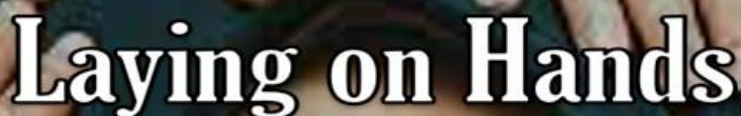


# Tool Box Series

## Part #3



Character Formation



Laying on Hands



Money & Church

**Preaching**  
Good vs Bad



## Study Outline

### **Character Formation**

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## Character Transformation (Fruit of the Spirit)

### Introduction

In many churches, you will never hear anything about self-control, spiritual discipline, death to self, holiness, or becoming a new creation in Christ. But for the believers that will be the bride of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit and character formation are a natural consequence of obedience to the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

We need to make it clear from the start that it is only by the grace of God that anybody is saved, filled with the Spirit, or able to glorify God with their life. We do not want to confuse the obedience of grace with the law, and we oppose any form of works-based salvation or religious legalism. Salvation is by God's grace, and it is God who works in us to make us willing to do his will.

*Titus 3:4-6 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, **not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,***

*Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

## **Freewill your choice**

God strives and works with us, but we have a choice whether we obey or reject him. God extends the invitation to whosoever will and is not just for salvation but also for sanctification and walking in the Spirit. It's up to us to obey his promptings and work together with him.

***Matthew 11:28-30** "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

***John 7:37-38** On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

***Revelation 22:17** And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

We are blessed to be under the new covenant, where God reveals himself to each person by writing his law in each of our hearts and minds individually. And Jesus said his sheep hear his voice, so each believer should know his voice for themselves without intervention from anyone else. Each person should obey what God has written in their hearts and the voice of the great shepherd.

**Hebrews 8:10-12** *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

**John 10:14, 27** *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

### **Holiness & Sanctification**

The words holy or holiness and sanctify or sanctification can be interchangeable and mean pure, morally blameless, consecrated (dedicated, set apart), innocent, modest, chaste, and clean.

There are two applications of sanctification or holiness. The first was imputed to us as a gift by faith in Christ when we were born again. When Christ died for us on the cross, he became our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption before God as the only means of salvation. Nobody could ever earn salvation by their works, but God gives it as a gift through faith in Christ, so all the glory belongs to Christ alone.



*Hebrews 10:10, 14* By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

*1 Corinthians 1:27-31* But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, **that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.**

### **Practical sanctification**

The second application of sanctification is the practical outworking of holiness and could include character formation and fruit of the Spirit. The practical application of being sanctified is a process whereby we separate from worldliness and sin and become more like Jesus. If we claim salvation and the righteousness of Christ, people will watch to see if we are legitimate in our profession. Jesus said we know a tree by its fruit, good or bad. If our lives reflect holiness or the Devil, people see it. Working out our salvation with fear and trembling is a practical part of our sanctification and spiritual growth.

***Romans 6:19-23 ... For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. ... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness ...***

***1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.***

We have seen that God has given us free will to choose, and we have been sanctified and perfected at the cross in Christ. As believers in Jesus, we are responsible for separating ourselves from worldliness and sin as we undergo character transformation and sanctification, walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

***2 Timothy 2:19-21 ... "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, IF anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.***

***2 Corinthians 6:16-17*** *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them;** and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.***

***Hebrews 12:14*** *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*

### **Character formation**

When we surrender our lives to Christ, a tremendous transformation takes place, and we are so drastically different that it is like we have a new life, and our old way of life fades into the past. At least that's what is supposed to happen.

***2 Corinthians 5:17*** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

However, some people do not exhibit any noticeable change, and others start well and then revert back to their old ways. It's sad to see professing Christians living like unsaved worldly people, or even worse. Paul wrote to a congregation of people who had returned to the old way of life. He prayed that they would start their Christian life over again and focus on developing the character of Christ in their lives.

***Galatians 4:19*** *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*

## **The Father's discipline**

If Children bear their father's resemblance, then spiritually speaking, we either resemble the character of Christ or the devil. If we profess to be born-again Christians, God the father will not allow us to keep living an ungodly sinful life, and he will help us with a character adjustment. In the same way, a father disciplines his children, God the Father will correct us to make us holy like he is because he loves us. And if we receive correction and discipline from God, that is evidence that we are his children, but those who reject his discipline are not his children.

***Hebrews 12:5-10** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and **do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.**" **Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.***

If you are unwilling to obey God, and accept his correction, you are either an unsaved child of the devil or a spiritual infant which will never mature until you are willing submit to God, his will, his word, and his correction.

## **Start with the heart**

The starting point for character formation is a change in heart. We begin with a good house cleaning and do away with the stinking thinking. The external forces outside our body do not make us sin, but the evil thoughts inside our hearts lead us into sin. There is a struggle between the inner man and the outside world, and transformation happens when the inner man takes charge and renews the mind.

***Mark 7:20-23** He (Jesus) went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For **from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'**"*

***2 Corinthians 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though **our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.***

***Ephesians 3:16** ... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to **be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,***

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

Jesus walked through a world full of sin, yet Satan could not get inside his mind. Jesus saw and heard many things, but nothing ever got inside him because he ruled in the Spirit.

***Isaiah 42:18*** "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant (Jesus), or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, And blind as the LORD'S servant? **Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear.**"

***John 14:30*** "I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world (Satan) is coming, and he has nothing in Me.**

***Proverbs 16:32*** **He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.**

However, when Lot walked through the streets of Sodom, his soul was vexed and tormented by everything he saw. Lot's problem was that he had been compromising, and he was like a brother to the Sodomites (Genesis 19:7), and he let Sodom get into his head. Remember Lot's wife, don't look back or think back (Luke 17:32, 9:62).

***2 Peter 2:6*** ... and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials ...

But God will help us to walk the streets as Jesus did, so we can see without observing and hear without listening. We can control what our eyes watch on the streets, in our homes, or with our cell phones. Like a blind person, we can depend on God to be our guide, to lead us to walk by the Spirit, and can mentally shut out the things we don't want to see or hear.

*Isaiah 30:21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.*

*Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.*

### **Battlefield of the mind**

In the tech world, they have a saying, garbage in, garbage out. Whenever we watch or listen to anything that fills our minds with sex, murder, witchcraft, and godless immoral filth, we put ourselves in a position of compromising, condoning, and mentally participating in those acts. Voluntarily participating in filling our eyes with images and ears with sounds of wickedness can be a form of idolatry or spiritual adultery. And when we intentionally expose ourselves to evil and perversion, we can defile, damage, and sear our conscience, so it becomes insensitive or dead.

*Jeremiah 7:9 "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and*

*walk after other gods whom you do not know, "and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD.*

*James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?*

*1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,*

An undisciplined mind is the devil's playground, and we cannot afford to be careless and ignore the escalating dangers of the end times. Tech and media companies are taking our personal information (data mining) and feeding it through algorithms with artificial intelligence to manipulate our minds to create subliminal acceptance or outright addictions to ungodly lifestyles or agendas.

Our cell phones, tablets, laptops, and other devices can be Trojan horses for the devil to get influence and manipulate our thinking, entering through our eye and ear gates. With the advent of digital IDs, digital vaccine passports, banking, GPS, online buying and selling, there is a phone app for



everything. All our tech devices are an essential part of modern life, and because we can't live without them, cell phones have become enslavement devices. These digital tracking devices that we call phones are powerful brainwashing, social engineering, and data collection weapons. There is also a demonic element at work and this tech explosion goes way beyond human and artificial intelligence. The media and tech industries are tools to usher in the new world order and the antichrist.

Yes, Christian ministries use the same devices, but that window is rapidly closing, and anything contrary to the approved narratives is flagged, de-platformed, destroyed, and removed from public view. There is a remnant of believers becoming more sensitive to the Holy Spirit and are weening themselves off the devil's media milk. The narrow path has fewer travelers and narrows even more as the world around us gets more wicked. We need to stay on alert because Jesus can come at any time. And what will he find us doing, watching, and listening to when he returns?

*Ephesians 2:2 ... in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince (Satan) of the power of the air (air waves, TV, internet, radio, etc.), the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

Our thought life controls who we are, either for God or the devil. We must decide to control our thoughts, eyes, ears,

and behavior and give our time in service to God with eternity in view. The time is short, and the spiritual battles will only increase as we get closer to the coming of the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 4:3* And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **The god of this age (Satan) 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.

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

### **Mental attitude & training**

Athletes are committed to a disciplined training routine that controls every aspect of their lives, including coaching, exercise, practice routines, and diet. They train repetitiously, hour after hour, day after day, to be stronger, faster, and better to defeat their competition. They are not mere spectators or fans but are continuously active and seek to excel above all others.

Our goal should be to have a greater mental resolve, commitment, and discipline in serving God because we are in a competition and are running to win the prize, which is being the bride of Christ.

We compete against ourselves as our sinful nature fights against our efforts to yield to the Holy Spirit so we can run this race with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

***1 Corinthians 9:24** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.***

### **Flesh vs. Spirit**

The apostle Paul had a dilemma because he said that when he tried to do good, he would end up doing bad. He recognized something from within that was working against him and concluded that the enemy was his fallen human nature. Paul experienced a perpetual war between his sinful nature and the Holy Spirit. Sound familiar?

***Romans 7:15-24** I do not understand what I do. **For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing. ...***

*... Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So, I find this law at work: **When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.** What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

***James 4:1** Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. **You murder and covet** and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because **you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.***

Paul tells us the solution to the dilemma of sinful nature's control over us. First, there is no condemnation to those who are abiding **IN Christ Jesus**, and second, the Holy Spirit sets us free from the law of sin and death, which is the stronghold of our sinful nature.

***Romans 8:1-4** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so, he condemned sin in sinful man, in*

***order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.***

The key to victory is the Holy Spirit, who puts to death the sinful nature, its mindset, and the misdeeds of the body. He that is dead to sin is free from sin's power, so those who have their mind controlled by the Spirit and led by the Spirit are free from the sinful nature. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Therefore, it is our responsibility to yield to the Holy Spirit and crucify the flesh with its lust and affections.

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

***Romans 8:12-14 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are***

*sons of God.*

***Galatians 2:19-20 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

***Galatians 5:24-25 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.***

When we yield to the Holy Spirit, he influences our thoughts and prompts us to put to death our sinful desires, mentally nailing them to the cross and burying them with Christ so Jesus can live his life through us. Let's look at the list of all our spiritual enemies that the Holy Spirit will slay in our lives.

***Galatians 5:16-21 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not***

*inherit the kingdom of God.*

*Colossians 3:3-10 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ... But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

### **Fruit of the Spirit**

When we yield to the Holy Spirit and die to our self-will and sinful nature, we receive power from the Spirit that lifts us above our natural abilities and circumstances. Walking in the Spirit will guide us to publicly manifest the character of Christ in every situation and at all times. They say you don't know a Christian by how they act but by how they react. Everyone can be happy and friendly in the good times, but how do we respond under pressure when attacked, wronged, angered, or tempted? Let's look at Paul's list of character traits that are evidence of the Holy Spirit in someone's life.

*Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

It is not enough to gloss over that list, so let's look at each character trait and Biblical examples that describe how we should represent the character of Christ to the world.

## Love

There are multiple words for love in the New Testament, but we will only concern ourselves with the word "agape," which is God's love, the highest form of love that elevates the concern for others above our self-interest. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies, and he demonstrated his love for us by dying in our place on the cross while we were his enemies. The Holy Spirit can give us the supernatural ability to love someone who has caused great pain and grief to us, our family, or our people.

*1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

*Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

*1 John 4:19-21 We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we*



*have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Therefore, the devil's greatest goal is to separate us from the love of God, and the greatest danger of all our trials, tests, and sufferings is that we would walk away from God's love. But God said he would never leave or forsake us. Loving God in the hard times and loving our enemies as ourselves, regardless of our feelings and circumstances, can be a witness of God's supernatural love flowing through us.

***1 John 4:16** And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and **he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.***

***Romans 8:35-39** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

***Hebrews 13:5** "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

## Joy

There is a difference between Joy and happiness. Happiness is dependent on what is happening and disappears in hard times. Joy is unaffected by circumstances and can manifest during the most severe suffering and intolerable circumstances. Anybody can be happy in the good times, but when times get hard, it becomes very evident who has the joy of the Holy Spirit. Another difference is that God's joy is a source of strength and deliverance and is eternal.

***Nehemiah 8:9-10** And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; **do not mourn nor weep.**" **For all the people wept,** when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. **Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"*

***Isaiah 35:10** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, **with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.***

***Isaiah 61:3** To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, **The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;** That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

**Acts 5:41** *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

**2 Corinthians 7:4** *Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. **I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.***

**James 1:2** *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

**1 Peter 1:6-8** *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, **may be found to praise, honor, and glory** at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, **you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.***

Two sources of joy for believers are the word of God and prayer, which is supernatural because unbelievers' disdain both and are dead to God. To those alive in Christ, we find great joy in the word, prayer, and everything about God.

**Jeremiah 15:16** *Your words were found, and I ate them, And **Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;** For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.*

*Isaiah 56:7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

## **Peace**

Peace is an aspect of God's character. He is the God of peace, king of peace, Jesus is the prince of peace, and he dwells in the hills of peace, Jerusalem. Jesus offered his peace to his disciples, which he said was not the same peace as the world gives. The world's standard for peace is the absence of war, conflicts, or noise. The peace that Jesus gives is an inner spiritual peace that is not affected by anything happening externally in the physical world. God's peace is only available to the righteous who are at peace with him, and there is no spiritual peace or rest for the wicked, ever.

*John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

*John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

*Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

*Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with*

*thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*

*Isaiah 57:19-21 "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him." But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ... "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."*

### **Longsuffering - Patience**

The word longsuffering has to do with forbearance, patience, and restraint. Thank God he is patient and longsuffering because he gives us time to repent and turn to him instead of rendering immediate judgment against our sin. Otherwise, we would have no opportunity to be saved.

*2 Peter 3:5 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.*

*Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

***Romans 9:22-24*** *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

***Lamentation 3:21-23*** *This I recall to my mind; therefore, I have hope. Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

It's great that God demonstrates his longsuffering for us, but what about our longsuffering and patience toward others? Patience and restraint are not a fruit we want to eat because that would involve controlling ourselves while someone or something is irritating, aggravating, abusing, creating stress, and pushing us to our limits. In every place where there are people or difficult circumstances, there is a need to have self-control over our emotions and actions to inwardly dismiss and forgive abuse and afflictions while outwardly manifesting the character of Christ. Most of us can forgive one transgression, but to forgive 490 times a day, as Jesus said, would require supernatural grace from the Holy Spirit.

***Matthew 18:21-22*** *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.*

***Colossians 3:12-13*** Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

***Ephesians 4:1-3*** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

***Colossians 1:10-11*** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

## **Kindness**

God speaks about the kindness he felt between himself and Israel that existed in Israel's youth with love, pity, and mercy, and he reminded Israel of their espousals to him with sentimental tones. There is a regrettable melancholy that reflects closeness and intimacy that was lost and deeply missed by God and summarized by the words, "I remember the kindness of your youth."

***Jeremiah 2:2-3*** "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love

*of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them," says the LORD."*

Even though Israel went away from the Lord and consequently felt forsaken and grieved in spirit, God always reached out to them and invited them back into the kindness of the espousals they once had. All they had to do was repent and turn to God with all their hearts, and God said he would gather them with everlasting kindness.

*Joel 2:13-14 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?*

*Isaiah 54:6-10 For LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," says your God. "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer. ... For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has mercy on you.*



When we were lost, rebellious, deceived, and enslaved to sin, the kindness and love of God appeared and saved us. Like Israel, our first love with God is the most beautiful time of our life that we never want to lose.

***Titus 3:3-5** At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. **But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,***

God saved us with a purpose, as we have a calling to show the same kindness that brought us to salvation to others as ambassadors of Christ. As the bride of Christ, we have the "law of kindness" on our tongue to speak salvation to the lost, begging them to reconcile with God through Christ.

***Proverbs 31:26** She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is **the law of kindness.***

***Proverbs 16:21** ¶ The wise in heart will be called prudent, and **sweetness of the lips increases learning.***

***Proverbs 16:24** Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, **Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.***

***2 Corinthians 5:18-20 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. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.***

Not everything is sweetness and honey because sometimes we rebuke, correct, or smite someone with kindness for their benefit. How we say something can be more important than what we say, we should only speak operating within the boundaries of the law of kindness. We should never correct anyone in anger because a soft answer can break a bone and turn away wrath. In the short term, a correctly applied rebuke may hurt, but it will be an ongoing blessing like an excellent oil or a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. Controlling the tone and content of every word spoken while being a good ambassador of Christ is a supernatural grace.

***Psalms 141:5 Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.***

***Proverbs 25:15 By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone.***

***Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.***

## Goodness

God is a good God, goodness is his character, and goodness naturally flows out from him even to those who do not deserve it. But those who reject the goodness of God will experience his severity. His goodness and his severity bring a balance of justice and mercy. Notice that in God's character, good is not balanced with evil because there is no evil in God whatsoever. God is absolutely pure and infinitely holy and can do no evil.

***Romans 11:22*** *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*

The goodness of God contrasted with our sinfulness, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness should bring us under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and lead to repentance.

***Romans 2:3-4*** *And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

That repentance is part of an endless cycle because of our sinful human nature. We want to do good and do what is right in the strength of our flesh, but we end up disappointing ourselves and doing the opposite. We have a sinful nature that pulls us toward sin and makes us a prisoner to sin, keeping us from doing the good we want to do.

***Romans 7:18-23 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So, I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. or in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.***

Thank God for his goodness and mercy because he has supernaturally equipped us to live above our sinful nature. The cross of Christ sets us free from the law of sin and death, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to live good godly, and fruitful lives.

***Romans 8:1-5 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.***

***Ephesians 5:8-11** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

***2 Thessalonians 1:11-12** Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

God longs for his children to glorify him for all the goodness and blessings he freely and abundantly bestows upon us. Grateful believers should be like salt that creates a thirst in those who are lost and challenges them to taste and see God's goodness and mercy for themselves.

***Psalms 34:8-10** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you, His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; **But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing***

***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.*

***Psalms 107:8-9 Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.***

***Psalms 107:13-16 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two.***

### **Faith - Faithfulness**

God is faithful, so we can fully trust that whatever he has said that he will do, he will do it, and we can have confidence in him. The question is how that faithfulness affects us. The following is a short list of what God has promised to do for us.

#### **Faithful over temptations**

***1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.***

#### **Faithful to establish & guard**

***2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.***

### **Faithful to his word**

*Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

### **Faithful to forgive**

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*

### **Faithful to make us rapture ready**

*1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

### **Faithful in suffering**

*1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

### **Faithful unto death**

*2 Timothy 2:11-13 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

To know if we are faithful, we must be tested and proven trustworthy. Testing may come in many forms, such as compromise and lukewarmness, which are deceiving and can induce spiritual slumber and backsliding. Other types of

testing may come from severe persecution and even the threat of death. Being faithful in those extremes comes only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the apostles they would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses, and the Greek word for witness is *martus* or martyr.

***Hebrews 2:9*** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

The book of Revelation describes Jesus as a faithful witness. Jesus is the faithful martyr that tasted death for every person by the grace of God. When Jesus returns at the second coming, he is called Faithful and True and followed by an army of saints who are called, chosen, and faithful.

***Revelation 1:5*** *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

***Revelation 3:14*** *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

***Revelation 19:11-16*** *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ... On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS*



## AND LORD OF LORDS.

In these last days, the faithfulness of the saints will be tested like never before by deceptions, temptations, compromise, persecutions, and death. The worst is yet to come, and believers could face severe persecution and possibly even martyrdom before the rapture. During the great tribulation, martyrdom is the only option for salvation. Jesus speaks to the suffering churches saying be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life. If we are not faithful right now, what are the chances of being faithful then?

***Revelation 2:10-11** "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**"*

***Revelation 17:14** These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: **and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.***

Jesus told several parables regarding the judgment of rewards and how rewards would get dispersed based on faithfulness, faithful over little or much, equals ruler over little or much. Jesus said that people who were responsible got rewarded by having rule over cities, most likely during the millennial reign of Christ.

*Luke 12:42-43 And the Lord said, **who then is that faithful and wise steward**, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

*Matthew 25:21 His lord said unto him, **Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.***

*Luke 16:10-13 He that is **faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much**: and he that is **unjust in the least is unjust also in much**. If therefore ye have not been **faithful in the unrighteous mammon**, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been **faithful in that which is another man's**, who shall give you that which is your own?*

*Luke 19:17-19 "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were **faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.**' "And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' "Likewise, he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'*

## **Meekness - Gentleness**

Jesus described himself as meek and lowly in heart. It is hard for us to comprehend how Jesus spoke the worlds into existence, every knee will bow before him, and he has all power in heaven and earth, but he is meek and lowly in heart. The contrast between being all-powerful and yet being meek and humble is beyond our comprehension and

proves that meekness is not a weakness.

***Matthew 11:28-30** Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and **learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:** and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Paul was also impacted by how Jesus stepped down from his position in heaven, laid aside his power, humbled himself more than a common man, and made himself a servant to all men, leaving us an example to follow in his steps.

***Philippians 2:3-8.** Let this mind be in you, which was also in **Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.***

God empowered Moses to be a great leader and used him to do many spectacular miracles, including ten plagues against Egypt, parting the Red Sea, and providing food, water, and every necessity for two and a half million people in a dry, barren desert. And this was no small task, and it was not a picnic for Moses, who carried the daily needs, burdens, and egos of millions of people on his shoulders. How did Moses do it? He was the meekest man in the whole world!

***Numbers 12:3 Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.***

David was the greatest King of Israel, a prophet, Christ the Messiah was from his lineage, they called him the sweet psalmist of Israel (rock star, songwriter, and musician), and he was the champion warrior and greatest general. David established Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Jews, and he gave the construction plans for the temple and supplied the materials to build it. So, David must have been aggressive and forceful as a leader, right? No, the secret to his greatness was God's gentleness.

***2 Samuel 22:33-36 God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places. He teaches my hands to make war, So, that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great.***

***Psalms 18:35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.***

Our sinful nature always seeks to exalt self, but the Holy Spirit can mortify the pride and arrogance of our old life and empower us to have the mind of the Spirit to serve others with humility and gentleness. Paul encourages us to esteem others higher than ourselves with the same mindset as Jesus in humility and gentleness.

*Philippians 2:3-8 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

*1 Thessalonians 2:6-8 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.*

*Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

### **Temperance – Self control**

Followers of Jesus are supposed to be disciples or disciplined ones. God is a God of order, not confusion. God designed everything in creation to function according to a set order, orbits, gravity, seasons, cycles, and God's authority.

As followers of Jesus, we should develop consistent spiritual disciplines that control every aspect of our lives and not live a disorganized and chaotic spiritual life. Paul compares godly discipline to athletic training, so being filled with the Holy Spirit supernaturally lifts us above our sinful nature and our physical limitations to have victory in doing the will of God.

***1 Corinthians 9:24-27*** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ***Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.***

***1 Timothy 4:8*** For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Reading the Bible, we see that believers are supposed to wrestle, strive, and fight the good fight of faith as good soldiers of Christ. Soldiers are taught discipline and are trained at boot camp and conditioned to take orders and throw themselves into the battle without hesitation or questioning. They do not get distracted by secular activities while they engage the enemy on the battlefield. A sloppy, undisciplined, lazy, untrained, rebellious, and independent soldier is a dead soldier walking.

***2 Timothy 2:3-5 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs, he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.***

The unsaved and half-saved worldly Christians do not want to hear about keeping the lustful desires of the body in check and living a holy life of dedication to God. The apostle Paul was on trial by a Roman ruler, but Paul turned the tables and preached the gospel in his defense. Felix, the ruler, was put on the spot by Paul's message of temperance, and he was afraid and sent Paul away.

***Acts 24:24-25 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."***

As we mentioned before, we are like athletes that train to run a race to win a crown, but we run for eternal crowns with no recognition or accolades in this life. There are five different everlasting crowns mentioned in the Bible, but that is not our primary goal. We are motivated, and the driving force of our lives is to win Christ, and nobody better exemplified that attitude than Paul, who was an unstoppable gospel preaching machine.

***Philippians 3:8-14*** Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### **Peter's list of virtues**

Peter mentions a list of different virtues and then tells us that we should intentionally and actively incorporate those godly virtues to produce the character of Christ in our lives. He also said that anyone not involved in this process is spiritually blind.

***2 Peter 1:5-9*** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and



*abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

The Holy Spirit uses our conscience and the word of God to guide us. If we are sensitive to him, he will guide us to do what is right, which will change and form our character, (John 16:8, 1 Timothy 3:9). When we combine Peter and Paul's list of character traits, we see the fruits that come out of obedience to the Spirit.

<b>Diligence</b>	<b>faith</b>	<b>Virtue</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Godliness</b>	<b>Joy</b>
<b>Self-control</b>	<b>Kind</b>	<b>Loving</b>
<b>Perseverance</b>	<b>Peaceful</b>	<b>Patient</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>Faithful</b>	<b>Gentle</b>

### **Trained by the Word**

Reading and memorizing Bible verses will train our minds, to think according to the scriptures with God's thoughts, instead of our own rationale and reasoning. Notice how God links his thoughts with his ways.

*Isaiah 55:7-9 Let the wicked forsake **his way**, And the unrighteous man **his thoughts**; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. "**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways**," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.***

*2 Timothy 3:15-17* and how from infancy you have known **the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation** through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, **correcting and training in righteousness**, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

*1 Timothy 4:14* Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. **Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.** Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

We are told that we can bring **every thought captive** to obedience to Christ, who is the word of God. To control our thoughts, we must train our minds, and every time our thoughts go astray, we must bring them back to the word of God. But it will never happen without a conscience effort.

*2 Corinthians 10:4-5* For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

*Philippians 4:8* Finally, brethren, **whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if**

*there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things.*

*Think on these, whatsoever is ...*

<b>True</b>	<b>Noble</b>	<b>Just</b>	<b>Pure</b>
<b>Lovely</b>	<b>Good Report</b>	<b>Virtue</b>	<b>Praiseworthy</b>

### **Ambassadors for Christ**

One reason God wants us to have the character of Christ, is so we will accurately represent Christ to a lost and dying world. Many people will judge Christ by how we represent him, therefore we have an obligation to live godly lives.

*2 Corinthians 5:18-20* Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

*1 Timothy 3:14-15* . . . I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness . . .

## Questions for Different Situations

We want to do the right things, but sometimes we are not sure about what to do. And as we mentioned from the beginning, it is God who writes his laws on our heart and mind, so we will not suggest any laws, rules or regulations. But we will give a sample list of questions that demonstrate how to each person can search the word of God for answers. As we pray and read the word of God, we will come to our own conclusions, and that process will change and mature us.

Paul wrote to Timothy, giving instructions for believers to live godly and to guide their behavior among the congregation of God's people. Paul was not legalistic but gave principles to be applied in various situations giving discernment to believers to be self-controlled.

*1 Timothy 3:14-16 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.*

We list some common questions and follow them with scriptures that answer the questions. No commentary is needed because each believer needs to gain wisdom and discernment, so they can rightly divide the word of truth for themselves.

***2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.***

**Am I representing Christ? Am I a good example?**

***John 13:3-16, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ... So, when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.***

***1 Peter 2:21-23, For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;***

***2 Corinthians 5:17-20*** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 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. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

***2 Corinthians 3:1-3*** Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? **You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.** You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

### **Do I offend or stumble others?**

***Mark 9:42-43*** "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched.

***1 Corinthians 8:9-13, But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.***

***Romans 14:13-21, Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.***

## **Does it look bad or inappropriate?**

*1 Thessalonians 5:22-23, Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Here is the background: Joseph was sold as a slave and became the chief of staff over Potiphar's household. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, and Joseph rejected her advances. But one day, Joseph was careless and was left alone in the house with Potiphar's wife, and she again made advances toward Joseph, and he rejected her and ran outside. But because they were alone and he had no witnesses, she accused him of attempting to rape her, and Joseph went to prison for the appearance of evil.

*Genesis 39:1-20 Thus he (Potiphar) left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now **Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused ... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So it was, as she spoke to Joseph, day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. ...***



... And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "... He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. "And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

### **Am I modest or sensual?**

**1 Timothy 2:8-10** *I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*

**1 Thessalonians 4:2-5** *For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;*

**2 Corinthians 7:1** *2 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.*

## **Am I leading people to God, or being led astray?**

***2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."***

***Ephesians 5:8-13, For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.***

***1 Corinthians 15:33-34, Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.***

**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.*

### **Am I hiding my light, or hiding my sin?**

**Luke 12:2-3**, *"For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. "Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.*

**John 3:19-21** *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ...  
... "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."*

### **Am I acting immature?**

**1 Corinthians 13:11** *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3**, *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

*Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

### **Are my words foolish, idle, build up or tear down?**

*Ephesians 5:3-4, But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

*Matthew 12:36-37, "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

*Proverbs 12:18; There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

*Proverbs 15:1-4, A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

*Proverbs 16:23-24, The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.*

*Proverbs 18:21, Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

### **Is this helpful? building up? God's will?**

*1 Corinthians 10:23-24, "Everything is permissible" but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

*Romans 15:1-6, We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."*

*James 4:13-15 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."*

### **Does this glorify God?**

*1 Corinthians 10:31-33 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ...*

*... Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

### **Am I motivated by God's love?**

*1 Corinthians 13:1-8 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

### **Am I selfish? Considerate to others?**

*Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

*Romans 15:1-3 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."*

**Philippians 2:19-22** *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. **I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.** But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

**Galatians 6:1-5**, *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.** If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.*

**Luke 6:31-36** *Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. **But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.** Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most-High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. **Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.***

## Tool Box Series

A photograph showing a person lying on their back. Their hands are placed on their chest and shoulders, resting on a dark-colored shirt. The person's hair is dark and curly. The image is framed by a black border.

# Laying on of Hands



## Laying on of Hands

### Transfer the Blessing

The Biblical origins of laying hands began with the patriarchs of Israel, who laid hands on their children to impart or transfer their blessing and designate the successor who would take leadership over the family or tribe and proclaim divine favor on their descendants. Traditionally the firstborn son would receive the birthright and his father's blessing with the benefits of inheriting the bulk of their financial wealth and lands along with leadership authority over the family, tribe, or nation.

The first example we see is with Isaac and his twin sons, the elder was Esau, and the younger was Jacob. Even before they were born, they were fighting in the womb, and the mother received a prophecy while pregnant that the elder would serve the younger, which broke with tradition.

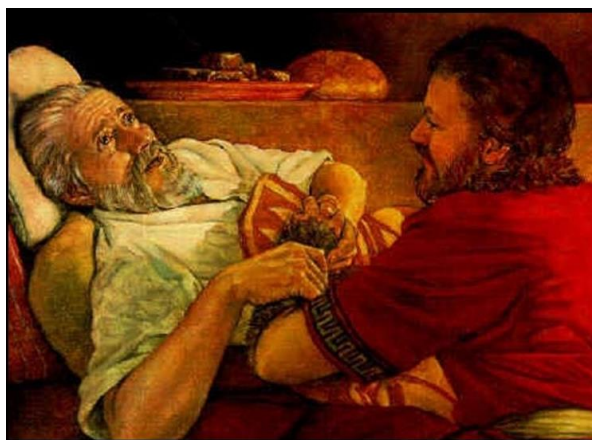
*Genesis 25:22-23 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So, she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: "Two nations (Jews and Arabs) are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."*

Esau was an immoral and ungodly man, and one day he came home hungry and tired and cared so little about his birthright that he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of soup.

Esau's disdain for the sacred honor of being the firstborn grandson of Abraham and the privilege of becoming a patriarch of a promised future nation was considered profane by God, leading to Esau's rejection of receiving the blessing.

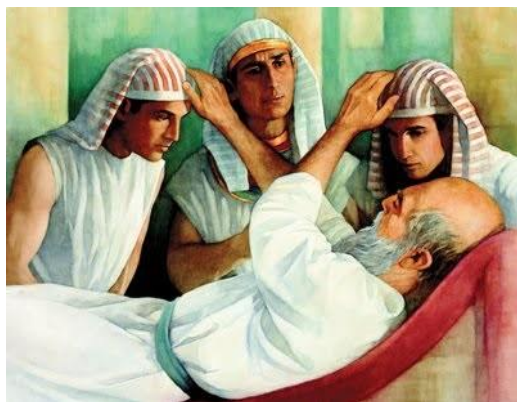
*Hebrews 12:15-17 ... looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

When Isaac was dying, he called Esau to hunt a deer to prepare his favorite meal so he could bless him before he died. But Rebekah favored Jacob, disguised him to be like Esau, and sent him to his father before Esau could return from hunting. So, Jacob went to his father, deceived him, and stole the firstborn's blessing from Esau by deception.



***Genesis 27:26-29*** Then his (Jacob's) father Isaac said to him, ***"Come near now and kiss me, my son."*** And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: ***"Surely, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed. ... Therefore, may God give you of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!"***

Next, we see Jacob in his old age, he is about to die, and he calls for his son Joseph to bring his two grandsons so he can bless them before he dies. The elder grandson is Manasseh, and the



younger is Ephraim. Joseph positioned the older grandson to Jacob's right and the younger to the left. But Jacob intentionally crossed his hands to bless the younger Ephraim. Again, Jacob breaks with tradition and gives His blessing to the younger. Later Ephraim became the dominant tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel.

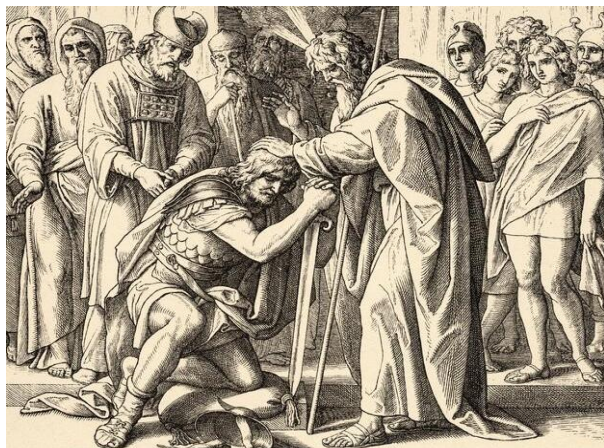
***Genesis 48:17-19*** Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so, he took hold of his father's

*hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."*

### **Transfer Leadership**

Another purpose for publicly laying hands on someone is to recognize, endorse, and transfer power and authority to the next leader. Moses was the leader of about two and a half million Israelis, and during his tenure as the leader of Israel, he dealt with several uprisings, rebellions, coups, and schisms. To have an orderly transfer of power, God designated Moses' successor by name and told Moses to recognize him

before the nation by laying hands on him. Moses' successor was Joshua, who had been his assistant from the time they left Egypt.



*Numbers 27:18, 19 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in*

*whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; "set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight.*

### **Animal Sacrifices**

According to the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, animals were offered as substitutionary sacrifices to make atonement for the people's sins. The Israelis would take an innocent animal they raised and cared for, and because of their sins, the animal had to die to pay the penalty for their sin. The priest laid his hand on the head of the animal and confessed the sins of the people. The sin of the guilty became symbolically transferred to the innocent animals who paid the death penalty of sin, and their spilled blood made atonement, or at-one-ment, uniting the people with God by repentance and confession of sin.

*Exodus 29:10,  
"Bring the bull to  
the front of the  
Tent of Meeting,  
and Aaron and  
his sons shall lay  
their hands on its  
head. ... (vs 15)  
"Take one of the*



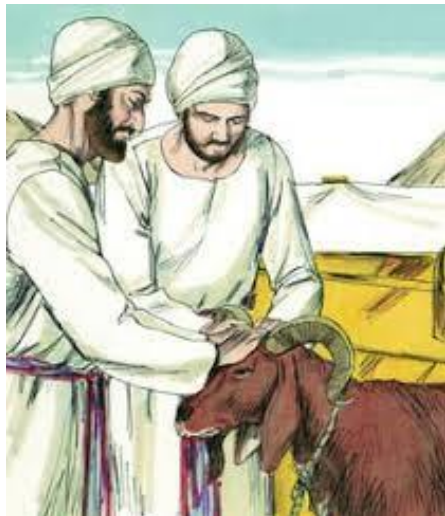
*rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands  
on its head. ... (vs 19) "Take the other ram, and  
Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head.*

***Leviticus 8:14*** He then presented ***the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.***

***Leviticus 8:18*** He then presented the ram for the burnt offering, and ***Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.***

In the case of the scapegoats, they took two goats, one became a sacrifice for sin, and the other one was released to carry the people's sin outside the camp.

***Leviticus 16:20-22*** "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall ***send it away into the wilderness*** by the hand of a suitable man. "The goat shall ***bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.***



Worship in the tabernacle and temple with all the sacrifices and offerings were just shadows of the coming sacrifice of Christ, who would be our substitutionary sacrifice to take our sins by his death on the cross.

*Hebrews 13:10-13* We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. **For the bodies of those beasts**, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, **are burned without the camp**. Wherefore, **Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.**

### **Part of the Gospel**

The writer of the book of Hebrews, while chastising immature believers for their lack of scriptural knowledge, gave them the basic foundational teachings of the Christian faith. One of the fundamental teachings he mentioned was laying on hands, but most churches never teach it.

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

Jesus placed such importance on the laying on of hands that he made it part of the gospel message that he commanded his disciples to preach to all the nations. That would imply that praying for the sick by laying hands on them should be as routine for believers as sharing Christ with others.

***Mark 16:15-18*** *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*



Jesus set an example for us by personally laying his hands on multitudes of sick people for many long hours and healing them all.

***Luke 4:40*** *When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought*



*them to Him; and **He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.***

***Mark 5:22, 23** And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, **Jairus** by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. **Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.**"*

Jairus had faith in Jesus for his daughter's healing, saying that if Jesus would just lay his hands on her, he would heal her. Just one problem, while Jesus and Jairus were on their way to the young girl, she died. But Jesus demonstrated that he has power over death by taking the girl by the hand and raising her from the dead.

***Mark 5:39-42** When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. **Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi,"** which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." **Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.***

We can see another example of laying on hands in the book of Acts. The apostle Paul had been falsely arrested and taken as a prisoner to face trial in Rome. While en route to Rome by way of a cargo ship, they suffered a shipwreck at sea during the coldest time of winter. The ship dashed against some rocks and broke apart, and the survivors floated on broken boards or swam to the Island of Malta. While taking refuge in Malta, the father of an influential island leader was sick, and Paul laid his hands on him, healing him. That healing attracted all the sick people on the Island to go to Paul for healing and opened the doors for Paul to share Christ with everyone there.

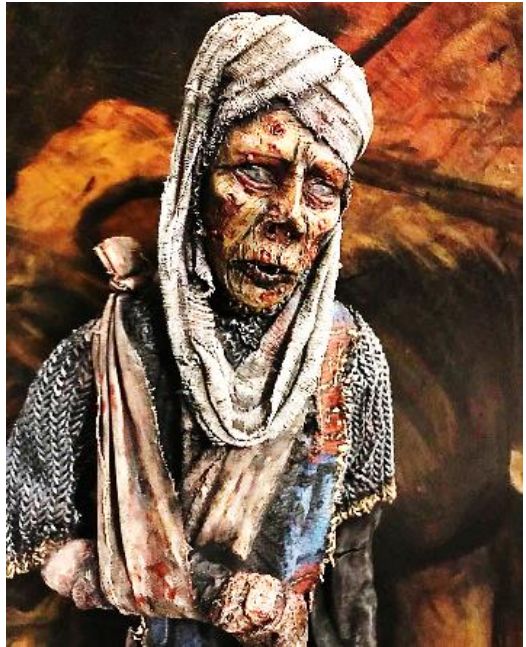
*Acts 28:7-9 In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. **And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So, when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.***

### **The Human Touch**

There is something significant about the human touch when praying for anyone, especially those that society has rejected and made social outcasts and those disfigured and repulsive in appearance. Divine healing can be for both the emotional inner scars and the outer physical body. And because many suffer from being slandered, shunned, rejected, mocked, and lost, a simple touch makes a meaningful connection and shows compassion.

Even when an Israeli laid their hand on the head of an animal confessing their sin, that physical contact made a connection, a transfer of sin. Israelites seeing an animal die as a consequence of their sin, could have experienced emotions of grief and regret. How much more meaningful is it when God's mercy, compassion, comfort, forgiveness, and healing flow from one human being to another? Those living in rejection, hurt, and in the pit of despair can be desperate for a compassionate hand to help them up. One example of this would be a leper in the time of Jesus.

The law mandated strict requirements for lepers, isolating them from spreading their contagious disease into society. When they entered any populated area, they had to put their hand over their mouth and shout, "unclean - unclean," at a distance from any approaching person giving that person time and space to avoid making contact with them. Lepers suffered from the devastating decay and disfigurement of their bodies, so their appearance could be shocking and socially uncomfortable. They dealt with isolation, rejection, cruel looks, and reactions from people repulsed by their appearance, so they had a horrible existence.



One day as Jesus passed through a village, a leper approached him and asked if Jesus would be willing to heal him. You can imagine how the crowd had withdrawn to a safe distance from the leper and how they cringed as they looked at a decaying nose or missing fingers with gaping holes in the flesh. In a great act of compassion, Jesus physically touched the leper. Jesus touched him! The crowd must have reacted with an audible gasp when Jesus laid his hand on the leprous man, saying, "I am willing," and healed him.

***Matthew 8:1-3*** *When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, you can make me clean." Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

Maybe the leper's biggest shock was not getting healed but that Jesus touched him. Jesus touched him where he was, in his worst



condition, in a pit of hopeless despair. Laying his hands on a leper revealed how unbelievably compassionate Jesus is to the suffering and brokenhearted who call out to him. That may have been the first time in years that he felt the touch of another human being. And it was not just any ordinary human touch, but God himself touched him, a leper, and accepted him openly and freely, giving him a new life after years of suffering and rejection.

## **Praying for the Holy Spirit**

In his missionary travels, Paul came to Corinth and found some believers who professed faith in Jesus and were water baptized. Upon hearing that, Paul had one question for them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They replied that they had never heard anything about the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 19:2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So, they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*

The Corinthians knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, so Paul instructed them, then laid hands on them and prayed for them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

*Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*

After the day of Pentecost and the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they laid hands on believers to receive the Holy Spirit. Philip went to Samaria, and there was a tremendous move of God with miracles, healings, and deliverance from demons. Many people came to faith in Jesus Christ and were water baptized. When news reached Jerusalem, they sent Peter and John, who went to Samaria and prayed for the believers to receive the Holy Spirit.

***Acts 8:14-16*** When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Samaritans were believers in Jesus and had been water baptized, healed, and delivered from demons, but they had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, when Peter and John laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit.

***Acts 8:17*** Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Among the crowd was a recent convert named Simon, who was formerly a sorcerer before making a profession of faith in Christ. Simon seeing Peter's gift to pray for people, tried to bribe Peter with money to buy the same gift of laying hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit. The ex-sorcerer Simon had the wrong motives, and Peter immediately recognized a wicked spirit and condemned it. Whenever anyone is self-promoting, power-hungry, and consumed with money and greed, there is a risk of demonic influence and a curse.



*Acts 8:18-23 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."*

### **Recognizing Leaders**

We need discernment over who we lay hands on and why, and we should never be careless or hasty about putting our hands on other people to pray for them. Remember the transfer of sins with the Old Testament sacrifices? The same principle applies to us. We must remember the transfer goes both ways, and we may unwittingly become a partaker of other people's sins by laying hands on them or them putting their hands on us.

Many denominations and churches will have ordination services to recognize Pastors, Missionaries, leaders, and elders. Usually, as part of such an ordination service, the leadership will lay hands on that person while conducting a community prayer over them, asking God's blessing and recognizing their authority in the church. That is another reason why Paul said not to lay hands on anyone hastily.

***1 Timothy 5:22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.***

Paul was a mentor to Timothy, and Timothy received a spiritual gift through a prophecy given with the laying on of the hands of the elders. Whether that was in a public meeting or in private, we do not know. Paul's advice to Timothy was to remember the elders' laying hands on him, the prophecy, and the spiritual gift, and then meditate and give himself entirely to reading, exhortations, and teachings, so his progress would become evident to everyone.

***1 Timothy 4:13-15 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.***

In Timothy's case, everything turned into a blessing, but dealing with leadership issues doesn't always go well. In every church that Paul established, he would recognize some who had proven testimonies as elders or leaders. Paul stressed godly character, spiritual maturity, and humility as requirements in leaders. Recognizing leaders in the church requires discernment and wisdom because giving somebody a title and authority outside the will of God could destroy them and others.



Sadly, sometimes church titles are like lifetime achievement awards leading to complacency, church politics, power struggles, and sin. The deacon, elder, or pastor may be great at the time of recognition when given a title, but in the years that follow, they may lose their first love with Jesus and become a problem or even a curse against the church. Leaders who are immature, worldly-minded, with character defects, flaunting their title and authority are more susceptible to spiritual pride and prone to fall into Satanic traps.

*1 Timothy 3:4-7 ... one who rules his own house well, having his **children in submission** with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); **not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.** Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, **lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.***

After Pentecost, the church in Jerusalem had thousands of people, and the apostles decided to prioritize their time and give themselves to prayer and the scriptures. The apostles chose to delegate the position of serving food and feeding widows to seven men who were full of the Holy Spirit with sterling testimonies.

*Acts 6:2-3 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.*

*"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;*

Sadly, today many leadership positions are given by seniority or money concerns. The Apostles and all the church showed great concern when they approved the character of the men selected to serve tables and recognized them by laying hands on them and praying. Those faithful with a little, God will make rulers over much.

To no surprise, the seven waiters were found faithful in serving food, afterward, God promoted them to do great works by the Holy Spirit, including martyrs, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and preachers. Two notables of that group were Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and Philip, who God used to bring the city of Samaria to Christ.

*Acts 6:5-6 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose **Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.***

### **Sending Missionaries**

A group of prophets and teachers were having a time of prayer together when the Holy Spirit spoke clearly to separate Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work for which he called them.

They continued fasting and praying and then laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas, prayed for the Lord's blessing on them and their mission, and sent them on their way.

*Acts 13:1-3* Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain **prophets and teachers:**



*Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."** Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

### **Slain in the Spirit**

Being slain in the Spirit is a historically recent occurrence that has gained prominence within the last fifty years. Being slain happens when people pass out and fall on the floor, usually after prayer and the laying on of hands, but sometimes without any touch. This practice is predominately exclusive to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The more traditional churches do not recognize this experience because they believe all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the power, and supernatural miracles ceased after the first century church (but they would be wrong on that assumption).

Now that we described what slain in the Spirit is, we will say that the experience, as seen in many churches today, does not match anything we read about in the Bible. We just covered the examples of what we do see in the Bible, which would be:

1. Impart blessing to the firstborn
2. Transferring sin to a sacrifice
3. Healing the sick
4. Praying to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit
5. Dedicating and empowering leaders for service

Many use the narrative of the soldiers arresting Jesus falling backward to the ground as justification for being slain in the Spirit. However, that does not fall into the category of any of the Biblical examples we just listed. So, let's read that portion of the scriptures to see if that hypothesis aligns with the scriptures.

***John 18:5-7** They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, **I am he**. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. **As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.** Then asked he them again, whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:*

If we take this verse into context, there are only two ways this can apply to believers today. First, there was no contact, no laying on of hands. The soldiers wanted to lay their hands on Jesus with evil intent, but they were repelled by the power of God, falling backward.

So, this incident does not reflect the impartation of a blessing, but to the contrary, it was a rebuke against sinful man invading the space of the holy God. This context would not justify or give credence to making this a church blessing, function, or tradition.

Secondly, they fell backward after Jesus said, I AM HE, but a better translation would be I AM, which is the name of God. When Moses saw the burning bush, God told him to remove his shoes because the ground where he was standing was holy. Then Moses asked God for his name, and the divine answer was, I AM. Jesus is the great I AM that Moses encountered at the burning bush.

**Exodus 3:13-14** And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, **The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, what is his name?** what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM:** and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM** hath sent me unto you.

Jesus also used that name when speaking to the Jews, saying before Abraham was, I AM, and the Jews picked up stones to kill him for blasphemy.

***John 8:58** Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I AM**. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

So, in the garden, Jesus declared himself to be the great I AM, Jehovah God, the Holy One of Israel. So, when Jesus said I AM, mighty power was released from him, knocking the soldiers off their feet.

Within the context of the second example, the justification for people falling back to the ground is a manifestation of God's physical presence and power. And now we are walking in areas where angels fear to tread, man's claims to divine presence and power. When the soldiers fell backward, did that set a precedence for church practices? Falling to the ground is not a miracle by itself, and the big question in those situations becomes, is this of God, or is this a religious display of the flesh? In reality, both scenarios are possible. God can do whatever he wants, and his power and presence can manifest anywhere and anytime he chooses. Depending on the parties involved, it can be a blessing, harmless, or a hoax.

Falling out or being slain in the Spirit is a common experience in most Spirit-filled churches. Many would justify getting slain in the Spirit because of their personal experiences. Everyone should always check all their experiences against the word of God to prove or disprove its merits. Each one should be firm in their convictions and conscience before God for everything they do.

Unfortunately, some corrupt ministers have muddied the waters and brought reproach to Spiritual gifts, so any arguments in favor of "being slain" are diminished and overshadowed by phony televangelist types who use it as a gimmick.

However, if God supernaturally speaks or gives a vision while people are "out in the Spirit," only God and that person would know, but in that case, it would not be a religious show for the sake of others.

Many sincere believers get slain in the Spirit, which does not necessarily make them heretics, kooks, or deceived. Churches have many religious rituals, practices, and routines that are not in the Bible, and some are a blessing. One example is the sinner's prayer to accept Jesus, which is not in the Bible, but God has used it. However, the safest way to live is by reconciling every experience, activity, or practice with Biblical precepts. Either it's in the Bible or not. All believers must exercise discernment, act upon their convictions, and in the context of this study, be very careful about who lays hands on you and why!

*1 Timothy 5:22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.*

## **Review**

So, let's review what we've seen about the Laying on of hands.

### **Laying on of hands ...**

To impart blessings to family and heirs.

To transfer leadership authority with order and peace.

To make animal sacrifices, and the transfer of sin.

To preach the gospel, laying hands to heal the sick.

To be included with the other foundational teachings

To pray with compassion for the hurting.

To pray with people to get baptized in the Holy Spirit.

To recognize and give authority to leaders.

To send missionaries with the blessings of the church.

To impart spiritual gifts.

We should avoid laying hands on unworthy leaders.

We should avoid sin with the laying on of hands.

We should avoid laying hands hastily, and use discretion.

We should avoid religious theatre, and have discernment.

We should practice scriptural discernment in everything

Remember, the laying on of hands for healing was commanded by Jesus, and it is a foundational teaching of the Christian faith. So, be bold and step out by faith, and God will use you to lay hands on the sick for healing. We should exercise patience, have compassion, use discernment, be wise, and keep ourselves pure as it relates to laying on of hands.





# Money & Church

# Money & Church

## Introduction

We are going to look at money and the church. Not the Biblical principles of saving, borrowing, lending, usury, etc. There is a lot of great information in the Bible about that, but the times we live in require a more urgent and specific message. Given the popularity of some preachers who promote a gospel that says if you give money to a church or preacher, God will make you rich and prosperous, we will focus on what the scriptures say about giving and faith. Churchgoers know all about passing the plate during church services, accompanied by a mini message about giving, but where is that in the Bible? Some churches use psychology and secular marketing to raise funds to grow the church as a business venture rather than focusing on saving lost souls from a Christless eternity and equipping the believers to do the work of the ministry. So, to start the study, we'll look at the roots of giving in the Old Testament with tithes and offerings, then contrast the difference between giving under Jewish law and giving in the dispensation of grace.

## Abraham & Tithes

The word tithe means one-tenth, so giving a tithe or tithing means giving one-tenth of something. Tithing started with Abraham, who showed gratitude for a military victory by giving a tenth of the plunder from the battle to God. Abraham got involved in the war when his nephew Lot was taken captive as a prisoner of war, then he armed 318 of his trained servants and went to rescue him. Miraculously, Abraham, a shepherd, defeated the four kings with armies, and while returning from the battle, he met Melchizedek, the priest of the God Most High.

Without going into a detailed study about Melchizedek, we will take note of a few details about him. Melchizedek was the priest of God Most High, and his priesthood is eternal, indicating that he is part of the trinity of God (*Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:8-10, 6:20, 7:1-21*). In other words, Abraham had a personal visit from God in human form. As a result of his great victory and meeting with Melchizedek, Abraham gave a tenth of what he took from defeating the kings as an offering to God.

***Genesis 14:18-20*** *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand" ... Then Abram gave him (Melchizedek) a tenth of everything.*

After leaving Melchizedek, the King of Sodom, whom Abraham rescued in the battle, came to speak with Abraham. The Sodomite King proposed that he and Abraham divide the spoils from the victory, claiming all the people freed from captivity to be his slaves while suggesting that Abraham take the riches.

Isn't that like the Devil? Here's the Devil's deal for all the Pastors, churches, and ministries, I'll take the souls, and you take the money. Satan tried to set the same trap for Jesus by saying, I will give you all the kingdoms of this world if you bow and worship me. If Jesus had taken that bait, all of mankind would have been turned over to Satan and hopelessly lost forever (*Luke 4:5-8*).

However, some modern preachers have taken the Devil's bait, hook, line, and sinker. They covet great personal wealth for themselves and let Satan enslave the souls of the captives that should have been set free. Abraham didn't fall for that trick and would not take a single thing from an evil perverted king that could tarnish his reputation.

***Genesis 14:21-24*** *The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' I will accept nothing . . .*

Abraham, the father of multitudes like the stars and sand in number, would fight for every single soul. Remember how he interceded pleading with God to spare the righteous in Sodom, pressing God for every soul, assuming there were 50 souls, then 45, 40, 30, 20, and finally down to 10 (*Gen 18:23-33*). The bottom line is that true men of God prioritize eternal souls over all else.

***1 Peter 5:2-3*** *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

***1 Timothy 3:2-8 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ... He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. (Also, Titus 1:7, 11)***

The next mention of tithes was with Jacob, who also vowed to give ten percent as a token of his gratitude (*Genesis 28:20-22*). Then some 430 years after Abraham, God spoke to Moses to put tithing into the law. Tithing for the Israelites was different than the way we think of it. The Israelites lived in an agricultural society; they did not have a banking system with credit cards, paper money, and a fiat currency based on nothing but trust like we have today. They used standards of weights and measures and traded precious metals, agricultural, and animal products at their face value by bartering and negotiating for goods and services. In short, they didn't pay tithes with a check, cash, or credit card at an ATM in the church lobby, and their perception of tithing was completely different than ours.

### **The Law of Moses**

The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the following generations of Jewish people, did not go to the synagogue every Sabbath to pay tithes. There were no special envelopes, passing a plate, a tithing sermonette, a prayer of blessing over the tithers, and woes, warnings, and curses over those who failed to pay up.

Many were farmers, raised cattle, worked in various trades, and were subject to rain, climate conditions, and the plowing, planting, and harvesting seasons to determine how much they produced by the end of the year. So, at harvest time, or whenever the flocks or herds gave birth or sheared the wool, they set aside 10 percent. They stored the tithes for one year and then took them to the Levitical priest or the temple in Jerusalem.

If they lived too far from the temple, they would store the tithes for three years and then sell them for silver. After they made the journey, they would bring the silver to the temple and use the tithe money to buy a sacrifice to offer to the Lord. They purchased whatever they chose for their tithe, it could have been a cow, a goat, sheep, grain, or whatever, and after the priest sacrificed the Lord's portion, **those who gave the sacrifice would eat their portion and share it with the Levites, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows.** In some cases, it was like a festive celebration, like a giant family cookout with plenty of food for the house of God.

*Deuteronomy 14:22-29 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce **each year**. Eat the tithe of your **grain, new wine and oil**, and the firstborn of your **herds and flocks** in the presence of the LORD your God **at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name**, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. But **if that place is too distant** and you have been blessed by the LORD your God **and cannot carry your tithe** (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), **then exchange your tithe for silver**, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your*

*God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and **your household shall eat** there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. And **do not neglect the Levites** living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. **At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied,** and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.*

***Malachi 3:10** Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house ...*

### **Remembering the Poor**

The heart of God for orphans and widows has not changed, and there isn't an Old Testament and a New Testament God because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In the New Testament, James said that true religion and undefiled is to visit (help) the orphans and widows in their troubles.

***James 1:27** Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit **orphans and widows in their trouble,** and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

God designed the laws that Moses delivered to help the poor, widows, foreigners, orphans, and even to have regard for animals.

God cares about the land, requiring Israel to give a Sabbath rest to the land refraining from producing crops one year out of seven. God gave laws regarding the harvesting of crops requiring the farmers to leave the corners of the fields for the poor, and while gathering the harvest, whatever they dropped (gleanings), was left for the poor (*Lev 19:9-25*). Jesus and His disciples ate from the corners, and Boaz's intentionally dropped gleanings for Ruth (*Ruth 2:2-9, Matt 12:1*). Then at the harvest, they would give a tenth to God.

*Deuteronomy 24:19-21* When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. **Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow**, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. **Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow**. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. **Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow**.

### **The Money Changers**

Also, those who had to travel long distances to pay tithes were put into vulnerable situations when they reached the temple in Jerusalem. They needed to purchase cattle, sheep, etc., for their tithes and offerings. Greedy merchants and money changers took advantage of the travelers and made the temple a place of business, like a flea market. When Jesus saw it, he was outraged and made a whip, overturned the money tables, and drove them out of the temple.



***John 2:14-16 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"***

How many churches have the money changers tables in their lobby today? They have ATMs for tithes, teachings merchandise, tee shirts, books, wrist bands, coffee, and donuts, all for sale in the lobby. Outside they may be selling pumpkins or Christmas trees. The pre-service and mid-service announcements are commercials for online giving, the latest fund-raising activities, book store, café, exercise classes, child care, and whatever else they're pushing, along with the numerous church activities.

### **The Levites**

Under the Old Testament law, there was only one tribe out of twelve that God called, chose, and set apart to be the priestly tribe. The Levites were set apart from all secular occupations to give total dedication to the work of the Lord. No other tribes were allowed to touch the holy things in the tabernacle or temple under the penalty of death. But the Levites forfeited the right to ancestral territories, lands, and material blessings that the other tribes inherited, and instead, God was their inheritance. The Levites were given temple service, tithes, and offerings as the provision for their food. Levites were freed from secular occupations to dedicate their lives in service to God and his people.

Aaron was the father of the high priestly line, representing the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament through all generations, as seen in the verse below.

***Numbers 18:20-21*** *The LORD said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.*

Correlating to the Levitical priest in the Old Testament, those who work full time in the gospel of Christ have a right to receive support for their work.

***1 Corinthians 9:6-7*** *Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Whoever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?*

***1 Corinthians 9:13-14*** *Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*

Everyone God calls must be willing to forsake their earthly inheritance so they can lay up their treasures in heaven. God is the only inheritance and reward of his servants, not the houses, toys, or riches of this life.

As good soldiers of Christ, the marching orders may lead them into plenty or poverty, but they are content to serve God in any circumstance.

***Luke 14:33*** "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

***Philippians 3:7-8*** (the apostle Paul speaking) But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

***Philippians 4:11-13*** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Another point to make here is that Levites were required to pay tithes from the tithes. Tithing is not a pyramid scheme with one guy at the top keeping all the money for himself. Many ministries hoard all the money, and some "ministers" brag and flaunt their riches as a supposed sign of God's favor. It should go without saying how wrong that is, and may God have mercy on their souls.

***Numbers 18:26-28***, "When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave

*offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe." (Also Neh.10:38)*

## **Freewill Offerings**

The Israelites took up **freewill offerings** for different occasions. First, they took an offering to build the tabernacle, which was a very costly tent for worship, with gold, silver, and brass fixtures and furnishings. The purpose of this tent was for God to dwell with the Israelites as they travelled to the promised land. In a sense, even what Israel donated to God came from God.

*1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And **what do you have that you did not receive?** Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

God had so devastated the Egyptians with ten plagues that they were ready to give up anything to get Israel out of their land. And so, while leaving Egypt, Israel plundered the Egyptians (*Ex 12:35-36*) and later gave what they had taken to build the tabernacle. Everyone who gave did so from a willing heart (*Exodus 25:1-8, Ex 35:26-29*). There was no arm twisting, money pledges, car washes, or gimmicks. The people gave so generously that Moses had to stop them from giving anymore because they gave more than what was needed.

***Exodus 35:3** They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And **the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning.** So, all the skilled craftsmen who were*

*doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so, the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.*

### **King David**

Another freewill offering happened because of the building project for the temple in Jerusalem, which came through King David's inspiration. David approached the prophet Nathan with his idea to seek God's approval for the project. It was a noble idea but never before in history did God ever ask anyone to construct a permanent stone building as a dwelling place for his presence.

*1 Chronicles 17:4-6 "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in. I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up out of Egypt to this day. I have moved from one tent site to another, from one dwelling place to another. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their leaders whom I commanded to shepherd my people, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'*

Even though God never requested a house to be built for worship, he honored David's heart.

**The temple in Jerusalem is the only building ever chosen and sanctified by God**, where he put his name, and his eyes and heart are always on the temple (it was destroyed but will be rebuilt).

*2 Chronicles 7:15-16 "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. "For now, I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.*

But David was not the one to build a house for God, but he passed that project on to Solomon, his son. The people were willing and gave offerings for the project (*1 Chron 29:5-9*). However, David gave massive amounts of materials and wealth for abundant provision for every aspect of the temple.

*1 Chronicles 22:14-16 "I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the LORD a hundred thousand talents (3,750 tons) of gold, a million talents (37,500 tons) of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone. And you may add to them. You have many workmen: stonecutters, masons and carpenters, as well as men skilled in every kind of work in gold and silver, bronze and iron craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and the LORD be with you."*

In the book of Acts, we see spontaneous free will offerings given by new converts who saw the needs of the Jerusalem believers.

Jerusalem had been packed with travelers from around the world for the feast of Pentecost. When thousands of people came to faith in Christ, they stayed in Jerusalem, creating needs for the massive congregation. Many sold homes or possessions and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles.

***Acts 4:33-37** With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. **There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.***

The Apostle Paul had no problems collecting a free-will offering from different congregations to give to the poor saints in Jerusalem without taking anything for himself.

***2 Corinthians 8:1** (Paul speaking) And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given **the Macedonian churches**. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and **their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity**. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. **Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints**. And they did not do as we expected, **but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will**.*

We only give back to God what we have received from God. But the greatest freewill offering of all time was given by God when he gave his Son for us all, and with Christ, he freely gave us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

***Romans 8:32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?***

***2 Peter 1:3-4** as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

### **New Testament Tithing Curse?**

Moving to the New Testament, we will use the favorite verse of most modern preachers on tithing, and ironically it is from the Old Testament.

***Malachi 3:8-10** "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. **You are under a curse** the whole nation of you because **you are robbing me**. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, **that there may be food in my house**. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*



What's baffling about them using that verse is that it pronounces curses on the people for not paying tithes. It's astonishing how many Pastors are willing to put a curse on their congregations in attempts to guilt them into giving money or more money. That mentality only undermines the work of the cross because Jesus died to redeem us from the curse of the law with its condemnation and guilt.

***Galatians 3:11-14*** *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

### **Religious Leaders**

First, tithing is not for the church, but for Jews who live under Old Testament law. Nowhere in the New Testament do you see Jesus, the apostles, or anyone else receiving or giving tithes. The only time Jesus spoke about tithing was when he confronted the Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous under the law. The comments Jesus gave were critical of tithing as a method of obtaining righteousness and used it as an example to condemn the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

***Matthew 23:23*** *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law justice, mercy*

*and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.*

Here is another verse where Jesus condemns the self-righteous pride of those who think they are righteous by their works, like fasting and giving tithes.

***Luke 18:9-12*** *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men robbers, evildoers, adulterers or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

### **Discipleship Giving**

Another comment that Jesus made puts the righteousness of the Pharisees into perspective. We live by a higher law than the law delivered by Moses, which is the law of the Spirit. Jesus said if we want to be his disciple, we must be willing to give up everything, and it may be that the Holy Spirit may lead us to give up ALL that we have for the gospel.

***Matthew 5:20*** *For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (giving a tenth), you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

***Luke 14:33*** *In the same way, any of you who does not give up EVERYTHING he has cannot be my disciple.*

Jesus wants total dedication in every area of our lives, not just ten percent of our money. Notice what Jesus said to a rich young ruler who asked him what he was lacking in his life.

***Matthew 19:21-26** Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, **go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.**" When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, **it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.**" When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "**Who then can be saved?**" Jesus looked at them and said, "**With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**"*

After hearing the conversation with the rich man, Peter and the other disciples who had already left their fishing businesses, tax accounting firms, houses, and families to follow Jesus questioned what was in it for them?

***Matthew 19:27** Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"*

What people give up to follow Jesus does not even remotely compare to the rewards he will give them for their service, both in this life and the next.

***Matthew 19:28-29*** So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold (100 times more), and inherit eternal life.

***1 Corinthians 15:58*** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

***2 Corinthians 4:17*** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

Jesus will not ask everyone to sell everything to follow him, but if he asks you, you better do it. Unlike the legalistic Pharisees, God understands our histories, resources, attitudes, and motives as different needs arise before us, whether we give or not or how much. God is concerned with the heart, not the wallet. The wallet is an easy fix for God, but the heart is up to us.

***2 Corinthians 8:12-15*** For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.

***Mark 12:41-44*** *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything all she had to live on."*

### **No Temple in Jerusalem**

The most popular tithing passage from Malachi quotes God as saying you are robbing me, and some would have you believe that is a felony or an unpardonable sin. The reason God gives for tithing is “that there may be food in my house.” We saw earlier that Old Testament tithing was supposed to provide food for the Levites, widows, orphans, and foreigners. In regards to the poor, Jesus said, the poor you have with you always (*Matt 26:11*).

We have, and will always be obligated to help the poor, and that is never going away. But the Levites and the Levitical priesthood ceased to exist after 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed the temple and scattered the Jews. Technically, with no temple or priesthood, there is no Biblical way to pay tithes according to the law of Moses. We are now operating in the ministry of the Spirit, with Jesus as our eternal High Priest, our bodies are the temple of God, and our giving should be by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

***Hebrews 4:14-15*** ... *since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the*

*Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet was without sin*

*Hebrews 7:21-25 ... but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

*1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

### **Peter's Building Project**

Like in a vision, Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, and they saw Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus, surrounded by a bright light. Then Peter had a brilliant idea, let's start a building project with three buildings, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Maybe, as the owner of a commercial fishing business, his corporate mind kicked into gear and took off.

Yes, we can take pledges for donations, advertise on social media, mail flyers to the area, go on radio and television, and build a world crusade center. While his unfiltered thoughts flowed through his moving mouth, in mid-sentence, God the Father spoke from heaven and shot down all his big ideas.

*Matthew 17:4-5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **While he was still speaking**, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "***This is My beloved Son ... Hear Him!***"*

For religious people, the first step to starting a church is getting a building, step two is getting a larger building, and step three is getting a mega building. They think the building is the key to success, so they incur huge expenses and debts, and in many cases, the only reason the church exists is to pay the bills of the building.

Historically, there were no Christian church buildings until around 326 A.D., when the Roman Emperor Constantine mingled government, pagan religion, and Christianity and anointed himself as the head of the church and state. The Romans Christianized pagan temples, holidays, and statues, or more aptly stated, he ruled over the paganization of Christianity. Then they started building enormous cathedrals to display the wealth and power of the church and state.

Before that time, the Christians were persecuted and met in houses, fields, catacombs, or wherever they could find shelter from being attacked, which is still the case in many countries.

*Acts 7:48-49 "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me?"*

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

### **Obedient Giving**

We have been bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus. If we truly belong to Jesus, he owns our body, soul, spirit, house, car, gifts, talents, and everything in our bank accounts, 401K, and savings. God does not need our money, but what he wants is our **obedience by faith**, which may be tested by money, even if that costs us everything. (*Acts 6:7, Romans 1:5, 16:26*)

*Luke 14:33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake ALL that he has cannot be My disciple.*

God is not impressed with what you give in disobedience. God gave a commandment to King Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites with their flocks and herds. But Saul kept the best of the sheep and cattle for himself and let the enemy king live.



And when asked, Saul said that he had obeyed the Lord by destroying the enemies and blamed his men for keeping anything alive. The man of God Samuel answered him that partial obedience is disobedience, rebellion, and witchcraft.

*1 Samuel 15:22-23 But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices (your tithes and offerings) as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? **To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination (witchcraft), and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.**"*

Another example is Ananias and Saphira, a married couple who sold a house and brought an offering to the apostles but lied, saying they gave everything when they held back some money. It was their money to do with as they pleased, but they lied about it.

In today's terms, that would be like selling a house for \$300,000 and giving \$250,000 to the church but saying you gave it all. Today they would be held up as heroes, with a plaque and their picture in the lobby, and they would be recognized and applauded, regardless of the lie. Peter identified the source of the lie as coming from Satan, the father of lies.

*Acts 5:1-5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property ... **kept back part of the money for himself ... Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit ...***

... *What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.*" **When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died.** And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

Paul states that doing the will of God has greater significance than all the sacrifices and offerings (money) you can give to God.

*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 Living by Faith**

You may be thinking, if Jesus did not have a church building and did not pass the plate or receive tithes, how did he support himself and his ministry? The answer is that Jesus and his disciples lived by faith. Jesus taught us by his example how to live by faith and not worry about what we will eat, what we will wear, and where we will sleep. Jesus received money, meals, and places to stay by faith.

Jesus did not restrict his ministry to the four walls of the temple building or a single synagogue. Jesus moved about continuously, and as he walked or crisscrossed the Sea of Galilee by boat, he taught, healed, and changed lives spontaneously without a building or designated meeting places or meeting times.

Jesus ministered at a well, a funeral, synagogues, the temple, in homes, on hillsides, on the water's edge, in the middle of the sea, and walking from town to town. Everywhere Jesus went, he had teachable moments, healing campaigns, meals, miracles, and answered questions. Jesus had no mortgage, utility bills, salaries to pay, musicians, no debts, and institutional backing, but he lived and ministered by faith.

Jesus died naked on the cross with no earthly possessions. Jesus loved souls, not money. Everywhere we go as believers, there are opportunities to touch lives for Jesus, gas stations, grocery stores, work, etc. We also do not need a building, musicians, or institutional backing to touch souls.

Most people associate the word church with buildings, which is incorrect. The word church comes from pagan roots, not from the original scriptures. The original Greek word is ekklesia meaning a religious congregation or meeting, with a heavy emphasis on the people, whether many or few and NOT buildings or institutions.

The following are some verses showing how and where the people who followed Jesus congregated to experience Jesus' teaching, healing, and miracles outside of the walls of a building.

*Luke 5:3. Jesus preached from a boat, then performed the miracle of the great catch of fish*

**Luke 5:3.** *at the water's edge Jesus preaches to crowds from a boat, then goes to deep water and performed the miracle of the great catch of fish.*

**Matthew 5.** *with multitudes on a hillside, Jesus Preached the sermon on the mount.*

**Matthew 24.** *with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus Prophesied about end times.*

**Matthew 26:6.** *they congregated at Simon the lepers' house, they ate, and Jesus taught and healed the sick.*

**Matthew 8:14.** *they congregated at Peter's house, Jesus heals and teaches the disciples*

**Luke 19:5** *Jesus and followers congregate at Zacchaeus house for a day*

**Luke 14:1** *they congregate at a Pharisees house, and Jesus taught the crowd*

**Matthew 9:9-10** *Matthew leaves his profession as a tax collector and follows Jesus. Then Jesus and followers congregate at Matthews house for a meal and teaching*

**Luke 11:37** *at another Pharisees' house they congregate for a meal and Jesus condemns all the Pharisees'*

*Luke 10:38-40* The followers of Jesus congregate at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' house, for a meal and teaching

*Mark 14:12-14* The 12 apostles congregate in an upper room of a house for the Passover meal, best known as the last supper.

### **12 Disciples sent out by Faith:**

Jesus sent his disciples on missions so they could learn to live and minister by faith and take note of the instructions he gave them when he sent them out by faith.

*Matthew 10:5-11* These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. **Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.** “Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.

### **70 Disciples sent out by Faith:**

Jesus set the example of faith, then sent the 12 apostles out by faith, and later reinforced the same pattern of faith by sending out another 70 disciples by faith. This pattern of trusting God is not always easy, but the challenge serves to strengthen and increase our faith, and provide testimonies for the glory of God.

***Luke 10:4-8, 17 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' . . . The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."***

They went out by faith; they took nothing with them. They did not hold fundraisers, sell books or tee shirts, did no car washes to support the trip, made no withdrawals from their banks, had no credit card or checkbook, and had no reservations for a hotel or a place to stay. They did not even take their wallets or a change of clothes, but they did have faith in the word that Jesus spoke to them. And they returned to Jesus with glowing testimonies of healing and provision (*Luke 22:35*). As we just read, Jesus said, freely you have received, freely give. And this was before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the church quickly grew to thousands. Jesus commanded them to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (*Mark 16:15-16*), but they were building a megachurch in Jerusalem. Maybe Peter was tempted to start a building fund again, but God pushed them out of the nest by allowing great persecution against the church, which scattered them to the ends of the earth whether they wanted to go or not.

**Matthew 10:5-11.** Upon entering a town or village, seek out a worthy person and stay at that house until you leave.

**Luke 10:4-8 & 17.** When you find a house, stay there, and eat & drink what they give you.

**Acts 2:1-4.** The church was born in a house. One hundred and twenty people were praying in the upper room of the house when they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues.

**Acts 2:5-47.** With 3,000 new converts and a growing community, various disciples would meet daily in the temple or from house to house to study the scriptures and have meals together.

**Acts 3:1-26 & Acts 4:1-4.** Peter and John went up together into the temple to pray and spontaneously decided to stop to pray for a beggar who could not walk. After they prayed, he was healed and went walking, leaping, and praising God. The commotion he made drew a crowd to see what happened, so Peter preached, and 5,000 converted to Christ.

**Acts 5:12-42.** Many signs and wonders followed the Apostles, and multitudes came to Christ, but the Apostles were imprisoned, beaten, and released with a warning not to preach in Jesus' name. The Apostles and followers of Jesus went daily in and around the temple and in every house to have fellowship, and they continued to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

**Acts 8:1-3.** *Saul (A.K.A, Paul) was persecuting the church, entering all the houses of the believers in Jesus in attempts to disrupt and destroy their faith and meeting places.*

**Acts 9:43.** *Ten years after Pentecost, Peter was in Joppa at a house owned by Simon the tanner when servants from a Gentile (non-Jewish) Roman Centurion named Cornelius came for him.*

**Acts 9:43 & 10:1-48 & 11:1-18,** *Peter entered Cornelius's house to find people who had assembled to hear from God by Peter's words. Everyone in the house comes to faith in Christ, taking water baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit. Cornelius's house was the first Gentile church. Peter stays a few days before reporting to the elders in Jerusalem about how God has accepted gentiles into the faith.*

**Romans 16:5,** *Paul sends greetings by letter, saying to greet Priscilla and Aquila and greet the congregation (church) that meets in their house.*

**Colossians 4:15,** *Paul sent greetings by letter saying to greet Nymphas and the congregation (church) that meets in his house.*

**Philemon 1:2,** *Paul sending greetings by letter, saying to greet Apphia our sister & Archippus and the congregation (church) that meets in your house.*



## **Paul's Sacrificial Life**

After Paul's conversion to Christ, he embarked on several missionary trips to spread the gospel to the world. Paul had no home, no salary, no paid staff, no musicians, no insurance, and no guarantees of anything other than persecution, beatings, and imprisonment wherever he went. However, the fruit of his ministry speaks for itself. Regarding money sent to Paul, there is one thing you knew for sure, whether anyone gave or not, he was still going to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ with every fiber of his being, regardless of his safety or provisions. Whenever Paul defended his ministry, he avoided mentioning any accomplishments but spoke of his sufferings for Christ.

***2 Corinthians 6:4-11 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you.***

***2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I***

*have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; **I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.** Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.*

### **Paul's life of Faith**

After the Apostle Paul's conversion to Christ, they sent him to take the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). When we follow his travels, we see the same pattern of doing the ministry by faith as given by Jesus to the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples that Jesus sent out. Paul went out by faith and stayed with people who opened their homes. Sometimes they held meetings out of that home, synagogues, or even rented rooms. At times Paul received offerings, and other times he worked as a tentmaker to provide for his needs (*1 Cor 9:6*).

*Acts 9:19. Saul (A.K.A. Paul) goes to Damascus and stays certain days with disciples.*

*Acts 16:14-15. Paul and Silas travel to Thyatira. Lydia and her family convert to faith in Christ, and Paul and Silas stay at her house.*

*Acts 16:40. After Paul and Silas got released from jail, they met the brethren at Lydia's house.*

*Acts 18:1-3 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, ... with his wife Priscilla ... So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation, they were tentmakers.*

*Acts 19:9-10. Paul went to Corinth, rented a lecture hall, stayed for two years, and taught his disciples daily*

*Acts 20:4-6. Paul and eight co-workers stay with believers in Troas for seven days.*

*Acts 20:17-35. Paul reminds Ephesians that he taught them publicly & house to house.*

*Acts 21:3-6. Paul and co-workers went to Tyre, found some disciples there, and stayed with them for seven days.*

*Acts 21:7. Paul and co-workers went to Ptolemais, found some disciples there, and stayed with them for a day.*

*Acts 21:8-10. Paul and co-workers went to Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the Evangelist.*

*Acts 21:16. Paul and co-workers in Jerusalem stay at the home of Mnason,*

*Acts 27:3. While under custody in Sidon, Paul met with his friends who cared for and provided for his needs.*

*Acts 28:13-15. Paul in Puteoli finds some brothers and stays a week with them and meets with some brothers who had traveled to see him.*

### **Freely Received, Freely Give**

Above all, Paul never wanted the gospel message tainted by money, but He had no problem whatsoever, taking up a collection for the poor. In his letters, we see he actively involved the churches in supporting each other financially as the needs became critical.

*2 Corinthians 9:1-9-15, "As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remains forever." (See also: John 13:29, Matt.25:33-40, Gal.2:9-10, Rom.15:26, 1Tim.5:16, Acts 6:1, Jas 2:5,14-17, Prov.28:27, etc.)*

Paul would never allow money to be a cause for offense or a stumbling block. But he had strong convictions that he had scriptural grounds to receive money from the churches for his support, especially churches he started or had labored to help.

Paul would have never accepted money if it would compromise the gospel or bring reproach to the name of Christ.

***1 Corinthians 9:6-13-14, Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel!" (Also, 1 Tim.5:17,18)***

***1 Corinthians 9:11-12** If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? **But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.***

***1 Corinthians 9:14-15** In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. **But I have not used any of these rights.** And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. **I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast.***

***1 Corinthians 9:18** What then is my reward? Just this: **that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge,** and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.*

***2 Corinthians 11:7-9** Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you **by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge?** **I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to***

*serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.*

Another thing that we will point out is that none of the apostles or disciples who followed Jesus did it for the money, and they all paid the ultimate price to follow Jesus. They crucified Peter upside down, Nero had Paul martyred, and all the other apostles experienced cruel deaths as martyrs with one exception. They tried to execute the Apostle John by throwing him into a vat of boiling oil, but he miraculously came out unharmed. So, they sent him to die on the barren island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation. The early church endured indescribable tortures and deprivations. However, the persecution against them was like pouring gas on the fire of the Holy Ghost, which only resulted in the gospel exploding like wildfire across the whole earth (*Acts 17:5,6*).

Contrast the testimonies and lifestyles of the apostles with us today, especially in America. We are wealthy by the world's standards, we live like kings (*1 Corinthians 4:8*), and we have had probably the most prosperous and comfortable lives of anyone in history. The greatest threat to the modern churches (in America) has not been persecution but compromise, greed, pride, and sin. However, the clouds of persecution are on the horizon, and we may have our time to be tested in the fire soon (*1 Corinthians 3:12-15*).

## **False Prophets**

Contrast the life and message of Jesus and his followers in the Bible with what we see and hear from the megachurch ministers and prosperity preachers today. We should be careful about giving money to anyone that does not have a godly character with good motives, or we could be supporting false prophets and partake in their sins. We are at the end of the end times, and the fulfillment of the prophecies about false apostles, false prophets, and spiritual deceptions is increasing, so we must always be alert.

*1 Timothy 4:1-2, In later times, they abandon faith, listen to deceiving spirits and demonic teachings by hypocrites*

*2 Corinthians 11:4, fake apostles preach another Jesus, another spirit, a different gospel, (prosperity, self-help, etc.)*

*2 Corinthians 11:13 -15, false apostles, deceitful workmen, Satan's servants mask as servants of righteousness, enslave, exploit, take advantage, push themselves*

The fastest way to find a false prophet is to follow the money. False prophets are all about the money and all about themselves. Many ministries build a personality cult of a charismatic minister, who peddles teachings for profit, enticing people with the hope of success and riches.

Jesus and Paul warned that these fake ministers would enter the flock dressed as sheep but are wolves who draw disciples to themselves and will not spare the flock from exploitation and destruction (*Acts 20:29-30*). Peter mentions that there were false prophets in Israel (400 false to 1 true), and there will be false teachers in the church, showing that deceivers and frauds never change or go away.

Notice that Peter says they will exploit you, and being experts in greed, they produce greed, worldly-mindedness, immoral and ungodly behavior in their followers.

***Matthew 7:15** "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

***Acts 20:29-30** "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*

***2 Peter 2:1-3** But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce **destructive heresies**, even **denying the sovereign Lord** who brought them **bringing swift destruction** on themselves. Many will follow **their shameful ways** and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. **In their greed these teachers will exploit you** with stories they have made up. **Their condemnation** has long been hanging over them, and **their destruction** has not been sleeping.*



*2 Peter 2:12-15 But these men **blaspheme in matters they do not understand**. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to **carouse in broad daylight**. They are blots and blemishes, **reveling in their pleasures** while they feast with you. With **eyes full of adultery**, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; **they are experts in greed** an accursed brood!*

### **Balaam - Money & Sex**

Peter mentions a false prophet named Balaam of Beor. And although Balaam had died centuries before Peter was born, he typified an evil spirit that continues to influence false prophets today, who love the wages of wickedness.

*2 Peter 2:15 They have left the straightway and wandered off to follow the way of **Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness**.*

The prophet Balaam appears in twelve chapters of the Bible, he is mentioned by name 59 times, and his story serves as a warning for us. Balaam was not from Israel, but he did hear from God, and he also had 100 percent accuracy in his seven prophecies recorded in the Bible (*Numbers 22-24*). And, as the previous verse mentions, he loved money.

***Numbers 24:13 'Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the***

*command of the LORD and I must say only what the LORD says'?*

The first thing Balaam said was that he could only speak the word of God, which he did accurately. And secondly, he wanted a palace filled with silver and gold. So, you might be thinking, how was he a false prophet if he spoke the word of God accurately? After blessing Israel with his prophecies, he later brought a curse on them. How? He consulted and advised Israel's enemy on how to corrupt and destroy Israel. He was not a false prophet because of what he prophesied but was a false prophet because of the lifestyle he promoted. Balaam peddled influence and compromise, making sin acceptable and widespread.

Balaam instructed the king of Moab to send Moabite women to seduce the men of Israel to commit sexual immorality, leading them to worship pagan sex gods. Many fake apostate churches today do the same thing by openly accepting and even promoting every kind of sexual sin and deviancy, and they will also incur the same condemnation.

***Numbers 25:1-2** While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods.*

The Israelites defiled themselves, and the wrath of God broke out in a plague upon them. Phinehas, son of Aaron, stopped the plague by putting a spear through an Israelite man and a Moabite woman, who were blatantly and defiantly sinning before the elders of Israel.

That day 24,000 people died of a plague. Who knows, maybe it was sexually transmitted venereal disease? That incident left a long-lasting scar on the children of Israel. Later, God told Moses to take vengeance on the Moabites and Balaam.

***Numbers 31:7, 8*** *They fought against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every man. Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.*

Balaam was served justice at the end of a sword. But notice how Jesus had revealed Himself to the church in Pergamum, where they had a modern Balaam teaching in their church. Jesus was holding a sharp two-edged sword!

***Revelation 2:12-16*** *"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live where Satan has his throne. ... Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. ... 'Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

Jesus was talking to the church about teachers who were like Balaam, they were still around then, and they are around today. Jesus still has the same judgment for Balaam in the church, a sharp double-edged sword (*Heb 4:12,13*).

There are teachers out there that preach from the Bible and sound religious from the pulpit. But they love money and will accept, allow, and promote any variation of sexual immorality or lifestyle in their church, so long as it fills the seats and they get a palace of silver and gold like Balaam. There is no shortage of examples of mega ministries that have disgraced the name of Christ by living a double life and tolerating sin in the church. Peter describes the fate of Balaam and of those who have his spirit of greed, love of money, and immorality.

*2 Peter 2:17* These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. **Blackest darkness is reserved for them.** For they mouth empty, boastful words and, **by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people** who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while **they themselves are slaves of depravity** for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

*Jude 1:10-12* Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals these are the very things that destroy them. **Woe to them!** They have taken the way of Cain; **they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error;** they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, **without fruit and uprooted twice dead.** They are wild waves of the sea,

*foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

### **Gehazi's Leprosy of Greed**

Next, we'll look at Gehazi, the servant of Elisha who was next in line to carry the mantle of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. One day a leper named Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, came to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. Elisha told him to go to the river and dip seven times to receive a miraculous healing. Naaman obeyed the word of the Lord from Elisha and dipped in the river, and he got healed, then he went back to Elisha, wanting to give him a gift to show his gratitude. Elisha refused to receive gold, silver, clothing, or any gifts but said to go in peace. Then Naaman left to return to Syria. However, Gehazi saw an opportunity to gain riches and ran after Naaman and money.

*2 Kings 5:20, 21 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him." So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked.*

Gehazi chose to serve money instead of God. Gehazi had the great privilege of being the understudy of Elisha, and everyone in the school of the prophets would have given anything to have that privilege. Instead of following in the footsteps of Elijah and Elisha, he chose to chase after money (*Matthew 6:24*).

To top it off, Gehazi had to make up a story and lie and deceive to get the money.

*2 Kings 5:22-24 "Everything is all right," Gehazi answered. "My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.'" "By all means, take two talents," said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver (150 pounds of silver) in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.*

Unfortunately for Gehazi, the Lord revealed everything he had done to Elisha, and he waited for Gehazi to return. When Gehazi entered the room, Elisha gave him a word from the Lord.

*2 Kings 5:25, 26 Then he went in and stood before his master Elisha. "Where have you been, Gehazi?" Elisha asked. "Your servant didn't go anywhere," Gehazi answered. But Elisha said to him, "Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? **Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservants?***

God sees what is in our hearts, all of our motives and desires, and when Gehazi had a lust for clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, and so forth, God revealed it to Elisha. And the question Elisha asked is even more relevant today than it was then, **is it the time to take money or run after the things of this world?** There is no time to be anchored to this earth by temporary things because Jesus is returning soon to take us to our eternal treasures in the heavens. Judgment came swiftly to Gehazi.

*2 Kings 5:27 Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever." Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.*

The logical consequence of taking money from someone with leprosy is that you might get infected with their leprosy. Gehazi loved money so much that it blinded him from the danger of leprosy, and the infection that first ate at his soul later rotted his flesh. We need to be careful not to catch someone else's leprosy, be selective about who and what we listen to, and distance ourselves from the spiritual leper colonies or churches that preach greed. The spiritual lepers like Gehazi are the religious leaders that love the world and are enemies of the cross of Christ (*Philippians 3:18,19*).

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, so there have always been spiritual leaders who have sold their souls to the Devil for money. But there is no healing or forgiveness for spiritual leprosy in Hell, now is the time for repentance before entering eternity.

***James 5:1-5*** Now ***listen***, you ***rich*** people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ***Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.***

***Ps 109:6-19*** He (Judas) loved to pronounce a curse may it come on him; he found no pleasure in blessing may it be far from him. ***He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil. May it be like a cloak wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him.***

The next time we see Gehazi, he is with the King of Israel and telling stories about all the miracles that Elisha did. Gehazi had become a picture of apostasy, full of leprosy, speaking about past revivals, but he was spiritually dead. Gehazi could not work a physical job (impaired by leprosy) because up to that time, his bread and butter came from being a religious leader in the ministry. Sadly, now he was making merchandise of his past association with Elisha making friends with the world, and they welcomed him into their eternal habitations.

***2 Kings 8:4-5*** The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, "***Tell me***



*about all the great things Elisha has done." Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to beg the king for her house and land. Gehazi said, "This is the woman, my lord the king, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life."*

***Luke 16:1-9-14** I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings ... "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.**"*

Having seen how the love of money can lead to destruction, we should take heed to avoid any prophets or teachers who preach covetousness and greed. If you hear prosperity preachers say you have to give to get, or they say the more you give, the bigger your blessing, just run. Get out as fast as you can, or you might catch Gehazi's leprosy! Jesus sees through the spiritual deprivation of those that run after money and advises them on what to do, and it can be summed up with one word, repent.

***Revelation 3:17-19**, You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can*

*see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent!*

## **Money and the End Times**

Many godly pastors, teachers, and preachers share a solid, balanced view of money, and there is nothing wrong or sinful about being blessed by God with riches, even more so when you use your resources to be a blessing to others.

*1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

But we are in the end times, and we know as we draw near to the coming of the Lord, there will be catastrophic financial upheavals and a complete takeover of all financial resources by the antichrist government in a global (digital) currency. All opposition to the antichrist's global empire will suffer sanctions and revocation of access to banks, money, credit, and the ability to make purchases, sell assets, or even stay alive. That global financial control will not come into full power until after the rapture. However, we are currently in the initial stages and development of that system with the onset of digital currencies and cashless societies, social scoring, ESG scores, and other globalist agendas that are rapidly being implemented and continuously moving forward day by day.

It is crucial to cultivate the right financial mindset for the end times because the world can change in one day, as it did at Pearl Harbor, 911, or Noah's flood. By the way, Noah moved with fear for 100 years as he prepared the ark before the flood. But Noah's neighbors, friends, and the rest of the world paid no attention to the warnings. They lived their everyday life occupying their time with eating, drinking, weddings, gardening and business as usual until the day disaster hit.

***Matthew 24:37-39** "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, **until the day that Noah entered the ark, 'and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.***

We are living in the end times, and at any time, Jesus will return and snatch away his bride. **Every earthly thing that the bride owns will be left behind.** And for all those who remain during the great tribulation, all their wealth will be useless, their silver and gold cannot save them, they cannot eat their gold, and they cannot buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast.

***Ezekiel 7:19-21** They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be an unclean thing. Their silver and gold will not be able to save them in the day of the LORD's wrath. They will not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it, for it has made them stumble into sin. They were proud of their beautiful jewelry and used it to make their*

*detestable idols and vile images. Therefore, I will turn these into an unclean thing for them. I will hand it all over as plunder to foreigners and as loot to the wicked of the earth, and they will defile it.*

***Zephaniah 1:18*** *Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth."*

***Revelation 13:1-17*** *He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.*

So, we should not put our hope in uncertain riches because the value of money can crash and become worthless overnight. Besides hyperinflation, access to our bank accounts, savings, debit cards, and credit cards can be denied and terminated immediately. That's when believers must trust God to meet all their needs. Jesus counsels the church to buy gold tried in the fire, symbolic of having a tested and proven faith.

***Revelation 3:16-18*** *"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white*

*garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*

***1 Peter 1: 6-9** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come **so that your faith of greater worth than gold**, which perishes even though **refined by fire may be proved genuine** and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

True riches are the spiritual riches that come from trusting God in every situation. The rich have the money to pay their bills or buy whatever they want, and they don't need faith because they have money. However, the poor who struggle financially and are under pressure turn to God for help and rely on him in times of need, and God provides miraculously, time and time again. The poor are humble and see the hand of God providing in every situation.

***James 2:5** Hearken, my beloved brethren, **Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith**, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

***Psalms 37:25** I have been young, and now am old; Yet **I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.***

Jesus understands the poor and persecuted and how outwardly they physically have to endure poverty and affliction. He also knows that inwardly, those problems and challenges are working to build faith and something eternal in their lives, making them rich in their relationship with God.

***Revelation 2:9-10, I (Jesus) know your afflictions and your poverty yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you; the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life, (an eternal crown for martyrs).***

***2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.***

## **Summary**

Here is a summary of some of the things we have looked at:

- The church is not under the law of Moses, like animal sacrifices and tithing
- The church is under the Law of Spirit, a higher law and willing to surrender ALL to Jesus

- The church is not a building, but is a group of people The church resources should be used to spread the gospel and help the poor
- The ministry of Jesus, and the Apostles functioned by faith, their needs were met daily as needed
- Those laboring in the gospel receive support from others, and can also work with their own hands
- True servants of God do not minister for the money, they will not let money be a cause of offense
- True servants are willing to suffer any affliction, any deprivation, and even martyrdom for the gospel
- False teachers love money, want to be rich, and will deceive, defile and destroy others to be rich
- False teachers lose their true calling, become like spiritual lepers, and suffer immediate and eternal consequences
- The poor will reap eternal benefits from a life of dependance on God, and they are rich in faith
- In the end times, believers can't allow money and material possessions to be an anchor binding them to the earth, so there will be nothing holding them back when Jesus comes in the clouds to take them to heaven at the rapture.

We need to seek first King Jesus and his kingdom, and keep our eyes fixed on him, He is returning soon!

*Mathew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But***

*seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

*Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,***



## Tool Box Series

# Preaching

Good vs Bad



1	<b>Context, References</b>	<b>Pretext, Twist Word</b>
2	<b>Preach Christ, Humble</b>	<b>Preach Themselves</b>
3	<b>Word of God, Gospel</b>	<b>Self Help, Psychology</b>
4	<b>Everlasting Gospel</b>	<b>Winds of Doctrine</b>
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6	<b>Godliness, Holiness</b>	<b>Worldly, Compromise</b>
7	<b>Reconciliation, Life</b>	<b>Condemnation, Death</b>
8	<b>Called, Spirit Filled</b>	<b>Hirelings, Wolves</b>
9	<b>Believers Participate</b>	<b>Sheep are Spectators</b>

## Good vs Bad Preaching

### Introduction

Have you ever considered being an independent thinker by analyzing and questioning the messages you hear being preached or taught? The book of Acts records that those who think that way have a noble character.

*Acts 17:10-11 ... the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Questioning the scriptural accuracy of a preacher may sound intimidating, especially for new or uninformed Christians. However, scriptural ignorance, and complacency, are not an option in the end times with the deception that is coming. The Bible tells us of a great falling away from Christ with false religious leaders and a global religion that will affect everyone on earth. We should not blindly follow anyone but Jesus, so it is essential to know the difference between the voice of Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, and the voice of Satan's messengers, the strangers.

*John 10:2-5 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. "*

*And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and **the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.** "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for **they do not know the voice of strangers.**"*

This study will help sift through the multitudes of voices, with all the preachers and teachers, to separate the wheat from the chaff, truth from error, and religious cliché from the substance. Our goal is to help give Biblical discernment regarding the message content and the character of preachers. And, if you feel called to preach or teach but are inexperienced, this study will provide scriptural guard rails to help you stay on track when sharing God's word. But this is not a comprehensive study for seminary students who want to be theologians. We will not use institutional jargon but briefly, compare distinctions between good and bad preachers and message content. We want to encourage simplicity and pure devotion to Christ in communicating the unadulterated word of God.

These are just guidelines, the Holy Spirit is the teacher, and He is the one who brings life. Regarding preaching, there are two aspects, the messenger and their message, which cannot be separated. You could say that the preacher has a public and a private life, but what happens in private reveals the true character and determines what kind of fruit they produce, good or bad.

A life spent in prayer, studying the word of God, and walking in continuous obedience to the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit and greater power to see souls saved and transformed forever.

But by contrast, even ungodly hypocrites can put on a religious performance providing riveting entertainment that appeals to the fallen, sinful nature. But God is not mocked, and you reap what you sow. If you plant apple seeds, you will harvest apples. And if you sow to the fleshly lusts and itchy ears motivational messages of worldly success or moral compromise, or salvation by works, what will you reap? Rest assured that whatever they are, they will not be born-again disciples of Jesus!

We will attempt to glean what we can from the scriptures to identify the best practices and ethics for preaching and teaching the word of God. We will outline the good, the bad, and the ugly of preaching and expose some nonbiblical and erroneous preaching methods, as well as the character defects of the ministers that are bad and should be avoided or outright rejected.

*1 Timothy 6:3-5 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to **the doctrine which accords with godliness**, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, **useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth**, who suppose that **godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself.*

*Philippians 4:9 (Paul)The things which you **learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do**, and the God of peace will be with you.*

***1 Timothy 4:12-13 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.***

### **The Messenger**

Theologians and seminaries educate and train professional religionists in public speaking, theology, and denominational narratives. That's all fine and good, but that is not how Jesus and the apostles worked with their disciples to train them. Institutional training without the gifts and calling of God is questionable, at best. It seemed incomprehensible to religious leaders of Jesus' time that God could speak through uneducated people, especially two ignorant and smelly fishermen like Peter and John.

***Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.***

In the original Greek, this verse reads that Peter and John were agrammatos, defined as illiterate, and they were idiots, meaning an ignoramus or an idiot. So, in the eyes of the religious leaders, they saw Peter and John as crude fishermen, illiterate idiots, and not fit to serve God. But Jesus chose Peter and John and made them pillars of his church, with the genuine gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, and God used them to change the world forever. God is the only one who chooses, appoints, and spiritually equips those who serve him, NOT any individuals, religious denominations, or institutions.

**Romans 9:15-16** For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So, then it is **not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.**

**1 Corinthians 1:26-29** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But **God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.**

Just because someone has a title like Pastor, Apostle, Bishop, or whatever does not mean you should blindly trust them. An official title is part of a job description but is not proof of someone's moral character or spiritual attributes. We cannot be presumptuous because who someone is inside their heart and mind comes out when they speak, and that spirit can be transferred to us, whether good or bad.

**John 6:63** "(Jesus speaking) **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**

**Luke 6:45** (Jesus speaking) **The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored**

*up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart (or spirit) his mouth speaks.*

If you sense pride, arrogance, greed, or uncleanness when you hear a preacher speak, leave, get out of there, and go somewhere else. You would not eat rotten maggot-infested food from the garbage can or drink colored water from a toilet bowl because those are unclean vessels and dangerous biohazards that could lead to sickness and death (besides being vile and repulsive). So, we should not consume spiritual food and drink from a preacher whose mind is in the sewer and who feeds on the garbage of this world. Those whom God calls, he equips, but it is the preacher's responsibility to be a vessel of honor, living a clean and godly life,

*2 Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will **be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master**, prepared for every good work.*

*2 Corinthians 7:1-2 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.*

## The Message Format

As we evaluate the message content, let's lay down some ground rules. First, we will look at the anatomy of a sermon. The closest Biblical models we have for this are from Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and the letters or epistles, written by the apostles to the churches. Using the example of the apostles, we will use the

Message	
Greeting (From, To)	
Introduction (Topic)	_____
	_____
Body (Content, Details, Illustrations)	_____
	_____
	_____
	_____
	_____
Close (Call to Action)	_____
	_____
	_____

template of a letter as a basic format for delivering a message.

### Greeting

Letters begin with a greeting, identifying the writer and the recipient. Also, this is typically a warm-up period to build rapport and connect with recipients before launching into the reason for the message.

### Introduction

In the introduction, the preacher sets up the reason or theme for the message. It is like a bricklayer using a plumb line, string, and level to build a wall. The first row of bricks serves as a guide for all the bricks that follow. If the first row of bricks is level, straight, and square, then the following bricks can be good.



But if the first bricks are not in a straight line and are off balance, then the wall will be a mess. It is good to lay down the introduction for the topic, draw a straight line, and then stay on topic. If the preacher begins with a false premise or mixed and disconnected thoughts, then that line of reasoning will turn into a wall of confusion with a twisted, and unbalanced and unsupported message, and will likely fall flat and may cause damage or harm.

One old proverb says, if you chase two rabbits, you will catch none, but if you chase one rabbit, you will catch one. After a sermon, if you cannot identify the core topic of the message, you probably will not remember the message. Retention and application may be the difference between ministering in the Spirit, and fleshly entertainment.

*1 Corinthians 14:33 God is not the author of confusion*

*1 Corinthians 14:8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?*

*Habakkuk 2:2 Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it."*

## **The Body**

The body of the message is a presentation of all the facts, evidence, supporting scriptures, information, arguments, examples, illustrations, and testimonies. Each speaker has their way of presenting a message that varies according to spiritual gifts and personalities, and styles may range from

passionate preaching, line-by-line teaching, humor, and testimonies, with various types of visual aids. The best case scenario is that preachers hear from God and deliver God's message with scriptural accuracy and under the unction of the Holy Spirit, which produces a lasting impact on the hearers. At least, that's the way it is supposed to be.

### **The Close – Call to Action**

The closing is a call to action, not a farewell. The preacher defines, suggests, and encourages how the listeners should respond to the message and apply it to their life. That response may invoke prayer or another course of action, but there should be a commitment to be a doer of the word just preached with whatever action is required.

*James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But **he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.***

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable **for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

## **Length of the Message**

The length of a message has an enormous impact on how it is received and is very dependent on the environment and the audience. Factors to consider would be schedules and routines, distractions, fatigue, hunger, opposition, and the direction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus and Paul taught at all hours of the day and night and for many hours at a time. At Cornelius's house, Peter only spoke a few words when the Holy Spirit fell on everyone in the house and ended his message.

*Acts 20:7-11* Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, **Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.** ... Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, **and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.**

*Acts 10:44-45* While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.** And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Preachers should be sensitive to their environment, adapt, and use their opportunities wisely without wasting time on frivolous and useless things. In most institutional church settings, thirty to sixty minutes are allotted for messages to accommodate multiple services, etc. However, preset schedules may limit the freedom of the Holy Spirit and restrict any participation from the congregation.

Some preachers without time restraints can go way too long (except Apostle Paul), and their sermons can drag on and on, draining the energy, ruining the message, and creating fatigue-induced slumber. When speaking to small groups, on the street, or in a store, there may only be a few minutes to testify or make a point, so in spontaneous situations, brevity is the soul of wit.

## **Humor**

Humor can be good but should not descend into anything crude or sensual. Neither should it turn into a standup comedy routine and neglect the responsibility of bringing God's word to the church. When moral and integrity lines get crossed, it becomes a corrupting influence and grieves the Holy Spirit.

*Ephesians 5:3-6 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

*Ecclesiastes 10:1 Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; So, does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.*

## **Cliches & Filler**

The definition of a cliché is a phrase that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought. Sometimes preachers repeatedly use the same cliches for years, over and over.

These sayings may sound good and pump up the crowd, but they become a mindless exercise of filling gaps of time between thoughts and maybe an indication of a lack of content or substance. This routine of clichés can become a tradition of men exposing a superficial, stagnate, artificial, and insincere religiosity.

Years after the revival has died, the old wineskins will repeat the same old revival clichés like clouds without water. It is much like how Samson would shake himself in the glory days when he had supernatural power. But after Delilah's haircut, the shaking thing didn't work anymore, but that didn't stop Samson from shaking. Many church revivalists continue shaking what isn't working anymore.

*Judges 16:20 Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.*

### **Details vs Illustrations**

One analogy of preparing a sermon compares it to building a house. The **content** would be like the walls and are the scriptures and commentary that support the topic. The **illustrations** are like windows with stories, testimonies, and graphic displays that illuminate and give vision. Both are needed, but with the proper balance. A message with all scriptures and no illustrations is like a house with no windows, no light coming in, and no way to see outside.

And sermons that consist only of stories and testimonies without scriptural content would be like a house with all windows that is structurally weak and could collapse under the weight of the roof. The right balance between scriptures, supporting documentation, and illustrations will produce a more powerful and effective presentation.

***Matthew 7:24-25*** "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: "

***1 Corinthians 3:10*** According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder ...

### **Relationships and Discernment**

Paul referred to Timothy as his son, and he also referred to himself as a nursing mother to the church. Local pastors, elders, or leaders are like parental figures over the church or group they lead. Leaders have a vested interest in their people, for whom they give their time, labor, and sacrifices. They stand with their people through all their ups and downs because they are family. That relationship earns them the respect to give counsel and correction to all the members of their spiritual family.

***1 Timothy 1:2 & 18*** To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. ... This charge I commit to you, son **Timothy**, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

***1 Thessalonians 2:7-8*** *But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.*

***2 Timothy 4:2*** *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

***Hebrews 12:6*** *... because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

However, sometimes a preacher comes around and causes a stir in the community. They don't know you or any of the locals personally, but they gather crowds in big or small meetings, give erroneous teachings and harmful counsel, fleece the flock, and then get out of town, leaving a bunch of big messes behind them when they go. Whenever you watch TV, listen to the radio, or are at a meeting, if anyone has questionable teachings or practices, beware and do not follow, subscribe, or buy their products.

First, pray to ask God for wisdom and discernment, and search the scriptures for answers to your questions. If you belong to a church or a small group, go to a respected leader with your questions. They may alleviate your concerns by giving scriptural and rational answers. But if their answers trouble you, and you have no peace, you may consider leaving that fellowship.

But do not ignore any negative feelings that linger with you because the Holy Spirit may be warning you to spare you from deception.

***James 1:5*** *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

***Proverbs 11:14*** *Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*

***Proverbs 15:22*** *Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.*

***Proverbs 24:6*** *For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.*

***Psalms 119:98-100*** *You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.*

### **Preparation vs Spontaneity**

Some preachers like to fly by the seat of their pants and rely on inspiration to come to them while they preach. They are prone to fish for thoughts during the message and may use emotional gimmicks to stir the crowd and fake it until they make it. They may have exciting moments but are usually low on substance. Other preachers are so prepared that they



robotically read their dry sermons, going point by point without any connection with the people, which can be a dreadful bore or a good nap time.

As always, there is a balance needed between delivering strong content with illustrations, speaking with passion, and rapport with the people. The bottom line is that preparation, content, and delivery are nothing without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Human wisdom and charisma without the Holy Spirit will have no spiritual benefit. Only the Holy Spirit can inspire words with the power to bring life to a dead soul and open spiritual eyes to peer into eternity. The preacher needs to pray and study as if everything depends on themselves but maintain the attitude that everything depends on the Holy Spirit to bless and bring life when preaching.

***2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.***

***1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.***

*1 Corinthians 2:13 -14 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

### **Imitators & Actors**

Most young preachers have a favorite preacher, and they like them so much they try to imitate their preaching style. God has made each person uniquely different, so preachers should speak from the pulpit in their natural voice and not put on some manufactured preacher's voice for dramatic effect. Some preachers change personalities as they step onto a platform. After getting warmed up, they switch into full preacher mode with a different voice, animation, and a grand display of religious theater that is not natural for them. Fervent and passionate messages are great if they come straight from a heart of sincerity, with the zeal of the Holy Spirit, and without concern for approval or rejection from men.

The following is an article **written in July of 1893 by William Booth**, the founder of the Salvation Army, about this very same issue:

*“Talk colloquially; that is, naturally; just as you talk at the table or in conversation. Don’t imagine that you have to shout or use some sort of platform twang. It is astonishing how interesting some people are in private conversation, and how utterly uninteresting they become directly when they mount the platform.*

*This is largely because they go into some unnatural way of speaking. Be natural in the way you talk. Be yourself, nay struggle to forget even yourself; that is, to lose yourself in the discharge of your duty. While you are thinking about yourself, or rather of what the people may think about you, or of what you are going to say next, or about anything except the salvation of the people before you, you will be hindered, if not actually disqualified, for your duty. Throw yourself into the fight regardless of anything and everything.*

*Don't imitate anyone else, however much you may admire them, or however useful they may be. Even if you could acquire what is best in their manner of saying and doing things, it is very improbable whether you would be likely to be more useful than you will be in acting out your own original self. But imitators of other speakers in manner or voice are usually worse rather than the better for it, seeing that they ordinarily acquire the most objectionable features of the person they copy”.*

### **The Message Content**

Now we will consider what is being shared or imparted during a sermon, the all-important content. Everything in a church can look great, have great music, with friendly people, but if the preacher is spewing false teachings, then nothing is as it seems, and deception and ruin are lurking in the shadows. The truth of God's word is all-important for the church, and it is the pillar and the foundation on which the church stands. Without God's truth, there is no church, and the building, the music, and the friendly people do not matter.

Depending on the degree of error, false teaching will eventually manifest with different levels of spiritual blindness and destruction. A little bit of leaven will leaven the whole lump, a little bit of poison in the Kool-Aid will kill you.

*1 Timothy 3:15 ... if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.***

*1 Corinthians 5:6-8 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.** For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, **not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

The following is an overview of important factors to consider when evaluating the difference between the good preachers and messages and the bad ones.

**We will work from the following chart going forward.**

<b>Good vs Bad - Preaching</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Context, References</b>	<b>Pretext, Twist Scripture</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Preach Christ, Humble</b>	<b>Preach Themselves</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Word of God, Gospel</b>	<b>Self Help, Psychology</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Everlasting Gospel</b>	<b>Winds of Doctrine</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Whole Counsel of God</b>	<b>Single Topic</b>
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<b>7</b>	<b>Reconciliation, Life</b>	<b>Condemnation, Death</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Called, Spirit Filled</b>	<b>Hirelings, Wolves</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Believers Participate</b>	<b>Sheep are Spectators</b>

### **1. Context vs Pretext, Twisting Scripture**

First on our list of what divides good from bad is that good preachers stay within the context of the scriptures, while bad preachers twist the scriptures to change the intended meaning to fit their narratives. Twisting the scriptures is nothing new and will get dramatically worse as deceptions increase before the coming of the Lord.

When we question the meaning of any verse of the Bible, we can get the context from the preceding verses and the verses that follow. We can also reference other related verses and possibly use resources like dictionaries to clarify the intended meaning taken from the body of the surrounding scriptures of the verses in question.

We interpret the Bible with the Bible, and a scripture text, taken out of context, becomes a pretext or a false assumption.

**Text** = written material regarded as conveying the authentic or primary message

**Context** = the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.

**Pretext** = a reason given in justification of a course of action that is not the real reason.

Anyone who twist and takes the scripture out of context is facing severe consequences from God.

***2 Peter 3:15-16** Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, **which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.***

***Revelation 22:18-19** For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.***

## **2. Preach Christ vs Preach Themselves**

The bad preachers like to preach about themselves, drawing disciples to themselves, and they are self-centered with inflated egos and wallets. Their churches are personality cults built on the charisma of the preacher who takes center stage while preaching a different Christ. Ironically, their Christ is a mirror image of themselves. But their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible that the apostles preached.

The good preachers exalt and magnify Jesus Christ while humbly rejecting the praise of man and avoiding self-promotion. John the Baptist took himself out of the picture to give Christ all the glory, and he described himself as just a voice to prepare the way for Jesus.

***John 1:22-23.** Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said: "I am **The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD," as the prophet Isaiah said."***

The apostle Paul considered himself dead at the cross, and for the remainder of his life, he allowed Christ to live vicariously through him. Paul took no credit for his accomplishments, and he attributed every good thing to the grace of God and gave God all the glory.

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

Paul was determined to preach Christ and leave himself out of the picture.

*1 Corinthians 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified*

*1 Corinthians 2:2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

*2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

The focal point of all preaching should be Jesus, period. Hungry souls do not need to hear about all the preacher's life and antics. People need the gospel about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the realities of eternity. Sad to say, sincere but misguided people will be hypnotized by the charisma of a preacher and become mentally and financially manipulated by them. The obsession with self-promotion, pride, and greed has its roots in Lucifer, a.k.a. Satan and the Devil. When Lucifer rebelled against God, he made five statements that started with him saying, "I will," which was his downfall.

*Isaiah 14:11-15 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'*



***Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol (Hell), To the lowest depths of the Pit.***

By contrast, when Jesus was facing the cross, he prayed while sweating drops of blood and said, "not my will." Jesus was not self-promoting or grasping for power, but to the contrary, he laid aside all his divine powers, humbled himself and became a man, and humbled himself even more by making himself a servant.

***Luke 22:42*** saying, "Father, if it is ***Your will***, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, ***not My will***, but ***Yours***, be done."

***Philippians 2:5-8*** 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, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, ***he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross!***

The Spirit of Christ promotes a humble life of selfless sacrifice and obedience. Satan is the polar opposite of Christ, and those who imbibe Satan's spirit and character are full of pride, lawlessness, narcissism, and self-promoters. It is startling how quickly a man of God can pivot from receiving inspiration from God to allowing Satan to speak through him. Many worship leaders and Pastors are vulnerable to the pride of ministry and unwittingly crossover into the sin of Lucifer. The Apostle Peter fell into this trap immediately after his big revelation about Christ.

**Matthew 16:13-18** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter ...

How impressive, Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter (Rocky), and Jesus himself says that Peter got his revelation straight from God the Father! You can imagine how that affected Peter's ego, so shortly after that, this happens:

**Matthew 16:21-23**, From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. **Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him**, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" **But He turned and said to Peter**, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

This spiritual flip-flop, changing sides back and forth, is a frequent but subtle switch and happens all the time. God chooses weak and foolish people, and he uses them mightily, then they get proud and steal God's glory from the victory for themselves.

Gideon faced an opposing army of 135,000 men, and he had an army of 32,000 men, so God told him he had too many men, and here's why:

*Judges 7:2 And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'*

So, God reduced the size of Gideon's army to 300 men against an army of 135,000. That's 450 enemy soldiers against one Israelite soldier in hand-to-hand combat, and guess what? Gideon still took the credit for the victory and stole God's glory! As Gideon prepared his men to attack, he gave them their battle cry, saying to shout, the sword of the Lord, AND OF GIDEON!

*Judges 7:18 "When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!'"*

After God gave Israel the victory, Gideon took 43 pounds of gold as his plunder and made an idol of gold to celebrate his victory. Later that idol of Gideon's victory was worshipped by the Israelites. How many of us make idols from our victories and place them on a pedestal seeking admiration from others instead of giving all the glory to God? In every message preached, Christ should be the victorious hero, and he alone should be the only one receiving praise!

***Judges 8:27 Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.***

Gideon began his ministry by tearing down his father's idol. He ended his ministry by making an idol of his victory, leading Israel to worship the idol and him by association. Preachers who put themselves on a pedestal and want the praise of man are not denying themselves, not taking up their crosses, and are making themselves enemies of the cross of Christ.

***Philippians 3:18-19 (Paul speaking) For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.***

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

Paul just preached Jesus Christ as Lord; he was there to be a servant to the people, and he always pointed away from himself and toward Christ, and he acknowledged that only God brings life and gives the growth.

***1 Corinthians 3:4-7 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not***

*mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So, who makes things grow, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God!*

The focus of every message should be about Jesus, not the messenger.

*Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*

### **3. Word of God, Gospel vs Self Help, Psychology**

Good preachers are not always popular or liked because they will not back down from preaching the truth, the unadulterated gospel of Jesus, from Genesis to Revelation. That would include fire and brimstone if the situation mandates it, likewise with death, hell, judgment, repentance from sin, and Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Paul said that he did not shun his responsibility to preach the whole counsel of God, and in fact, Paul said, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.

*Acts 20:27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

*2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*

***1 Corinthians 9:16-17*** Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. **Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!** If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

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

***1 Corinthians 1:18*** For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Jeremiah tried to hold back from speaking out, but the word of God was like a fire inside him, so he had to speak out. Good preachers deliver God's truth without fear or concern for the approval of man.

***Jeremiah 20:9*** Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." **But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.**

The Bible tells us about a great apostasy or departure from the faith in the last days. Churches, false preachers, and religious people will partake of the moral rot of the culture, consumed with the love of themselves, money, and pleasures, and living only for this life. They won't tolerate true men of God but will hire false preachers to tickle their ears with a feel-good gospel of human potential and success. Meanwhile, these preachers of vice and greed will make merchandise of the tickled ear reprobates.

As we get closer to the coming of the Lord, the teaching errors will become more demonic, declining, and falling over a cliff into the depths of depravity. The current trends of false preachers are: to advocate for sexual perversion, surgical mutilation of children, abortion, inflaming racial prejudice, empowering the medical police state, global climate fascism, and unifying the world's religions as one to establish the harlot church for the false prophet and antichrist. End times false ministers and others profess to be Christian because of attendance at a building that claims to be a church that may have some outward religious trappings. But they are spiritually dead, cut off from the life of God because they have rejected Christ. Paul advises us to have nothing to do with them.

*1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*

*2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they*

*will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

***2 Timothy 3:1-5*** *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

***2 Corinthians 11:13-15*** *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

***2 Peter 2:1-3*** *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:*



*whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not.*

#### **4. Everlasting Gospel vs Winds of Doctrine**

Next, we examine the contrast between teachings that have eternal principles, contrasted against those that emphasize temporary, trendy, or unimportant things. Messages emphasizing an earthly vision, living for today, and whatever is currently popular and trending will create instability. We can compare trendy teachings to being blown around by strong gusty winds or tossed to and fro by powerful waves. Messages based on temporal things are short-sighted, earthly-minded, compromising, seek instant gratification, and can be a distraction from God's eternal purposes.

Contrast that with the concrete stability of teachings that are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Messages that stress eternal principles bring an awareness of the future consequences of our actions which should dominate our thinking and theology and compel us to prioritize our time, relationships, and service to God.

***Revelation 14:6** Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel** to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people*

***Isaiah 40:6-8** The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" **All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. ...***

*... The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."*

*Hebrews 11:24-26* By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. **He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his (eternal) reward.**

**When you are listening to a sermon, you can ask yourself these questions;**

- In 100 years from now will future generations relate to this message?
- If we could go back 100 years in the past, would they have been able to relate to it?
- Would Jesus, Peter or Paul recognize this as a true gospel message, that is inspired by the Spirit of God?
- Where did they get the content for this message? Was it the Bible, testimonies, secular, or other?

That is one reason we previously used the article of William Booth from 1893 to show that his words are still as relevant to us today as when he gave them. Truth is eternal. Fads come and go, but we have the everlasting gospel that never changes. Jesus is the rock of ages, and he never changes.

*Hebrews 13:8* **Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.**

*James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

Some pastors and leaders are sheep themselves, followers of the crowd, dragging their people into whatever wind is blowing at the time. If the latest fad is worldly, weird, or greedy, do not accept it, and get out of there and find other sober-minded, rational believers and leaders who will protect the flock from heresy.

*Ephesians 4:11-14 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*

## **5. Whole Counsel vs Single Topic**

Some “Christian” groups specialize in a single theme and stay exclusively on that topic. For example, under the heading of financial prosperity is the health, wealth, and positive confession movement with a single focus on becoming wealthy. They go to the extremes of believing they can create wealth by speaking money into existence. Their greed drives them to see everything through the corrupt lens of money, which leads them to twist every scripture to fit their narrative. Many groups have hang-ups, but the prosperity, seeker-friendly, and church growth (megachurch) movements have recently come to the forefront and have turned the church into big business. Jesus said, you cannot serve two masters, and you cannot serve God and money.

***Luke 16:13*** "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.**"

Sad to say, but some preachers love money more than God and have taken large groups of people captive into their deception. Beware of greed-based, money-driven ministries. If money is the main focus of their messages, run for your life!

Others specialize in one-topic subjects like Sabbath worship, the reformation, relationship experts, and the list goes on and on. It is not beneficial or spiritually healthy to focus on one singular topic while excluding all others. We cannot ignore the command that man shall not live by bread alone but by **every word** of God. We need balance from Genesis to Revelation.

***Matthew 4:4*** But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**'"

***Proverbs 11:1*** A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

***Proverbs 16:11*** A just weight and balance are the LORD'S

With such a wide variety of things to study in the Bible, why be stuck on one topic? That's like eating the same thing every day, year after year. Somebody may argue that the children of Israel ate manna every day for forty years. That's true, except that "manna" literally means, "what is it?"

*Exodus 16:15* So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "**What is it?**" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "**This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.**"

So, every day for forty years, the children of Israel woke up saying, Lord, what is it today? What is the word from God for today? Also, the manna would breed worms if they kept it overnight, so they had to get fresh manna every morning. Yesterday's word of the Lord was for yesterday and is old and worm-infested now, so we need to get a new word from the Lord each day!

*Exodus 16:19* Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it (manna) until morning." However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; **they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell.** So, Moses was angry with them.

*Matthew 6:11* **Give us this day our daily bread.**

Why get stuck in a rut with one message over and over? Dwelling on the past can create a risk of eating maggot-infested food. For anyone in this situation, escape, get out of the cage, and move onward into the promised land and explore the height, depth, and length of God's word!

*Ephesians 3:8* To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that **I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ** ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints

*what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*

*Acts 20: 26, 27 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God".*

*Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*

One reason for five different offices and ministry gifts to the church is to have a variety and provide a balance of perspectives and functionality. That is another reason that each person should contribute their talents to benefit the whole body of Christ.

*Ephesians 4:11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . . may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together **by what every joint supplies,** according to the effective working **by which every part does its share,** causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

***1 Corinthians 12:5-11 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.***

## **6. Godliness, Holiness vs Worldliness, Compromise**

Good preachers have goals to develop the character of Christ and a godly lifestyle in themselves and their disciples. Bad preachers put on a public persona of godliness, but in their private life is a different story. They may have an inner circle surrounded by compromise, worldliness, and corruption and live no differently than ungodly secular people, or worse, hiding secret sins.

In the end times, there will be two churches forming simultaneously. The first is the bride of Christ, who will meet Jesus in the air when he returns, and they go to heaven. Then there is a global religious system called the Harlot church, which will go to hell with the anti-Christ. These two will grow side by side like the wheat and tares, until Jesus separates them.

***Matthew 13:30 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."***

Even sincere believers can be seduced and deceived by the teachings of false preachers. Jesus speaking to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, pointed out several false prophets, one of them was Balaam.

***Revelation 2:14*** "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who **hold the doctrine of Balaam**, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to **idols**, and to commit **sexual immorality**.

Jesus is making a direct reference to Numbers 22 to 24, where an enemy king hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel. Balaam could not curse with his words because he only spoke the word of God. Instead, he counseled Balak to send young women into the camp of the Israelites to seduce them, and Israel fell into the trap. At first, it began with sexual immorality, and then the Israelites backslid into worshipping the idols and pagan gods of the Moabites

The modern Balaam preachers quote the Bible, prophesy for money, encourage sensuality, allow promiscuity, idolize material possessions, and are in bed with the secular culture. Outwardly they have the appearance of Christians, a church, and a preacher, but there is an atmosphere and undercurrent of blatant hypocrisy and brazen sin.

***Jude 1:10-12*** Woe to them! For they have **run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit**. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, **serving only themselves**.

***2 Peter 2:12-15*** But these speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and **will receive the wages of unrighteousness**, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, **carousing in their own deceptions** while they feast



*with you, having eyes full of **adultery** and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart **trained in covetous practices**, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, **following the way of Balaam** the son of Beor, who **loved the wages of unrighteousness**;*

*2 Peter 2:18 For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, **they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness**, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. **While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption**; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*

On the contrary, the Apostle Paul said doctrines should teach how to live a Godly life, and if they do not teach Godliness, get away from them.

*1 Timothy 6:1-6 ... so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and **to the doctrine which accords with godliness**, he is proud, knowing nothing ... useless wranglings of **men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself***

## **7. Reconciliation, Life vs Condemnation, Death**

Finally, Good Preachers are Spirit-filled and have a ministry of reconciliation. The Apostle Paul never forgot that he was a Pharisee and that he viciously persecuted the church.

Looking back on the days before his conversion, he said that he was the greatest sinner because he persecuted the church. Paul demonstrated his gratefulness by becoming an ambassador for Christ, preaching reconciliation to God, forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Paul is still an ambassador through his letters, which continue to reconcile people to God.

On the other hand, Bad preachers preach wrath and condemnation, and they may drive people further away from God, doing more damage than good. Legalism produces pride, self-righteousness, condemnation, and spiritual superiority. They use intimidation and pressure tactics on their followers to enforce compliance with their version of spirituality. **Notice there are two types of ministries, one brings life, and the other brings death.**

*2 Corinthians 3:6-9 ... who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones (the 10 commandments) was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.*

*2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of ...*

*... reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

Ministry absent the gifts, power, and grace of the Holy Spirit is condemning, legalistic, and exploitive:

*Matthew 23:13-15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to ... "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.*

*Colossians 2:20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

***2 Timothy 3: 4-5 ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.***

***2 Corinthians 11:20-21 (the Apostle Paul speaking)  
In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. To my shame, I admit that we were too weak for that!***

Sometimes denominations or churches have written or unspoken rules that amount to human attempts to achieve God's righteousness. They may be well-intentioned, but their legalism usually has the reverse effect. The law condemns, makes guilty, or produces pride. But only the Spirit of Life in Christ can set us free from the law of sin and death and resurrect us to walk in the newness of life.

***2 Corinthians 3:4-6 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

***Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His Own***

*Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (This is the chapter on the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, read the whole chapter!)*

***Galatians 3:1-5*** *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? **This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** Are you so foolish? **Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?** Have you suffered so many things in vain if indeed it was in vain? Therefore, He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

Each person should pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who will teach us the truth and guide us in the way we should go. He will make us his messengers and give us discernment to find other messengers who are after God's heart. We need men of integrity, called, equipped, and obedient to the Holy Spirit to be leaders and examples for the church.

***John 6:63*** *(Jesus speaking) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**"*

***Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.***

## **8. Called, Spirit Filled vs Hirelings, Wolves**

Next on our list of what separates good and bad preachers is the calling of God. God chooses his messengers and equips them for his purposes, and when someone finds that purpose, it becomes their mission and the driving force in their lives. Some bad preachers were called but went astray, others were never called but use religion as a job to pay the bills, and then some are charlatans and scammers chasing money. These people have been separated from God, deceived, and are spiritually dead. Here is the bottom line, only God chooses, approves, and equips his ministers, period.

***Hebrews 5:4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.***

***Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?***

***John 10:12-13 "But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.***

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15** *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan, himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

God decides who he calls and how he equips them. We do not choose the time and details of our physical birth, and we do not choose our calling or gifts when we are born again spiritually. God assigns all the callings and spiritual gifts to each person according to his eternal purpose before they are born.

**Jeremiah 1:5** *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*

**Romans 9:10-16** *Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls, she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.*

A good analogy to show the difference between people that God calls and those who he did not call would be the difference between a Chihuahua and a Great Dane. They are similar in that both are from the dog family, but that is where the similarities end. A Chihuahua will never have the ability to grow like a Great Dane because that is not in their DNA. God ordains the DNA, which determines all the gifts, talents, abilities, and growth potential.

A church member and an apostle are both saved and belong to the family of God, but they do not have the same spiritual DNA and how they operate in the church is different. Each person needs to identify their gifts, functions, and authority in the body of Christ and then stay within the boundaries that God has assigned to them. A calling is not what you do, but who you are, and you cannot be anything else, and there is no escaping from it, ask Jonah.

***Romans 11:29*** *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

***2 Peter 1:10*** *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to **make your calling and election sure**. For if you do these things, you will never fall,*

The Apostle Paul, before he met Christ, was called Saul, and he was breathing threats and slaughter on his way to persecute Christians. Then a bright light enveloped him, and he heard Jesus call him. Jesus chose Saul (Paul), and not the other way around.

***Acts 9:3-6*** *As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.*



*Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So, he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

Jesus did not only choose Paul, he chooses everybody that gets chosen. He made it clear to his disciples that he chose them, and not the other way around.

***John 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

***Ephesians 1:4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,*

Back to Paul. Later, God spoke even more clearly to Saul and confirmed it with the elders.

***Acts 13:2-4** As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

There has never been anyone so driven by the convictions of their calling than the Apostle Paul. He was willing to do anything, enduring hardships and suffering, and boldly risking his life because of his burning passion for Christ. His calling and the power of the Holy Spirit equipped him to preach and have the grace, strength, and endurance to do what he did. His life and message are so powerful that future generations yet to be born will be blessed by his writings and testimonies.

***Philippians 3:7-8** But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom **I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ***

***2 Corinthians 11:23-25** Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more: in labors, more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to*

*stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*

To anyone claiming to be a somebody in the church world, read that list of Paul's qualifications as a minister again. He didn't mention how many cities where he planted churches, how many souls he won, how many books of the Bible he wrote, how many miracles he experienced and performed, and how many visions and revelations he had. The only qualifications Paul boasted about was his weaknesses and sufferings in service to Christ. May God help us to renew our minds and learn from his example.

## **9. Believers Participate vs Sheep are Spectators**

We have reviewed some differences between good and bad preachers, not to criticize or discourage but to instruct and give discernment. The principles we went over can be used to diagnose preachers, or they can help give guidelines on what to do and what to avoid when you teach or preach. Not everybody will forsake everything and be a full-time missionary, pastor, preacher, or leader, but everyone can and should learn, grow, and lead others to Jesus and disciple them.

For most people, Christianity is a spectator sport where everyone enters the building, takes a seat, and watches the show. That mindset is contrary to scripture and just plain wrong in every way. People with the spectator attitude are spiritually immature, easily manipulated, and possibly just religious without having a salvation experience. Jesus gave a command, not a suggestion, that his followers go, preach, teach and make disciples.

**Mark 16:15** *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to every creature.*

**Matthew 28:19-20** *(Jesu speaking)"Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "**teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

The writer of the book of Hebrews rebuked those who were not teaching and said they were immature spiritual babies. Every follower of Jesus should be able to teach the basics of Christianity to others. The more we teach, the stronger and more mature we become.

**Hebrews 5:12-14** *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Paul sent a letter to the church in Corinth which describes the distribution and variation of gifts that should operate when the church is gathered together with everyone participating. The churches back then did not function with the speaker spectator division like churches today.

Their meetings were more like a spiritual potluck dinner where everybody brought their gifts, a song, a testimony, a word of knowledge, so they all brought something to the table so that everyone gave and received blessings.

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11 1Co 12:4 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**. Now **to each one** the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, **to another** the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **to another** faith by the same Spirit, **to another** gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **to another** miraculous powers, **to another** prophecy, **to another** distinguishing between spirits, **to another** speaking in different kinds of ... tongues, and **to still another** the interpretation of tongues. **All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.***

All Christians should actively share their faith, that is the purpose of this book, and the other books in the toolbox series, which are designed to equip believers with the tools they need for personal and small group studies. Paul told Timothy to teach faithful people, and they should teach others, and everyone who actively participates will grow spiritually.

*2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.***

### **Call to Action**

We are in the end times; our world is changing quickly to line up with Bible prophecy. Jesus said the signs of his return would be like birth pangs, growing in intensity and frequency and globally. All those signs happen at once, and we can see them happening in real-time with wars, food shortages, pandemics, shutdowns, and natural disasters, all leading to a one-world government ruled by the antichrist. Also, there will be a great falling away from Christ, with churches becoming perverted, politically woke, and government-controlled. Eventually, all true believers will have to come out of the dead institutional denominations and fake churches. Thank God we have a blessed hope that Jesus will rapture the church before wrath and judgment hit the earth!

While we have time and freedom, we should study the scriptures, share the gospel, and learn to live by faith. This book is part of a series of basic teachings that all Christians should know and teach. We call it the "toolbox series" because each study is a tool for you to share your faith with others. For free resources and study materials, visit our website at [Ears2Hear.online](http://Ears2Hear.online).

# The Tool Box Series

This book is part of a series of Bible studies that are basic teachings for followers of Jesus. We call it the "toolbox series" because each study is a tool for you to use in building your faith and sharing with others. These "tools" can also be used as a start-up kit for small group Bible studies and shared online. For other resources like free Bibles and study materials, visit our website at:

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