3)
- Power for healing and deliverance (Mk 16:15-18)

*Romans 15:13 NASB Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope **by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** (see also Romans 14:17; 2 Peter 1:3).

The River overflows through our abundance not our own strength

Luke 6:45 "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart...For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

Holy Spirit flows through us in ways that are beyond our ability to ask for or even think. This is why we are encouraged to drink from Jesus, pray for revelation and awareness of His moving in and through our lives.

Ephesians 1:18-20 NASB I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Ephesians 3:16-20 NASB that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. (see also Eph 1:23, Jude 20, Jn 3:34, 4:13; Colossians 2:9-10).

11. Living in the Ministry of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:18-19"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them..."

Jesus death, burial, and resurrection totally changed our relationship with God. Before we received the work of the Jesus, we were enemies of God because of the pollution in us effecting our thinking and because of our lifestyle (Romans 1:21-32; Colossians 1:21). But now the Blood of Christ has reconciled us to God. Through the death of Jesus, we now have full access into the presence of God (Ephesians.2:12-13, 18; Hebrews.4:16) and we are now in Christ (Rom 3:22, 6:23).

Romans 5:10-11"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

Reconciled to Move in the Ministry of Reconciliation

The Greek word translated "Reconciliation" is defined as "The establishment of friendly relations between parties who were hostile towards and enemies with one another." If we are to minister reconciliation to others, we must first be reconciled to God ourselves. This is important because we can only help reproduce in others what we have ourselves (Matthew.10:8).

Reconciliation with God is not just a theological concept. It is a daily experience. It is the reality of an intimate walk with God. If we are to be ministers of reconciliation, we must ourselves be walking close to the Lord. We must never let anything come between us and God.

James 4:4 "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." (see also Philippians 3:18-19; Ephesians 4:30-31)

Our reconciliation with God through Christ is to be a daily experience not just a theological concept. He wrote a letter to a church pleading with them to let Him back into the church and their lives.

Revelation 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

The letter was to the church at Laodecia. The context of what He spoke to them was that they had become comfortable without His present and real experience in their lives (Revelation.3:15-16). Their actual life had drifted away from an experiential reality of their own reconciliation. Jesus revealed Himself as being outside of their lives and church.

James echoed a similar idea about drawing near to God. The idea is that in our experiential reality of walking in our reconciliation we can find ourselves in a state of being near or far away. Obviously being near enables us to walk in what reconciliation is all about.

James 4:8 NASB Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Establishing Intimacy

With God on Mission

Hebrews 10:22 NASB let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (see also James 4:8).

God's design for our life with Him is a daily drawing near and walking with Him. It is about daily intimacy in which we hear from Him and minister through Him.

Isaiah 50:4 NASB The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

Mary discovered the kind of intimacy that the Lord desires with us (read John 12:3), in contrast to her sister Martha who worked for the Lord rather than hearing from Him. Many times Mary could be found at the feet of Jesus, enjoying His presence.

Luke 10:38-42 "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'"

Like Martha we can drift into a mode in which we are - "distracted by all the preparations" for ministry and "worried and upset about many things." Ministry is about walking with God (the source of entering into His rest Heb 4:3-10) instead of trying to work for God without Him. As we spend time with the Lord, we draw strength and wisdom from His presence, and the anointing to become an ambassador of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 NASB 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Walking With God is our main Qualification for Ministry/Service

Acts 4:13 NASB Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Being a minister or reconciliation is not about a title or ministry degree. A close walk with Jesus is our qualification. People need to see our lives, not just hear our words. Our lives should reflect the reconciliation we are walking in through Christ. We display the fruit of reconciliation as we dwell/walk with Him.

John 15:4-5 NASB "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.(see verse 8,16; Matthew.3:8; 12:33; Ephesians.5:8-10).

We are Ministers of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NASB 14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Being a minister of reconciliation is our primary calling in Christ. We have been reconciled (the establishment of friendly relations with parties who were enemies/hostile with one another) with Christ. Out of our daily experience of reconciliation we are compelled to call others to that same life.

Another fruit of reconciliation is that we were not only reconciled to Christ in a new life but reconciled to His people in a new way of life together in Christ.

- Reconciliation to God (Colossians.1:21-22; Romans 5:10).
- Reconciliation with others (Ephesians.2:14-16,; Matthew.5:23-24).

These are the two key aspects of the Gospel. They are also the two foundations of the Christian life - our individual walk with the Lord and our fellowship with other believers. As ministers of reconciliation, this is what we introduce others to!

1 John 1:3 NASB what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (see Philippians 2:1-2; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Great Commission and the Great Commandment

Walking in reconciliation with our brothers and sisters demonstrates Christ to the World. If we only proclaim the gospel of reconciliation, Great Commission Mt 28, and fail to walk the Great Commandment John 13:34-35 we will fall short. Allowing reconciliation to work in our lives towards His people gives testimony of His work of reconciliation

*John 13:34-35 NASB "A **new commandment** I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Walking in His reconciliation with Him and one another is the real answer to all the relational difficulties that cause most of the world's problems. As we walk in that we become lights to the world and a city set on a hill (Mt 5)

Philippians 2:15 MSG Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night

12. Working with God in Ministry to the Body

The Christian life is designed to be walked out in community with fellow Christians. It is to be a "one another" experience (there are 59 "one another" commands in the NT). Our individual walk with Jesus is incomplete. This was the experience of the early church.

Acts 2:42 NASB They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

We must have a corporate walk with His body to have a complete picture. There is a corporate aspect of the Christian life that causes us to experientially be the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12,20), the family of God (Eph 2:19-22), and the living temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22, 1 Peter 2:1-4). As we walk together we express the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23 MSG He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. 23 The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence. (Colossians 2:10).

The New Testament turns our thinking to a corporate/family perspective

- In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught us to pray from a family position "Our Father."
- Paul uses the term "our Lord 53 times" only once did he refer to Jesus as "my Lord" Phil 3:8.
- The term "brother(s)/sister(s)" (Gk adelph) is used in Pauline literature 139 times.
- 23 times in NT Savior is used in conjunction with a person or group being saved, only once does it refer to the Savior of an individual *Luk 1:46-47 And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, (47) And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*
- 44% of the letters of the New Testament are about how we should get along with one another. This contrasts with about 4% on spiritual gifts.

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

Ministry with the "one anothers"

59 times the NT uses the phrase "one another." It causes of to focus on an important part of our ministry as we work with God. They are all centered around the idea of building up one another

As we work with God we will be involved in building up one another (His body) instead of tearing it down. Building up is a five-step process:

- Accept one another (Romans 15:5-7).

- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:9-10).
- Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Pray for one another (James 5:16).
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13-15).

Encouraging one another

1 Thessalonians 5:11 NASB 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

In the original language of the New Testament, the word "encourage" means "a coming alongside" to encourage, counsel or comfort.

As every part works with God in their ministry to one another the result will be that the body will be built up to better demonstrate the fullness of Christ to the earth.

Ephesians 4:16 NASB from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

In Him we are *being built together to become a dwelling* in which God lives by his Spirit Ephesians 2:22. This is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:14), who is called the Counsellor, the one who "comes alongside." He also works with us in this ministry.

Receiving and Giving

"...Freely you have received, freely give" Matthew 10:8.

God gives freely to each one of us in order that we give just as freely to one another. Paul said: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you..." (1 Corinthians 11:23). There are two things that we receive which we can pass on to others:

- Revelation (1 Corinthians 11:23) - what we hear *from* God
- Experience (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) - what we go through *with* God

This kind of mutual sharing is called "Body ministry".

Participating in Body Ministry

1 Corinthians 14:26 NASB 26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

God desires for us to minister to one another, both during and outside of meeting times. For this reason, He has distributed gifts to every believer (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

Colossians 3:16 NASB Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (see also Ephesians 5:19).

Body ministry has only one purpose - to build one another up toward the Lord. The guidelines given for prophecy apply to all forms of Body ministry. What we say should be "for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3). Humility, not pride, should be the motivation behind all Body ministry. Everything should be done "for the strengthening of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:26).

"Be completely humble and gentle with one another, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" Ephesians 4:2-3 (see Colossians 3:15).

Identifying as Part of the Body

1 Corinthians 12:24-26 "...But God has combined the members of the body and...its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it".

Body ministry works on the basis of mutual identification - knowing what the other is going through. Romans 12:15 (KJV) says: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice; weep with them that weep." As ministers of God's grace, we must learn to feel with the other person, before we can truly minister comfort and encouragement to their heart.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ" Galatians 6:2 (see Romans 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Anointed with Gifts of the Spirit

Each of the gifts of the Spirit is a "manifestation" of the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7). There are many expressions of the Spirit's anointing, but five are common in ministry to the church body: prophecy, prayer, tongues (if interpreted), sharing and song. During Body ministry, the anointing of the Spirit can be expressed in any of these (and other) forms. It is the same anointing (1 John 2:27), but expressed in different ways. This anointing is controllable (1 Corinthians 14:32-33), and can be expressed in a form that best fits the time and situation.

Not every meeting is suited to Body ministry, but under the guidance of leadership, ministry through the participation of many believers can bring great encouragement and growth. Prophecy is something all believers are encouraged to move in - in the right place and if it is for the "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" of the believers (1 Corinthians 14:3-4).

Corinthians 14:31 "For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged." (see also verse 1)

God desires for us to be filled with His Spirit, and that the overflow of this infilling will spill over in the form of encouragement and comfort to the lives of others within the Body and out in the world.

"...be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs..." Ephesians 5:18-20.

13. Working with God and Others in the Harvest

Joel 3:13-14 NASB Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Important Revelations that give Motivation for Working in His Harvest

1. The harvest work is always now

John 4:35"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

When we think harvest work is sometime in the unknown future we will fail to actively work in it today. Harvest work contains both sowing, reaping, cultivating weeds, as well as cutting down ripe grain and joining it together for processing. All are part of harvest work. If we are always thinking it is not now we will fail to participate in it on a daily basis.

Ecc 11:4 NASB He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.

2. God, not the enemy, is the Lord (one who owns and rules) of the harvest

Matthew.9:37-38"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest...to send out workers into his harvest field."

The harvest belongs to God, not the enemy or us. He is called "the Lord of the harvest." He wants to train and engage the workers in the harvest as we follow Jesus. *Mark 1:17 NASB And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."*

This training is not just training on how to put on crusades or events. It is a training for every individual to engage in everyday work in God's harvest field.

Different Stages of Harvest Work

The New Testament society was primarily agricultural. They understood that when Jesus mentioned working in the harvest that it was a process not an event. Many evangelistic emphasis and programs tend to see it as an event rather than a process (getting people to make a "decision for Christ").

John 4:35-38 "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

Mark 4:26-29 "...This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come".

Plowing

Hosea 10:12 "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailling love, and break up your unplowed ground..." (see also 1 Corinthians 9:10).

The plowing stage is a picture of people who are not yet ready to receive the seed of God's word (Eph 4:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4). This can be for a variety of reasons. Jesus described the different types of ground we encounter in the harvest (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

- Hard ground - hearts that are hardened against the Gospel
- Rocky ground - hearts whose response has no depth
- Thorny ground - hearts entangled by worldly cares
- Good ground - hearts that respond to the Gospel

A properly prepared harvest field should always have more good ground than hard, rocky and thorny ground. The hard ground in the parable was the pathway that ran around the outside of the field. Likewise, the rocky and thorny grounds lay at the edges of the field. If the main part of the field is hard, rocky or thorny, then plowing is needed. It is the plowing which makes the ground ready for the seed of the Gospel.

Isaiah 28:24-26 "When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way"

We plow with our prayers, the testimony of our lives, and the continual words we speak by the Spirit. God also uses circumstances in people's lives to prepare them. We need to be aware of circumstances and how they may be working in people and help address it with them.

Sowing

Sow - break ground open and put seed in ground. It entails preaching, evangelizing, witnessing

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

When you sow a seed into someone's heart, you usually do not see immediate results. But the sower is still a vital part of the harvest process. In times of the moving of God's Spirit, the reaping can even overtake the sowing and plowing. John 4:35-38 (see above),

Amos 9:13 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills" (see also Galatians 6:9).

Watering

1 Corinthians 3:6 "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow".

You water a seed after planting. At this stage, the seed may be dormant in people's hearts . As you water it causes the seed to sprout. You water by reinforcing the witness already given. Many historical as well as current statistics show that the average person has about 7 encounters evangelistically before they yield to Christ.

Reaping

Psalm 126:5-6 "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."

This is when a person is ready to receive Christ. Reaping is a time of great rejoicing. But when we lead a person to receive Christ, we must remember that we are just one of the workers in God's harvest field. We are reaping what someone else has sown, just as we have sown and another may reap.

John 4:37-38 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Binding into sheaves

When it is ripe cut down or pull up by roots then it is bound together in sheaves Ps 126:6, Ps 129:7 so it can be carried and processed. It takes joining together with others to endure the rest of the harvest process. This is building people together with God and each other Eph 2:19-22

Threshing

The sheaves are taken to the threshing floor and beat on it or they are spread them out and they had an ox trample on it *"You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing."* 1 Cor 9:9, or they beat it with some sort of mallet. Break off what the grain had been standing on, the stock which was once useful but now longer necessary (can stand for the flesh).

Winnowing

The threshed grain was taken to a windy place (filling with and the continued encounter with the Spirit of God) and with winnowing fork threw the broken grain into air to separate grain from chaff.

Threshing and Winnowing

When our cultural, flesh centered way of living life is confronted with God's Kingdom culture. These types of things help fulfill Mt 28:19-20. They can happen in every day life as we walk together.

The synergy of everyone's labor flowing together

We must recognize what stage of the harvest process an unbeliever or new believer is at. We then cooperate with God in His work of harvest. Whether we sow, reap, or sheave etc., we need to remember

that we are only one part of a team of many harvest workers. Jesus promised that everyone's labor would be part of each other John 4:38. It takes all to be effective and no one is more important than the other.

1 Corinthians 3:7-9 "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field."

God wants to reach a lost world through His people working in the harvest field everyday, everywhere, all the time. As we follow Jesus He makes us effective harvest workers.

14. Speaking the Word of God

1 Peter 4:11 "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God...so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ..."

God wants us to absorb His word in our hearts (Colossians 3:16). Out of this reservoir of His word in us, and the leadership of the Holy Spirit we speak. The Holy Spirit will work with us to anoint His word in two ways:

1. He reveals to us what to say (Matthew 10:19-20)

Paul ask for prayer that this phenomenon would happen in his life.

Eph 6:19 NASB and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

We are to have our ear open to hear what God wants to say to people to bring God's life and direction to them.

Isa 50:4 NASB The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

2. He works in the heart of the listener

Joh 6:44 NASB "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Feeding on the Word

Matthew 4:4 "It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Eze 3:1-3 NASB Then He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." 2 So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. 3 He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

God's word is like food that gives us strength and will cause us to grow (Ephesians 4:14-15). As we mature we will be able to absorb more of His word. Our degree of maturity is really determined by how much the word is put into actual practice in our life. The Bible speaks of the "milk" aspect of the word that sustains us as children, but also solid food for those who are spiritually older.

Milk

1 Peter 2:2-3 "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."

These are simple truths that help establish early foundations in our life about the Gospel, God, and our relationships with Him.

Solid food

This has to do with God's nature, hear, and eternal plan He is calling us to participate in now.

Hebrews 5:12-14 "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

We are to grow up in order to bring His word of life, that we have received to others.

Receiving His Word

Psalm 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (see also verses 11, 105).

It is not just hearing the word, but putting it into practice in and through our lives that constitutes really receiving His word. If we are simply hearers not doers, the Bible says we are deceived instead of helped to be more effective.

Jam 1:21-23 NASB Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; (see also verses 23-24).

Ministers of His Word to Others

His word is not just for us to grow, but to be used to further His purposes. When we share the Gospel with others, the Holy Spirit can enable us to bring it into a language and meaning so others can understand. This is the living word that works to change other people's lives.

God's word is expressed in two forms

1. The general word

2 Timothy 2:15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (see also 2 Peter 1:4,19; 1 John 2:14).

This is the Bible as a whole. It is like water that we read and meditate on that continually cleanses us like water (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:25). It is the general word which trains us to think and speak like the God (Isaiah 50:4).

The general word of God provides us with the worldview (lense we evaluate and live our life through). It is the context for everything God personally speaks into our lives. The whole of the Bible, verses read and set in their context, gives us the context that we live our lives from. Verses taken out of their context can lead to error. Truth is set in the context they were written in. An example is that the NT letters were written to Christians living in a local church context. We must read them from that context. They were not just words to me, but to us. An Example is Romans 12. We often read verses 1-2 but don't go on and read the context that these verses were applied in (local church life) 3-13.

2. The specific word

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

This is when God speaks a specific word into our lives by the Spirit that points to a specific thing we are facing or He wants us to know (see Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:8). This is a revealed living word God brings to us. It is a sent word that won't return empty. This is the living word of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to meet the need of a person's life. It is the living word of God which brings revelation and change. It is the living word which will not return to God empty.

Isa 55:10-11 NASB "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

Imparting Faith

Hebrews 4:2 "For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith" (see also 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

When God's word enters and person's life and is mixed with faith it produces results. When we speak His word to others with faith and conviction the Holy Spirit will anoint our words to penetrate people's hearts.

1Th 1:5 NASB for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

God wants us to be sharing the word we have in our hearts (Jeremiah 20:9; 2 Timothy 4:2). We want to speak God's word, not our own. We use the "can't miss" general word of God but also the specific word the Holy Spirit speaks in our hearts for others (2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:5). This means we must continually walk close to the Lord so as to hear His words (1 Corinthians 2:13). This is our call to bring His word to a needy world.

Phi 2:14-16 NASB Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Importance of Boldness/Confidence

We must remember that boldness is essential. We are not called to sneak the word, but to speak the world. Boldness is essential. We are to pray for it because boldness makes an impact.

Eph 6:19 NASB and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

Act 4:13 NASB Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Act 4:29-30 NASB "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

15. Demonstrating and Declaring

1Th 1:5 NASB for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. Philippians 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life.

*Philippians 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life. Phil 2:14-15 Message "Go our into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. **Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night***

Jesus came to the earth in what is called the 'Incarnation.' People not only heard His words but observed His life. Both brought the testimony of God and impacted people's lives. He both demonstrated and declared God's word.

Joh 1:14 NASB And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1Jo 1:1-3 NASB What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life-- 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The Gospel isn't just words but is also observable in the lives of people who receive it. It is a lifestyle.

- Prayer is not an activity; it is a way of life (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Witness is not an activity; it is a way of life (1 Thessalonians 1:5)
- Church is not an activity; it is a way of life (Acts 2:46-47)

When our lives and words match, the power of the Gospel is effectively displayed and declared for people to receive.

The Word Become Flesh

Jesus is the image of God (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3), but we would never have known what God was like unless He became flesh - a human being we could see, hear and touch (John 1:14). God's goal is

that His Word become flesh in and through us too. This means His Word is translated into the reality of our lives, our words, and our actions. This is the way He will show His glory to the world.

2Co 3:3 NASB being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

We are to be a Living Witness

Act 1:8 NASB but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (see also Luke 21:12-13).

We don't convert anyone, we are simply witnesses. Just like in a court of law in which witnesses are called, we testify what we have seen and heard. We give first hand experience of what or who we are testifying about.

Being an eye-witness involves three things:

1. Seeing (1 John 1:3; 2:8)
2. Speaking (Acts 4:20; 2 Corinthians 4:13)
3. Living (Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 2:12; 2 Peter 1:3)

The early disciples were eye-witnesses of Jesus (1 John 1:2), and so are we. The same Spirit that anointed Jesus anoints us. (Acts 5:32; 1 John 5:6-11). These three elements of our witness are to be seen in the lives of His people.

Rev 12:11 NASB "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

Living His Pattern of Life

Phi 3:17 NASB Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

We are not to be conformed to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:2), but the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Jesus Himself is the model of this new life (John 13:15; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Phi 4:9 NASB The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:1; Ephesians 5:8-10).

If we are living God's pattern in our everyday life we become something positive that impacts others around us.

Isa 32:2 NASB Each will be like a refuge from the wind And a shelter from the storm, Like streams of water in a dry country, Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.((see also 35:5-8).

People who live outside of Christ live in dry desert places (Psalm 63:1). If we will live God's life, as we drink from Jesus, His river will flow towards others.

Joh 7:37-38 NASB Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink (Gk keep coming and keep drinking). 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (Psalm 107:35-36; Psalm 84:6; Isaiah 41:18-20).

Emitting the Fragrance of Christ

2Co 2:15-16 NASB For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; 16 to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

As we live filled with His presence our lives give off an odor. Those smelling it will smell two different things.

The Aroma of Life to Life

16...to the other an aroma from life to life.

The Old Testament talks about sacrifices which were a pleasing aroma to God (Numbers 28:2,6). When we offer our lives as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:2), our lives become a pleasing aroma to God and to others.

The Aroma from Death to Death

16 to the one an aroma from death to death

For some it is a displeasing smell. The Bible talks about "the offense of the cross" (Galatians 5:11). This will often attract a sharp reaction from unbelievers (2 Timothy 3:12-13; John 15:18-19; 1 John 3:13).

As we walk with the Lord, the Holy Spirit works to conform us to the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; Titus 2:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). Jesus was the Gospel become flesh. We are to be demonstrate and declare the Gospel. As we do we will make impact. For some and pleasant impact, but for others and unpleasant one. It is good to remember that not everyone will agree with us, or like us, but they should have to deal with us.

1Jo 2:6 NASB the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Our Greatest Apologetic is to be our Authenticity

The importance of an authentic lifestyle that lives what is proclaimed is essential for the witness of the Gospel. By the same token, people who speak things that they don't live as a lifestyle can be one of the biggest deterrents to people receiving the Gospel. People will be more impacted by an authentic lifestyle that backs up the words we speak. People can easily spot a phony.

16. Salt and Light, a City set on a Hill

Mat 5:13-16 MKJV You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is no longer good for anything, but to be thrown out and to be trodden underfoot by men.

(14) You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden... (16) Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

God's calling on His people is to be both salt and light, a city set on a hill.

The idea of salt speaks of our contact, interaction, and influence on this world. In that day and age, salt was a means of preserving and influencing things like meat to help retard it's spoiling. Obviously this was before refrigerators. Meat left by itself would deteriorate and become rotten. Salt had a way of preserving it and slowing down the deterioration process. Some of the things salt does:

- Salt adds flavor (Job 6:6)
- Salt preserves (Mark 9:50)
- Salt creates thirst (Colossians 4:6)

The idea of light as a city set on a hill, speaks of distinctiveness and God's culture. In that day and age cities were places of distinct culture and life. Cities had their own governments, customs, currency, and sometimes their own language. They were distinct places of culture. They were often built on high areas and surrounded by city walls. This was for their protection from enemies because they could be more easily defended from high ground. They were also elevated so they could be seen from long distances so travelers could more easily find them. They often could be seen for miles around. The life we live as the city of God (the church) should serve as a demonstration and example (light) of the life of God among His people.

How we live in the world is very important to the Lord (Colossians 1:10). We can be both salt and light because we are in the world but not of it.

We are in the world

John 17:15 "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (see also verse 11).

We are to be in the world but not of it. We are not called to physically separate ourselves from the people of the world (1 Corinthians 5:9-10) but to be separate in heart and mind (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). It is only when we have a clear sense of identity apart from the system of this world that our presence can truly be felt *in* the world (Philippians 3:17-20).

John 17:18 "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (see also 1 John 4:17; 1 Peter 2:11-12).

We are not of the world

John 17:16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it".

Jesus Himself confessed that He was not of this world (John 18:36) and we are encouraged to make exactly the same confession (read 1 Timothy 6:12-14; John 17:14).

Galatians 6:14 "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" (see 2 Peter 1:4; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16; Romans 12:2).

Problems in our calling as salt and light, a city set on a hill

Salt without light and city. I have seen Christians go out and individually and try to fit in (rub their salt) on the world without walking in a lifestyle of light connected to the city of God (being connected to a community/city of people who will encourage, and reinforce the ways of God that help them stay on track). They often end up like Lot's family, captivated in a foreign culture without enough salt left in them to influence anything. They individually try to save the world and end up losing their own souls.

Light without salt. I have also seen the other extreme where Christians try to create a perfect culture together and end up cloistered away in a monastic type community far removed from the people Jesus wants them to influence. Without a healthy perspective that salt, rubbing shoulders with lost humanity, the city of God can take on aspects of a "religious sub culture" that projects additional things besides the light of God that hinder people from being impacted by Him

Recognizing the World's system

In order to live in the world, we must recognize the world's system for what it is - under the control of Satan (1 John 5:19; Galatians 3:22). Satan is called "the prince of this world" (John 14:30; Matthew 4:8-9; Ephesians 2:1-3) and Jesus came to destroy His tyranny over people's lives (1 John 3:8). He did this once and for all at the Cross (Colossians 2:15), but each person personally needs to experience the victory of the Cross. Satan, however, seeks to entrench his control over people through:

- Fear (Romans 8:15; Hebrews 2:14-15)
- Injustice (Isaiah 10:1-2; Amos 5:12-15)
- Poverty (Luke 4:18; Psalm 140:12)
- Love of money (1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5; Ecclesiastes 5:10)
- Demonic torment (Matthew 8:16; 10:1,8)
- Sickness (Luke 13:11-13,16; Acts 10:38)
- Death (2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:9,14; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26;55-56).

God has declared war against Satan's rule of this world (John 12:31) and we are called to play a part in this war (Romans 16:20; Acts 26:18). We must always remember that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Exercising Kindness, Justice, and Righteousness

Jeremiah 9:24 "...but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord" (see also 22:15-16; Isaiah 59:1-17; 61:8; Zechariah 7:9-12).

God is a God of justice (Isaiah 61:8 His rule always is just). He hates the injustice He sees in the world (Psalm 94:1-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24). But the answer is not man's sense of justice, but God's justice through Christ.

Matthew 12:18-19 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory" (see also Isaiah 11:2-4; Luke 11:42; John 9:39).

True justice can only be found under the Lordship of Christ. But if we belong to Christ, then Christ's priority of justice will be expressed through our lives (doing what is right, good, and fair according to God's justice).

Isaiah 58:6-7 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (read also verse 8).

The Weapons of Our Warfare

2 Corinthians 10:3-4"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."

The Weapons of the World

Ephesians 6:12"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."

The world uses many different weapons to fight injustice such as benevolence, politics and economics. Christians can move in these arenas but our first primary arena to fight is in the realm of the Spirit. Our spiritual weapons are important for us to put to use. This is because we are not fighting people but spiritual powers. These powers were bound at the Cross. We are now called to plunder their goods.

Matthew 12:29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

The Weapons of Righteousness

2 Corinthians 6:4,6"Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance...and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left."

The weapons we have been given are the weapons of the Gospel. It is the Gospel which is the power of God (Romans 1:16). Through prayer, moving in the power of God, and the witness of our lives, we administer the Gospel in the world around us. Through the Gospel, we can now participate in the justice of God and become "instruments of righteousness" in the hands of the Lord (Romans 6:13). As the salt of the earth and the light of the world, we play an active role - not just in introducing people to eternal life but also to abundant life Jn 10:10!

Ephesians 5:15-16"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

17. Enforcing Christ's Victory on Earth

Eph 6:12 NASB For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

1Co 15:57 NASB but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus came into the world to destroy the work's of the Devil *1Jo 3:8...The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*

The Demonic Realm: Satan is called "the prince of this world" (John 14:30; 16:11), "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and "the enemy" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan rules through a network of demon spirits called "principalities and powers." God has now called us to be actively involved in the battle with, and enforcing Christ's victory over the devil as His Kingdom expands in the earth through His church. Matthew 16:18 "...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

The Victory of Christ through His Death and Resurrection

Col 2:13-15 NASB When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Before we join with Jesus in the battle over people's lives, we must understand what He has already accomplished. If we do not first have a revelation of the finished work of the Christ, we will end up struggling to do things from a foundation of what has already been accomplished in Him. Spiritual warfare is not trying to complete the work of Christ. Spiritual warfare is enforcing a victory He already won. We are not fighting for victory; we are fighting from victory.

Just before Jesus went to the Cross, He made this declaration: *John 12:31"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out".*

Christ's death and resurrection was God's answer to breaking Satan's power. When Jesus died, God counted His death as the death of the whole of mankind (2 Corinthians.5:14). The basis of our victory over Satan is the Cross of Christ and His resurrection! Ever since Adam, the "old self" - everything in us that stood opposed to God (Colossians.1:21-22; Ephesians 4:17-19; Romans. 1:18-32) - has given Satan the right to rule on two levels:

- **Over the individual** (Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 John 3:8)
- **Over the community** (1 John 5:19; note Luke 4:5-6)

At the Cross and through the Resurrection, God dealt decisively with Satan's claim for rulership on both these levels. Not only did my old self die with Christ on the Cross (Romans.6:6; Galatians.2:20).

The whole world - the corporate "body of sin" - was also crucified in Christ. *Galatians 6:14* "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."

We are now raised with Him to walk in newness of life, His resurrection life. *Rom 6:4 NASB* *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

We are not so much trying to break the power of principalities over cities, because that power has already been broken at the Cross and through the resurrection. As God's people move forward the "gates of hell" will give way Mt 16:18. Like Jesus said the "strong man" has been bound and we are now plundering his goods (Matthew 12:29).

We are now called to enforce the victory already won on the Cross and through the Resurrection. God's people enforce/expand the victory through a variety of ways:

- Prayer (Ephesians 6:12-18; 1 Timothy 2:1-2)
- Preaching of the Gospel (Acts 26:18)
- Good works (Mr 5:16, Eph 2:10)
- Displaying God's power over the enemy (Luke 10:19; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Our Position in Christ

Eph 1:17-21...18 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

The Bible declares that Christ is now seated in a position "far above" principalities and powers. Not only that, we have also been seated with Christ in the same position (Ephesians 2:6). It is from this position that the church wages warfare against the power of the enemy that holds people's lives in bondage. As we move forward as the church Christ victory is enforced and His glory spreads.

Eph 1:22-23 NASB *And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (MSG 23... The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.)*

Tearing Down Fortresses/Strongholds

2Co 10:4-5 NASB *for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,*

The enemy seeks to resist the advancement of God's Kingdom through His Church. One tactic is the establishment of fortresses/strongholds. These are lies that are erected in people's minds that oppose the

knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). If you believe lies you empower them to control. Every idea is opposed to God and the Gospel can become fortresses/strongholds, such as dead religion, self-centeredness, and various philosophies.

One of the main areas of fortresses/strongholds is relational lies and speculations.

The context of the passage in Corinthians are relational lies and speculations designed to separate God's people. Various people had come into the church at Corinth and introduced ideas about Paul and his motives that worked to separate that church from him.

As the church is lead by the Spirit in the advancement of the Kingdom, the Bible tells us that God "will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans.16:20), but the previous verse says, "I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil." We do not need to discover every secret of Satan's kingdom in order to tear down spiritual strongholds (Revelation.2:24). Our focus isn't on the enemy but is to be fixed on the Lord to be effective (Hebrews.12:2).

Binding and Loosing

Mat 16:19 NASB "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Much speculation and confusion exist in the area of binding and loosing. Bind means to restrict, and loose means to set free. In Greek grammar the construction of binding and loosing in Matthew 16:19 are perfect passive participles. It means what is bound or loosed on earth must have already been in a state of what has been bound and loosed in heaven. The directives flow from God's throne to us, not the other way around. We enforce God's will "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

The Amplified Bible translates this fact.

Matthew 16:19 (AMP) 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth [a]must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth [b]must be what is already loosed in heaven.

When Jesus returns, the structure of Satan's kingdom will be totally dismantled (Isaiah.24:21-22; Revelation.20:2-3). Until then, God's purpose is that "now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 3:10). In your community, God plans to "crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20).

Psalm 149:6,8-9 "May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands...to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord."

18. Moving in God's Supernatural Power

Paul prayed an important prayer over the local church in Thessalonica which expresses an important part of local churches fulfilling God's calling.

*2Th 1:11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy (make you fit) of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness **and the work of faith with power,***

We must realize that moving in "works of faith with power" is an important part of every local church's calling. This was, and continues to be, an important part of Jesus' calling

Acts 10:37-38 "You know...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."

The Bible is a miraculous book filled with miraculous events. We cannot separate moving in preaching and good works from miraculous power. Jesus Himself said we would do similar works after He left, "even greater things."

John 14:12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (see also Acts 5:15-16; 19:11-12).

In the book of Acts Jesus continuing ministry through the church is full of God's works of power (read Acts 2:42-43; 4:30; 6:8; 8:6; 14:3). Some mistakenly think these things stopped after the Bible was written. The Bible, and history reveal the contrary. Jesus promised that miraculous signs would accompany those who move with Him in the earth.

Mark 16:15-17 "[Jesus] said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation...And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.'"

The Gospel Presented with Power

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." (read also verses 1-3; 1:17).

1 Corinthians 4:20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power .

The church is not only to be full of good works but also works of power. The Gospel is the power of God (Romans.1:16) - not only to save a person from the future consequences of the Fall (eternal judgment) but also to reverse the immediate effects of the Fall (sin, sickness, disability and death). Jesus appeared, and continues to work to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8..The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

We serve a supernatural God who has given us supernatural power, and a supernatural gospel. Missions contain **good works** but also **works of power**. **We need both**. It is both feeding the hungry, serving practical needs, bringing justice and relief to suffering, but it is also healing the sick, casting out devils, and seeing God's supernatural works of faith with power.

There are 22 supernatural encounters recorded in the Book of Acts and 21 of them took place outside of religious buildings. We need the supernatural to be effective as we are on God's mission.

The Purpose of Miracles

The operation of God's supernatural power isn't for the entertainment and interest of the saints but for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately in many "Spirit filled" churches miracles are more about catching the saint's interest. This is why so much "show" and "drama" occur in these types of meetings.

Miracles point to the Lord

Miracles are signs. A sign on the road is just a pointer. It tells us which direction to look. In the same way, signs and wonders must point to the Lord and to the Gospel. We must never accept a miracle simply because it is a miracle. Even Satan can perform counterfeit miracles to lead people away from Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing."

Miracles are not an end in themselves

*Mark 7:35-37 "At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. **Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone.** (see also Luke 8:56).*

Jesus often told the people not to tell anyone about the miracle they received. This can sound strange to us. Miracles are not to be the focus of our lives. We should not broadcast the news of miracles in order to get more people to come to our church or to make a big name for ourselves. The news will spread by itself. The focus should always remain on Jesus and the Gospel.

1 Corinthians. 1:22-24 "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Miracles are not the whole work of God

James 1:2-3 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance."

In some "positive" or "word of faith" environments God's power and miracles are guarantees that we will never suffer and things circumstantially will always get better. There may be times we are believing for a miracle and we don't see it right away. This may not be a lack of faith but a trial/testing of faith (read 1 Peter 1:6-7).

Even Abraham waited 25 years before receiving the promised son. We need to understand that the work of God is much higher than just the miracle we are believing for. Faith itself produces a work in our lives that lasts for eternity.

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

Miracles are no guarantee people will believe in Jesus

John 12:37"Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him."

Miracles only point to the Lord, so that a person may respond in faith to the message of the Gospel. Some may have a harness that refuses to believe.

God's Power Has A Confirming Effect

*Hebrews 2:3-4"...This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. **God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit** distributed according to his will."*

Miracles are the supporting testimony of Jesus and the Gospel being true. They are the seal of God's accreditation on the ministry of His Church.

*Act 2:22 NASB "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, **a man attested (to bring out. show forth, declare)** to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--*

We need to have an expectancy of faith as we are working with God on mission in the earth. We need to believe that God will confirm His word with power.

Mark 16:20"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."

Expect and Pray for God to Open our Eyes to His Supernatural Power

*Eph 1:16-20 making mention of you in my prayers;...(18) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know...(19) and **what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.** These are in accordance with the working of the **strength of His might** (20) which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

19. Church That is a Daily Way of Life

Mat 16:18-21...upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

*Eph 1:22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the **church**, (23) **which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**(MSG)...At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. (23) The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.*

Eph 3:8-21...to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery...10) so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church (MSG Through Christians like yourselves built into churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known) (11) This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,...(20) Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, (21) to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever

As we consider the idea of working together with God we must capture God's design for the church. The church was not an afterthought in the purposes of God. God has always designed to demonstrate Himself (His fullness) "through the church." The church is designed by God to be the primary vehicle through which He reveals His Kingdom in the earth.

Demonstrate and Declare the Gospel

The church exist as Christ Body, to reveal His glory in the earth (Demonstrate and Declare His life and message)

*Phi 2:12-15 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure....15 MSG Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. **Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night***

Church that is a daily way of life

To effectively demonstrate and declare it takes a church that lives a way of life, not just one who conducts meetings. Many wrong concepts of the church exist that hinders God's design for her (church is a meeting, building, or organization that meets at certain times) and limits her effectiveness. This does not mean that we fill up the week with meetings every day. It means Christians living out their relationships in Christ on a daily basis and as we do we daily influence the world. This was the expression of the early church in the book of Acts.

Acts 2:46-47 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 16:5"So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Arenas of Daily Life

Acts 5:42 "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

In order to be a church that is a way of life, not just a meeting, church life must take place in the arenas of daily life. Where does daily life take place?

In the home

1 Corinthians 16:19 "...Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house" (see also *Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2*).

The home is the first foundational arena of people's lives. The quality of church life in general will only be as high as the experience of Christian life in the home.

Acts 20:20 "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house" (see also *12:12*).

In the workplace

Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

Every Christian is full-time in the ministry, wherever he is. In the workplace, believers make daily contact with unbelievers. The workplace is where Christians spend a majority of their waking hours.

2Co 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... (see also *2 Corinthians 5:20*).

On the streets

Luke 14:21...Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

Wherever people can be found, that is where the Church is called to have an impact. When church life overflows onto the streets, our communities will see the Church in action.

Acts 5:15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

In community gathering places

Acts 16:13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

Joh 4:6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

Many communities have special gathering places. It can be retail stores, coffee shops, or local recreational centers. They are where community issues are discussed and community life is gossiped about. These are places where the Gospel can be demonstrated and declared. Like the story of the woman

and the well in John 4, we need to determine our community wells and frequent them looking to make impact.

"Acts 17:17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

A church that is a way of life is not limited by the four walls of a church building. Church is not to be on the outside of daily life but right in the middle of it.

Arenas of Church Life

The Greek word for Church means "those called out" or "the gathering of called out ones." Notice that the definition of the Church is based on God's call, not man's organization. There are three manifestations or arenas of church life that all Christians are to participate in

- The family (Acts 16:31-34; 1 Tim. 3:5) - daily
- The small group (Matthew 18:20, 1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 10:25) - daily/weekly
- The large group (Psalm 68:26) – weekly or whenever called

Church life needs all these levels to function properly. The family is where church life is designed to be experienced on a truly daily basis. The small group is the place where personal sharing and close fellowship can exist. The large assembly is where the greater Body ministry can take place (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) and is the place where the prophetic voice and the five-fold ministry can be heard (Ephesians 4:11-13).

A Temple of the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 2:21-22. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The temple of God is no longer physical buildings (Acts 7:48-50) but is a spiritual construction of human lives (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16). The Spirit now dwells among God's joined together people. God works in the hearts of His people. Our primary focus we must not concentrate on outward, physical structures but on the hearts and lives of the believers. Holy Spirit works in and among His people as we build along the lines of a daily Spiritual Temple.

1 Peter 2:5...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"

Church life is meant to be a daily way of life. But a church will only become a way of life when the members of the church walk with the Lord and each other daily. Each member contributes their part.(1 Corinthians 12:18-20; Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19). The Church is an organism, not an organization. Each church becomes an organism made up of people living their lives in Christ with one another on a daily basis.

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Heb 10:24-25 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 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.

20. Walking with God's Leaders

In order to work together with God as we live under His rule/Kingdom we always will come face to face with His design for leadership. There is always a component of leadership as God expresses His rule in, and through, the church. Every believer must face their relationship with God's appointed leaders.

Hebrews 13:7-24 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith... (17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you...(18) Pray for us (leaders)... (22) But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation (from a leader), for I have written to you briefly. (23) Take notice that our brother Timothy (a leader) has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. (24) Greet all of your leaders and all the saints.

Act 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

When the Lord Jesus established His Church, He introduced a whole new kind of leadership. Instead of the world's model in which leaders tend to "lord it over" those under them, Jesus model of leadership is based on servanthood.

Luke 22:25-26"Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.'"

Before Paul referred to his ministry as an apostle, he called himself a servant (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 3:7). It is this servant attitude which underlies all ministry. Jesus Himself gives us this example. Though Lord of all, he became the servant of all (Mark 10:45). He set for us the example of the kind of leadership He requires of His Church (read John 13:3-17).

1 Corinthians 4:1,5 "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God...For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

Philippians 2:5-7"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant..."

Eldership

The pattern of local church leadership seen in the New Testament is that churches are lead by Elders/Bishops with the function of Deacon closely connected with it.

*Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (elders/bishops) and deacons:
Acts 14:23; 20:28; 15:22-23; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-2; 1Thessalonians 5:12*

Biblically (OT and NT), 'elders' were:

- Family men! Heads of families and tribes, e.g. Exodus 3.16, 24.1, 1 Kings 8.1
- Governmental men! Rulers and judges, e.g. Joshua 20.1-4 **Dt 19:12, Prov 31:23**
- Men who fight! Leading God's people out into battle, e.g. Joshua 8.10\ Men who seek God! Joshua 7.2-7, Acts 13.1-3
- Men who bring counsel and wisdom! e.g. 1 Kings 12.1-8
- Older men who have wisdom 1 Timothy 5:1
- Designated leaders of local churches Acts 14:23, Acts 15:2,4, 6, 22-23, Acts 20:17-18, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14

Scriptures indicate a plurality of Eldership that work as a family/team

The Godhead lives and works as a family/team and the expression of God's leadership on the earth should bear that same image. It is diversity living in complete unity. Jesus prayed that His church would have the same type of leadership.

Joh 17:21-23 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

1. Acts 14:23 "Elders in every city"
2. Acts 15:4-23 "Elders in Jerusalem"
3. Acts 16:4 "Elders in Jerusalem"
4. Acts 20:17 "Elders of Ephesus"
5. 1 Timothy 5:1, 17-21 "Let the Elders rule"
6. James 5:14 "Call for the Elders of the Church"
7. 1 Peter 5:1 "The Elders which are among you"
8. Titus 1:5-11 "Ordain Elders in every city"
9. Hebrews 13:17 "Obey them that rule"

Shepherding is the main context of local church leadership

The main New Testament metaphor for Eldership is Shepherds who are assigned to oversee God's flock

Acts 20:17-21 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church... 28-31 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (29) "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (30) and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. (31) "Therefore be on the alert.

*1Peter 5:1-8 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, (2) **shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your*

charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The Lord Jesus is called the "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews.13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; Revelation 7:17) and He sets the example of a "good shepherd" - one who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11-15). He is the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4) and every leader who shepherds His flock is responsible to Him. Shepherds, like natural shepherds, have a main responsibility to watch over and tend the flock given to their charge. *Acts 20:28 "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.*

Serving as overseers

An overseer is someone who has the responsibility of guiding and leading a church (Titus 1:6-9; Philippians 1:1). With that responsibility comes the authority from Christ to govern a church (Romans. 12:8; Hebrews. 13:17). Jesus is called the "Overseer of our souls" (1 Peter 2:25) and the model for how an overseer should lead.

1 Timothy 3:1 "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task" (read verses 2-7).

Acts 20:28. "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

Qualifications and examples of Elders

1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and Acts 6 show the moral, domestic, and spiritual qualifications of those who are elders and deacons in the church. One of the major qualifications has to do with the way they rule in their home. Paul said if they didn't know how to manage their own home well that they wouldn't be able to manage God's home, the church. You might say it like this, "***The way they treat their bride is how they will treat His bride, and how they run their home is how they will run His home.***"

Not greedy

1 Timothy 6:10-11 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (see verses 5-9; Luke 12:15; 1 Thessalonians. 2:4-5).

The motive of Christ-like leadership is not self-gain but self-giving. A leader can receive financial support from a church (1 Corinthians. 9:7-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). It is not money that is the problem. It is the love of money (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 6:24).

Eager to serve

A leader is not just to serve, but to be *eager* to serve (1 Peter 5:2; Romans. 12:11). If we do anything out of obligation, this is not pleasing to God. Rather, everything we do in the Christian life is a response to God's grace (1 John 4:19). We give our lives in ministry *because* of God's goodness to us (Romans 12:1).

1Pe 4:10 NASB As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (see also 1 Corinthians 3:5; 4:1).

Not lording it over

Matthew 20:25-26 "...You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their *high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant*" (see also 2 Timothy 2:23-26).

To "lord it over" means to take the place of the Lord in people's lives. Only Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Corinthians. 8:9). A leader's desire should not be to build a big ministry for himself or to lord it over other churches (2 Corinthians. 1:24), but to work with other ministries to help the Body grow (Ephesians. 4:16), as fathers and mothers in the Lord (1 Thessalonians.2:6-7,11-12; 1 Corinthians. 4:15-16).

Being an example

Hebrews 13:7 "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (see also Titus 2:7-8; 1 Thessalonians. 1:5-6; 1 Timothy 4:12).

True leadership is by example (2 Thessalonians. 3:7-9) This is the way that Christ leads (John 13:15; Ephesians. 5:1-2; 1 Peter 2:21). *1 Corinthians.11:1"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."*

How the church responds to it's leadership

1. Submitting to the leadership of the elders Hebrews 13:17.
2. Following their example Hebrews 13:17.
3. Expressing love and appreciation, praying for them, and helping them 1 Thessalonians 5:12 13.
4. Being generous towards them, so that they don't have to live under unnecessary financial pressure Galatians 6:6, 1 Corinthians 9:9, 1 Timothy 5:17-18.

The purpose of leadership is to lead. Leading means having a vision and a goal. That vision must be an expression of the vision of the Lord Jesus Himself (read Ephesians. 1:9-10). In order for His vision to be fulfilled, Jesus prayed that "all of them may be one." God's plan is bring the leaders of the Church - the "elders" together in prayer and unity. This is the foundation upon which He will pour out His Spirit.

21. The Commission to Make Disciples

When people think of the "Great Commission" or the post resurrection commission of Jesus they think in terms of preaching and baptizing. It is important to note that each Gospel account contained an aspect of Jesus Commission. The church usually focuses on only two of the four.

Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. (16) "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Focusing on these two commissions have historically brought expressions of accomplishment through meetings, crusades, and rallies that include preaching the gospel, baptizing, proclaiming forgiveness of sins and repentance.

The two often forgotten

Matthew 28:18-20 "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...

*John 21:15-17 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs." (16) ...He *said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." (17)...." Jesus *said to him, "Tend My sheep.*

Making disciples, teaching them to obey all Jesus commanded, as well as taking care of younger and older sheep are impossible to accomplish at events, crusades, and rallies.

For both the Matthew 28 and John 21 commissions to occur it necessitates the establishment of local churches (local flocks of sheep) and the continued building of local churches where the continuing process of discipleship and tending the flock can occur.

The Matthew 28 commission Jesus gave to His church to "make disciples of all nations" is the mission statement which underlies all ministry. It defines the purpose of God expressed through the Church (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Making Disciples works to Multiply and Fill

God created within every living creature the ability to reproduce "each according to its kind" (Genesis 1:11,24). When we make disciples, we are reproducing after our own kind.

Mark 4:8 "Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."

The mandate at creation was to "be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). God told Noah and his sons the same thing after the Flood, "be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it" (Genesis 9:7). This is part of the same call upon His church to fill the earth.

Eph 1:22-23 NASB And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (MSG Christ body...through which He speaks and acts and fills everything with His presence).

But when Jesus told us to "go and make disciples of all nations," He was telling us to do the same thing: multiply!

2 Timothy 2:2 "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

God wants to multiply the Gospel through our lives. What we have, we can pass on to others (Matthew 10:8; Colossians 3:16). We can only do this by coming alongside other people's lives, just as Jesus came alongside us (John 1:14). Discipleship is through person-to-person contact - not just hearing about the life of Christ, but seeing it in operation (1 John 1:1-3).

Obeying Jesus' Commands - Apostles Doctrine

The early church was privileged to hear the Apostles teaching Jesus commands. This was part of fulfilling the Matthew 28 commission. They did so "from house to house" and "in the Temple."

Acts 2:41-42 "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (see also 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2 John 9-11).

The teaching of the apostles was written down in the New Testament. It includes a number of unchanging themes:

The person of Jesus

Acts 5:42 "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (see also 28:31).

All the purposes of God have been focused in the person of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:11). He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) and the focus of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

The finished work of the Christ death, burial, and resurrection

1 Corinthians 1:18 "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" (see also verses 23-24; 15:3-4; Galatians 3:1).

The pattern of godly living

Romans 6:17-18 "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (see also Ephesians 4:21-24; Titus 2:1-15).

The making of disciples involves "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19). Everywhere Paul went, he spent time teaching the disciples how to live a godly life (Acts 18:11).

John 8:31-32 "...Jesus said, 'If you continue in My word, then you are disciples of Mine, and you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.'" (see also 14:23-24; 15:20).

The Way of the Gospel

The Gospel is about entry into a whole new pattern of life - "a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20), also called "the new way of the Spirit" (Romans 7:6).

1 Thessalonians 1:5 "...because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake." (see also 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 3:10-11; Hebrews 13:7).

There are two patterns a Christian can live by:

This world

Romans 12:2 "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..." (see 1 Peter 1:14).

We are called to live in the world, but not of it (John 17:14-16). The discipleship process begins with a repentance from regarding the world as a pattern for living. This is part of the "many other words" Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost and thereafter.

Acts 2:40 "With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'" (see also James 4:4; 1 Peter 1:18-19)

God's Son

Romans 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). He is the starting point and the ending point of discipleship. But this is not just an individual experience. We learn to follow Jesus as we join with other Christians who are also committed to follow Jesus. It is a learning experience together in the context of the local church.

Discipling is not Rocket Science

The process of discipleship isn't overly complicated and only a few specially gifted people can do it. It is for everyone. It is primarily through one-on-one contact - discipling the individual (Colossians 1:25-29). But the end-goal of discipleship embraces the nations of the world - the discipling of all peoples. It is simply walking with, caring for, and instructing people to see and obey Jesus.

Romans 16:25 "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ...so that all nations might **believe** and **obey Him** - to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

22. Family on Mission - Walking in Authenticity

When we consider working together with God we must understand the theme of God's purpose that runs through the Bible, It is like a cord that ties it together. The theme can be summed up as God creating and joining His family together and sending them on His mission together. We see it outworked throughout the Bible and at key junctures.

The Beginning *Gen 1:26-28 NASB* Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over...28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

The Us, and Our image and likeness, is the family of the Godhead. He creates His people in that image and sends them on His mission, "be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth...subdue it....rule over

End of Old Testament *Mal 4:5-6 NASB* "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

The prophecy is about restoring the sense of family among God's people. Commentator Matthew Henry comments on this passage, *That thus he shall be an instrument to revive and confirm love and unity among relations, and shall bring them closer and bind them faster to each other, by bringing and binding them all to their God. He shall prepare the way for that kingdom of heaven which will make all its faithful subjects of one heart and one soul (Act_4:32).*

Beginning of New Testament *Mat 11:14 NASB* "And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He also spoke about family being established among God's people. Jesus referred to John as Elijah

Family among the church. *Mar 3:31-35 NASB* Then His mother and His brothers *arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. 32 A crowd was sitting around Him, and they *said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." 33 Answering them, He *said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" 34 Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He *said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 35 "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." **MK 10:29-35**

End of the Bible The summation of the mission by God's family, the church, celebrated at the great family event, "The marriage supper of the Lamb." *Rev 19:6-7* I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. 7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready."** Eph 5

Jesus sends His family, the church, on mission in the earth.

John 17:18-19 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Joh 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

You can sum up the them of the Bible and the pattern seen with Jesus and His church as “God’s Spirit filled family of disciples working together on His mission to the earth.”

New Wine and Wineskins

Mar 2:22 NASB "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

Jesus referred to the Spirit-filled Christian life as "new wine." He was also talking about the nature of the Christian life, which involves daily change. Just as new wine is undergoing a fermenting process which pushes out against the wineskin (Job 32:19), so the Christian is undergoing a transformation process - a conforming to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29; 12:2).

The Holy Spirit is God's agent of change in the Christian life *2Co 3:18 NASB But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

The world is needing, and waiting for that process to show forth through His people.

Rom 8:18-21 CEV.... 19 In fact, all creation is eagerly waiting for God to show who his children are. 20 Meanwhile, creation is confused, but not because it wants to be confused. God made it this way in the hope 21 that creation would be set free from decay and would share in the glorious freedom of his children. 22 We know that all creation is still groaning and is in pain, like a woman about to give birth.

The Vineyard

God often likens His people to a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Luke 20:9-16,19). We are designed by God to bear good fruit - grapes that can be made into new wine.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (read also verses 4,8). Luke 6:43-44 "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. (see also Matthew 12:33).

The Wine

Amos 9:13 "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills'" (see also Joel 3:18).

Wine is made out of crushed grapes. In the same way, it is only as Christians are "crushed" together in the winepress of true fellowship, the church, that the new wine is poured out. This new wine is made out of the fruit of God's Spirit displayed in each believer's life as they walk with the Spirit and each other.

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." (see also Ephesians 5:8-10; Philippians 1:11; Colossians 1:10).

Many people don't like the process of fermentation. They don't like the process of being crushed together. They don't like the change. They prefer the old wine - religion that makes no demand of change on their lives (Luke 5:39). God wants to bring forth His new wine through His people, empowered by the Spirit, and formed together in authentic relationships.

The Need for a New Wineskin

In Bible times, people used wineskins to hold wine. The wineskin was a container, so that wine could be poured out. In the same way, God has created our lives, the church, to be a container of His presence. The Holy Spirit is poured into our lives, and then from our lives into the world.

Acts 2:17-18 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

There are, however, two wineskins that can be used to try to hold this new wine:

The Old Wineskin

When Jesus talked about the "old wineskin," He was referring to the hypocritical lifestyle of the Pharisees, observing the law of Moses - but only on the outside. They had ordered their life with human traditions and control that had the outward appearance of holiness (Mark 7:9). Even in the Church, it is easy to fall into the trap of outward rules (Galatians 3:1-3), or half-hearted, man centered effort. The old wineskin has the outward trappings of nominal Christianity. It can never contain the new wine of God's Spirit.

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

The New Wineskin

1 Samuel 16:7 "...The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (see also Romans 2:27-28)

The new wineskins focus on God working in our heart, by the Spirit, as we walk together with Him and each other, the things that are pleasing to Him. It is about a lifestyle of obedience to Him.

Heb 13:20-21 NASB Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you in every good

thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

In contrast to the old wineskin, which focuses on external things, the new wineskin is all about the internal things of the human heart - our love for God, our daily relationship with Him and His people, hearing His voice, and being led by the Spirit. It is about a lifestyle of obedience to God not human effort.

Psalm 51:6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Containing the Glory

2 Chronicles 2:6 "But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him?..."

No building can ever house the fullness of God's presence (Acts 7:48-50). But God's plan was never for a physical building. From the beginning of time (Ephesians 1:4), He planned for a Body of people that would contain His presence.

Eph 1:22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

*Eph 1:22-23 MSG He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. (23) **The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.***

God's plan is for the Church to be a wineskin that will pour out new wine - the revelation of the presence of His glory - into every corner of the world.

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

People need to experience new wine poured through an **authentic** people who God is at work in and among. Old Wineskin churches that simply go through outward form will never do it.

Authenticity is an Essential Apologetic for the Twenty-first century church

The Apostle John was the last of the twelve, He had a unique vantage point. Out of his observation of some deterioration in Christianity over the course of his life he addresses a falsehood/hypocrisy that had come into the church. It has everything to do with what it means to be an authentic (not hypocritical) child of God. This is the life of the authentic wineskins, that reveal God's glory and pour forth His wine.

*1 John 4:7-20 NLT 1 Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world....7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. **Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ...11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us ... 19 We love each other because he loved us first. 20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can***

*see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? 21 And he has given us this command: **Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.***

23 The Goal: A Glorious church Impacting the Earth

God's goal from the beginning was to impact the earth (fill, subdue, and rule over) with a people who bear His image.

*Gen 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over...and over all the earth...28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and **fill the earth**, and subdue it; and rule over...*

The ultimate expression of this plan is the church, those "in Christ" who have become His body in the earth.

Eph 1:22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (MSG He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. (23) The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.)

The Local Church - Centerpiece of God's Purposes

The Greek word of church (assembly, congregation etc.), is the Greek word *Ekklesia*. It appears 114 times in the New Testament, 96 of which refers to a specific group of people in a geographic area who are joined together in walking out their common life in God.

It is impossible to fulfill exhortations to seek to fulfill God's purposes apart from real, active involvement in a local church. Just like a doctor without patients, a teacher without students, or a parent without children, a church member who isn't rooted in a real local church involvement will not be able to participate in God's purposes in the fullest way He designed.

Eph 3:10-11 MSG 10 Through Christians like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels! 11 All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus.

It Takes a United Effort

Jesus prayed, just before He was crucified (which was part of the "joy set before Him" in enduring the cross Heb 12:3) for His church to express the life of the Godhead in the earth.

Joh 17:11-21...Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are... 18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world....20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their

word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

This is not a sentimental unity but a real relational unity that the Godhead lives in which They are joined, and labor together to accomplish Their will. The church is to have that kind of unity as they are joined in the Godhead and with one another (Jn 17:21). The result is impact "that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Jesus works from His ascended position at the right hand of God to bring this unity and impact about.

Eph 5:25-27... just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

The goal of all ministry

The goal of all ministry is to work with the Holy Spirit to fulfill Jesus' prayer. If this isn't the aim of all gifting and ministry then it will end up simply expressing selfish ambition and self glory. There are five places in the New Testament that mentions gifts and ministry. The context of all of them is the building up of local churches for impacting the earth (1 Corinthians 12, 14, Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:1-16, 1 Peter 4:8-11).

Moving Towards Maturity

Eph 4:13 NASB until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

This verse describes four goals of ministry:

1. Unity in the faith

Because God in His nature is a Divine Community (Father, Son, and Spirit dwelling and moving together in perfect harmony), He designed His people for the same experience. He always moves to join people together in Him and with each other, because that experience expresses what His is like.

Col 2:2-3 NASB that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul's goal was to impart "the word of God in its fullness" (Colossians 1:25). It is not a compromised word that will bring about unity. It is in a full understanding of the Gospel of God's grace that we discover true unity in the faith.

Col 1:6 NASB which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

2. Unity in the knowledge of the Son of God

*Col 2:2-3 NASB that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, **Christ Himself**, (see also 1:27; Ephesians 1:17).*

Everything in the Christian life that is authentic is "in Christ." The word of God is the revelation of Jesus and should lead us to a real relationship with Him. As we fix our eyes on Him and follow Him, He is "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). A desire to know the Lord more deeply should be the core motivation of the Christian life. This was the aim of the Apostle Paul's life, even to the end.

Php 3:7-11...8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him...10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

3. A Mature People

Col 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man mature in Christ. 29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Both individually and corporately, the goal for the Christian life is to be conformed to Christ. This includes his character, purpose, and power. Maturity is growing up in Christ. It is living less for self and more for, and with Jesus

Eph 4:14-15 NASB As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

4. Measure and Stature that Belongs to the Fullness of Christ

Col 2:9-10 NASB For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Jesus perfectly expressed the fullness of God's nature in bodily form. God's plan is that now the church, which is connected to Him, will do the same. It is only as the Body of Christ comes together in unity that the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ" can be manifest to the world. (Eph 1:22-23, 3:16-19).

The Five-Fold Ministry

The two verses before Ephesians 4:13-19 tells us how God will bring this four-fold goal about.

Eph 4:11-13 NASB And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

These five ministry gifts have been given to fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17. They are not titles or positions, but are extensions of the ministry of Christ Himself. When Jesus walked on this earth He was the perfect manifestation of all five, our Apostle (Hebrews 3:1), Prophet (Luke 24:19), Evangelist (Matthew 9:35), Pastor (1 Peter 5:2-4) and Teacher (John 3:2). He distributed these gifts to different people which requires a harnessing together in unity to fulfill His purpose.

These five gifts don't "do" the ministry, they "equip the saints" so they will do the "work of the ministry" as they express the fullness of Christ.

The Hope of Glory

Col 1:27 NASB to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

God's plan can be summed up: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is not just future glory in heaven. It begins with Christ's earthly glory (John 17:22), and now by the power of Holy Spirit, we are being transformed "from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The apostle Paul summed up the heart of God for this when he said: *Gal 4:19 NASB My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you--*

God's desire is for us to grow into the fullness of Christ. Not for personal benefit, but that the world is influenced as we demonstrate and declare the message of Christ.

Rom 16:25-26 NASB Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

Jesus Pattern of Mission with the Disciples (Matthew 9-11 and Luke 9-10)

Jesus commissioned His Disciples to be Laborer's in the Harvest

*Mat 9:35-38 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (36) Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. (37) Then He *said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. (38) "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

Mat 10:1-42 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness....(5) These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; (6) but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.... (11) "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city... (remember that He sent them out two by two)

Luk 9:1-3 And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. (2) And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. (3) And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece.

Luk 10:1-3 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. (2) And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. (3) "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

He commissions and sends His church on Mission into the Harvest

John 17:18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Joh 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The Matthew 9-11 and Luke 9-10 pattern of sending on mission seen in the 12 and the 70

There is a principle seen in the Matthew 9-11 and Luke 9-10 of how Jesus sent the disciples (the 12 and the 70) on mission's trips. He sent people out in pairs and later He and the rest of the group joined them in the work. This has the important connection of mission with the family He joins us to.

They go together as God's family. Sending doesn't end with everybody just scattering out and doing their own thing. There was a sense of being yoked together (Jesus and the twelve) as they continuing to participate in the work. Jesus and the others began to go into these new places of labor.

*Luk 9:6 Departing, **they** began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.*

*Mat 11:1 When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in **their cities** (the cities they had just went to).*

Matthew Henry comments on this passage “**Christ departed, to teach and preach in the cities whither he sent his disciples before him to work miracles** (Mat 10:1-8), and so to raise people's expectations, and to make way for his entertainment”

The Matthew 9 – 11 and Luke 9-10 principle: *As the disciples went forth to labor in the harvest beyond their borders they never lost the reality that they were yoked/joined together in family with Jesus and each other. Even though they were in different places they were working together as part of the same family/team. Later on Jesus and the others (family/yoke fellows) were able to follow them into their labor and they continued to participate together.* This is the essence of being family/yoke fellows. They were joined in family not just in local church but also in extra local work. It is a family joining that transcends geography.

This is a far cry from how the average American Christian lives their life. Typically any movement from one geographic place to another has no sense of extra local yoking or co laboring in it. Usually it works like this, you get a better job offer in another geographic place (or if you are in “full time ministry” you get an offer from a bigger church) and you “feel led” to move so you just go. You just find another church and go on with your new job and new life.

I recently spoke with a church leader who did a similar thing and now things are not working like he had hoped with his new opportunity. When I ask about the connections and help from his previous church and/or fellow laborers he had none. When you leave you leave. It was something he did on his own without a sense of extra local yoking. You can still know the people in the previous place and be “friends” but there is no sense of yoke fellows or co laborers that transcends geography.

When Jesus sent out His disciples there was the expectation that they would continue to work together. He would follow them and they would go with each other to help in the work in new places. Why, they were “yoke fellows” and “fellow laborers.” It wasn't just geographic but relational. Paul was the same way as he left Antioch with Barnabbas. He later took Silas and others with him on his journeys. He worked the same way with those who joined him along the way like Timothy, Titus, and Epaphroditus (who was from Philippi). Neither Paul nor Jesus could have imagined not being able to have their yoke fellows and co laborers be able to participate in what they were doing. Neither could the twelve disciples, or Timothy, or Titus have imagined going into something that Jesus or Paul couldn't come.

Five Steps to the Matthew 9-11 Luke 9-10 pattern

Perhaps the most significant mission field in the world is right under your nose. It is everyday in or normal sphere of life. We must begin mission everyday in your sphere of influence.

Luke 10:1-17 NASB Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself (with the others) was going to come. (2) And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ... (5) "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' (6) "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. (7) "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages... (8) "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; (9) and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ... (16) "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." (17) The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

1. As much as possible go with family. Jesus sent them in pairs. "Two are better than one" Eccl 4:1. When this happens we have a more fuller representation of the love and perspectives of God for people. Peter and John brought the Kingdom power to the man at the temple Acts 3:6.

Luk 10:1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and **sent them in pairs** ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

2. The first order of business is to give a blessing to people

Mat 10:12-13 "As you enter the house, give it your greeting. (13) "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

Luk 10:5-6 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' (6) "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

Giving a blessing has to do with speaking positive words to someone. It can be a compliment or a word of encouragement. It is something that brings life, hope, and lets people know someone (and God) sees, affirms, and appreciates them. The idea of a spoken blessing gives people a sense of hope. It isn't just flattery but has substance to it. In most of our workplaces we understand how negative they can be. A positive blessing will be in stark contrast. For some it will

3. We then enter into receptive places and look for ways to relate, bring healing and deliverance into their lives

Luk 9:4 "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.

Mat 10:7-11 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (8) "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. (9) "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts..."And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

Luk 10:8-9 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; (9) and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Receptive Homes/Man of Peace/Worthy Person

Mat 10:11 "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

Worthy – deserving

Luk 10:5-6 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' (6) "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

Man of Peace principle - People who are receptive, responsive, and relational

The term "man of peace" literally means "a man who is searching for peace." Apparently there was something in a way a person responded to the blessing "Peace to this house" that revealed the level of

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receptivity in that house. I would contend that it is our duty to discover the “Peace to this house” statement for our generation.

Consider a few Scriptural examples of men and women of peace and the profound impact that they had in their sphere of influence:

-Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10 – He was eager to see Jesus and responded to Jesus saying He was coming to his house.

-Lydia Acts 16:13-15 – She listened to Paul’s teaching and God opened her heart

-Andrew – John 1:35-42

-The woman at the well – John 4:1-26; 39-42 – she was open to Jesus, responsive

-Demonic Mark 5:1-20 – He came to Jesus on his own, and later beseeched Him

-Levi - Luke 5:27-32

-Cornelius - Acts 10:1-48 – He was receptive to the angel and was eager to hear the Lord’s message through Peter

-Philippian Jailer Acts 16 – Asked what he should do to be saved, received the word of the Lord, and his family was receptive to the gospel.

What does a man or woman of peace look like? Here are a few things to look for:

- 1) They are not just open to the gospel but they receive the gospel freely.
- 2) They are in a position of great influence over their family, friends and within the community (Biblical "household.")
- 3) They have the ability to introduce God's missionaries into their sphere of influence effectively.
- 4) They are also great "bringers and includers" of others into the life of the church.

Zacchaeus - Jesus starts a conversation with Zacchaeus and invites Himself to his house for the day. Why does Jesus do this? Jewish customs show that eating at another person’s house was a sign of friendship. Zacchaeus was responsive Zacchaeus is a changed man and reveals the change by his next actions. He gives half of his wealth to the poor. He then pledges to make restitution of four times anything he cheated anyone out of. This was twice the normal amount for Jewish restitution. More than likely Zacchaeus would have ended bankrupt.

There are certain people who are more open to spiritual conversations than others. Even Jesus said, (paraphrase) “I have come to seek and to save those who are sick, not those who think they are already well.”

Rick Warren, author of the Purpose Driven life, identifies two types of people who tend to be more receptive towards the message of Jesus Christ: Those in transition and those under tension.

The Receptive – The good soil

These are people who allow the Word to take root and grow. Their hearts have been cultivated by the Holy Spirit to receive spiritual things. It is this cultivating that creates openness to the gospel. These are people who produce spiritual fruit.

4. Establishing relationships with them. God is always building in the context of family/relationships. People aren't projects or ministry targets, they are people in the image of God that He loves and wants a relationship with. We need to convey that heart. This is the idea of not moving from house.

Mat 10:10-12 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. (11) "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. (12) "As you enter the house, give it your greeting.

Luk 9:4 "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.

Luk 10:5-7 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' (6) "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. (7) "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

Meal time in that day was the means of relating with people along with eating food. Eating what is set before you means you relate with people where they are at. As we are doing that we are to look for ways to bring healing, both physical and emotional, and healing from sin. It may be as simple as praying with someone about something. Most unbelievers will not refuse someone praying for them if you just ask. Jesus blessed people (unbelievers) by feeding them and healing them. He didn't withhold blessings because of their sin.

What happens when Jesus finds a receptive heart?

Lost souls find direction. Hopeless people discover that there is a new hope. Those who are world weary are given new strength. Thirsty spirits find refreshment. Broken lives are mended. Hurting hearts are healed.

Luke 19:1-10 - God things happen when good seed goes into receptive hearts.

5. We begin to speak about the Kingdom

Mat 10:7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Luk 9:2 And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

Luk 10:8-9 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; (9) and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Interacting, blessing, and healing people helps build a platform from which we speak of the Kingdom. Speaking of the Kingdom isn't just giving the four points of salvation. It is both demonstrating and declaring God's reign in every area of life. Where He rules it gets better/restored to God's life. It is also bringing up the positive testimonies of how the rule of Jesus in our lives or the lives of others has brought life and change.

We also must look for ways to preach the gospel because it is the only way to the new birth and entry into Kingdom. *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*