

HEAVEN ON EARTH

UNVEILING THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S KINGDOM

REVISED SECOND EDITION



DR. JIM RICHARDS

HEAVEN

ON

EARTH

**UNVEILING THE MYSTERY OF
GOD'S KINGDOM**

DR. JIM RICHARDS



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Heaven on Earth: Unveiling the Mystery of God's Kingdom: 2nd Edition

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What Do You Want to Get From This Book?

The picture on the front cover is the Hebrew letter MEM. Understanding this letter and why we chose this for the cover is important to help you determine the benefit you will derive from reading this book.

Studies reveal that what we perceive and understand when reading or listening to a lecture is directly connected to our purpose for reading or listening. In other words, besides all the serendipitous benefits, we do have some choices. What we choose to understand tends to open our mind and heart to experience those benefits.

Understanding the MEM will help you reach a clear purpose for reading this book, which determines much of how you understand and benefit from what you read. Besides what happens on the natural plane, it will also open your heart and mind to the Holy Spirit to use this material to take in the direction you have chosen.

Hebrew is an incredibly unique language, providing interpretive insights into each word more than any other language. The Hebrew language is designed to provide you with clear definitions while leaving room for the Holy Spirit to show you what is specific for your life!

Every Hebrew word has an obvious, general meaning. Additionally, each letter has its own definition, which becomes part of the overall definition of the word. At the end of the translation process is the most important dynamic: “What is God speaking to your heart?” In other words, “How will you apply this to your life?”

No one can teach you to know and experience God. Your walk with God, although encouraged and inspired by teachers, is something that happens intimately between you and God. The definitions and explanations provided by teachers can, at best, help you theologically or theoretically, but can never guide you in a way that brings the quality of life Jesus promised.

Information does not give life. Life is given and received through personal intimacy with God through the Lord Jesus. All that pertains to how you walk the path to heaven on earth is discovered in your personal, intimate communion with the Lord. Please understand I am not referring to *private interpretation* or secret theological insight. I am referring directly to God's wisdom for application in your life!

There are two MEMs in the Hebrew alphabet, the open and the closed MEM. The MEM, from which we get the "M" sound, represents water. In the ancient world, water represents the mysterious. One can look at the surface of the water and still not know what lurks beneath. The only way to know what is below the surface is to dive into the water and explore for one's self.

This represents the concept of knowing God and His Word personally, not through second-hand accounts. The things of God cannot be explained. They can be described, and people can give testimony to experiencing them, but that serves only as inspiration for us to seek our own personal experiences. Regardless of how much information we may amass, we do not experientially know until we interact with Him personally and intimately, i.e., we must dive into the water!



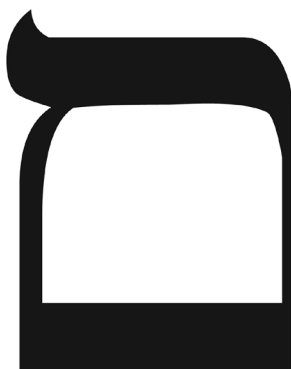
The open MEM looks like a rectangle standing on its end with the left, bottom corner missing. The open MEM represents God's revealed knowledge, which has been poured out on the earth through His Word. It is available to all who desire it.

Millions of believers daily cry out for God to deliver them from trouble, lead them through life, or help solve their problems. Sadly, in most cases, the wisdom for the solution is in God's written Word, readily available,

but completely ignored. In other words, the answer has always been provided. Should we read and believe the promise of God, we would experience the grace of God to follow His wisdom. The truth is when we will not pursue God's revealed knowledge, seldom will we recognize and follow God when He attempts to lead us.

When we study God's Word to know Him and discover how to walk in love, we are looking for more than information; we hunger for more than deliverance to immediate problems, and we desire relationship. His Word is not simply a road map for a full life; it is a window into the heart of God. It allows us to know Him, His character, and His goodness even before we personally experience it!

How we handle the first open MEM is the determining factor as to whether we will ever experience the closed MEM.



The closed MEM is identical in appearance to the open MEM with one exception: it is closed at the bottom. This symbolizes what is not open to the entire world because it is private and personal between the worshipper and God. Notice, I said, “worshipper,” not “believer.” The worshipper expresses trust, gratitude, and love for God in deeply intimate, personal, and private ways. The Song of Solomon's depicts this very type of relationship clearly between King Solomon and his Shulamite bride. It was also demonstrated between David and Bathsheba: the picture of two lovers intimately sharing what they share with no other!

It was not unusual in ancient times for a man to have more than one wife. The fact that a man wanted a woman to be part of his family demonstrated his commitment to provide for her and share the affection he expressed for all his wives. In a very general sense, this depicts the bride of Christ. As

was usually the case, however, there was one wife with whom, because the reciprocal love she expressed for him, he enjoyed a unique relationship, different than the other wives.

All believers are the bride of Christ, but not all believers are worshippers, intimately expressing their love for Jesus and exchanging the deepest vulnerabilities of their heart. Jesus made several statements that for years sounded to me like favoritism. I knew that could not be the case, but I did not understand the dynamics of loving relationships as described by God!

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. (John 14: 21, 23)

Jesus is not telling believers they must earn their way into this intimacy; He is, in fact, saying that they must be relational to have intimacy! God's Word, when applied from Jesus' perspective, is all about how to express love to God, others, and ourselves. Love has many emotional components, but at its core, love is about value. If we value God, others, and ourselves, we will treat each of these dimensions of the relationship as valuable.

The Greek word for the love that emerges from God's character is *agape*, i.e., to consider valuable, precious, and to hold in high regard! *Agape* does reference the intimate, relational love Jesus is offering in the previous verses. He is offering relational love that is reciprocal. It is a relationship He offers to all but is only experienced by those who answer the call and develop an intimate relationship. It is not that He loves them more; it is that He can have a completely different level of relationship with them because it is what they desire!

This reciprocal relationship begins by the value we hold for God's Word, the open MEM, which provides the basis for knowing God... as He is. With the Holy Spirit as our teacher, His Word introduces us to Him, and our desire for a relationship is where we come to know him experientially. Each step in that journey grows deeper as it becomes more honest, transparent, and vulnerable. The degree of love we have for God, and our ca-

capacity to experience His love is what determines our faith (trust) for Him.

Regardless of where one is in their love walk, there is always more in both quantity and quality to experience. As we make this journey, we discover new dimensions wherein God can manifest His goodness and grace. Outside of knowing, embracing, and proceeding on this journey to Kingdom Living, we can never experience Heaven On Earth. We will always feel lack, something just beyond the veil of conscious awareness!

This book is designed to provide the tools you need to make your never-ending journey with God. I want to help you transition from where you are today to an entirely new experience with the open MEM and be a relationship coach to help you enter into the closed MEM, where you experience God speaking to you about the secrets of your life that no one knows but you and Him!

Heaven on Earth is the first in a trilogy designed to facilitate your progression from information, to personal experience, to effectively using the Keys of The Kingdom to open the doors to God's perfect will—heaven on earth!

I recommend contemplating and deciding what you would like to happen in your life as it pertains to your walk with God, the quality of life you are experiencing, and your understanding in how to use your authority as a believer. Read through the Table of Contents and the back cover while making your decision. Once you have made that decision and entrusted it to God, your heart will be set to hear and recognize God fulfilling your prayers.

When you have made those decisions, prayerfully begin reading this book. There are several ways to facilitate an open heart through this process. You may want to first read the book from cover to cover without trying to take many notes or even doing the exercises. If you take that approach, I recommend reading it a second time, while pondering and reflecting on everything you read. Look up every scripture reference and, most importantly, do the exercise at the end of each chapter. Do not attempt to rush through the exercises. They are designed to inspire your heart more than your mind. Meditative reflection is going to be your most powerful tool, the time you and God interact, and true transformation occurs!

If you want more support through this journey, download the audio series

that accompanies this book. Many have found this incredibly helpful in getting the most benefit from this information. Click here: <https://www.impactministries.com/shop/> to purchase your copy of this incredibly powerful audio series called ***Heaven On Earth: Unveiling the Mystery of God's Kingdom.***

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Start Here!

Intention changes what the mind sees and the heart perceives. For you to engage your intention, it is essential that you know the purpose of this book before you begin. Please read this page, but before you begin, make this determination, “I agree with the stated purposes of this book, and I am open to the Holy Spirit to show me what I need to see, perceive and understand.”

The Purpose: Experiencing The Abundant life!

Jesus said He came to give us the abundant life. The Greek word for life is *zoe*. Its literal meaning is *the quality of life possessed by the one who gives it!*¹ In other words, Jesus wants us to have the same quality of life He is experiencing with God!

This book has one straightforward purpose. I want to give you the information and the tools needed to experience the very best quality of life possible, while you are on Planet Earth: the abundant life!

The Problem: Not Knowing, Trusting And Following Jesus’ Teachings!

Much of the complication and frustration for the believer in pursuing this life, is religion has taken us off course. Religion is man seeking God on his own terms. Many believers are pursuing what God is offering, but we are not pursuing it as Jesus instructed; we are seeking God and His promises based on our human reasoning and logic. Religion uses all the right words, but those words have been redefined to mean something completely different than their original intention. Customs and colloquialisms of the time are largely ignored when interpreting Jesus’ teachings. The scriptures are rarely used to interpret the meanings of other scriptures; types and symbols are not used at all. The most egregious biblical interpretation, however, occurs in the negligence of interpreting Scripture in light of the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—the entire basis of the New Covenant!

Jesus taught us how to experience heaven on earth, and it is straightforward. He called it the *Kingdom of God* and the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and there is nothing complicated about it. This book is written based primarily on Jesus' teaching. The purpose is to unravel the Mystery of the Kingdom so every believer can begin to experience heaven on earth!

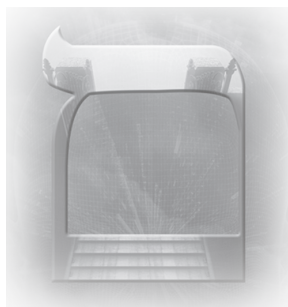
Intention Statement:

I intend to live the life Jesus provided through His death, burial, and resurrection: The Abundant Life! I will read this material with an open mind, remain loyal to the Scripture while allowing the Holy Spirit to be my guide! I desire to live, move, and have my being in the realm Jesus called the *Kingdom of God* and enjoy all the associated benefits!

Glossary:

Due to an overwhelming number of requests, we are providing a glossary of terms for this book that can be accessed from our website: <https://www.impactministries.com/glossary>.

Any word that you see bolded in italics is listed in the glossary and is, in most cases, always defined at least once in the text. This is intended to provide consistency in your reading experience throughout for the proper Biblical definitions of words that have been primarily misconstrued or misdefined by religion. We understand how important it is to have the proper terminology and definitions for the variety of common words and concepts to which we are referring. Please enjoy this added benefit, and I hope it adds to the pleasure and ease with which you read and understand this book.



CHAPTER 1

The Problem with the Promise

The greatest deception is not an outright lie, but a partial truth coupled with a lie.

Jesus was born in the exact year the prophet Daniel had predicted.² It was this prophetic knowledge that caused Herod and much of Israel to be hyper-attentive. They had a clear understanding of the times. Among those who knew what to expect, there was great anticipation, most of which was based on partial truths. Our human tendency to accept portions of God's Word as it is stated while twisting others to fit our personal preferences is what I call *mixed motives*.

Mixed motives may be the most difficult of all mindsets from which to ever gain clarity or freedom. When based on mixed motives, a belief or action is called into question; we point to the biblical aspect of that belief or action to validate its legitimacy while ignoring the unscriptural part of the belief or action. All we need is a small amount of truth to justify an entirely false concept and blind ourselves to the fact that it is false. Although not consciously, we deliberately make destructive choices daily, in every arena of life, to soothe our conscience. Like politicians pushing a corrupt agenda by pointing to one small positive benefit, all the harm hides behind the one positive benefit.

The result, tragically, is that a mixed motive corrupts the entirety of the fruit it produces. God warned that a little leaven leavens the entire loaf.

When corrupt motives are justified by partial truths, we are blinded more than when we believe a complete lie. The leaders of Israel were corrupted; they may have understood many of the prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah, but they were not interested in God fulfilling His purposes in the earth. They wanted the Messiah to fulfill their purposes. They believed for a Messiah who would fulfill their corrupt, selfish intentions, much like believers who long for salvation merely to fulfill their lusts and personal ambitions.

An innate deception stands in direct opposition to all that is true, healthy, and life-giving. In other words, for every truth, there is potential for a specific deception. The Hebrew language indicates that all truth possesses a light side and a dark side. The way we interpret any truth is determined by whether we decide if that truth will bring us life or death. For example, the word that God gave to Moses brought life and freedom to the children of Israel, but it brought death to the Egyptians.

Everything God seeks to do in us is from the inside out—from our mind, our heart, and our behavior.

Every Word of God has the potential for life or death. The misinterpretation, then, does not stem from the Word; it stems from our heart. The *heart* is *the core of our beliefs*. When we do not believe God is who He says He is, our interpretation of scripture is skewed because our perception of God is not based on how Jesus revealed Him to us, thereby twisting what is meant for life into our destruction. Conversely, when we believe

God's character as He revealed it—consistent with His names, the life, teaching, and example of Jesus, along with His death, burial, and resurrection—every word brings life.

God has provided clear processes for making our lives incredibly rich with peace, joy, and overall quality of life. Many people believe God wants them to have an abundant life, but a biblically-based belief mixed with an unbiblical application is a recipe for internal conflict and pain. One of the laws of the Kingdom is the law of the seed, and its second principle teaches: "By planting discordant seeds with the Word of God, we corrupt the seed of God's Word, and the crop it produces is contaminated!"

Everything God seeks to do in us is from the inside out—from our mind, our heart, and our behavior through which we influence the world around

The Problem with the Promise

us. Every Word of God and every teaching of Jesus concerning how to enjoy heaven on earth is rooted in personal responsibility; otherwise, our search of the Kingdom will be external. It will focus on the need for others to change but not ourselves!

In our pursuit of the happiness Jesus undeniably guarantees, we tend to mix the promise with the corrupt, anti-biblical seed that infers others must change for us to be happy. From this corrupt logic, we impose our will onto others, demanding that they make us happy and justifying it with a biblical promise. So deep is this rotting selfishness that we even demand God be who we want Him to be, and His salvation be as we think it should be. We want a god created in our image to fulfill our will. This corrupt selfishness opposes the Lordship of Jesus and the unchangeable nature of God. From a mixed motive of the promised abundant life and a selfish agenda, the seed of God's Word is destroyed, and its harvest produces more pain and unhappiness.

All the kings of the ancient world knew a Deliverer would one day come to restore man to God and Planet Earth to the perfect will of God, as demonstrated in the Garden of Eden. The first recorded prophecy of the Bible, spoken by God Himself in the Garden of Eden, was, "a deliverer, born of a woman, would overthrow the power of Lucifer and the kingdoms of this world."³ The godless feared that when this prophecy was fulfilled, they would lose their kingdoms, power, wealth, and rule over men. Throughout ancient history, counterfeit fulfillments of this prophecy were staged to seduce the human race into giving their allegiance to corrupt men and women of power. The Bible reveals that with any known sign of an emerging deliverer, mass murders and atrocities were committed to eliminate the threat, thereby protecting the power of evil rulers and their empires.

Sadly, even the Jews, who longed for the Messiah's arrival, had taken themselves into such a state of *selective processing*⁴ that they rejected Scripture revealing the Messiah who would appear twice: the first time, as a suffering servant and the second, as a ruling King. They wanted the Lion of the tribe of Judah and had no interest in the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world. They were so convinced of what they needed to be happy and free, that even when Jesus proved beyond any doubt that He was who He claimed to be, they killed Him. Had he not so irrefutably proven Himself to be the Messiah by the evidence they demanded, they

could have disqualified Him; nevertheless, by fulfilling what they determined were miracles that could only be done by the Messiah, they had to either kill Him or acknowledge Him.

Imagine the extreme internal reactions experienced by both groups when John the Baptist announced that the **Kingdom of God** was at hand. The Jews became hopeful, even ecstatic at the possibility of finally breaking the power of the Romans; they must have reveled in their retaliatory fantasies for every oppressive, violent, oppressive action taken against them. Surely their vengeance exploded from hot embers into flame at the notion of finally conquering their mortal enemy. Even more intoxicating was the supposition that Israel would rule all the nations of the world alongside the Messiah.

The ruling class, on the other hand, feared the loss of their positions of power and wealth. They did not want a kingdom that God ruled; they wanted a kingdom they ruled. The wicked rulers had already attempted to prevent the advent of the Messiah by killing all the newborn male babies at the time of Christ's birth, just as Nimrod did at the sign of Abraham's birth. They were poised for extreme ruthless action to secure their control. Murder, destruction, and oppression are always justified by those who believe the end justifies the means. Like Pharaoh, the promise of the Deliverer was wholly anticipated by the people but highly dreaded by the rulers.

Corrupt politicians thriving on power and control who killed the Savior of the world.

When Jesus came preaching the *Kingdom of God*, the corrupted Jewish leaders thought He was referring to world domination; it was everything they had hoped. Conversely, the godless religious leaders felt their greatest fear had come to pass. By this time, the high priests and rulers of Israel were being appointed by Rome to positions they usually obtained by paying bribes, not to positions intended to serve the people but for the power to benefit themselves and administer their corrupt agendas at the will of Rome.

The common people had few agendas: they wanted a better quality of life and to know God. Throughout history, many have assumed it was the common people of Israel who killed Jesus; it was, as it always has been and always will be, corrupt politicians thriving on power and control who

The Problem with the Promise

killed the Savior of the world. Jesus did not fulfill the political ambitions of those Jews with mixed motives. As the people began to follow Him, He quickly became a threat to the authority and control of the corrupt religious and political administration. Pagan rulers feared the wrath of Rome and the loss of position and power, even possible punishment. To them, Jesus most certainly did not fit the Kingly profile of those who craved power and position. Even among the religious leaders, He was a threat to their “ministry.”

The problem with the promise comes to light by one question Jesus asked, “*What is written in the Law? How do you read it?*”⁵ The problem of understanding is never whether or not the promise is clear: the promise is always clear. We complicate the promise through our interpretation process. Sadly, most of the people I have ever asked admitted that their interpretation and application of scripture was something handed down to them by someone else. They never studied God’s Word to discover if their understanding was truly congruent with Jesus’ teaching.

Interpretation of scripture is always internalized in beliefs and expressed by the way we apply scripture. While we start with a real promise of God, we interpret it based on our religious influences or personal agendas. When the promise does not come to pass, we blame God. Each failed promise leads to more unbelief, which corrupts future attempts to obtain the promises.

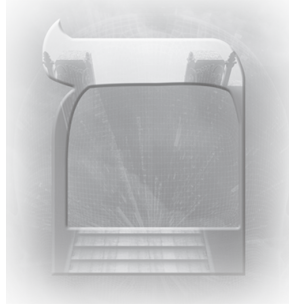
Our failed attempt to live in the promises is caused by our insistence on planting the corrupt seeds of religion with the pure seeds of God’s promise. Corrupt seed not only destroys the promise but it also destroys our perception; we lose the capacity to see the obvious and hear what has been clearly stated.

HeartWork⁶

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. This HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth.

Read the following questions and prepare yourself to see and perceive, to hear and understand. Be honest about the beliefs or agendas that will prevent you from hearing and receiving God's promises.

1. I have personal goals or agendas that I must make happen; therefore, I fear to put them in God's hands.
2. When my understanding of scripture is challenged or questioned, I feel threatened.
3. I believe I can only have happiness if certain people do what I need them to do.
4. I am willing to surrender all my opinions and interpretations when I see it in the Word.
5. I trust the Word of God as the truth and the Holy Spirit to be my teacher.



CHAPTER 2

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The clearest expression of faith is a humble heart.

Jesus was a teacher of the ***Kingdom of God***, sometimes referred to as the ***Kingdom of Heaven***. The phrase, Kingdom of God, is more about a realm wherein God rules. The Kingdom of heaven refers more to a realm where God's resources are available to the believer. The Gospel of the Kingdom is, among other things, the good news that a believer can enter that realm and have heaven on earth... and it is not as difficult as the religious leaders had led them to believe.

Simply hearing the phrase, *the Kingdom of God* evoked all manner of thoughts and emotions in all manner of people. Hearers either interpreted Jesus' teaching based on their predetermined opinions and personal desires, or they allowed their hearts to remain open to being taught of the Lord.

Only those who had no lust for power, but rather a passion for God and a better quality of life, grasped and benefited from His Kingdom teaching. Today's believers are as unclear about Jesus' Kingdom teaching as those who heard it firsthand. Our intention to find happiness from that which occurs in the natural stands in complete opposition to His teaching. This opposition to natural thinking is the only thing that makes the Kingdom difficult to enter. Only when we are willing to surrender our personal opinions for how to find happiness will we find the way to be *easy and light*.

Heaven on Earth: Unveiling the Mysteries of God's Kingdom

As the cornerstone parable of the Kingdom, the parable of the sower and the seed never indicates that anything outside of us must change to enter the Kingdom realm, i.e., heaven on earth. It clearly illustrates the factors that determine whether we can enter the Kingdom realm: does the seed (Word) sown in the soil of our heart survive long enough to bear fruit?

Jesus encapsulated our tendency to selectively process information when He said, *"Hearing you will hear and shall not understand and seeing you will see and not perceive."*⁷ Some believe God closed people's eyes and ears, but He clarifies this in the very next verse, *"For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing."*⁸ He is describing an issue of the heart, a **hardness, or blindness, of heart**. Our heart is how and where God communicates with us. We, and we alone, have dominion over our hearts, and its attitudes and beliefs. It is these very factors which determine our softness or hardness toward God. A hard heart is insensitive and even resistant to God: the seed that fell on hard soil and lost the quickest.

As Jesus continues in the same verse, it becomes evident that it is we who choose to close our eyes and ears, *"And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears."*⁹ God never arbitrarily decides who will believe and who will not, who will rebel and who will surrender. He desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth. Each of us, individually, opens and closes our heart to God based on our knowledge and trust for His character and His Word, coupled with our willingness to surrender our agendas.

The process for enjoying heaven on earth makes little sense to the person who has learned to get what they want by force. Lying, manipulation, using people, and other carnal actions of force and deception are implanted in our minds from the earliest age. These are the tools that deliver happiness... or so we suppose. When we reject God's process, we reject God. Why? We are convinced His way will not get us the happiness we so deeply desire. To reject the Word of God is to reject the God of the Word. Rather than reject God, we placate our conscience by creating a false image of Him, closing our eyes, ears, and hearts!

The key to understanding this phenomenon is found in the statement, *"Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn."*¹⁰ It is impossible to understand God's truth when attempting to make it fit into our logic. If the only way we can feel happy, safe, or fulfilled is based on our predetermined

opinion, any other point of view is illogical and incomprehensible. Upon determining what we want to see, we selectively process out that which differs from our established view. So, we never see it.

A heart that does not trust the goodness of God interprets the Word to support and justify its opinion! Therefore Jesus asked, “*What is written in the law... How do you read it?*”¹¹ No one ever solely reads the Bible; we read **and** interpret. Many external sources are available to use as a basis for interpretation. Regardless of the resources or in-depth study, the truth can only be grasped by the *humble* (teachable).

Surrendering our opinion and turning to God is far more than accepting a single truth or fact; it is accepting a thought process that is foreign to ours. Jesus is called *logos*.¹² Among its complex and extensive meaning, *logos* is *logic or a way of thinking*. Jesus taught and modeled how we are to think about ourselves and God. He is the embodiment of godly logic. Surrendering to Jesus as Lord is the point at which we choose His logic, opinion, and interpretation of all things above our own or any offered by the world’s system.

The problem with the promise is seldom our inability to see the promise.

Lordship seems to be a concept foreign to the modern church. In my opinion, it is the single cause for the impotence, ignorance, and iniquity permeating much of today’s Christianity. The willingness to surrender our opinion to His is one of the clearest expressions of faith in Jesus as Lord. Such faith is, however, an impossibility when we believe the path to happiness, pleasure, or fulfillment is according to our plan.

Until we understand exactly what Jesus meant by the phrase the *Kingdom of God*, we remain in darkness concerning His central message. Jesus came proclaiming the message of the Kingdom. This message must be preached to the ends of the earth before He can return; yet, we seem to know less about perceiving, entering, and abiding in the Kingdom than any other aspect of our doctrine, as is revealed by our lack of health, happiness, peace, and joy!

The problem with the promise is seldom our inability to see the promise. The problem is that our idea of how that promise is fulfilled is a twisted theological premise based on our personal preference or opinion. When

Heaven on Earth: Unveiling the Mysteries of God's Kingdom

Jesus is our Lord, His words transform our minds and establish our hearts in an internal understanding that results in faith and the manifestation of the power of God!

The commandments, when applied from the basis of love, teach us how we should treat one another. They reveal God's wisdom for health, marriage, civil order, the personal and national economy, and every other aspect of life. Religion has twisted the Word of God into something hard, heavy, and legalistic... never God's intention. Thus, Jesus was the Word made flesh, and His life, teaching, and ministry show how every Word of God is to be interpreted and applied.

The Jews, to whom He preached, did not need to learn the Word; they needed to learn, see, and experience the Word interpreted and applied as God originally intended. Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom showed us the attitudes, mindset, and logic of those who desired to live in the supernatural realm wherein the Word of God was not just preached... it was made manifest!

This book, *Heaven on Earth*, will not only help us understand the message of the Kingdom clearly, but it will explicitly show us what Jesus taught about how to establish our lives in the Kingdom. It is, therefore, paramount to prepare ourselves to see, hear, and understand the truth in a context that will most likely violate our family culture, religious beliefs, and personal logic.

Being teachable (humble) is a choice, 50% decision and 50% faith. The decision to open our hearts to God to make a journey we have never made, to follow wisdom we have never acquired, and to experience a quality of life we have never seen must be made by trusting Him to lead, guide, protect, and teach us every step of the way. Commitment to His Lordship is the only path by which we can follow Him as a disciple and participate in this internal realm called the *Kingdom of God*!

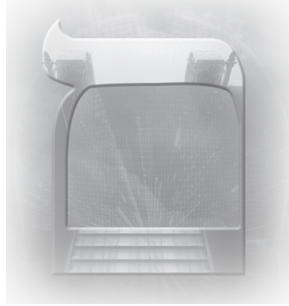
When Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God, the corrupted Jewish leaders thought He was referring to world domination; it was everything they had hoped. Conversely, the godless religious leaders felt their greatest fear had come to pass. By this time, the high priests and rulers of Israel were being appointed by Rome to positions they usually obtained by paying bribes, not to posts intended to serve the people but for the power to benefit themselves and administer their corrupt agendas at the will of Rome.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

Answer these questions honestly. Do not answer them as you feel you should; answer them based on what is really in your heart.

1. Is Jesus really my Lord? Have I surrendered my opinions concerning every aspect of life to Him and His teaching?
2. If understanding the message of the Kingdom means I will have to surrender long-held beliefs and opinions to scriptural truth, am I willing to do so?
3. Do I feel the need to protect the doctrines held by my parents, people I respect or my denomination?
4. Am I able to value the input of others even when I realize not all their input is accurate?



CHAPTER 3

Discovering the Door to the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is only accessible through the door of the heart!

John the Baptist came proclaiming, “*Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”¹³ Jesus soon followed, preaching the same message, “...*the Kingdom is at hand.*”¹⁴ **Carnal** religious minds imagined the fulfillment of all their selfish ideas and aspirations of the Kingdom of God coming to earth, but the Kingdom never manifested to their liking. Perhaps one of the many reasons they would cease to follow Jesus was because he was not producing the Kingdom they wanted.

It could be argued that the Jewish people had an excuse. How were they to know Jesus would establish God’s Kingdom in phases? It would be internal at His first appearing, then external, in the world, at His second coming, and finally, in its ultimate expression, when New Jerusalem comes to Planet Earth to abide forever. Likewise, many could argue that upon hearing the Gospel today, we cannot be expected to grasp the mysteries of the Kingdom either. Often, these arguments are a form of internal and sometimes subconscious resistance to a message contrary to the type of Kingdom we want.

Why we misunderstand the message of the Kingdom has little to do with our lack of theological information; it is the Holy Spirit who reveals the Kingdom to us. As we will soon discover, there were very distinct choices made by some listeners which made it possible for them to see what others would

not see and perceive what they were not willing to perceive. The Holy Spirit can only work with a teachable heart. He never violates our will, and He never forces when we resist His leadership.

There is, however, one quality that makes it possible for Him to lead any believer on the journey to discover the door, which leads to the understanding of all the mysteries of the Kingdom. John the Baptist proclaimed repentance as the critical component to internal preparation for the soon coming Kingdom of God. **Repentance**, in its most basic form, means *to have a change of mind*. We could generalize the many things about which we must change our minds, but at this point, *a change of mind* is all we need to understand.

The Messiah, for which they had prayed and waited, was about to be revealed, and He would teach them all they needed to know to enter the Kingdom of God and Heaven. In other words, if they had any intention of being disciples of the Messiah, they had to repent (change their beliefs) when His teaching conflicted with any of their currently held doctrine, tradition, view, or opinion about life or God. *Repentance* is the attitude of the teachable who are ready to surrender their closely held opinions when presented with a truth supported by scripture.

The Kingdom of God is called a *mystery*. Like most of the mysteries of God, they hide in plain sight. It is the heart of the hearer that hides the mysteries of God from humanity, not their inability to be deciphered. Understanding the Kingdom is a capacity of the heart, not the mind; therefore, that which affects the heart can alter our perceptions, how we hear, and ultimately, our understanding of what we hear.

The parable of the sower and the seed illustrates the underlying conditions of the heart that corrupt our understanding of those who: 1) instantly reject the Word because of hardness of heart, 2) are shallow and because of persecution or pressures turn away, 3) are deceived by the pleasures of this life and their desire for other things, and 4) sow corrupt seed that is contradictory to God's Word, thereby choking it out. It is the condition of our heart that determines whether the Word is understandable or incomprehensible to us.

Many hearers claim confusion as to the reason they do not grasp Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom. **Confusion**, nonetheless, is *a self-induced*

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disordered mental state which arises from being presented with the truth but unwilling to repent. James 3:16 says, “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion...” (KJV). When we insist we do not understand, it is our religious justification for not believing the truth. Jesus explained how we close our eyes so we cannot see, our ears so we cannot hear, and dull our hearts so we cannot understand.¹⁵ Why? We never had any intention of surrendering our opinions in the first place; therefore, we refuse to repent.

When asked why Jesus taught in parables, a casual glance at the Scriptures would seem to indicate God was selective concerning whom He would and would not give revelation. Upon closer examination, however, we see that each of us makes our own choice whether we will hear and understand what God is saying. To man's absurd indictment against God's love of all men, Lenski says:

The Scripture answer: no unwillingness on God's part to give (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Jn. 3:16; Matt. 28:19–20) but only the unwillingness of so many to receive... (Matt. 23:37; Acts 7:51; Hos. 13:9)¹⁶

Our heavenly Father longs to reveal His mysteries of truth to everyone. He has done everything He can to draw all of us to Jesus, other than violating our will. Love never violates the will of another person, even when that other person is being self-destructive. Oppressors use force to coerce people into fulfilling their will. God is not the oppressor; He is the Deliverer. He has given us the truth, sent the Holy Spirit to lead us, and provided everything He can to draw us, but He will never violate our free will!

The scripture says these things are revealed to babes, but those who consider themselves wise to this world cannot see. Only to those who will not hear are these things a mystery. God has given us His written Word, and the Holy Spirit is persistently attempting to speak wisdom to our hearts. The most obvious revelation available to all is the life and teachings of Jesus Himself; even when we cannot understand the complexities of Jesus' theology and identity, we can see how He lived and ministered.

Some form of the Gospel has been preached to most of the world. Scores of people who had never read the Bible or heard a sermon but deeply hungered to know the true God have reported receiving personal visita-

tions from Jesus. In other words, people who want to know the truth will always find it. The ugly reality that no one wants to admit is that for many, ignorance and misunderstanding about God and His ways are largely preferable to repentance.

I am not saying that most people are going to tell God, “I reject your ways and choose mine.” I am saying that we find a false sense of security in doing things the way we have always done them, seeing things the way we have always seen them, and thinking the way we have always thought. We have lived by our beliefs and opinions for so long we will not trust any influence that does not support our predetermined perspective. Some studies indicate man’s greatest fear is the fear of the unknown. Nowhere is this more apparent than when people stay in dysfunctional, often abusive relationships rather than risk the unknown. Sadly, people will continue in a destructive lifestyle rather than accept the offer of heaven on earth simply because they have never seen it.

The Amplified Version gives a more accurate rendering of James 3:16, “*For wherever there is jealousy (envy) and contention (rivalry and selfish ambition), there will also be confusion (unrest, disharmony, rebellion) and all sorts of evil and vile practices.*” Jealousy and selfishness are a continuum of lust, and **lust** is a *desire*. We believe that a desire fulfilled will bring great pleasure, and the expectation of pleasure

is one of the strongest motivations. The twist, however, is that when we believe something will please us, we create a process for how we will obtain that pleasure. It is the process, not the pleasure, that destroys us! There is always a godly way to fulfill a desire, but our refusal to trust God’s process leads us away from Him and into self-destruction.

The first step toward the Kingdom is to perceive the door.

Jealousy is often a component of the imagination that comes from *coveting what someone else has*, while **selfish ambition** is *the commitment to have the things we so deeply desire; therefore, we hold fast to our secret agendas*. Any thought, input, or suggestion from God or man about the destructiveness of our pursuit is met with outright rejection or a stream of self-justification and rationalizations that lead to a state of self-induced confusion. When people know what to do but refuse to cease pursuing their lusts, the standard response is, “I am confused,” or “I do not understand.” After

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45 years of counseling, I discovered that “I do not understand,” actually means “I do not **want** to understand.”

Based on how we were raised and what we were taught, we determine what we need to be happy and how to get it. Because of the inherent compulsion for pleasure, anything other than “what I want,” and “how I will get it,” provokes the fear of never finding happiness. We resist overtly or covertly, aggressively or passively, any message that threatens our perceived opportunity for happiness. Jesus’ teachings on the attitudes of those who abide in the Kingdom are completely out of sync with anything the world’s system teaches. We close our heart, not only making it impossible to enter but impossible to perceive there is a Kingdom!

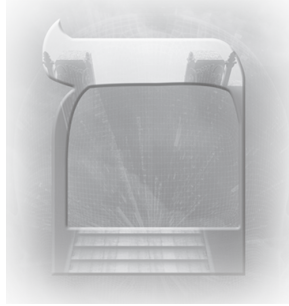
To enter the Kingdom, we must first see the door. The ***door** is an entryway into a realm allowing us to perceive the promises of the Gospel.* The first step toward the Kingdom is to perceive the door. Unrepentant hearts cannot be led or taught of the Lord; therefore, the Holy Spirit cannot lead them to the door. Not seeing the door is the basis for the justification of the carnal mind, “I see no door; therefore, there is no door, which means there is no Kingdom; thus, there is no fulfillment for these promises.” This false conclusion confirms the carnal reasoning, “My way makes more logical sense than something I cannot see.”

God never asks us to commit to something we cannot see or perceive. Contrary to religious logic, faith is never blind. Millions have discovered an incredible quality of life by sincerely praying, “I cannot see this, but if it is real, I am willing to see it. I am asking you to open my eyes; bring me to the place to see what I cannot see.”

HeartWork

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1. Am I willing to allow God to show me something that may challenge many of my currently held beliefs?
2. Is there something I want, but I fear I will lose it if I follow God?
3. Have I sincerely prayed the prayer mentioned above?



CHAPTER 4

Recovering Sight

We only believe what we can see, and we can only see what we are willing to see!

Jesus miraculously gave sight to the physically blind, but not every scripture mentioning blind eyes being open is about the physically blind. In Luke 4, when Jesus launched His public ministry, He addressed the core reason our lives are in shambles: our broken heart. A ***broken or bruised heart*** has been trampled on and filled with pain so devastating that it is impossible to live the abundant life.

One of the ways Jesus brings recovery is by opening the ***blind eyes of the heart***. In this scripture, He is not referring to the physically blind but rather to those who have been so hurt they cannot see the freedom God offers. The prophet Isaiah spoke of those who sit in the darkness of their emotional and mental prison (Isa. 42:7–9). The prison to which he refers is the limitations imposed by our beliefs and perception.

Jesus, through His resurrection, has opened the prison door of a limited life, but the darkness that captivates the prisoner prevents the way out from being seen. The promise of a new life does not make sense to the mindset of a prisoner whose life experience makes it impossible to see any way to escape. What we need is for the eyes of our heart to be open to perceive God's reality and escape our perceptions.

The original language of the phrase in Luke 4:18, “*recover sight to the blind*” is the same as Mark 6:41. When presented with the need to feed 5,000 hungry people, Jesus saw the need with His natural eyes and was momentarily limited by His natural perception. After all, feeding 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish was an impossible task. We must remember, Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are.¹⁷ The fact that He never gave in to the temptation to the point of sin models how we too can overcome temptation. He, like us, had to choose between His personal, natural perception, and God’s perception. He had to recover His spiritual sight. In every limiting situation, we see with our natural eyes instead of the eyes of our heart. If Jesus had not seen the situation with the eyes of His heart, He would have remained limited to His natural resources and never met the need.

Mark 6:41 says, “*When He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves...*” In the original language, this phrase says, “*He looked into heaven and recovered His sight.*”¹⁸ The word for **recovering sight** is the same as is used in Luke 4:18. Our heart is the seat of our insight, perception, understanding, and faith. A broken heart is afraid to trust God; it has experienced too many disappointments. Unbelief twists our perception; our blindness is the darkness that makes truth imperceptible. We accept the version of reality based on natural limitations.

The moment we choose to be open to God’s reality, He is free to work in our lives.

Although our broken heart is imprisoned by darkness and we cannot see, our freedom of choice is always intact. At any time, we can open our hearts to God and recover our sight. The Hebrew language reveals the main way God helps us is by revealing His perception, a reality into which we can enter, making us capable of hearing and understanding our circumstances from God’s point of view.

The moment we choose to be open to God’s reality, He is free to work in our lives. Only then can we perceive the Kingdom of God. For the person who has suffered from a broken heart, this message offers a promise too good to be true. How could someone who has been crushed by life ever allow themselves to hope for something so incredible? It is not impossible, but it is a mystery!

Jesus came declaring a mystery. For centuries the sages diligently sought to know its content and the timing of its appearance. The message most dreaded and feared by governments, kings, and those who lusted for power, including the devil himself was the revelation for which the meek, humble, and godly hunger and thirst: The Mystery of the Kingdom! To one group, they were words of life, but to the other, they were words of death. For the fearful and unbelieving who would not open their hearts, they were unrecognizable.

In the Bible, we often see what appears to be contradictory concepts. One example is in the case of God hardening someone's heart. Tragically, this concept has been interpreted as God sovereignly choosing to harden some hearts while choosing to soften others. The problem with that interpretation is that it directly opposes aspects of God's loving nature. When Scripture appears to contradict itself, it is either a poor translation or a

We all have a one-time event that begins a lifetime process of receiving the Kingdom of God.

misunderstanding in our interpretation. Whether our hearts are hardened or softened by the truth we hear is determined by the condition of our hearts. Likewise, our immunity to lies and our affinity for truth is always determined by the condition of our heart.

My first mentor helped me understand God's effect on Pharaoh's heart with this saying, "The same sun that softens butter hardens clay." The children of Israel rejoiced when God called them out to the wilderness to worship, but Pharaoh became enraged. Likewise, the light of God's Word, as it poured from the mouth of Jesus or as it is read from the pages of the Bible, is like the heat of the sun: it can harden, or it can heal! The question is whether your heart is like butter that becomes soft, pliable, and yielding, or like clay that becomes hard, inflexible, and resistant.

Jesus told His disciples, "...To you, it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God ..." (Luke 8:10). Earlier, they were given a key making it possible for them to understand His parables. Jesus did for them what the Holy Spirit now does for us; from time to time, He had to explain them in greater detail. Even with more explanation, those who did not have this key would never understand.

A mystery is revealed through a process that begins with an initiation and is further revealed in stages or degrees. We all have a one-time event that begins a lifetime process of receiving the Kingdom of God. The million-dollar question is, “What is the event that has such a dramatic effect on our heart that it changes our capacity to hear and understand God’s Word of the Kingdom?”¹⁹ The answer lies in the attitudes of the hearers.

The two main types of hearers who listened to the teachings of Jesus were believers and unbelievers. Among believers, there were two subcategories: disciples and non-disciples. A **disciple** is *one who seeks to build and govern life by the teaching and lifestyle of the teacher*. Before the resurrection, no one was born again; so, it is not merely the new birth that opens our heart and mind to the capacity to understand.

A disciple that molds his or her life after the teaching and example of the teacher must have one trait above all others, a trait that goes beyond casual believing. After all, the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19, KJV), but they are most certainly not disciples—they are enemies. A disciple believes and is teachable; he or she has predetermined to reject any opinion, doctrine, or lifestyle contrary to the Master’s teaching and example.

The disciple begins a journey with one prevailing attitude: repentance! Contrary to the religious notion of repentance, the original language teaches that it is a continuing state of mind. We cannot be disciples of Jesus if we are unwilling to continuously surrender our thoughts, opinions, doctrines, and lifestyles to His teaching and example. The moment we, as believers, refuse to repent, we are no longer disciples. The Kingdom message of John the Baptist prepared the people to hear by calling for one action, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*” (Matt. 3:2). This was the explicit and implicit message in all of Jesus’ teaching, and as such, repentance is the one preliminary decision for becoming a disciple. It is this attitude and decision, alone, that opens our hearts to receive what God is offering to all men: the capacity, or the **grace**, to understand.

Repentance is not the door to the Kingdom, but it does make it possible to perceive the door. Those who are not ready to surrender themselves to the Lordship of Jesus, through repentance, are not even aware there is a door. The door of the Kingdom, which is the heart, can only be perceived when we are ready to surrender ourselves to Jesus as Lord and become a disciple.

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The Hebrew word for *hear* and *obey* is the same word. Hearing and obeying follow along a continuum, which helps us better understand the concept: “The same sun that melts butter hardens clay.” God, in His love, is calling out to all, but not all are willing to hear. The heart can only hear, see, and perceive that which it is willing to do. The repentant heart that is truly ready and willing to follow anything God says will hear, see, perceive, and understand.

We all want God to open our eyes so we can know how to make decisions and navigate life, but the reality is: God cannot open our eyes when we have chosen to keep them closed; to do so would violate our will, and that is one thing God can never and will never do.

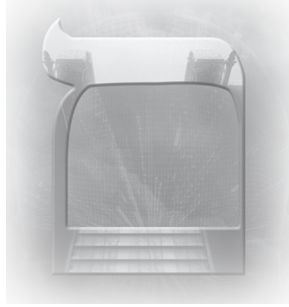
The unrepentant can only see that which exists within the scope of their natural sight with no awareness of what exists beyond the realm of their own opinion. The moment we choose to follow Jesus as a disciple, our eyes open to a whole new world of opportunity. We realize the prison doors are open, the boundaries are clear, and we can step into heaven on earth!

HeartWork

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Before moving on, it is essential to make a clear and honest evaluation of your relationship with Jesus. I am not asking you to question your salvation, but it is essential to decide if you will approach Him as a disciple and relate to Him as your Lord.

1. Have I made an absolute commitment to follow the teachings and lifestyle of Jesus?
2. Do I surrender my every doctrine, tradition, opinion, and behavior to His teaching and example?
3. If not, am I ready to do so now?
4. I understand that if I want my eyes open to see God's perfect plan for my life, I must open them.



CHAPTER 5

Trusting Your Opinion or Trusting God

Every man lives by faith, but not necessarily faith in God!

Faith is an issue of the heart. The word ***faith***, in a very general sense, identifies what or whom we trust. Our every decision is made based on what we believe and trust. Since faith is a function of the heart, whether it is faith in God or faith in our personal feelings and opinions, it has the power to make what we believe come to pass. For example, people often believe they will die at a certain age, and they do. Others deeply believe they will get cancer, and they do. Some people believe they will overcome problems and against all the odds, they do. The testimonials that prove faith can work for or against us are endless and undeniable! The truth is: we all live by faith (trust/belief); it is just rarely faith in God and the wisdom of His counsel. From this point forward, when speaking of faith, I will be addressing faith in God unless otherwise stated.

Our every struggle, offense, and temptation is the fruit of what we think, believe, and subsequently feel. Thoughts give rise to emotions, while beliefs create deep-seated feelings.²⁰ Our feelings and emotions drive our behavior through two main processes: expressing our feelings and emotions outwardly and projecting our motives and judgments onto the world around us. These judgments and projections create a false sense of reality, thereby multiplying misunderstandings and magnifying the scope of the conflict to all with whom we interact.

Since beliefs are the subconscious driving force behind all behavior, problems are only permanently resolved when beliefs change. When beliefs do not change, we live in a suspended state of feelings versus willpower. In the end, feelings ALWAYS win over willpower. Since willpower is OUR POWER, the changes it brings remain only if we “stand strong.” If we are too tired, discouraged, or forget to put forth the effort, the false victories collapse into disappointment and personal failure.

Grace, on the other hand, is God’s power, which works from our heart, based on our trust in His truth.²¹ Grace manifests as the power, strength, capacity, and ability to be and do what God says we can be and do. Since we are not taught how to influence the beliefs of our heart, grace does not manifest when we need it. The closest substitute for true spiritual victory, through the grace of God, is the constant tormenting effort to produce enough will-power.

One of the greatest theological ironies of the modern church is its ignorance of the integral role of the heart to empower believers to find permanent solutions to life-long problems. How ironic that the heart, the core of every aspect of our connection with God, is wholly disregarded beyond a few token references.

Changing beliefs leads to an effortless change in thinking, feeling, emotions, and ultimately, behavior.²² Faith is, sadly, replaced with behavioral modification. While behavior modification is certainly not wrong, it is only temporary; it will last only if our willpower is present. Nevertheless, behavior modification is mistakenly seen as a victory when it reduces social conflict. While it is not a victory itself, it can be a path to victory. The reprieve from social angst, conflict, and emotional distress that comes from changing our behavior can be a perfect time to resolve the real problem: the beliefs of our hearts.

Religion is a system of relating to God on man’s terms instead of God’s.

Remember, religion is a system of relating to God on man’s terms instead of God’s. Religion uses biblical terminology but changes the definitions. It is a very subtle form of propaganda designed to rob the believer of true biblical faith. Religion, while looking and sounding spiritual, is based on unbelief in what God says about Himself. It alters what we see, perceive, and believe about God, thereby altering what we can trust about Him.

It also alters how we interpret God's Word. Religion is a combination of external performance, mysticism, and humanism, all of which are rooted in *Luciferianism*.²³

Religion is man's attempt to evoke a response from God based on a formula, ritual, or personal performance. Religion is rooted in man's opinion of God, independent of what He has revealed. Man's opinion is a vain imagination, and it is this imagination wherein man creates false religions, idols, and faulty concepts of God. Our modern idols are not the result of carving an image from wood or stone; we engrave a false image of God in our mind and heart.

Faith is man's response of trust to God, based on His testimony of Himself. Faith believes in the name(s) of God and that His names reveal his character and nature. Above all things, faith believes Jesus is the exact representation of God.²⁴ Faith believes that Jesus' representation of God in His ministry and teaching is the exact and only valid interpretation and application of the Scriptures. Faith believes, based on Jesus teaching, that every word God has ever spoken can only be understood and applied when based on God's definition of love. Faith is a declaration that God is true, and any man who disagrees with His truth is a liar. Conversely, religion is a declaration that man is true, and when God's Word contradicts man's opinion, God is a liar!

One of the most important questions God has ever posed to man has probably never been considered by most Christians: "*Who has believed our report?*"²⁵ Do we believe our denomination, our family, secular science, or our opinion more than the testimony of God? We would all say, "Absolutely not; I believe God!" Massive numbers of Christians, however, do not believe in God's account of creation, that murderers should pay with their life, that sex before marriage is ungodly, that God is good and only good, and the list goes on. The honest response of too many Christians is this, "God, I only believe your report when it aligns with my opinion."

God asked the question about whose report we will believe after which He described what Jesus would accomplish on the cross. Of all the places we reject God's report—to our detriment—is the message of the cross. People of faith set aside their opinions in favor of God's Word even when they do not understand all the factors, or what the Bible calls childlike-faith. Children trust their parents even though they do not understand the facts.

Religion is usually a deceptive, toxic, and deadly mixture of truth and lies. As one of my favorite preachers used to say, “Religion is like a vaccination; it gives you just enough of the real thing that you cannot catch it!” The most dangerous aspect of religion is that it appeals to the logic of the natural mind. As previously mentioned, religion uses biblical words and terminology, but it alters their definitions.

Casual listeners, or as Jesus identified them, hearers and not doers of the Word, will not read the Bible to understand for themselves, nor allow the Holy Spirit to be the Teacher. Casual Christians think they are hearing the Word of God preached simply because the preacher is using Christian terminology. Our doctrines shape the beliefs of our heart—the seat of love, faith, wisdom, and understanding; when not based on truth, these corrupt doctrines result in hell on earth instead of heaven on earth!

Religion preaches **propaganda** designed to shape our worldview and personal perception by determining how we perceive God. The ***propaganda gospel*** is designed to give authority to institutions or to those “anointed” to lead. Rather than leading the believer into a personal relationship with God where the individual submits to the Lordship of Jesus, it brings the worshipper into submission to a person, **denomination**, group, or doctrine. The irony is, this life-destroying deception is reinforced with Christian terminologies such as “The Lord Jesus Christ” or “surrender to the will of God,” but the application reveals its true interpretation. Surrender and submission are not to God but to a vain imagination resulting in a constant dependency on those who pretend to have the power to reveal God to you!

Since these definitions and concepts are learned while we are in pursuit of God or our idea of God, and come from people with position, recognition, respect, and authority, we, as mere laymen, cannot challenge nor dissent. **Laymen** or **laity** means *common or ordinary*. Some have said it means *the nothing ones*. This distinction between *laity*, or *the nothing ones*, and **clergy**, *the anointed ones*, creates a class distinction which includes the right to study and understand Scripture personally. By distinction, those teaching us have the anointing to understand Scripture and, therefore, must serve as mediators between God and us to ensure that as ignorant laymen, we do not find ourselves opposing denominational doctrine. Their interpretation of Scripture becomes laws by which we must live, thereby

corrupting our understanding so we can never quite see God as He is or understand the Word of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19, NIV) for ourselves. The result is, we can neither see the door nor enter the door!

Jesus warned that tradition and culture could neutralize the Word of God, rendering it ineffective in our lives. The tradition against which He spoke was the teaching of the Jews which interpreted the Word of God, thereby dictating its application. Once this happens, we are seldom, if ever, following God or even the Word of God; we are following the traditional interpretation of the Word and the dictates of religious propaganda. Thus, while speaking the name of God and quoting His Word, we are etching our beliefs about God on to our heart. Unfortunately, these beliefs and the application is someone else's interpretation of God's Word. The grace of God does not empower us to live a life of religion. The more we believe, the more ineffective the actual Word of God becomes. The harder we attempt to grow in faith, the less faith in God we develop.

The Jews means of propaganda was the priesthood and the law. In this, our ignorance of Jewish history limits our understanding of the term *law*. Every place in the New Testament where the law was spoken of negatively, it was not referring to the commandments God spoke; it was referring

One of the famous rules of propaganda is this: a person will believe the lie they hear repeatedly.

to the Jewish laws that interpreted God's commandments. Every word of Jesus and every teaching of the Apostles was based on the commandments. God's Word is not, nor has it ever been, legalistic or fear-based. It is religion that has used fear and legalism to interpret the Word of God, rendering a fearful and legalistic approach to God and His commandments.

With their lips, the Jews worshiped the name and Word of God, but as Jesus pointed out, their hearts were far from Him! Over the centuries, the Jews compiled many books written by the sages into what they called the Talmud. The Talmud was a historical and cultural attempt to interpret how to apply Scripture. The Talmud can have many benefits to understanding Jewish history and even some word translation. The Jewish leaders, however, violated the heart to heart relationship between God and believer: instead of teaching people to learn the Word of God and apply it to their

lives as the Holy Spirit led, the religious leaders interpreted how the Word of God should be applied, totally violating man's connection with God. The result was that the Talmud became the basis for all teaching rather than Scripture, a rendering that twisted its meaning: propaganda!

Like the Jews of Jesus' day, we have grown up under the indoctrination of not just religious leaders, but parents, teachers, and political figures who have defined every aspect of life and how it should be lived. Their ideology has become the foundation of our belief system. One of the famous rules of propaganda is this: a person will believe the lie they hear repeatedly. In a wartime report written by psychoanalyst Walter C. Langer, which was later published in a book entitled, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler*, he writes, "*People will believe a big lie sooner than a little one, and if you repeat it frequently enough, people will sooner or later believe it.*" What we have heard about love, marriage, sex, morality, politics, God, faith, health, money, and every other conceivable aspect of life was not taught to us by God and His Word, but by those who, perhaps with good intentions, have sought to shape our views to match theirs.

Some professionals say our every thought is based on a memory or an imagination. Sadly, most of our imagination is limited to the confines of our memories. Suffice it to say, most of our creativity is based on what we were told, which limits our capacity to see the world beyond the influence of our tradition. Few of us are willing or capable of admitting that before coming to Jesus we may have never had an original thought, and since coming to Jesus, until we **renew our minds**, what seems to be a revelation or new insight may be a revision of something we learned in the past. When we trust God more than we trust ourselves, we realize how natural and beneficial it is to admit that we may not have a single opinion about any aspect of our life that is in harmony with the Word of God.

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Minister, said, "*The best propaganda is that which, as it were, works invisibly, penetrates the whole of life without the public having any knowledge of the propagandistic initiative.*" I would take it a step further and say, "*The most influential propaganda is spread by those with good intentions who have no consciousness that they are spreading propaganda.*" The passion of sincerity has spread more propaganda than any other proponent of society. Unless we surrender our every thought and opinion to the Word of God, as interpreted by the life, teaching, ap-

plication, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, there is a high probability that much of our sharing, preaching, and life application is recycled propaganda.

We spend our lives being brainwashed, much of which has occurred through the annals of religion or the propaganda of false science or government. Having been influenced by religion, we have multiple ways in which to proliferate the effects of our lifetime of propaganda. We will focus on two of those possibilities: reject God's Word altogether or humble ourselves to God and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us. Most people I have counseled over the past 40 years came to Jesus with great intentions; however, never having renewed their minds, their beliefs, opinions, and general life paradigm never changed. They embedded their own opinions into biblical definitions of words and engaged in *Christian-ese* without repenting from their established worldview. While speaking God's name and using biblical terminology, they employed a faith made of their own opinion without ever actually seeking to know God's.

Subsequently, after years of attempting to make religious propaganda accomplish what the professionals said it should accomplish, they finally realized they had been seduced by religion. Then, in what appears to be a bold launch into true spiritual freedom, they rejected as much doctrine as they could. Ironically, instead of using biblical tools to read and study the

We live in an era where people are worn out with the church. The problem is, they cannot make a distinction between church and God!

Word to follow the Holy Spirit as their Teacher, they simply rejected religious propaganda, succeeding only to reject God altogether. They failed to realize they only needed to reject the false definitions and concepts of God that religion propagates, not God's Word.

We live in an era where people are worn out with the church. The problem is, they cannot make a distinction between church and God! Rather than rejecting the false definitions of the church, they reject the church; instead of rejecting the false definition of faith, they reject faith; by despising the false definition of repentance, they reject repentance. While proclaiming themselves free, they are taken captive by a deception far worse than anything by which they had previously been seduced: the rejection of God's Word.

Instead of truth guarding their heart, fear and anger propel them to harden their heart. In so doing, they once again render themselves incapable of ever seeing the door to the Kingdom, i.e., the door to heaven on earth!

The only process for *transformation* in the New Covenant involves putting off the old man, renewing the mind, and putting on the new man. All this demands that we address our thoughts and beliefs, all of which are ultimately expressed in our behavior. This entire process is rooted in repentance, not a one-time repentance but a dynamic harmonization between the mind and heart that continuously fine-tunes our mindset. Repentance is the starting place for surrender to Jesus as Lord and a lifetime of discipleship. We cannot learn anything new if our heart and mind will not surrender its view and opinion to God. We cannot simultaneously hold on to what we have while taking hold of something new. We cannot travel north if we continue to travel south. We cannot see what God is attempting to show us if we insist we already see!

Renewing the mind, through a particular biblical process, is the only way we can see where our thoughts and beliefs are in disharmony with God and, more importantly, see how to bring the Word into our lives in a way that is relevant and life-giving. Renewing the mind is the fulcrum for putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Renewing the mind is not a mere intellectual process; it is coming to know Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit as Teacher, God as our gentle, wise Father, and His Word as the one tool for directing our lives to its fullest potential. Renewing the mind is a process that begins with the choice to trust God's view and opinion more than our own. In the simplest of terms: it is when we accept that God is smarter than I!

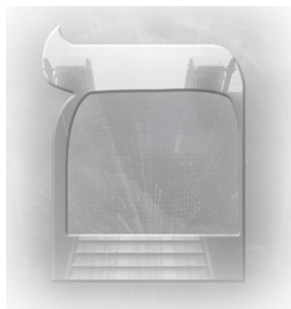
Like all Kingdoms, the King's Word is the truth. True converts are not seeking to earn entrance into the Kingdom; they are seeking to renew their mind, so they know how to function in the Kingdom. This process of renewing the mind is only possible for those with a repentant attitude and a teachable mind! One of our greatest challenges is to have more faith in God than our personal opinions.

The foundational law of the Kingdom is the law of the seed. The seed you plant determines what will grow in the garden of your life. God's Word is the seed that grows into the Kingdom of Heaven—heaven on earth!

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Where did I get my beliefs about God and every aspect of life?
2. Are my beliefs producing the quality of life I desire?
3. Do I personally and diligently study to ensure my beliefs align with God's Word?
4. Do I allow others to influence my view of life and God?
5. If yes, who? Do they validate their opinion with the Word of God?



CHAPTER 6

Everything Starts with Faith in God

You cannot have faith for what God will do apart from faith for who He is!

When we come to Jesus, whether we realize it or not, we are searching for the Kingdom, which takes us to a quality of life better than anything we have ever experienced. After all, most people come to Jesus upon realizing their approach to life is not working—they want a better life. The general hope given to people in their time of need is *Jesus is the answer*. That may or may not be a true statement.

Sadly, modern converts are led to think believing in Jesus to save them is enough to solve all their problems. After all, they were told Jesus is the answer. Real life experience proves that is never the case. Herein lies a paradox that few seem to grasp: salvation is not a one-dimensional event; it is the experiential first step of a lifetime journey. On earth, that journey is consummated in the heart of the believer who enters the realm of the Kingdom.

The only way to comprehend the New Covenant life of a believer is to understand the Old Testament journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. All their struggles are types of struggles we face today. Even the nations they were told to drive out were types of the works of the flesh. It is this type that provides a living picture of why believers who cling to the works of the flesh, though saved, can never inherit the Kingdom. One cannot experience righteousness, peace, and joy while struggling with the flesh! The

person battling with the flesh is like the believer who experiences moments of peace and joy but can never be sustained, because of the constant struggle!

Sadly, too many believers are like the Israelites who never entered Canaan. They trusted God just enough to come out of Egypt but never enough to enter Canaan and enjoy the promises. Like them, we are always wandering in the wilderness, not inheriting the abundant life Jesus promised. The Apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10:1–11, everything that happened to the children of Israel is an example for us. We can see where and why they stumbled, but we can also see when and why they prevailed. All these events were recorded in God's Word for us: those who live under the New Covenant and are seeking to enter the Kingdom of God.

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The writer of Hebrews lays out an obvious parallel between the journey of the Israelites and the journey of the New Covenant believer. He presents the compelling typology of Canaan as an example of entering rest, which seems to be synonymous with the Kingdom of God. Rest is an excellent metaphor for Kingdom living. It is a place where

we cease from toiling in our strength because we trust God and experience His grace, making us able to live this abundant life! By understanding the struggles and victories of the Israelites, we can trust God's Word rather than learning by trial and error. We can learn by their example to forego the pain of failure and move into this place of rest known as the *Kingdom of God*.

To accurately interpret Scripture, we must first understand what Scripture is. Every word of the New Testament is based on **Scripture** – the Old Testament. Jesus, all the Apostles, and the early church called it the *Scripture*. The writers of the New Testament never considered their writings to be a replacement of Scripture but rather an interpretation and instruction for how to apply it based on the New Covenant.

Pagan influence began to enter the church through Gentile converts who did not know the Scripture. Instead of interpreting and applying the writings of the Apostles based on Scripture, they interpreted them from pagan philosophies, such as Gnosticism, asceticism, and mysticism. Classifying the Bible into Old and New Testaments created a false dichotomy between

the history of God as revealed in Scripture and the life, teaching, and resurrection of Jesus. This separation was a necessary, deliberate means of accomplishing a corrupt religious agenda. If the Scriptures were the body of knowledge about an unchanging God, Gnosticism and Catholicism would have undoubtedly been condemned as idolatrous, pagan religions; therefore, there was a need to corrupt the faith by separating converts from the Scriptures.

It is impossible to understand most of Jesus teachings without a working knowledge of the Old Testament. Likewise, the Old Testament cannot be properly interpreted apart from the teachings of Jesus. Neither can it stand independently! Rejection of the Old Testament opened the door for occult and pagan doctrines to fill the early church. Most Luciferian doctrines came into the church through the Gentile believers who were utterly ignorant of the Old Testament. It was, on the other hand, primarily the Jewish converts who, without the New Testament, flooded the early church with legalism. The dichotomy of the Old and New Testaments facilitated extremes in both legalism and mysticism in the emerging church!

Upon closer examination of both the New Testament and Old Testament Scripture, we can understand what it means to enter the Kingdom of God. Through the following concise overviews of several meaningful events, I am attempting to provide some clarity for the modern-day believer about our journey into Kingdom living.

Leaven is usually seen as sin, but, more than anything, leaven is a way of thinking.

Egypt is a type of the world. As slaves, the Israelites had no choice but to obey their masters. Being slaves to sin, we have no choice but to obey our lusts. I encourage you to study the Exodus account and discover the wealth of insight that can be gained.

- The children of Israel left Egypt on the night of the first Passover. The ten plagues were poured out on Egypt to break the hold of the Egyptians and provide deliverance for Israel. The one provision that protected the Israelites from the fate of Egypt (the world) was the blood of the Passover lamb, which is a type of Jesus on the cross.
- Before partaking in the Passover Lamb, they observed what became

known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. **Leaven** is usually seen as sin, but, more than anything, leaven is *a way of thinking*. While all sin has the power to destroy, it is the leaven of *the un-renewed mind* that is the actual culprit. What did they have to change that had so much potential to derail all God was attempting to do for them? They had to surrender everything they had been taught about how to live while under the pagan influence of the Egyptians (the world). More importantly, they had to surrender every concept of God as the world's system defined Him.

- Early in their exodus from Egypt, we see the parable of the sower and the seed illustrated. Just like this Kingdom parable explains, there are many ways we allow the seed of God's Word to be robbed from us. The Israelites refusal to let go of their pagan beliefs, the corrupted seed, choked out the promises God gave them. They never allowed the Word to take root in their hearts. Upon reaching **Canaan** – “*the land of milk and honey*” – a *type* of the Kingdom of God – they could not enter in to experience the life God promised. Just like so many people who become Christians but never make the journey of faith from Egypt into the Kingdom realm. The book of Hebrews identifies the problem as nothing more than unbelief.
- Crossing the **Red Sea** was a *type* of being baptized into the body of Christ (salvation).
- Receiving the **Law at Mount Sinai** was a *type* of the Word of God being written on our hearts.
- Crossing the **Jordan River** was very probably a *type* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, wherein we receive the power (grace and wisdom) to conquer our enemies, i.e., our flesh which wars against our soul.
- Driving out **the nations** that inhabited the land represents us putting to death the deeds of the flesh.
- What should have been approximately an eleven-day journey through the wilderness turned into 40 years before they entered the Promised Land. Why did God not just make it happen supernaturally? The wilderness journey depicts the life of a carnal mind, which embodies many subtleties of unbelief, destructive thinking, and actions.

Everything Starts with Faith in God

- The theme of the book of Leviticus is “*be holy because [God is] holy.*” When something is ***holy***, it is *uncommon*. God taught them all the ways He was entirely unlike the pagan gods. One way was: sacrifices were not designed to appease His wrath; they were always intended as a means for operating faith. All the sacrifices were a type of Jesus, which, when combined with faith, has an incredible influence on their hearts, reconnecting them with God. Offerings were never given to draw God near to them but rather an act of faith in drawing near to Him. He was a God of love and relationship, ever reaching out to His people. They were to see themselves as sons and citizens of a holy nation, in preparation to be the light of God’s love shining in a dark world.
- All the promises God made were contingent on two factors: seeing God as He is and seeing themselves as God saw them. Remember, they were slaves, not only of the Egyptian people but of the Egyptian gods. For hundreds of years, they were surrounded by paganism while having it forced upon them. Pharaoh himself was like a god; therefore, to serve Pharaoh was to serve another god.

Naturally, they viewed themselves as slaves and the gods as their brutal masters, and, as such, slaves do not want a relationship with their mas-

ters (gods). All slaves want to know is what they must do to keep their masters satisfied and how to avoid their wrath. The Israelites’ unbelief in the wilderness was merely a projection of their distorted view of God and themselves. Trusting in a god who had made promises to his slaves was utterly foreign to them.

The Bible explicitly explains why the children of Israel could not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief

The Bible explicitly explains why the children of Israel could not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief:²⁶ The Word they heard did not benefit them because they did not mix it with faith.²⁷ Nearly the entire fourth chapter of Hebrews warns us not to suffer that same fate. It is clearly saying that, even though we are born-again believers, it does not automatically mean we will enter this place of God’s rest—The Kingdom of God.

Heaven on Earth: Unveiling the Mysteries of God's Kingdom

This next concept is probably one of the most difficult to grasp. We all agree with the premise but seldom comprehend what it may look like in real life application. God is more interested in who we are than what we do. It could be said that God is more interested in us *being* than *doing*; nevertheless, *being* and *doing* are a continuum. The seed is the *being*, while the fruit is the *doing*. Since *being* is a heart issue, the only way we can validate that we are who we say we are is by the fruit we produce. If what we do is contradictory with godly character, it proves to our conscience that we are not yet who we say we are.

God taught the children of Israel who He was, and they were called to be like Him: generous, kind, merciful, honest, moral, and ethical – in all ways godly. Even if He drove out all the inhabitants of Canaan (the flesh) and they walked in to claim the land uninhibited, they still could not have been the people they needed to be to possess it. Unbelief renders us incapable of being the people who can live in the promises of God!

Picture the scenario of a man believing for a beautiful, loving wife. Now, imagine God brings the woman of his dreams into his life. He talks a good game, expresses all the right values, and she is immediately attracted to him. They have a whirlwind romance and get married. On the outside, it appears that the promise is fulfilled.

Not long after their marriage, however, she begins to realize he is not the man she thought he was. He had good intentions and continued to say all the right words, but at every turn, he manages himself in a way that disproves his assumed identity. In response to her growing discontent, he desperately cries out to God to save their marriage, but the truth is, the marriage can only be saved by him being the man who can live with such an incredible woman. As I have told men for decades: if you want to marry Mrs. Right and have a great marriage, all you must do is be Mr. Right!

God was calling the children of Israel to trust and follow Him but not just to the Promised Land. He needed them to be the people who would trust Him as He led them through every battle of life, every challenge and every disaster, all the way to victory; otherwise, they would not be able to maintain what He provided.

The length of time it takes us to get from The Red Sea (salvation) to Canaan (The Kingdom) is up to us—not God. He has already done His part.

Everything Starts with Faith in God

God dwells in the Eternal now! His love for us moved Him to meet all our needs in Jesus preemptively. The moment we choose to make the journey, the Holy Spirit begins to lead.

The Apostle Paul says God is offering something better than we have ever heard, seen, or imagined, and only the Holy Spirit can reveal it to us.²⁸ The questions are whether we

believe He is as good as He has revealed himself, we are who He says we are, we are qualified for His promises through Jesus, and will we allow Him to lead and empower us to enter the Promised Land and possess the promises?

Faith begins with believing God is who He has declared He is.

Faith begins with believing God is who He has declared He is. Faith in God does not merely believe He exists; it believes He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. He is who His names declare Him to be, and most importantly, He is exactly as Jesus represented Him. We can only believe God can and will keep His promises to the degree we believe He is who He claims to be, and we can only become like Him when we see Him as He is.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is so good it is unbelievable on every level until we discover and believe the truth about the goodness of God. The duration and severity of the wilderness journey (deeds of the flesh) from Egypt (the world's system) to possessing Canaan (the Kingdom) are based on how long we hold to the beliefs formed from the influence of this world's system.

People always choose what they believe will bring the greatest pleasure with the least possibility of pain, but three things make even Christians reluctant to trust God wholeheartedly:

1. Righteousness, peace, and joy are beyond natural comprehension and intellectual description. Experiencing righteousness, peace, and joy is an unfathomable fulfillment which cannot be comprehended by intellectual portrayal; it must be experienced.
2. Religious influences have convinced us that walking with God is hard and painful; therefore, everything in our inherent physical and emotional makeup causes us to resist following God.

3. We trust our ways of obtaining pleasure and fulfillment. We are not ready to give up the temporary pleasure of sin for the hope of a pleasure for which we are unsure.

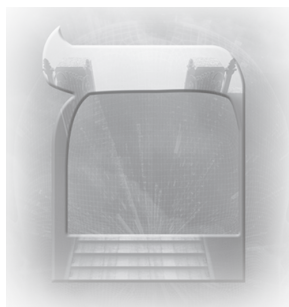
These resistant factors come down to one influence that is both the cause and the effect of pain in our lives: unbelief. Refusal to trust God robs us of experiencing His quality of life. Unbelief says, "The promises are not sure. God is not as good as He says, or there is no way this is true." Thus, the individual never pursues the Kingdom promise. Then there are those who make a half-hearted attempt, but when faced with a challenge, they draw back. The hardship of the challenge provides the excuse needed to retreat and deny the validity of the promise.

As impossible as it seems, however, every person can find a starting place in trusting God. For many, it starts with the honest prayer that says, "Lord, I do not believe these promises, but if they are true and they are for me, help me open my eyes." The teachable person with a repentant attitude will always find the truth. Sometimes, we forget that willingness is the precursor to obedience.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

- Look up the names of God and then answer this question: Do I realize none of the names of God are negative?
- What do the names of God tell me about the character and nature of God?
- Do I interpret scripture in harmony with the meanings of those names? An excellent resource for studying the names of God is ***The Prayer Organizer***: <https://www.impactministries.com/product/the-prayer-organizer/>
- Do I see that Jesus perfectly represented the identity of God?
- Did Jesus ever harm anyone or make their situation worse? If He is the exact representation of God, what does that tell me about the character and nature of God?
- Pray this prayer if you genuinely desire what it requests, “Father, I want to see you as your names and Jesus reveal You.”



CHAPTER 7

Too Good To Be True

When something is too good to be true, usually it is not true unless God says it is.

The word *gospel*, like so many biblical words, has taken on a colloquial meaning that is unrelated to what it means in Scripture. When swearing that something is true, many people will declare, “It is gospel!” In most religious settings, the word *gospel* represents a specific idea vaguely related to Jesus and salvation, but people with some biblical knowledge agree: the most accurate definition of the gospel is *good news*.

While ***gospel*** can mean *good news*, it can also mean *the reward for good news*. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says:

The spoken word is equated with its content; bad news brings sorrow and good news joy. The bearer of bad news is thus guilty and may be punished for it, while the bearer of good news is rewarded.²⁹

Interestingly, this concept adds a new dimension to what is and what is not gospel. The obvious questions we ask to determine if a statement is gospel are: 1) Is this in the scriptural fulfillment of Jesus’ resurrection, and 2) Does it produce joy or sorrow for the hearer? Jesus brought the good news that produced joy about the Kingdom of God, is available to all, can be entered by anyone at any time, is not hard like the religious leaders portrayed it, and makes it possible to connect directly to God without going

through the religious hierarchy.

Religion points us to the afterlife for the fulfillment of salvation and heaven. When Jesus preached salvation and the Kingdom of Heaven, it was apparent to the listener that He was referring to a quality of life here on earth. Paul described it this way, “*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them who love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us through His Spirit....*”³⁰ The gospel is so good it is beyond experience or imagination; it is so good that only be the Holy Spirit can reveal it.

Because of our Gentile misconceptions about salvation, we tend to miss this mystery called the *Kingdom of God*. Salvation, the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven came to mean the experience we have after we die. It is the original language that refers to an experience that occurs in this life and continues into eternity. Another reason this is such good news is that it is experienced independently of the actions or will of others.

According to many Hebrew teachers, when a Jew heard Jesus speak of the Kingdom of God or Heaven, they probably thought of Eden. The Garden of Eden represents both. We understand that the *Kingdom of God* is a place where its inhabitants are surrendered to the King. Eden was paradise—heaven on earth—if man trusted and followed God in a kingdom ruled by God!

Eden represents one of the most obvious ways to understand God’s will for humanity, which reflects His character, nature, and love for us. It was this environment God chose for man, not based on anyone’s prayers or faith. Dispensationalists³¹ argue that since man became sinful, God’s will for us changed, but this contradicts the fact that He is the great *I Am* who never changes. The theological concept of dispensationalism used to explain away what we do not understand is predicated only by that which our carnal mind will not believe.

As man dominated Planet Earth, it evolved into what he desired ...

When mankind trusted and yielded to God, they lived in His perfect will: no sin, sickness, or lack of any kind (heaven on earth)! Contrary to what religion teaches, the curse that came upon the earth was not God’s punishment for sin; it was the consequences of man’s choices. God gave authority

of Planet Earth to man. It has and is becoming what humanity chooses.

As man dominated Planet Earth, it evolved into what he desired...a world ruled by men without God's commandments or wisdom, hence the scripture that says, "...*Cursed is the ground because of you.*"³² It does not say God cursed the earth. The King James Version clearly states that the earth was cursed for "*your sakes.*" The Hebrew root word for *your sakes* points to the change that occurred in the hearts of Adam and Eve, specifically a change in their perception. It was they who changed their view, most likely referring to their view of God. They no longer believed He was good or worthy of trust!

The very concept of Eden also made it easy to understand the need to surrender to Lordship.

Eden was a place of incredible provision, producing everything man needed in the perfect form for perfect health. The Garden, a type of the heart, was created with perfect soil, in a perfect environment, and ripe with perfect seeds. It was also a type of the Kingdom of Heaven: a realm of all the needed resources for a perfect life.

It was understood that when referring to the *Kingdom of God*, it was the place where God rules, and the *Kingdom of Heaven* was the place containing all of God's resources. Even still, as wonderful as Eden was, the gospel of the Kingdom promised something even better.

The cornerstone of faith, remember, is rooted in trusting God, which starts with what we believe about creation. The person who does not believe the literal biblical account of creation will never have fully stable faith. If the foundation of all creation is a myth, it is hard to trust God about anything else refuted by secular science. While we cannot delve any further into this here, we now know that everything about the biblical account of creation is mathematically proven, as is referenced in my book *Apocalypse*.³³

The reason it was easy for the ordinary Jew to believe in Jesus' promise of the Kingdom is simple: they knew it had once existed. The very concept of Eden also made it easy to understand the need to surrender to Lordship. The Jewish mindset fully understood from Scripture that access to God's resources was the by-product of being intimately connected to Him as Father, protector, provider, Lord!

Although it was an imperfect type of the Kingdom, Eden was the best reference the Jews had for understanding God's intention toward them. They, of course, had no way to know their nation and its history was the type for the New Covenant believer. The Apostles, however, understood the history of Israel coming out of Egypt (our old man), every step of the wilderness journey (carnal thinking), what befell them (the consequences they brought on themselves), and ultimately possessing Canaan (Kingdom of God) to be the perfect model for the life of a believer.

Canaan (Kingdom of God) was an inheritance they would receive by a promise. God would lead them every step of the journey, but as we know, He could only lead them where they would trust and follow. As Paul pointed out to the Corinthians, as well as by the writer of Hebrews, being a Christian is no guarantee for entering the Kingdom – the place of rest. We must trust God enough to obey Him, for only the obedient will allow God to lead them into Kingdom.

God led the Israelites to the Jordan River (salvation) where He was ready and willing to deliver the nation (the flesh) of Canaan (Kingdom) and its inhabitants into their hand. Due to their unbelief (rooted in how they saw God and themselves), they would not follow Him into Canaan. They did not see themselves as a match for the armies that possessed the land. Even worse, they did not see God as being able to deliver the land into their possession. God had no choice but to keep them in the desert until a new generation arose that was willing to trust Him.

The legalist looks at their 40 years of wandering and labels it as God's punishment. The truth is, this massive group of people considered Him to be a liar who could not deliver what He promised. If God's wrath were as religion defined it, He would have killed them. Instead, He guided and protected them from hostile nations who sought their destruction while waiting patiently until a generation arose that would trust His promise and follow Him into the inheritance.

It seems that most believers live in the wilderness (flesh), experiencing degrees of God's provision and protection but never really entering the realm Jesus identified as the Kingdom of God. Like the children of Israel, they never admit to their unbelief. Religion is continuously promoting more programs and formulas, promising the outcome they desire, but it always falls short. Little do they realize that God is delivering unto them as many

promises as their hearts are willing to receive!

Both Jesus and Paul insisted on the need to experience the Holy Spirit as Teacher, Comforter, and the One who imbues us with the power to do what needs to be done to experience God's promises. One of the greatest paradoxes of the Kingdom of God is: The Holy Spirit is the helper, not the doer. In faith, we decide what we will do; when based on God's Word, the Holy Spirit empowers and leads us to success in our endeavor. The New Testament calls it *grace*.

The Hebrew Word for *help* first indicates God's ability to bring a different perception. He opens our eyes not only to see what we cannot presently see but to see from His perspective. The second aspect of help in the Hebrew comes from the image of a sword. God's protection is not independent of what we believe. When we see things from His perspective, we can be led down the path of life where we experience His protection. The last aspect of the Holy Spirit as a helper is repentance. When we surrender our perspective to His (repentance), we enter the glory of God (His view and opinion) and experience the outcome He promises. It all begins when we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God's perspective to us, a view and opinion better than anything we have seen, heard, or imagined. Our one responsibility is to believe!

God promised to deliver the land of Canaan to the Israelites, but they still had to fight the battles (of the desires and deeds of the flesh). The same is true for the New Covenant believer: We fight the battle, but we do so dependent on and trusting in God's power to be our strength. The *Holy Spirit*, according to the Greek, is *the one called alongside to help*. He is not called alongside to do! Like the children of Israel, we fail to grasp this subtle difference. They were going into battle, with their lives on the line, against superior forces and trained armies. Having been slaves who had never been trained for war, trusting God as their source for victory meant the difference between life or death.

Their doubt stemmed from a combination of not believing in themselves and not believing in God. For us, that problem is resolved first by the fact that we are new creations in Christ. Second, we, too, have been delivered out of Egypt—our old nature. Finally, we have all the Word of God as proven history and every reason to trust God to be faithful to what He has promised. When we believe God is who He presents Himself to be and

Too Good to Be True

that we are who He says we are in Jesus, nothing will keep us from our inheritance: The Kingdom of God.

Every promise for life this great seems too good to be true. It seems beyond the reach of our faith, but one thing of which we can be sure: if we choose to take God at His Word and open our hearts, He will open our eyes to a life better than we ever imagined. Then by His Word and His Spirit, he will guide us across the Jordan into the Kingdom realm.

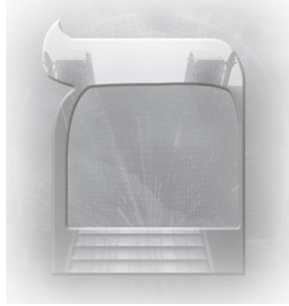
HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Will I choose to believe God wants me to have a life better than anything I have ever imagined? If not, am I willing to allow Him to open my eyes to see what I am unable to perceive at this moment?
2. Am I determined to believe God, and His promises, in every situation, even when I realize I am not confident enough to take steps of faith at this moment?
3. Am I determined to believe in a realm called the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven even though I may not fully understand it?
4. Take time to honestly discuss your limiting beliefs with God, without guilt and shame?

Let God know if you are willing or unwilling to have the eyes of your heart open to a dimension you have never seen?

CHAPTER 8



The Mystery of the Kingdom

The most challenging mystery to solve is the one hidden in plain sight!

The Kingdom of God is a mystery. As such, it can never be grasped by intellectual prowess alone. Based on the original language, this mystery can never be unraveled in any way other than personally making the journey into the Kingdom. Any time we stop making the journey, we stop grasping and growing in the mystery. Our understanding ends where the journey stops — as such, entering the mystery of the Kingdom can never happen simply by being taught. Our inheritance of the Kingdom is very personal, occurring between Jesus and us alone.

All things related to God are matters of the heart. The intellect plays a role, but it is a minimal role. The mind is renewed by the Word of God, but only the Holy Spirit, working in the heart, can bring wisdom and understanding to the information. It is in the heart that information has the potential to become life. The paradox of this great mystery is this: children can understand what the wise of this world cannot. It is easily seen by those who have no agendas or predetermined dogma. The heart that fully trusts and is ready to repent at the first indication of incongruence between opinion and God's Word easily grasps the many nuances of the Kingdom of God.

The word *mystery* in the Greek refers to something hidden or secret; it is discovered by initiation, revealed in degrees through the process of assimilation, and then proliferated by repeating that process in different

areas. Assimilation is not merely the gathering and memorizing of intellectual information; it involves adaptation and incorporation. Through the appropriation of God's revealed knowledge, we renew our mind while incorporating it into the beliefs of the heart.

The Bible refers to this process as "*writing on the tablet of your heart*."³⁴ Turning information into beliefs occurs by thinking, pondering, reflecting, and meditating until the information becomes our reality. Then, after we have established it as a belief of our heart, it manifests as a life-giving experience with transformative power. If you do not get this mystery to work in your life, you do not understand the part of the mystery you are currently seeking.

The greatest occult threats in the 21st century come from political, psychological, scientific, and educational groups.

Luciferian cults have used these initiations since man partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The original temptation implied that God had not given man all the knowledge he needed; therefore, he was not really like God. The lure of cults is the offer to have all God has

promised without having to trust and follow Him. Through secret knowledge, possessed by the elite, we can have heaven on earth while rejecting the morals, ethics, and values of His commandments.

It is not just the religious cults of our day that offer utopia apart from God. The greatest occult³⁵ threats in the 21st century come from political, psychological, scientific, and educational groups. The elite consider themselves to have enlightenment that the average person cannot comprehend requiring that the ignorant masses be seduced or forced into complying with their will. Today, socialism is the most powerful occult movement. After all, Carl Marx, a devout Satanist, who hated God, believed socialism to be the lie powerful enough to destroy the world.

The seduction of millions has been the lure of obtaining what God promises, without God and His "pesky commandments," a seduction that tempts those not committed to godliness. The depth of their corruption and true intentions are only revealed after a person has gone through many initiation rites and become sufficiently brainwashed during each stage of the process.

The Mystery of The Kingdom

God's Kingdom, as we have seen, is also hidden, not because God makes it difficult to see but because the condition of our heart hides it from us. The ***pure in heart*** have no hidden motives or selfish interests; they are pure in all things and can see God... as He is. God is clear and up-front about what He offers and what it will require of us; there are no secret agendas. Between God's pure heart and the pure heart of the believer, a heart-to-heart connection is established, paving the journey ahead with clarity, understandability, and even some predictability.

Our journey into the realm of the Kingdom starts with a repentant, teachable attitude that surrenders to Jesus as Lord. Acknowledging Lordship is equivalent to a commitment to God's Word as Jesus taught it. We have every reason to believe that repentance is the first key that makes it possible for us to realize there is a door which leads to the mystery realm of the Kingdom.

The passageway to the Kingdom is through our heart; it is not an external Kingdom, nor will it be until Jesus returns the second time to personally overthrow the antichrist and his armies and to establish a physical Kingdom on Planet Earth. His eternal Kingdom will be established when all wickedness is removed from the renovated earth, and then, New Jerusalem will come to earth where we will live eternally as God originally intended.

Religion has reduced Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom to being born again. If, however, the parables of the Kingdom are about how to be born again and get to heaven, then Jesus was preaching salvation by works, making His teachings contradictory! By diminishing His teaching, the Kingdom is nothing more than an automated process that occurs when a person is saved, introducing multiple dimensions of contradiction, confusion, and frustration to the believer who is expecting heaven on earth completely independent of freedom of choice and faith. When the believer's life does not automatically improve, the alternatives are few:

1. Doubt or question our salvation
2. Turn to legalism and dead works to earn the Kingdom benefits
3. Reject Jesus' teaching
4. Turn the gospel into mythical and religious dogma
5. Reject the gospel entirely
6. Create personal concepts about Jesus independent of God's Word

The Kingdom of God and heaven are mysteries that can never be perceived, believed, understood, or experienced by the unrepentant, unteachable heart. Although the promises of God should be a source of comfort, hope, and strength, they will only frustrate and harden the hearts of the believers who do not come to understand this mystery. They will never understand why the promises of God are not being experienced.

Even though the focal point of the gospel is centered around the good news of Jesus, we sometimes forget that in its most complete sense, it is the Gospel of the Kingdom. Every aspect of the good news is only perceivable within the context of the Kingdom. If our hearts are not teachable, open, and fully surrendered to Jesus as Lord, we will ignore His teaching about the Kingdom, live mediocre lives, and turn the glorious gospel into a foolish religion that has no power.

In pursuit of Kingdom living, we look for the invisible to the natural mind. Seeing the unseen is what sustained the Apostle Paul in the extreme persecutions he repeatedly encountered. It is what gave Moses and all the Old Testament saints the courage to face kings, lions, and the sword and still overcome. On the other hand, when believers perceive and enter the Kingdom of God, they discover all the resources of heaven are at their disposal.

How do we see what cannot be seen?

How do we turn lifeless information into Words of life?

Like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, we insist that being able to quote a verse or debate doctrine accurately means we know the truth. At its best, this is a form of self-deception. We conveniently forget that when the Bible uses the word *know*, it means *to experience*. In other

words, we do not know what we are not experiencing. Quoting scriptures about peace is a poor substitute for living in peace. So, as it is with all the promises, we can either have the talk or the power. "*For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*" (1 Cor. 4:20, KJV). Jesus warned the one thing that would keep us blind is to insist that we see.³⁶ Any time our lives are not consistently functioning in the realm of abundant life, we must admit to ourselves, "There is something I am not seeing. I may know the information, but I am not experiencing the truth!"

So how do we resolve the mystery? How do we see what cannot be seen?

The Mystery of The Kingdom

How do we turn lifeless information into Words of life? How do we make a journey into a realm in which no man can lead us? It is all about a teachable attitude, starting with the choice to surrender to Jesus as Lord, become disciples, and pursue the same quality of life Jesus taught and lived. Remember, the one prerequisite for making this journey is a teachable (repentant) heart that is ready to be taught of the Lord.

In the Hebrew alphabet, every letter has a definition in and of itself. These definitions are based on the original Hebrew alphabet, a series of pictures conveying specific ideas. Knowing the meanings of these letters brings incredible depth to the words. One unique letter is the open MEM. The MEM initially looked like the top of our letter *M* and produced the same sound. The top of the MEM looked like waves because it represented water. In the ancient world, water always represented a mystery: the most flexible and adaptable natural element but also the most powerful. Like the heart, water takes on the shape of the vessel that holds it. The ***open MEM*** represents *God's revealed knowledge*. The shape of the letter is a picture of *God pouring knowledge onto the earth for all men, in the form of His written Word*.

Since the *MEM* also represents *water*, we understand how it can be seen from various angles, whether from the shore or a boat. If our view of the water is incredibly limited, we can only guess at what lies in its depths. We may be right, or we may be wrong; either way, we have never seen it for ourselves. We could, however, dive into the water and discover by personal experience the wonders hidden beneath the surface.

Only when we believe
God's revealed Word
can we expect to
enter an intimacy
where He instructs us
how to apply it.

Another unique letter is called a ***closed MEM***, which represents *secret or private knowledge that only applies to us*. The *closed MEM* is *God's Word revealed to us in such a way that we understand how to apply it to our present circumstances*. The Holy Spirit is the One who teaches us practically how to apply truth so that it brings life. While this knowledge is available to all, it is an exchange that only happens in heart-to-heart intimacy.

Only when we believe God's revealed Word through the open MEM (revealed knowledge) can we expect to enter an intimacy where He instructs

us how to apply it. To make light of God's Word, interpret it irresponsibly, deny parts of it, or reject it altogether is to call God a liar. No one has intimacy with someone they do not trust. God wants to share in intimacy with all His children, but not all of us desire or are willing to hear Him. In hearing God, we run the risk of revealing personal agendas or selfish motives.

In the interpretation and understanding of the Word of God, there is one final element. The final filter through which we must seek to understand is personal application. Those who want information will create intellectual interpretations of God's Word, bent or twisted to their preferences and agendas.

Believers committed to being disciples want to understand how truth applies in real life. Pharisaical believers want to have the "right" doctrine for being right. Disciples, on the other hand, want to know the interpretation so they can know how to live. It is this process of learning the information, trusting God for the wisdom of application, and experiencing the manifestation that ultimately unravels the mystery. Each step of learning, renewing the mind, transformation, and manifestation takes them to a new level of insight for life application.

The ancient Hebrews said there are 50 faces to the Torah; in other words, God's Word is so rich and deep there is always more than one way to understand it, none of which would violate His names. More importantly, for New Covenant believers, is that they cannot be incongruent with the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; therefore, every Word of God must be interpreted and applied from the motive of love. Then, and only then, can we discover our life-application. Remember, the Word of God is absolute, but the application is variable.

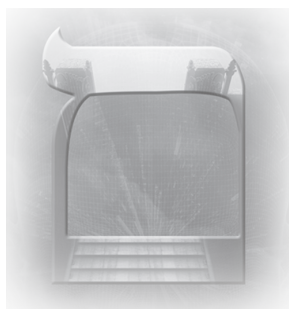
A mystery unfolds through a process of initiations and growth in a single truth. When that truth is accepted, believed, and applied to our lives, we finally understand it. From that new insight, we naturally see the next step of our growth, which then repeats the same process. There is no end to discovering and experiencing the "... *width and length and height and depth of ... the love of Christ which far passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*" (Eph. 3:18–19, AMP).

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

Honestly answer the following questions. When needed, give prayerful attention to any area that needs to be reconciled.

- Do I interpret every Word of God by His names, the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as applied from God's definition of love?
- Am I willing to give up all personal agendas and seek the righteousness of God?
- Am I a disciple, searching for how to live as Jesus taught and modeled?
- Do I accept the validity of God's Word as taught by Jesus?



CHAPTER 9

The Walk of Faith

Faith is not blind; faith is when we see more clearly than ever before!

I have heard it said, the Old Covenant is based on works, but the New Covenant is based on faith. At some point, in my early walk with God, I made those same statements. Sadly, I, like so many, was repeating what I had heard. Regardless of how many of us have said the same thing, it did not make it true. The more I studied the scripture, the more I realized this statement was incredibly inaccurate and opposed Scripture.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) says, “*But without faith, it is impossible to please Him [God].*” The word ***please*** can mean *to be by fully pleasing or agreeable* or *to be well-pleasing, to take pleasure in*, and *to walk as is well-pleasing*. The dimensions of this word have incredible ramifications. In the absence of faith, God is not pleased, we are not in harmony with God, nor can we find pleasure in what we do for Him; therefore, our actions will never be as they should. Believers who have the intention of being pleasing to God, not in the form of works-righteousness, but in the context of a loving relationship, cannot do so apart from faith.

While doing my undergraduate studies in theology, I passed many nights searching the Scripture to understand faith. The more I sought to understand it, the more I found modern-day, self-contradictory teachings about faith and random accumulation of partial truths, in addition to formulas for legalistic ritualism. Like so many modern teachings, however, faith was

not hard to understand once I repented (changed my mind) by surrendering current definitions that opposed the Word (in the original languages).

Hebrews 11:1 says, “*Now, faith is ... the evidence of things not seen.*” If we stop there, we reach the illogical, mystical conclusion that faith is blind—a leap into the unknown. These concepts, although embraced by religion, are in complete contradiction to what the Word means and how it is used in Scripture. Faith sees with the eyes of our heart, not the eyes connected to our brain. Our natural eyes are connected to our brain, where it interprets what is seen. The eyes of our heart, on the other hand, send signals to the heart that are interpreted by the beliefs of our heart.

“*Walk[ing] by faith, not by sight*”³⁷ is where our religious teaching kicks into overdrive, telling us faith is blind, to just shut our eyes and take a leap of faith. This is an absurd concept because faith is not blind at all. Faith sees what the natural mind or the unbelieving heart cannot see. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon says the word *sight* is speaking of outward appearance.

The Greek indicates that ***faith*** is being sure, fully persuaded, and immovable. The deep assurance of faith is not blind; it perceives God quite clearly, based on His testimony of Himself. To know and trust His character means we recognize and trust His promises.

God is completely trustworthy! Faith is built from discovering how faithful God is to His Word.

As a new believer reading the Gospel of Matthew, I was continually struck by the fulfilled prophecies concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Seeing God’s trustworthiness to fulfill His every Word was monumental in establishing my faith. Words He had uttered thousands of years prior came to pass when and how He had foretold them with incredible accuracy.

In the Hebrew, the words “*truth*” and “*faithful*” originate from the same root word, which implies, if it is the truth, God is faithful to it. He never changes, and no man can make Him change; therefore, His truth never changes nor His willingness to uphold truth! In other words, God is completely trustworthy! Faith is built from discovering how faithful God is to His Word. His consistent faithfulness is based on His character and nature as proven through thousands of years of recorded history and as modeled by the life, teaching, and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus took a handful of ordinary men and women who had lived under the yoke of oppressive, religious legalism. These formally uneducated believers found freedom in Him and turned the world upside down! The reason they withstood such violent persecution was twofold: first, they knew the Scriptures; therefore, they understood the references and basis from which Jesus taught. Their faith was built on the objective proof of God's Word. Their personal interaction with God, through Jesus, caused them to believe and experience truth in their own lives.

They experienced the power of Kingdom living. In their hearts, they experienced righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Their beliefs and emotions were not based on external factors; as such, they were strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.³⁸ They believed and experienced the promises internally, even when they were actively laying down their lives.

All three core factors for immovable faith must be present at the same time if we are to enter in and live this Kingdom life: quality seed, quality soil, and nurturing for growth.

People who do not know Scripture have no basis for this kind of stability; they are those in whom, whether from unbelief or ignorance, the Word has never taken root in their heart. They cannot, as a result, inherit the Kingdom, although it has been freely offered. All three core factors for immov-

able faith must be present at the same time if we are to enter in and live this Kingdom life: quality seed, quality soil, and nurturing for growth.

The second factor that caused the disciples to turn the world upside down while withstanding unthinkable persecution was their personal, intimate involvement with God, through the Lord Jesus, after His resurrection. When Scripture is not the basis for our knowledge of God, we have nothing through which the Holy Spirit can operate. We cannot attempt to know God through our pastor, our favorite doctrines, or the testimonies of others. We certainly cannot rely on our subjective emotions that change with external circumstances.

The carnal (natural) mind thinks, "If I understand it, I will believe it." Such an egocentric approach is equivalent to putting God on trial where He must prove His truthfulness based on your logic. It is like saying, "Your

The Walk of Faith

Word is not true until it meets my criteria.” This is exactly what Israel did in the wilderness. They tested God By putting Him on trial and convicting Him of being untrustworthy, thereby justifying their unbelief and disobedience. Trust based on intellectual or subjective persuasion can be changed with another, more compelling intellectual persuasion. This type of trust is not faith in God, but faith in self.

Hebrews 11:3 (NASB) tells us, “*By faith we understand . . .*” The ego thinks, “When I understand it, then I can believe it.” In this scenario, we become our own god, determining truth by our standards, opinions, and experiences. The heart, however, only understands after it believes. Again, this is not blind faith but rather a believing that comes from a clear knowledge of Scripture, through a teachable heart open to the Holy Spirit, based on a deeply intimate relationship with God. Once we believe, our perception changes; then the eyes of our heart see and perceive; then the ears of our heart hear and understand.

Sadly, for the last 50 years, faith has been taught as trusting in what God will do more than knowing and trusting who God is. From that perspective alone, we have been taught all manner of ways to convince ourselves that the promise is ours. While these processes are not entirely wrong or evil, trusting for the promise apart from knowing and trusting in the promise-maker is utterly backward.

Every challenge in this life can be faced as an overcomer, based on our knowledge and absolute confidence in the Word of God, His consistent, loving, and generous nature, and His unlimited resources. Trusting God for small things is comparable to confidently asking a friend for five dollars as opposed to five thousand dollars. The amount for which we can confidently trust to ask is based on the depth of the relationship and the resources of the friend.

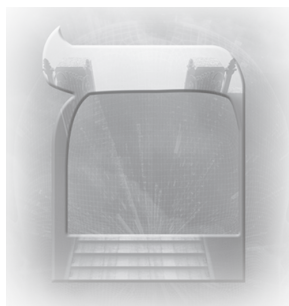
Believing God to provide His resources for our situation apart from a deep personal relationship would be like asking a stranger for a large sum of money just because that person is wealthy. It is a shot in the dark. Likewise, faith in what God will do, apart from trust (faith) in His character through personal intimacy, is a shot in the dark.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

Read and consider each of the following questions before moving on to the next chapter.

1. What am I doing right now to grow in my knowledge and relationship with God?
2. Do I really know God well enough to be confident in His desire to use His resources to better my life?
3. How many promises of God do I know by heart?
4. Do I have a scriptural basis for knowing that the promise for this situation belongs to me?



CHAPTER 10

Seeing the End from the Beginning

Foresight gives us the power to choose the future we desire!

In Mark 11:22 (KJV), Jesus tells us to “*have faith in God.*” Some theologians say this phrase implies that the believer should have the same kind of faith as God. Religion would reject such a thing as impossible, but God is our model for everything; and, after all, we are created in His likeness and image. When Jesus came to earth, He showed us exactly what it looks like for man to operate in faith the same way God does.

When God created the universe, He established the model for operating in faith. God followed the exact pattern Jesus taught in Mark 11:23: He had intention, conceived something in His heart, spoke faith-filled words and did not waver; hence, our perfect biblical model for faith!

In the first chapter of Genesis, we see the repeated statement, “*Then God said, let there be ...*” The following statements usually occurred in some shape, form or fashion, “*... and it was so.*” The final part of the sequence of statements was, “*... and it was good!*” Each of these phrases gives us insight into the operation of faith as Jesus taught!

In Hebrew, there are different words from which we translate “*said*” or “*to speak.*” One emphasizes speaking, while the other places emphasis on speaking that has been conceived and developed in the heart. The word used when God created the universe is a word that emphasizes the fact

that all He spoke was first conceived in His heart! It also indicates intention. In other words, God conceived something in His heart to bring it into existence.

For years, we have tried to operate faith-based on speaking with little to no emphasis on intention or having first conceived it in our heart. The faith principle taught us simply to believe that what one said would come to pass. It was more about having faith in your faith or in your words. While not entirely inaccurate, it is not really faith in God.

The primary component to operating faith in God is rooted in the two pillars of faith: 1) faith in the creation account, just as it is in the Bible, and 2) faith in the fact that man is created in the likeness and image of God. The moment we deviate or contradict any of the principles embodied in those two realities, we are no longer in faith. These two events provide the framework of faith as Jesus taught it, and as God demonstrated it.

Because we believe we are created in the likeness and image of God, we know our operation of faith should be identical to His. Our faith is in the way God created us and the way He modeled it; it is faith in God personally, in His Word and His process! Now, we will look a little deeper into God's process.

Among God's intention for creation was the determination to provide a unique environment on Planet Earth capable of sustaining human life.

First, God formulated the outcome He desired. Faith always sees and perceives (knows and declares) the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10). We have the idea that God just blurted out what He wanted to create, speaking those words in a general way, and the earth, solar

system, planets, galaxies, and all their interactions simply appeared. It was, however, far more specific and deliberate than that

Every second of every day, there are millions of interactions between the cells of the body that are dependent upon the environment on Planet Earth. Our environment is reliant upon the billions of interactions between the planets in our solar system, which rely on our galaxy. Our galaxy is dependent on other galaxies ad infinitum. Every moment there are trillions and trillions of interactions based on mathematical formulas, all which God

had to know and apply to create a universe that works so perfectly. Among God's intention for creation was the determination to provide a unique environment on Planet Earth capable of sustaining human life.

Every creative word He spoke was delivered with the absolute assurance that it would occur. In fact, in His heart, there was no possibility His words would not create precisely what He intended. Since God impregnated the universe with immutable laws, it seems that we do not have to be as detailed in our creative process. We must see the end from the beginning and have a specific intention, as it relates to the outcome.

One of the significant differences between what God did and what we do is this: God created something out of nothing; therefore, He must be very precise concerning every detail. When we operate faith, we create the visible from the invisible (Heb. 11:3). By His ultimate creation, energies, and the laws by which they are governed, were established. This framework provided the creative potential for all other things to come into physical manifestation. We are not creating the world; we are using the resources God created by applying the laws that govern all creation! We need not know those laws or all the elements required for the miraculous; we just operate the laws of faith.

Through salvation,
we have legally
been given the
very life of God.

Once our framework of faith is set, all that is left is “*not to doubt*.”³⁹ **Doubt** is in the continuum of wavering. Once we have believed and set the process for faith to work, far too often, we change our focus from the end we have seen, spoken, and perceived in our heart to an adverse outcome. While in faith, we have planted the seed of God's Word into our heart, but when we shift our focus to another outcome, we begin to fill our heart with other seed. If this continues, the bad seed will choke out the good seed.

The Apostle Peter provides excellent insight into this process when he says we are all “... *receiving the goal of our faith* ...”⁴⁰ Due to a limited definition of salvation, some tend only to apply this verse exclusively to the new birth. The scope of **salvation** is massive, including every aspect of *being saved, healed, delivered, blessed, prospered, protected, set apart, etc.* Through salvation, we have legally been given the very life of God. The only requirement to transition His life into our life experience is that it must be the goal and intention of our faith.

Heaven on Earth: Unveiling the Mysteries of God's Kingdom

Most believers I have personally counseled are afraid to determine a clear intention or goal for the outcome of their faith, trapped by the religious, unscriptural quagmire of, "I am not sure if it is God's will." They act as if God is deciding every prayer individually. The truth is, God has made His will abundantly clear. If we are in Christ, we are free from the curse of the law.⁴¹ Every promise God has ever made to anyone is yes for us.⁴² We are qualified to be partakers in the inheritance.⁴³ He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.⁴⁴ If Jesus settled it through His death, burial, and resurrection, there is nothing else we need to know.

The second pillar of faith is: we are created in the likeness and image of God; therefore, how God operates is our model. The way God walks in faith is the way we walk in faith. We are not merely placing faith in our faith; we are placing faith in how God made us. The root of our faith is how we were created, functioning as God functions. Everything Jesus accomplished through the cross is for everyone who is in Christ! Those who believe these truths are choosing the promise of God. They have faith in the finished work of Jesus, and they exercise faith just as God did at creation and just as Jesus taught and demonstrated.

Jesus spoke in an Aramaic dialect, not Greek. When the scriptures were written in Greek, there were often words that had no equal in the Greek; therefore, phrases sometimes replaced words. Occasionally, entire concepts were lost. When Jesus stood in the boat with the disciples addressing the storm, He did not need to pray. He knew God as His Word, and His names revealed Him to be; therefore, it was not the will of God for Him and His disciples to die. God has no name that implies He makes us suffer. In the Greek, it states that He said, "*Peace be still.*" While that makes sense, what He really said in the Aramaic was, "*Surrender to the will of God!*"⁴⁵ When we believe the Scripture, there is nothing to pray about if we know and believe the will of God.

The third pillar of faith is rooted in the fact that God gave us dominion on Planet Earth. It is we, believers, who establish God's will on Planet Earth. That can only happen when we believe who God is and who we are in Him. God's Kingdom only comes when God's will is done. We use our faith and authority to establish the will of God. If we do not do this, we cannot have heaven on earth!

When the wind and the waves calmed, they were in harmony with the

Seeing the End from the Beginning

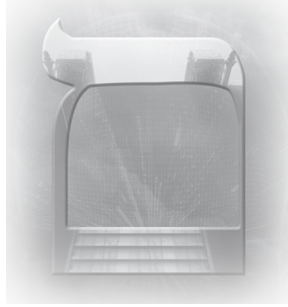
will of God. Our role as believers is to bring our lives and Planet Earth back in harmony by using our faith. In Genesis, God declared what He had made “*good*,” and that word embodies more than a single adjective. The word ***good*** in Hebrew nearly always presents the idea of *harmony*. In other words, what God created was in accord with His intention; it was in harmony with His will for man—that which He conceived in His heart before He spoke.

When we create a clear mental picture of the result we desire in our heart, one that is in harmony with the names of God and the finished work of Jesus, and we apply God’s kind of faith, the result will be good. It will be in harmony with the Word of God and that which we saw and declared from the beginning. We do not use our faith to convince God to act; we use our faith to bring our world into harmony with what God has already established in the Lord Jesus.

HeartWork

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1. What decisions are you presently trying to make?
2. Identify the result you desire based on the names of God and the resurrection of Jesus.
3. As much as you can, conceptualize that end and how you will experience it.
4. Now, consider the following questions:
 - a. Is the outcome I desire based on the promises of God?
 - b. Am I confident that I am qualified for this because I am in Christ?
5. Ponder, imagine, or meditate on the end you desire. When you see it clearly, operate the faith of God.
 - a. See it in your heart.
 - b. Speak it into existence.
 - c. Do not allow yourself to doubt.
 - d. Expect the outcome you have declared.



CHAPTER 11

A Moral Kingdom

The hope of a good life is either poisoned or profited by our morals and ethics!

As much as anything, the Kingdom of God is a realm wherein we choose to live in the same virtue as God. God repeatedly stated, “*Be holy for I am holy.*”⁴⁶ We are called to have the same character and nature (virtues) as God. Jesus called us, “...*the light of the world.*”⁴⁷ As a result, we are to look, talk, behave, and function from the same values as God. Like Him, we are to love our enemies. He blesses those who curse Him, does good to those who hate Him, and prays (intercedes) for those who use and persecute Him.⁴⁸

Chaim Bentorah, my Hebrew teacher, says of this verse:

Goodness not only puts our response in harmony with God, but it also creates the possibility that the individual may bring his or her life into harmony with God. After all, “...*the goodness of God leads you to repentance.*”⁵⁰

In the previous passage, Jesus is not telling us how to earn our way into becoming sons by loving our enemies; He is telling us how to be sons who, like our Father, bring His light into the world by acting in harmony with His true character and nature. When we call ourselves by the name of the Lord but act incongruent with His character and nature, the light we bring into the world is darkness.

Unfortunately, much of Christendom profoundly misunderstands why God wants us to be moral and virtuous. With the advent of Catholicism, Christianity became a predominantly works-based religion. The character of God was besmirched by the incorporation of paganist concepts of asceticism, Gnosticism, and Luciferianism into our beliefs. Morality and virtue were no longer our representation of God to the world. For the religious-minded, it became the payments we made to earn from God. To the self-righteous, it became the standard whereby the church judged the world. It was also believed to be the primary way we earned salvation. This works-based standard rejects faith in Jesus and the cleansing power of His blood. Additionally, it completely ignored the importance of how our character affects our heart, our faith, and the world.

God has always desired for His people to embrace and value a virtuous life, “... *seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...*” (Matt. 6:33). God called Israel and the church to represent Him on the earth, but we must represent Him as priests and kings, as a holy God and a holy nation. The one characteristic that expresses holiness (uncommonness) more than

When God brought Israel out of Egypt (the world's system), He established the model for the believer seeking the Kingdom.

any other is His love for His creation. Out of His desire to give us the very best, He provided the blueprint on how to have peace in our heart, a unique quality of life, and pure love for one another.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt (the world's system), He established the model for the believer seeking the Kingdom. After being baptized into Christ, the first goal of every believer should be to renew the mind. The renewing of the mind not only teaches us what to think but how to think in a way that always leads us down the path of righteousness. Along the path of righteousness, there is only life and no death. It is a path that always keeps us in harmony with God's character nature and quality of life, i.e., the Kingdom of heaven!

Mt. Sinai was the place where the Hebrews renewed their mind and where they should have discovered God's value for loving one another. Interestingly, eight of the Ten Commandments are instructions for how to treat one another, indicating God's desire that we “*love our neighbor as ourselves.*”⁵¹

By accepting His morals and ethics, walking in love becomes our priority. Unfortunately, we have no English equivalent for the actual Hebrew word that is translated as **commandment**. When we hear the word “*commandment*,” we default to the idea of rules we are forced to obey to pacify an angry, judgmental God.

Many believers only have a negative connotation of the commandments, as if they are complicated or burdensome. Those who embrace such views either do not understand the commands as the basis for walking in love or they do not want to walk in love. “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome*” (1 John 5:3).

In Hebrew, the word is not *commandment* as we think of it; it is much more positive. One writer asserts that the closest word we have that expresses the Hebrew equivalent is *prescription*. The commandments are prescriptions that not only heal our relationships with God, self, and others but are also preventative.

The Israelites, much like many 21st century believers, embraced a pagan concept of God as a hard taskmaster. After centuries of religious propaganda, they began to view the commandments as rules He enforced with a heavy hand. They refused to see His holiness (uncommonness). They judged Him to be like all the wrathful pagan gods. Consequently, they interpreted and applied His commandments based on their judgments.

In the absence of love, they are laws we obey to earn favor and acceptance. However, more than any other concept, God presents Himself as a loving Father. His commands should be understood in the context of instructions from a loving father to a son whom He favors.⁵² The Israelites never freed themselves from a slave mentality, and they never accepted God’s testimony of Himself. Much of the church suffers from the same malignancy: religion!

Slaves operate from the principles of the world’s system (Egypt). Because the world is brutal, we are justified to lie, cheat, steal, or violate any of the commandments to have “the good life.” This mindset of carnal-minded believers do not see how walking in love could ever produce what they desire. As a result, the church is comprised of those who reject God’s highest prescription to *walk in love* and those who accept the commandment but corrupt its meaning.

Many Christians who claim to walk in love are walking in humanism, which defines love entirely different, and usually opposes God's prescribed manner for walking in love according to His commandments (prescriptions). What appears to be love is merely manipulation. While doing what they do in the name of God, they are opposing God and corrupting His testimony to the world!

The believer who has surrendered to Lordship and chosen to become a disciple may not understand how it all works but very quickly realizes that walking in God's love is the highest goal. The Apostle John said, *"By this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:2–4).

Lest anyone should misunderstand or twist my words, I must reiterate that, first and foremost, we are not under the law; we are under grace. God's prescriptions teach us how to walk in love, and Jesus explained that walking in God's definition of love is our highest goal. Fortunately, we have the Word of God, and all it implies, written in the deepest part of our heart. We have Jesus' example and teaching to understand how the commandments should be interpreted and applied. And we also have the Holy Spirit, who has transformed our nature, giving us the power of righteousness. But we have something the Old Covenant believer did not have: a strength the Bible calls *"grace."* **Grace** is *God's power, strength, and capacity operating from our hearts and empowering us to be and do all God asks us to be and do!*

Born-again believers can walk in love if they desire. The question then becomes, "Will we trust God's teaching about love or continue to operate in the world's system? The latter represents Christians who wander through the wilderness, never entering Kingdom living. Their false testimony is how much harder life is as servants of God. Like the mixed multitude of Israel, they longingly look back to Egypt, desiring the pleasures of sin, because they do not trust God enough to follow Him into the Kingdom. Instead of being a light in the darkness, they are the ultimate darkness. They take the name of the Lord in vain, corrupting His testimony to the world!

If Israel had trusted and followed God's prescriptions, they would have never wandered in the wilderness. In about two weeks, they could have entered Canaan and received all the promises, protection, and provision

they desired. They would have probably seen more incredible miracles than have ever been witnessed. After all, only by God's miraculous power could a group of slaves with no army conquer the fiercest nations on the earth. They would have become the most loving and just nation in the world.

Had they trusted God, they would have trusted in and followed His commands, thereby preventing political and religious oppression. The rich could never have monopolized the poor. God's system of justice would have prevailed as they were governed by the best civil laws for women, immigrants, slaves, and citizens in the entire world. Their virtue would have been their reputation, and all the nations of the earth would have desired the peace and power they enjoyed. Their enemies would have feared them because they would have seen the constant presence of God among them.

Nowhere does the New Testament do away with any of the commandments; instead, it elevates them to a level that says they must be applied from the motive of love and obeyed from our heart! Jesus, Paul, and the apostles thoroughly rejected the Talmud as the supreme understanding of God Word, which was the basis for the doctrine of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and many other religious Hebrew sects. Jesus' life, teaching, and resurrection is the definitive insight into interpreting and applying all the law and all the prophets.

Our morality is not what gives us the right to our inheritance; that right comes because we are heirs of God and joint heirs in Christ.

Like the nation of Israel, we are called to live in a moral Kingdom from our heart. Since the heart is the seat of our identity, our morality and ethics must be who we are, not just what we do! This is where we enter the paradox. Our morality is not what gives us the right to our inheritance; that right comes because we are heirs of God and joint heirs in Christ. Our morality and ethics, however, determine if we can possess our inheritance.

Leviticus 20:24 says, *"You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey..."* The land became Israel's possession because the Creator gave it to them; it was an inheritance. In response, they had to walk with Him by faith, obeying His commandments as the absolute standard for love, relationships, civil, and moral law, if they

ever hoped to occupy it. The word *possess* is synonymous with *occupy*. Just as an immoral, unethical Israel could not possess the inheritance God gave them, an immoral, unethical Christian cannot occupy, or possess, the Kingdom of God.

One statistic states that, on average, lottery winners will be bankrupt in 3–5 years.

Think of it this way: every year, people across America win lotteries. They are convinced, “If only I could get ahead, my life would forever be different.” When they win the lottery, they not only get ahead, but

they become millionaires. You would think they would so value their new-found wealth that they would carefully guard it and protect the future they could have. But, ironically, most do not. One statistic states that, on average, lottery winners will be bankrupt in 3–5 years. In most cases, they will be worse off financially than before winning the lottery. It is like Christians who are given their inheritance but do not have the character to hold on to it! If we do not have the character to possess our inheritance, it will be our lack of godly character that destroys it!

2 Peter 1:3 teaches that God has called us to “*glory and virtue*,” while Romans 8:29 explains how we are predestined to be “*conformed to the image of His Son*.” Every epistle reaffirms the need for godly living! And yet, it seems there is little connection between our pain and our lack of character and morals. It is Christian mysticism that believes we can stay the same while God magically makes everything all better. I have encountered very few believers who realize they are the source of their problems. Salvation changes us from the inside out, and the evidence of transformation is in our quality of life! We cannot have God's quality of life when we destroy our life through our beliefs and behavior.

The Apostle Paul expended incredible effort in the sixth chapter of Romans explaining our new identity, righteous nature, and new-found strength (grace) coupled with the free will to yield to sin or righteousness. He reminds us that the wages of sin are death for the believer just as they are for the nonbeliever.

Chapter seven further explains that while we are righteous, we must deal with the temptation to sin, which wars in our minds and members. In the eighth chapter, He delivers the instructions to yield to the Spirit, free ourselves

from condemnation over our struggle and find victory through the grace of God. Many have twisted his words into a strange “sin-is-okay” doctrine, entirely foreign to anything in the Old or New Testaments.

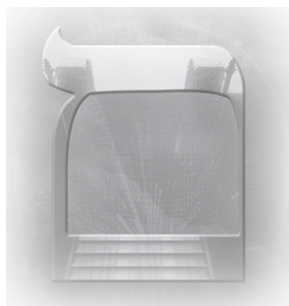
Paul tells us that the “*Kingdom of God is ... righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 14:17). Again, they are not characteristics whereby we earn the Kingdom, but the fruit of our internal state of being that occurs from living in the *Kingdom of God*. The believer who does not manifest ***righteousness*** (*the pursuit of the character and nature of God*), ***peace*** (*tranquility that comes from having access to God and His resources*), and ***joy*** (*the continual celebration of life with God*) is not possessing the Kingdom of God. They may have won the lottery, but they still live like broken, desperate, poverty-stricken fools! God cannot bring ***zoe***—*His quality of life*—to a life of chaos, immorality, or unethical pursuits. It is like putting ice in boiling water; it can only cool the water if the pot is removed from the fire!

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

Take time to ponder, consider, and reflect on honestly answering these questions.

1. Without condemning myself, do I fully believe and accept that I am the source of all my problems?
2. Do I wholeheartedly believe and accept that only a change from within will fill my heart with peace and joy?
3. Am I desirous of and pursuing a godly life marked by walking in love as God describes it?
4. Do I fully accept that God's commandments are the only basis for defining love?
5. Do I realize and accept that it is beyond my natural strength to live this life to which God has called me?
6. Do I depend entirely on the power of God to make me able to live this life, in Christ, I have chosen?



CHAPTER 12

Check the Fruit

If you do not like what is growing in your garden, plant different seeds!

Kingdom living is a commitment to personal responsibility and individual choice, which counters the hype and deceitfulness of the world's view. The mantra of the world's victimhood is, "All my problems are the fault of society." However, all faith-based truth points to personal responsibility as the pathway to personal freedom!

Historically, the Hebrew people seemed to recognize the first two pillars of faith: 1) God created the universe exactly as described in the Bible, and 2) He created man in His likeness and image. These two pillars implicitly convey that man has a free will that God will never violate, and man can alter the world with his faith.

Personal choice and responsibility are strikingly present in every book of the Bible. We choose life or death, blessing or cursing. We choose to hold to painful offenses or send them away (*forgive*). God never violates our choices. When we refuse to choose, we default to the natural progression of the world, which always leads to death. It is this very issue of personal choice and responsibility that most Christians refuse to accept.

When we do not accept and follow this fortifying principle, we conjure all manner of mystical concepts of God. The denial of these two pillars of faith makes it impossible to operate in Kingdom principles since all

Kingdom principles rely on personal faith and choice. Based on ministry experience, personal coaching, and counseling Christians for nearly half a century, most believers genuinely seeking God who are suffering, do so primarily because of violating these two pillars.

We are told repeatedly that “... *without faith, it is impossible to please Him [God]*.”⁵³ If we believe God's account of creation and that we are created in His likeness and image, we will have the confidence to operate faith just as He did. If we do not believe in our God-given identity, we will never operate faith as He modeled it, and as Jesus taught it. We will twist our entire prayer life into begging God to do that which He has already done. We pretend not to have free will because of our unbelief. With iniquity at its very core, we justify our victim mentality by placing all our responsibility on God and blaming Him for all our problems!

Many believers challenge the responsibility of choice with the accusation, “You are leaving God out. You have to wait until you know His will.” As

Partaking in the Kingdom requires that we decide to receive and participate in what God has already done.

spiritual and humble as that sounds, it is just the opposite. When we know the New Covenant provision and promises, we realize God has already made His choices and completed His part of the process, otherwise known as “the finished work of Jesus.”

His part is finished, but ours is not! Through Jesus, we have “... *all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Pet. 1:3); all the promises are ours (2 Cor. 1:20); the inheritance is already ours (Col. 1:11–12); and we are delivered from all the curses (Gal. 3:13). At salvation, we are baptized into the body of Christ, which means all He has is ours. We are left with the following possibilities: 1) we do not believe what Jesus accomplished through the resurrection; 2) we do not believe who we are in Christ; or 3) we do not believe the promises of God. The final possibility is that we believe the truth, in which case we must choose to operate faith in harmony with the way God created the world and the way Jesus taught and modeled it!

Partaking in the Kingdom requires that we decide to receive and participate in what God has already done. That decision is based on trust (faith). If I waver, it means I doubt (distrust). Those doubts are expressed

by continually asking God to do what He has already done, questioning the legitimacy of His Word. “Is your promise still good? Is it good for me? Is there anything else I need to know?” The person who trusts God knows He does not change, He is always faithful to His promise, and there is nothing left for Him to do!

The writer of Hebrews warns us not to fall into the trap of unbelief. Remember, Israel’s successes and failures are examples to us. Their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and eventually being expelled, teaches us how to avoid the same mistakes. Hebrews explicitly states they could not enter the promise because of unbelief. They, like us, could not envision winning their battles and conquering their challenges, even though God ensured their victory if they would just trust and obey Him! God did not take the promise away because of their lack of faith; by refusing to trust Him, they alienated themselves from His power (grace).

The most egregious form of unbelief is to ask God to do what He has already done through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The key to faith (trust) is to believe God’s testimony of Himself. By believing on Jesus as Lord, we are baptized into the spiritual body of Christ. When Jesus rose from the dead, God sealed the covenant of peace with Him, in His blood. He obtained the inheritance of the Kingdom. Since we are in Him, we share in His inheritance.⁵⁴ Trusting that our inheritance is secure because of what Christ accomplished, and because we are in Him, is our absolute assurance of faith. Anything less is to question God’s testimony of Jesus. We can walk with God and have our desires met in a godly manner. There is no reason to doubt God’s goodness; neither is there any reason to compromise and walk down the path that leads to death in the pursuit of happiness.

In the Garden, man declared independence from God. The abandoning of Adam’s faith expressed that man no longer desired to know good and evil based on God’s Word and wisdom. Instead, he desired to make that determination independent of God. In other words, man’s declaration to God was, “I do not trust you; I trust me!” Hence, our concepts of good and evil may play a significant role in our failure to understand the significance of such a decision. ***Good and evil*** go far beyond the scope of whether something is godly or sinful. Some say this phrase means *from one extreme to the other and everything in between*. The words “good” and “evil”

are not merely concepts of sin and righteousness; they more aptly indicate *the capacity to determine for oneself the outcome of every decision*. Every time we decide we can violate God's Word without consequences, we are choosing to eat from destructive fruit.

The concept of **evil**, or **wicked**, refers to *that which causes pain, misery, distress, unpleasantness, displeasure, injury, anything which is harmful, sorrow, or defeat*. In Hebrew, the word **evil** or **wicked** presents the concept of *bending the path, corrupting our conscience, and bringing us to a turning point*. In the Greek, it is a process that leads to *malignancy* and is related to words opposite of *evil*, such as *pleasant, good, prosperous, pleasing, virtuous, healthy, the right timing, honorable, moral, praiseworthy, and more*.

The word **good** in Hebrew lends itself to the concept of harmony with God, whereas *evil* is *bent*, or *crooked*, and presents the idea of disharmony. In Psalms and Proverbs, the King James Version usually translates the words **crooked** or **bent** as **froward**. Psalm 101:4 (KJV) says, "*A froward (crooked) heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.*" When we are not in harmony with God and His Word, we continually, by degrees, depart from Him. Even with His name is upon our lips, our hearts are far from Him! We depart from Him because we do not believe we can walk with Him and have a life of peace and joy.

Possibly the greatest tragedy in life happens to the *have-nots*, those who lose what little they do have. The lack that dominates our hearts takes from us what little we do have and keeps taking until it brings us to an emotional and, ultimately, physical death. When we understand the dichotomy of good and evil, we know how a crooked heart has so corrupted our understanding that we neither choose the good nor can we even find it. The way we see and process information is out of harmony with God; thus, Proverbs 17:20, "*He that hath a froward (crooked) heart findeth no good.*" Those who have not will lose what they have. The way they look at the world prevents them from seeing and perceiving their opportunities. Their own heart blinds them to the good!

Truth is light, and light makes us able to see, perceive, and understand what is occurring in any situation. Interestingly, the light changes colors when it is bent. Likewise, when the light of God's truth attempts to shine into a crooked heart, it is bent to that heart's preferences, deceptions, and lusts. It no longer makes the path of life clear to the observer but instead

distorts it, deceiving the onlooker. Proverbs 14: 12 explains that the way we choose seems right, even logical and appealing, but it ends in death.

Another lesser known concept of the word **evil** is an *unrealistic optimism*. A crooked heart is convinced that sin has no derogatory effect. At this point, we need to remind ourselves that **sin** is *missing the mark of His glory* (His view, opinion, and reality). God's reality is this: He has provided everything in Jesus. It is not about what we do wrong as much as what we miss altogether!

Anytime we believe we are not created in the likeness and image of God, less than a new creation, made righteous in Christ, less than who God says we are, our decisions will lead us down the path of destruction and death, fully convinced of a good outcome. We are convinced that we can take hot coals into our laps and not be burned.⁵⁵

Our incapacity for Kingdom living is not a punishment of God, but rather the result of choosing the way of death because we believe it is the better way to obtain our desires. It is just as Jesus said, "... and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken from him."⁵⁶

A crooked heart does not consider the outcome of its ways⁵⁷ nor factor them into the equation of life. I have talked with thousands of people who insist they pray and seek God, but nothing is working. The one thing they are not doing

is changing the basis from which they are making their decisions. The New Living Translation probably says it best: "*People ruin their lives by their own foolishness*" (Pro. 19:3). We ignore God's warnings and then blame Him for the outcome. This generation seems to have lost any correlation between personal beliefs, choices, behavior, and the resulting consequences.

When we find ourselves at a crossroads, we must choose the way that leads to rest, peace, and harmony with God.

God is always attempting to warn us when our choices take us in a destructive direction; therefore, when everything is falling apart, we must consider our ways. This is not a subjective, introspective witch hunt, nor does it necessitate blaming ourselves or passing personal judgments; it recognizes that God tells us how to have the best life possible. Our choices and behavior merely reveal the source of our faith—ourselves or God. If our behavior

shows a lack of trust for God, then we must repent (change our mind and direction); otherwise, we can never find the doorway into the Kingdom.

One of the significant factors of prayer is self-assessment. It is not a personal condemnation; it is not unhealthy self-examination. It is looking at our lives and asking ourselves, “As a child of God, delivered from the curse and qualified for all the promises in Christ, is this how my life should be?”

Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes. (Hag. 1:5–6). Consider her ways, and be wise. (Pro. 6:6)

Jeremiah 6:16 provides incredibly wise, yet simple instructions for making choices. When we find ourselves at a crossroads, we must choose the way that leads to rest, peace, and harmony with God. In every decision, we choose which path we will take. The outcome is the fruit of that choice and the expression of our heart beliefs. If we trust God and His Word, we can see the end from the beginning. We may not know all the specifics of how it will turn out, or how we will get there, but we can know for sure whether the outcome will be good or bad—life or death!

Life, and walking with God, is far easier than we have been led to believe. We want it to be complicated so we can justify our circumstances. We want to pretend we are surprised when we choose something other than God's Word, and our life falls apart. We need to justify our limited quality of life by finding some way to be irresponsible and blaming God for not making clear and simple!

In Romans 10:6, Paul echoes what God said in Deuteronomy 30:19: You get the life you choose. We do not need anything miraculous or a special message from heaven; we must choose the life we want based on God's Word or death based on the world's philosophies.

The simple fact is: we are living the life we have chosen, but the life we have chosen may not have been the outcome we wanted. Regardless of what we may think, if the fruit that habitually grows is bad fruit, we have planted bad seed through our beliefs and choices. All it takes to change the destructive patterns in our life is to stop planting bad seed and start planting good seed.

HeartWork

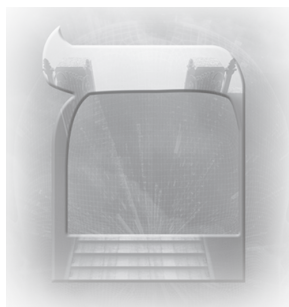
Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

As you consider the follow questions, do not become introspective, negative, or self-judgmental. Consider the quality of your life and honestly answer the questions.

“Because I am a Child of the Creator, I have been given all things that pertain unto life and godliness; therefore, I am delivered from the curse, and all the promises are yes for me.” At present, how is this reflected in your:

1. Emotional health?
2. Personal relationships?
3. Finances?
4. Physical health?
5. Peace of mind?

Do not be concerned if you are not experiencing *zoe* in one or more of these areas. You are reading this book to discover how to enter Kingdom living! Continue making the journey and refuse to give up all that Jesus died to give you!



CHAPTER 13

The Silent Killer

Indecision is an incurable disease; you just cannot decide what to do about it!

God created us with a unique capacity to make decisions. Once we decide, all our internal resources begin to work synergistically to fulfill that decision. Proverbs 29:18 in the King James Version says, “*Where there is no vision, the people perish: ...*” Of the many concepts embedded in this verse, one applies to personal vision.

One translation says these same people “*cast off restraint*” (NIV), while another says they “*run wild*” (HCSB). The context indicates this refers to those whose vision (perception) is not founded on the Word of God, which results in them running wild. In our personal lives, this is true in a more general sense. Without a defined life goal, short-range target or clear-cut intention, we are like a ship without a rudder being tossed to and fro based on the winds of life. When we fail to choose God’s Word as the basis for our life’s vision, we are left only to our circumstances.

As a counselor, I have seen people’s emotional and physical energy change merely from a decision, having a profound effect on their mental capacities. Great ideas seldom come to those who are not searching for something, but the doors of opportunity always swing open to those who are knocking. The most incredible treasures of life are found only by those who are searching for them.

The Silent Killer

Although these treasures and opportunities are always there, the problem is we are passively waiting for God to make the decisions He has told us to make. The person who is unwilling or afraid to make decisions is blind to most of life's opportunity. The idea of deciding feels like negative pressure, nor do they see it as an opportunity. Ecclesiastes 9:11 points out that success is not about skill or intelligence alone. As much as anything, success is about the "*time and chance*" that comes to us all.

Hopeless pessimists and negative thinkers rarely recognize "time and chance" when it comes to them. People without faith are overwhelmed by the magnitude of great opportunities. They do not realize their access to God's resources. Those who do not recognize their identity in Christ are afraid to make a choice. Since "time and chance" come to us all, we realize perception and decision-making are keys to positive outcomes. Based on God's Word, those who cry "victim" are only limited by their beliefs. Positive outcomes are possible for everyone. The difference is this: some of us see and seize the opportunity, while others never notice and miss them!

As people of faith, we believe in a spiritual city (realm) whose builder and maker is God! We understand Canaan was not the ultimate "rest" God promised to Israel, and we believe in a Kingdom that is only perceivable to a heart of faith. As people of faith, we are not afraid to trust God, and we need no additional signs to make decisions. The testimony of Jesus being raised from the dead is all the evidence we need.

The opposite is true for many who, sadly, have just enough of God that they cannot enjoy the world and just enough of the world that they cannot enjoy God. They are languishing in the netherworld of indecision, weighed down with information, and paralyzed to act. Like the mixed multitudes of Israel, they want just enough freedom to follow God out of slavery (Egypt), but do not trust Him enough to enter Canaan (Kingdom). As a result, we are doomed to wander in the wilderness tormented by promises greater than our trust for God!

Medical doctors call high blood pressure the silent killer. They say it has no noticeable symptoms to provide warnings. In the spiritual, physical, and emotional realm, indecision is our silent killer. Indecision does not appear to be an active step. It seems harmless when, in fact, indecisiveness is an active statement of unbelief. We are really saying, "God, I do not trust

you or your Word enough to take any action. The resurrection of Jesus is not proof enough of your willingness to keep your promises.”

James' teachings are rejected by many who fail to understand the nature of faith. All actions and inactions are a statement of what we believe, as well as what we do not believe. It is the outward expression—the fruit—of our faith. In both the Old and the New Testaments, **believe** and **obey** are synonymous. James' teachings are based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:21–27 where He begins with, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”* In these verses, He compares the fate of those who hear and apply His Word with those who hear but do not apply them.

When we do not apply truth, we mistakenly believe we are safe. After all, we have neither obeyed nor disobeyed. The problem is that there is no such thing as indecision. The lack of a decision is, by default, a decision. Some of us become spiritually stuck in this deadly place of indecision; it's as if the resurrection of Jesus is not enough proof of God's faithfulness. If we do not seek to apply God's Word in faith, our testimony is based in unbelief.

Shifting faith is characteristic of the person attempting to trust God on a case-by-case basis, much like trying to trust the promise of someone you do not know well.

Israel wavered from trusting God one day to not trusting Him the next. It serves as an example of why they could not enter the Kingdom. In every area of life, *“A double-minded [waverer] man is unstable in all his ways; for let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”*⁵⁸ The double-minded

shifts from one opinion to another, one perspective to another, eventually debilitating their faith. From Egypt to Canaan, Israel continuously wavered between believing and not believing. Faith for entering the Kingdom of heaven is not about believing God for a one-time event; it is a way of life!

Shifting faith is characteristic of the person attempting to trust God on a case-by-case basis, much like trying to trust the promise of someone you do not know well. Every time a promise is made, you evaluate it. You do not know them well enough to be sure they will do what they say; thus, the size of the promise becomes the pivotal point of trust or distrust! This

is when we project our character onto God in judgment of Him. If the promise is greater than we can understand, or greater than what we would do for another, we will not believe God (or anyone) would do it for us. If the promise is not greater than our understanding, or what we would easily do for someone else, we are willing to believe it.

This mentality results in putting the person who makes the promise on trial with each new promise made. "I know you have already done that for me, but I do not know if you will do this for me!" The Psalmist and the writer of Hebrews explain how Israel put God on trial and passed a judgment that He was not trustworthy, limiting what God could do in their lives.⁵⁹ When they limited God, they forgot all the promises He had kept by succumbing to the temptation to disbelieve Him. Since they could only enter the Promised Land and conquer their enemies by His power, their unbelief rendered it impossible for them to enter, a fact they blamed on God for not keeping His promise!

Faith requires that we know and trust both the character and the power of the one who makes the promise. Unbelief on either point drags us down the stony path of temptation. ***Temptation*** comes when a desire is not fulfilled. According to Thayer's Greek lexicon, the definition of *temptation* is when anything causes us to feel *tested, tried, scrutinized, made to strain or strive*. When we have a desire and no means to obtain or fulfill that desire, we feel lack, powerless, or inadequate.

Temptations emerge when we have legitimate, healthy desires but do not trust God's way to fulfill them, within the ethical, moral, and godly parameters consistent with His character and nature. When we do not trust God's way or His character, we turn to something we trust more than God. Whenever we turn away from God, it will be toward that which we learned from the world's system. Egypt is a type of the world's system. The ***world's system*** is *any philosophical approach to life, whether secular or religious, that offers what God has promised, apart from walking in His character and wisdom*.

When Moses was on the mountain receiving the commandments from God, the children of Israel fell into temptation, resulting from legitimate needs and desires. Moses had stayed on the mountain so long they feared God had killed him. Moses was the one they looked to for leadership and survival. They had legitimate questions about how they would survive in

the wilderness without Moses. Where would they get food and water? How would they be protected from the nations who would seek to destroy them? The problem, however, is never our desires. No natural desire is inherently sinful.

God is not only ready and willing to meet our desires and fulfill our needs, He has already done so through Jesus!

God is not only ready and willing to meet our desires and fulfill our needs, He has already done so through Jesus! When we do not trust God as our source (unbelief), temptation entices us to turn to something we trust more than we trust God: our

knowledge of good and evil – our judgment – apart from God. Israel made a golden calf. Why? Because they had learned to do so in Egypt! We justify our 21st-century paganism since we do not worship something as overtly idolatrous as a golden calf, but when we turn to ourselves instead of God for wisdom, we are just as idolatrous as they were!

Neither natural intelligence nor desires are evil. The desires for provision, success, and safety are not wrong. When we pursue those desires by exalting our ideas above the Word of God, we begin to die, just like Adam and Eve did when they ate from the tree. We put misplaced trust in the world's system, assuming that the system can give us what God offers but without God! When we trust in God's goodness, if we have not succumbed to religious perversion, we turn to Him and His Word to find the path that leads to the fulfillment of our needs and desires and keeps us deeply connected to God.

In 1 Kings 18:21 (NIV), the prophet of Elijah taunted the unbelieving children of Israel with these words, *"How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."* Maybe it is time to go "all in" with God. Do not wait for things to change before making the decision. When we make the decision, things change internally. We do not wait to understand to make our decision to trust and follow Him completely; when we believe and decide, understanding will follow.

Indecision is the silent killer who slips into our lives undetected. It is the opiate that lures us into the dreamlike state where we choose neither life nor death, seduced into thinking we exist in some neutral plane, exempt

The Silent Killer

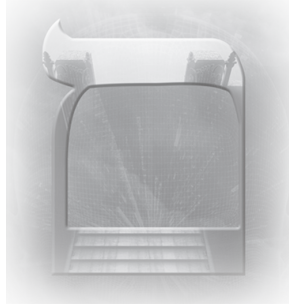
from God's Word. When we awaken from our stupor, we discover our life, which has been unattended by the direction of deliberate choices, is like a ship which has drifted far off course. With no one at the helm, it was being driven by the winds of the world. We are either driven onto a rocky shore or we remain lost at sea.

Consider praying this: "Jesus, I believe God raised you from the dead, conquering all the curse and all that stood against me. I am in you; I am one with you, and all that is yours is mine. I refuse to remain stuck in indecision. I allow you to bring me to the place where I see you as my source in every situation."

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Am I more comfortable making indecisions or putting them off until later?
2. Do I fear making wrong decisions when it relates to the will of God?
3. Do I feel comfortable deciding based on a promise of God and trusting it will come to pass?
4. Do I know enough of God's promises to know what I can choose?
5. I am confident of this:
 - a. The curses of the law have no right in my life.
 - b. The promises of God are what I should expect.
 - c. I can choose the one I desire.
 - d. Even if I am not entirely convinced of this, I choose to trust God and invite Him to bring me to the place of faith where I can confidently choose what He has freely given me!



CHAPTER 14

Pain and Pleasure

The one place no one wants to look to solve their problems is inward.

When we walk with God, we are not only seeking to believe in and experience a way of life better than anything we can imagine, but we are also approaching life in a manner that contradicts everything we have been taught. When we genuinely intend to experience the quality of life Jesus offers, we must renew our minds at every level of our life experience.

Renewing the mind includes multiple dimensions, among which are: what the Word says and our interpretation. An expert of the Law came to Jesus and asked, “...*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*”⁶⁰ It is, at this point, when many believers launch into their personal opinions concerning eternal life, usually without referencing Scripture. When our response to a question that requires proper information is not based on Scripture, it is highly likely we are not thinking from a mind renewed by Scripture. Likewise, when asked a question concerning interpretation and application, if we do not base our response on the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, not only is it doubtful that we have a renewed mind, it is questionable if we embrace Jesus as Lord!

Since man rebelled against God, one of our greatest fears has been the unknown. After all, Adam ultimately chose to live by his knowledge and interpretation of good and evil rather than trusting God’s love and wisdom. When we fully trust God, the unknown poses no threat. God is

omniscient. There are no unknowns for Him. God leads us through the unknown without fear. Security does not come from knowing all the details; it comes from knowing God, who knows all the details.

We are even uncomfortable walking an unknown path when that path can lead to something enjoyable. The unknown makes us unsure if it will be a chaotic, painful (evil) experience or a pleasant, enjoyable (good) experience; therefore, it is in our inherent nature to avoid and flee from the unknown. At its core, the fear of the unknown is our desire to be a god unto ourselves. We cannot control what we do not know! Therefore, we obtain a false sense of safety by the illusion of knowing all the information, upon which we take control of the situation. If I know all things and can control all things, I am in charge... I am my own god!

Our internal hierarchy processes our decisions based on the anticipation of pain or pleasure, i.e., good and evil. We were created to live in paradise with no physical, emotional, or spiritual lack. Eden was God's will for man; it was an environment capable of sustaining man forever with no lack or

Since before the time of creation, we were called to a life described by the Greek word *zoe*, which means the quality of life possessed by the one who gives it.

even the fear of lack! Due to our creative design, we are drawn toward that which we believe will please us (good) while withdrawing from that which has the potential for pain (evil). For this purpose, our nervous system is equipped with fight or flight. Our subconscious avoidance of pain and affinity for pleasure are among the deepest motivators.

We will risk the possibility of pain if the reward is guaranteed and if it offers the expectation of enough pleasure. We will, on the other hand, most assuredly, forego any potential pleasure that is not gratifying enough to warrant the risk of pain. The life God promises us is an unknown. Religion has made walking in love sound difficult and demeaning. Based on what we have heard and seen, we have no reason to believe life can be as good as God promises. Most religious doctrine teaches that Christian life should be hard, even suffering to please God! Not only is that contrary to both Covenants, but it is also contrary to how we were created, denying the finished work of Jesus. It is a denial of the resurrection life!

Since before the time of creation, we were called to a life described by the Greek word *zoe*, which means *the quality of life possessed by the one who gives it*.⁶¹ We are called to and promised the same quality of life that God Himself possesses. This *zoe* life referred to by Jesus as the *Kingdom of Heaven* represents all of God's heavenly resources, which he offers freely so that we may literally experience heaven here on earth! The apostle Paul characterized Kingdom living as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and according to Jesus, it is a life that is easy and light.

The promise of a better life is what initially attracts us to Jesus; but then we become indoctrinated by religion, which focuses on suffering and hardship. Rather than experiencing the freedom and love of the promise, religion instills obligation and fear. By twisting the truth, religion yanks the promise of Kingdom living right out of our hands under the pretense that pain and suffering are part of our godly education, our master's degree to growth and maturity in Christ.

Paul said faith (trust) works by love. In other words, we will only trust God to the degree we trust His love. Love, as God defines it, does not harm its neighbor. The fear created by religion makes it impossible to trust God wholeheartedly. Yet, without faith (trust), it is impossible to please God.

Moreover, those who desire the promises of God are condemned as selfish and carnal. In religion, all positive motivation for trusting and following God is destroyed. Once the character of God has been thoroughly assassinated beyond our ability to trust Him fully, fear and obligation are the only motivations left to follow Him.

Every human being has an inward awareness that life is supposed to be good. We crave it, search for it, but because of the negative influences of religion, we do not trust the only source for fulfilling that desire. And yet, we do not stop looking. The religious idea of an angry God, sadly, causes us to look in all the wrong places, doing all the wrong things to find that indescribable happiness that we know we should enjoy.

Every aspect of the world's system: government, education, medicine, cults, occults, and religion, all promise a better life. Not one of these, including much of the church, offers what God is offering: entrance into His Kingdom! Many churches present a quasi-version of living by faith as the means to a good life. Seldom is it faith in the character and nature

of God; it is usually faith-based on need. Rarely, if ever, is the concept of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven presented as the realm we enter in our hearts, accessing God's resources through an intimate relationship with Him.

Today, governments, the educational system, and science offer the false hope of a utopian society, finally giving us the perfect life... apart from God and His truth. Most of the philosophies upon which these promises are made have been present in the earth and utilized for centuries, even millenniums. Incredibly, they have never worked, nor will they ever work, yet the masses place their hope in these "*clouds without rain*."⁶² Why do we keep falling for the same deceptive promise of utopia? Our DNA is wired for it! Being created in the likeness and image of God, it is unique to the nature of human beings to know we should experience heaven on earth! People of faith pursue it with God; people of unbelief pursue it without God!

Because of unbelief, we are ready to embrace Luciferian Utopianism by an acceptable name: socialism, science, or some other humanistic political name. At the very mention of God's way of living in righteousness, peace, and joy, with our emotional, relational, and other needs met, is rejected as religious fanaticism. So, we trust a human philosophy that has failed since the beginning of recorded history rather than trust God's process!

Humanity is the only species with the desire and capability to improve our quality of life by our choices. We will always seek to make the quality of our lives better. The lie of the world's system is the idea that there can be peace among men—produced by other men—through regulations and philosophies. God, on the other hand, promises peace between Him and us, resulting in peace and joy in our heart, regardless of what is happening in the world around us.⁶³

Jesus never offered absolute peace between men until New Jerusalem comes to earth. He never implied any form of government could solve the world's problems or bring peace on earth. He offered the opportunity to live in His Kingdom realm, entered into through the doorway of our hearts. This offer is the only way to live in the joy and pleasure man had in the garden, before the fall: enter the Kingdom of God within!

The world's system offers a utopia that requires someone to make the rules. The enlightened make the rules by assuming all the responsibility.

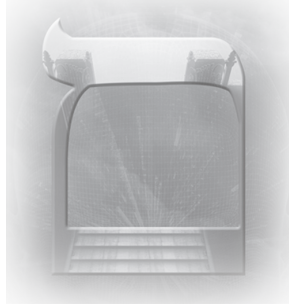
Pain and Pleasure

They claim to know the way, but the truth is: Jesus not only knows the way, but He is also the way. Nowhere does God imply we can trust any other human to rule over us. No matter how good the intention, those who rule over us will always oppress us. Those who seek to define and establish fairness only create justice for those in control. Every political, religious, or philosophical movement that has offered utopia has only produced pain. Without trust in God and His Word, however, the human race, in its pursuit of happiness, will always blindly follow those who promise to lead us away from pain and into pleasure, although God's Word shows and history reveals those promises always end in a world of pain and suffering.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Do you realize your natural tendency to move toward what you think will bring pleasure while you move away from the anticipation of pain?
2. When making decisions, do you consider remaining in harmony and relationship with God the determining factor? Think for a few moments about how you make decisions and how God's wisdom and your relationship with Him factor into the equation.
3. Make a list of the top five areas of your life you want to improve. Find and write a scriptural promise for each of those areas?
4. Do you find yourself looking to politicians, science, or other external sources to solve the problems of society?



CHAPTER 15

It's All in Your Mind

What you think today will become your beliefs, and your beliefs will become your reality!

As previously established, God desires and has provided for man to live an incredible life! Because He is good and only good, He wants good for us. He sent Jesus to deliver us from what we deserve while providing us with so much better than we deserve: deliverance from the curse, qualified for the inheritance, and sonship!

In direct opposition to the concept of God that religion has presented, God instituted His will for man in the Garden of Eden. Out of love, God created us to live in paradise, free of sickness, pain, and lack. Out of His desire to protect us, God made our nervous system to detect pain and pleasure. When confronted with even the threat of pain, our fight or flight response is activated to deliver us from harm. God never intended that we tolerate pain. The garden was the only time and place we can see God's desire for humanity perfectly expressed. If we want to understand God's will for us, we must start by looking at life in the Garden!

God never changes; therefore, His desire for man is still the same today as it was in the Garden. As contradictory as it may seem to the religious mindset, it was man's choice to personally decide good and evil that led him to leave paradise to be his own god. It was the inception of the Luciferian doctrine in the Garden that influenced the concept of "an angry

God.” The proliferation of this doctrine, through carnal thinkers under the guise of science, education, and enlightenment, has been the basis of the world’s system throughout the ages. This destructive philosophy teaches that Lucifer is the true savior of men. According to Luciferian doctrine, he gave us the knowledge to set us free from the moral and ethical control of the angry, vindictive, creator God. Our knowledge, or so-called science, is the true route of freedom for us all.

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen. (1 Tim. 6:20–21)

This false science created a two-front war against the human race. To the believer, there is no denying God’s existence; there is merely a perversion of His character. “*Faith works by love,*”⁶⁴ but we cannot love who we do not trust! If we do not see God as loving, His children cannot trust Him.

To the unbelieving world, the concept of an angry God becomes the justification for the rejection of all things representing God. The very nervous system God created for our protection now works against us. If we perceive God and His Word as a source of pain, we will subconsciously run away from “all things God!”

The false sovereignty message says God can do anything, including the violation of our will.

Portraying God as harsh and vengeful is based on a twisted concept of sovereignty. **Sovereignty**, as it is erroneously defined today, denies the second pillar of faith: our creation in the likeness and image of God

with free will. God never, for any reason, violates our freedom of choice, even if that choice will produce destruction or death.

Freedom of choice is the essential quality that gives us the capacity to love. Anyone who makes choices for another is not a deliverer; they are an oppressor. God cannot be both deliverer and oppressor. If God makes a single choice for us, even if it is for our good, He has now become a liar. Such an action denies our creation in His likeness and image.

God has given us the truth in His Word. He has poured out His Spirit, who speaks to our hearts and provides us with the strength of His Spirit to walk

in His Word! Anyone desiring to know the loving character and nature of God can do so... but it must be our choice!

The false sovereignty message says God can do anything, including the violation of our will. It also teaches God is in control of everything that occurs on Planet Earth. Luciferians say, "Since God is in control of the earth, it is easy to see how cruel He is. If He were good, He would make everything come out good." The Luciferian concept of sovereignty is at the core of almost all modern Christian doctrine and reinforced every time someone says, "We do not know why God allowed this." God is not responsible for allowing evil in this world. It is "*The thief [who] comes to steal, kill and destroy ...!*"⁶⁵

With control as the fulcrum of their propaganda, Luciferians, and as many Christians, denounce God as a loving Father; after all, if He loved us, He would not allow these horrors to occur! All the promises outlined in the Bible corroborate God's intentions toward us, yet it is those who are spiritually corrupt who accuse God of seeking to oppress humanity through His commandments, claiming they only serve to prevent us from the fulfillment of our desires. Every facet of Christian dogma is embedded with these beliefs; thus, the doctrine of suffering to become righteous and holy is the foundation of modern theology.

We blindly believe Paul said that preaching Jesus was the basis of the persecution. He stated, both explicitly and implicitly, is that preaching Jesus as our righteousness is the offense, the stumbling stone, and motivation for fierce persecution. The claim that we must suffer to be made righteous is a rejection of His death, burial, and resurrection. *Faith righteousness*, on the other hand, strips the religious controller of power and robs the ungodly of their power to evoke the rejection of God.

Luciferian doctrine is the ultimate deception embedded in every human philosophy, every cult, every corrupt governmental policy, and false science. Mercifully, the deception is simple, and its cure is even simpler! The deception is this: by choosing to heed to the twisted logic of Satan, man decided to act independently of God's Word and wisdom. With the authority God gave him in Genesis 1:26, man brought every problem that exists on Planet Earth through corrupt knowledge. Rather than admit the state of the world is the product of our will, we blame God under the auspices of sovereignty and control (the angry God doctrine)!

The Luciferian message of fear and wrath has tragically doomed billions to choose an eternity apart from God. Billions more cling to a concept of God they do not fully trust while awaiting the promise of a better life-after-death, but never entering the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. Not only does this distorted concept of God make it impossible to trust Him, but we blame Him for every pain, heartache, and natural destruction. God becomes the pain we avoid, while self-gratification becomes the pleasure we pursue. If we are wired to be drawn to pleasure and avoid pain, no one is in pursuit of God for a better life.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus refuted this pervasive, corrupt perception of God by preaching, teaching, and modeling the gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Hebrew mindset understood and immediately connected this Kingdom message to the Garden of Eden: the realm where man enjoyed the benefits and resources of God. The Kingdom of God represents any-time or place where man willfully trusted and submitted to the wisdom/will of God.

When we walk the same path, He is walking and live in the same garden He abides, we are in the realm of His resources (heaven).

Adam and Eve were 100% surrendered to God until they believed the lie. When the serpent told them that by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they would become like God,⁶⁶ he implicitly accused God of being a liar! By inferring that

they were not created in His likeness and image, He promised a better life that would come by thinking for themselves. To this day, it is our acceptance of this accusation about God that not only destroys our relationship but degrades our quality of life far beneath our legitimate, inherent needs, and sabotaging any possibility of peace and contentment. Consequently, we strive under a subconscious, perpetual feeling of lack, driving us to the constant pursuit of assuaging the emptiness by gratifying the lusts of the flesh!

In the garden, man enjoyed God's will—devoid of sickness, pain, aging, sorrow, heartache, or death—a virtual heaven on earth! The Hebrews understood what has now been lost on modern Christian doctrine: We do not earn God's blessings by abiding in Him. When we walk the same

path, He is walking and live in the same garden He abides, we are in the realm of His resources (heaven). When the prodigal left His father's house, he left the realm of his father's resources. Feeding pigs and eating swine's food was the consequences of his choices. It was not a punishment inflicted by the father. The false sovereignty doctrine forces us to assume the consequences of our actions are a punishment from God. No, it is the result of the path we choose!

As in every Kingdom, there are two aspects: a king and a realm, wherein the Kingdom of God points us to the rule of the King, while the Kingdom of Heaven points us to the resources of heaven. The only requirement for man to enjoy all God has is to abide where He abides, walk the path He walks, where all His provision is accessible in His presence.

Our western culture misunderstands biblical faith due to centuries of indoctrination. Conversely, our faith does not get God to do things for us. Faith is trust, an essential factor in any relationship. Faith in God is trust for who He has revealed Himself to be and what He has already provided, specifically through the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

In the Old Covenant, the Hebrews brought their sacrifices to God—a *type* from which we understand all New Covenant truth. The Hebrew word for **sacrifice** means *to come close or draw near*. Contrary to popular teaching, the Old Covenant was not fear-based or works-based. The sacrifices were not a means to appease an angry God or earn righteousness and His blessings. The *roll call of faith* in Hebrews 11 makes it clear that faith, or trust, is the only way anyone has ever pleased God. If we do not trust Him, by default, we are accusing Him of lying.

The Old Covenant sacrifices were given in faith. "Faith for what?" We might ask. Rather than trying to earn right-standing with God, the sacrifices were designed to influence man's heart as he sought to reconnect to God. As we understand from the New Testament, love is about value. The sacrifices were all about stirring up, reminding or expressing our value for God!

We wrongly assume that giving a gift to another draws them near to us. If that were the case, every parent who did too much for their children would have their love and adoration instead of hatred and rejection. In-

stead of drawing the child to the parent, it draws the parent to the child. The parent with an exaggerated value for the child irrationally gives more and more hoping it will bond the child to them. In the end, the child becomes entitled and selfish, and the parent thinks God's instruction to walk in love has failed them.

Only when faith was present could a sacrifice have a positive influence on the heart of the giver.

The sacrifice (draw near offering) was a way of expressing and reviving our value for God. According to Allen Ross, in his excellent book, *Holiness to the Lord*, before giving an offering, the people were examined by the priest to determine if they were in faith (trusting what God

had promised). In other words, are you trying to buy God's favor, or are you coming to God with a heart of repentance seeking to draw near to Him?

Only when faith was present could a sacrifice have a positive influence on the heart of the giver. The Holy God of Israel being unique and uncommon, unlike all the pagan gods of the world, did not need sacrifices as a bribe. The worshippers of Jehovah did not sacrifice for God's benefit; they sacrificed for their own. On some level, every offering was an effort to *draw near* to God. Whether dealing with a known sin or just the desire to experience a connection to God, the concept was simple: God promised always to be near and accept their *draw-near* offerings. Being loving and kind, the separation between Him and us lies within our hearts and minds, not His. So, when we draw near to Him, He is already there attempting to draw near to us! Hebrews 13:5 reiterates this, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*"

When the Hebrews made offerings, they selected a specific offering that most closely related to their sin or offense—the action that had negatively affected their hearts. Many times, they offered the most anticipated of all personal offerings: the peace offering. The peace offering was cause for celebration because the source of separation (guilt) was removed, and they were reconciled to God, not by the offering but by faith in the offering.

From the Hebrew perspective, peace meant health, healing, prosperity, protection, deliverance, and almost every positive aspect of a full life was available. The peace offering was a joyous declaration of their hearts that

said, “I am intimately connected to God; I have returned to His heart; I have returned to His house; therefore, all His resources are immediately available to me!”

Through this process of reconnecting to God, peace with God was experienced, with all its implication of provision that resulted in a tranquil state of mind. Having entered into peace, they felt a sense of righteousness—life was once again *as it should be*. A celebration immediately followed during which they shared their peace offering with all who were present. They testified to their foolishness and God’s enduring mercy. It was a joyful occasion; hence, the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy.

Unlike believers today, the Hebrew worshipper had no illusion of access to the resources of God apart from an intimate relationship with Him. Like the prodigal, they knew if they did not abide in His house, they had chosen to separate themselves from His resources. Many times God rebuked them for their hypocrisy when their goal was to take from Him apart from seeking Him relationally. They sought the benefits as if they alone could give them a quality of life. As we all know, relationships, not possessions, produce quality of life. People of faith brought their offering because they wanted to reconnect to God in their heart.

In the Hebrew language, all the letters are also numbers. God created all that exists in mathematical equations; therefore, it only stands to reason that His language of choice would be as numerical as it is conceptual. In Hebrew, numbers can convey meanings just as surely as words. When words or phrases have identical numeric values, there is a connection, which is called Gematria (not to be confused with numerology).

The words *heaven* and *mind* have an identical numeric value; therefore, people understood from the beginning, and even more clearly after listening to Jesus’ teaching, that the way we think and believe is essential for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. When Jesus stated that the Kingdom did not come by outward observation but is found within, He was not saying anything new. The problem, however, was that the religious rulers were not interested in a Kingdom within, one that required repentance and transformation. They were not much different than their Roman counterparts. Lust for power drove their desire for a Kingdom that would give the Jewish nation rule of the world, not a moral Kingdom that ruled in our hearts!

Jesus said this when seeking to find *zoe*, *the quality of life possessed by God*, “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it*” (Matt. 7:13–14). The reason we do not experience the quality of life offered by Kingdom living is merely the refusal to surrender our view and opinion to God: it seems we would rather be right than be whole.

Jesus' message of the Kingdom describes a realm inside each of us wherein we can enter now to experience a deep personal connection with God and all the resources of heaven. Trusting God by surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus is the only requirement for entry. The born-again experience is free and open to all, but the believer must choose the path of life. Believers who trust Jesus' representation of God and His interpretation of Scripture will renew their minds to harmonize with the life He modeled, His teachings, and all that was accomplished by His death, burial, and resurrection. Then, with complete faith, they confidently open their hearts to see, perceive, understand, and enjoy that which was previously hidden to them by their fear and unbelief. Believers live life in the invisible Kingdom of the heart, inwardly experiencing all that God is and all that God has.

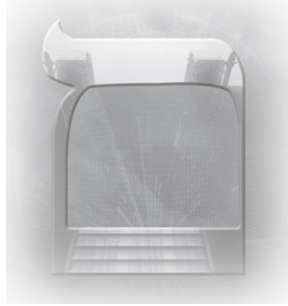
The thoughts of the mind are the doorkeeper of the heart. What we think about ultimately determines what gets into our heart. Our thoughts are the “*measure we mete*,”⁶⁷ concerning the Word of God we hear. According to Jesus, the degree of thought, study, reflection, consideration, and meditation on the Word we hear is the single factor determining the quantity and quality of life we derive from the Word we hear. When we renew our mind to create an awareness of the promises and provision of God through the Lord Jesus, our thoughts begin to harmonize with the truth. By this process, the seeds are planted in the soil of our heart. The repentant heart has been prepared to receive the seed. By noticing, thinking, and meditating on God's Word, we “tend the soil.” In time, it will grow into a harvest of righteousness and life.

Starting with renewing our mind, we begin to experience heaven on earth and worry less. We can see the Kingdom of heaven. When the seed is planted in our heart, we have a sense of ownership even though it has not yet manifested. Long before the harvest comes outwardly, we are enjoying heaven on earth inwardly!

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Write out ten scriptural promises you are currently experiencing in your life.
2. When fear or discouragement attempts to monopolize your thoughts, remind yourself of those promises and begin to give God thanks for those things that are happening in your life.
3. When you notice some part of your life that is not happening as it should find a scripture that promises to meet that need in your life. Replace the fear and worry with the scriptural promise. Speak to the situation, insisting that it align with the promise of God's Word?



CHAPTER 16

Facing My Ultimate Fear

You can die once and be resurrected or die the death of a thousand cuts.

One of Jesus' most ignored warnings may be that we "*make the word of God of no effect through tradition*" (Mark 7:13). The religious mind would quickly declare that nothing can make the Word of God void of power, but the writer of Hebrews would disagree, "*... the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it*" (Heb. 4:2). Likewise, the Psalmist points out, "*...again and again, they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel*" (Psalm 78:41). Tradition and culture are the plagues of the 21st-century church. They are socially accepted norms which make unbelief seem reasonable.

God's Word is like a seed that must be planted in the soil of our heart by making a choice. The soil must first be tilled and prepared by a repentant, teachable attitude. When the soil receives the seed, it must then be watered, fertilized, and nurtured through reflection and meditation. The final influence on the growth of the seed is that the thorns must not only be removed, but they must not be planted among the good seed; otherwise, they will choke out the seed before it can produce a harvest. Thorns are planted in our garden through doubt as we consider and meditate on that which is contrary to God's Word.

Entering and living in the realm of the Kingdom is all about faith, not faith for things, but faith (trust) in God Himself. Faith believes God is who He

proclaimed Himself to be, through His names, the Scripture, the life and teachings of Jesus, but most specifically, through what He accomplished in His death, burial and resurrection. For over half a century, the predominant teaching has centered on “faith for things.” The tragedy is, people do not seem to have faith for life, or what I call “walking around faith.” Biblical faith believes and receives the grace to live a godly life, provide for our family, walk in love, and live in harmony with our new identity in Christ!

To some degree, we are the product of our environment, culture, and education. By and large, our sense of right and wrong has little to do with what the Bible says, particularly for those who determine right and wrong subjectively. When the behavior gets us what we want, or makes us feel good, it is judged as good. Then there are those of us who believe if it is legal, according to civil law, it is good. One report says that there have been over 44 million abortions since 1970. Many Christians believe abortions are moral because they are legal and supported by the medical community. Somehow, they forget that the same political and medical experts considered lynching a black man to be legal and moral a little more than a century ago.

The Word of God gives several warnings about how culture and community can help us or destroy us. 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV) sums it up best, “*Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character.*” The Bible is full of warnings against spending time with and taking on the beliefs, values, and traits of the ungodly. If we are more open to hearing the opinions of other people than the Word of God, those people will influence our lives more than God Himself!

Even those seeking to walk with God are usually unaware of how little they believe the Bible and how much they are influenced by the religious traditions that neutralize the Word of God. Our culture and tradition shape the way we see the world and ourselves; therefore, they become the basis for interpreting God’s Word. Jesus revealed God’s intention behind His every Word in everything He said and did. Unwittingly, we reject Jesus’ rules of interpretation:

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. ³⁸

Jesus, thankfully, did not just leave us with rules; He modeled precisely how those rules would operate when put into practice. He showed and taught us that we must interpret everything in a way that reveals God's love for man and inspires us to love others and ourselves with God's love.

The most significant deficiency of the Word of God is when Christians refuse to read the Bible in prayerful consideration for themselves. We prefer others to be the mediator between God and us. Rather than search Jesus' teachings, pray for direction, and trust God to be a real Father, we want others to read and interpret the Word for us. We reject Jesus' interpretations and application, replacing them with those of our leaders.

We are attempting to operate faith on someone else's personal or denominational interpretation.

One reason Jesus came was to show us what the Word of God looked like when applied by the motive of love. Men who had never seen God had interpreted and guided the application of the Scripture for so long it had be-

come impossible to perceive God as He really is. Jesus is the only one who has ever seen God and is, in fact, God; therefore, He is the only one who can reveal the true interpretation and application of His Word; yet, we have repeated the same cycle. Sadly, very little of Jesus' interpretation of the Word of God is taught from the pulpit; therefore, we are attempting to operate faith on someone else's personal or denominational interpretation, never knowing and experiencing the Word of God for ourselves.

We cannot believe in truth we have not heard. Rarely will we accept a truth that opposes our culture if we are not repentant and teachable, nor will we surrender what we have trusted unless we trust the source of the new information. That which defies personal life experience will nearly always be rejected as a lie. The lie heard repeatedly will be believed before the truth can be validated; thus, the saying, "*he who has, gets more of what he already has.*"⁹ Emerging as overcomers from the trap of unbelief, with so many influences working against us, depends almost entirely on two factors: the condition of our hearts and the version of the gospel we hear.

Our reality is not what we see; it is what we perceive. How we perceive and understand anything is influenced by our life experience, previous teaching, and the resulting judgments which arise based on these influences.

On one occasion, when an expert in the law asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus answered the question with a question, “*What is written in the Law, and how do you read it?*”⁷⁰ His point was that it is not just a matter of reading the Bible; it is what we read *into* the Bible that creates our beliefs. We judge and interpret God’s Word through our traditions and cultural standards.

Jesus was not coy when He asked this question; He intended to reveal the man’s predetermined beliefs. God always attempts to bring us to the light, for it is never His will that we remain in darkness. The truth that will open our eyes is the same truth to which we have closed our eyes and hardened our heart. That is why the truth with the most potential to set us free always has the most potential to offend us.

Jesus understood that tradition is always influencing our perceptions and biblical interpretations based on our life influences, education, and the social constructs we have accepted as normal. The *unrepentant* (*opposer of truth*) interprets the Bible based on predetermined, traditional views, while the repentant disciple interprets personal opinions based on the Word of God, according to how Jesus modeled, taught, and fulfilled it.

How we read and interpret the Bible in no way ensures our understanding is harmonious with God’s intended interpretation or application. We may fervently apply our interpretations with all sincerity, but as our lives continue getting worse, we will most likely blame God while possibly still clinging to Him. Nevertheless, when our misplaced faith does not produce the desired outcome, we will inevitably despise Him in our hearts.

As humans, we do not like the unknown. Functioning in our idea of the known gives us a false sense of control and security. Even those who enjoy change may alter their activities or other superficial endeavors but rarely change their beliefs. Beliefs are the filters through which we view the world, shape our perception, and determine good and evil (danger, threat, hardship). What we perceive creates an interpretation of the world, called a *paradigm*. We all have a personal *paradigm: a distinct set of concepts or thought patterns by which we determine reality*.

Our life experience is like a closed loop. We are raised in and influenced by a culture that embraces a worldview, shaping the way we see and interpret reality. Our worldview, or paradigm, then, becomes an interpretation of

reality based mainly on the sum of our judgments; therefore, our interaction with the world affects us not based on reality but on our perception of reality. The subsequent emotions and experiences invoked by our pre-defined reality determine our actions. Our actions, in turn, provoke the reactions of others, and a destructive, cyclical process ensues, continuously affirming our false interpretation of reality.

Surrendering the beliefs that create a false sense of reality is the emotional equivalent of what the Bible calls **dying to self**: *forsaking the world we know and entering a realm that is entirely unknown*. When coming into the Kingdom, this realm is only an unknown if we do not believe the teaching of Jesus and writers of the New Testament. When we become one with Christ, through faith in His death, burial, and resurrection, we have a sense of “knowing” that goes beyond our actual life experience. Being born again is not entrance into the Kingdom, but it does give us the capacity to perceive the Kingdom (John 3:3).

Dying to self involves surrendering our opinions, assumptions, and judgments to God. Entering the Kingdom, however, occurs when we choose to believe and govern our lives by the Word of God as taught, interpreted, and modeled by Jesus. Until we surrender our lives to Him as Lord, we cannot enter His Kingdom. We are just like the children of Israel who crossed the Red Sea with Moses but refused to trust God enough to enter the Promised Land. We, like they, may have entered the body of Christ, but we wander aimlessly in the wilderness.

Hebrews points out that the fear of death keeps us bound to the devil.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:14–15)

There are a few things to point out about this scripture. First, this is referring to what Jesus accomplished by becoming a man and conquering the devil as a man. On the cross, He settled the sin issue once and for all. Now, all who trust His finished work can enjoy freedom from the power of sin.

It says that through His death, He destroyed the power of the devil. The word **destroy** in the original language means *to be (render) entirely idle*

(*useless*);⁷¹ or, *to condemn to inactivity or to take out of the sphere of activity*. Keep in mind, the devil did not have any real or legitimate authority or power over man; his power of influence was, as it is today, through our fear of death.

This reference to the **fear of death** may well be more than mere physical death. The Greek word for death can be literal, figurative, physical, spiritual, or emotional. After the fall, man ceased to be a living soul and alive to God. The soul is that part of our being where we experience things emotionally. Man's soul was no longer infused with the Life of God, producing satisfaction, peace, and joy. He was now dominated by the flesh; he would now seek those feelings and emotions by gratifying the natural senses of the flesh: taste, touch, hearing, seeing, smelling, and the pride of life.

Because of Jesus' finished work, we have a choice to live by yielding to the Spirit or the flesh.

Today, because of Jesus' finished work, we have a choice to live by yielding to the Spirit or the flesh. As believers who operate from faith by yielding to the righteousness of God, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit who produces righteousness, peace, and joy in our soul. As believers, we know that no gratification of the flesh can compare. The carnal, or naturally-minded, Christian seeks inner satisfaction through fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

Today, because of Jesus' finished work, we have a choice to live by yielding to the Spirit or the flesh. As believers who operate from faith by yielding to the righteousness of God, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit who produces righteousness, peace, and joy in our soul. As believers, we know that no gratification of the flesh can compare. The carnal, or naturally-minded, Christian seeks inner satisfaction through fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

The book of Romans addresses the issue of carnal Christianity, as it is addressed to Christians and not the unsaved. It exposes the prevalent deception that sin has no consequences for the believer. Paul writes:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom. 8:5–8)

For the carnally-minded, death is not merely the end of physical life; death is the end of a life fulfilled by selfish, fleshly-gratifying desires. When any sense of fulfillment resulting from the gratification of the flesh is removed, it is experienced as a form of death; therefore, carnal, or naturally-minded, people are opposed to the commandments. Although the commandments

are God's prescriptions for walking in love and producing peace and joy, to carnal Christians, they prevent personal happiness and gratification.

The core lie of Luciferianism is this: The Creator God is not good. He seeks to keep humanity from the pleasures of the five senses. His commandments serve only to prevent mankind from the ultimate pleasures. Lucifer brought knowledge (light) to set man free from the oppressive Creator. By rejecting God and His commandments, we can fulfill our every desire (lust) with no guilt or shame.

In a TV interview, a Satanist high priest, Anton LaVey, once said, "*The truest form of Satanism is not worshipping the devil; it is selfishness.*" Living in the flesh is when we put self-gratification ahead of walking in love. It is the line in the sand between walking in righteousness and sin, spiritual mindedness versus carnal mindedness, and living in the Kingdom versus living in the world's system.

We begin the process of *dying to self* by first recognizing our selfishness and making the appropriate corrections. For the person who believes righteousness is the path to peace and joy, this is a simple decision. Living life surrendered to righteousness is the way we die daily, and it is this daily death to self that frees us from the fear of death! Dying to self enables us to participate in the resurrected life of Jesus...now; we have no fear of death, figuratively or literally, because we are already living in newness of life!

Jesus was referring to this very concept when He said:

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. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:24–26)

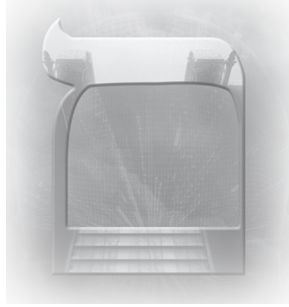
Religion's portrayal of *dying to self* is an ascetic life of humility, a denial of pleasure, and sacrificing your dream for God's dream, which is nothing more than self-denial.

Dying to self is what happens when we decide to no longer find pleasure through the lusts of the flesh, and instead, discover the righteousness, peace, and joy which come from living in the Kingdom, and experiencing heaven on earth.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Do I identify as a Baptist, Methodist, charismatic, or some other denomination more than I identify as a child of God?
2. Do I really believe sin destroys my chances at a great life?
3. Have I deliberately chosen to walk in love toward others?
4. On a scale of 1–10, one being the lowest, what percentage of my decisions are made by putting other's needs ahead of my own?
5. Do I see the commandments as God's prescription for walking in love, or do I see them as rules that rob me of what I want?



CHAPTER 17

Opening the Eyes of Our Heart

We are all blind to that which contradicts our life experience!

In the first public address of his ministry, Jesus proclaimed that His primary objective was to heal our broken hearts (Luke 4:18). Until our hearts heal, we cannot function consistently in faith or love. In such a broken state, our beliefs are corrupted, and our capacity for a life of righteousness, peace, and joy is almost nonexistent. Several factors are necessary for experiencing healing in our hearts, but it starts with preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to the poor; those who lack what they need to be whole.

We are all in some form or fashion struggling with our past: our childhood, and cellular memories, i.e., what has been done to us, what we have witnessed, what we have done to others, and what was passed down through cellular memories. All those factors come together to influence our heart, affecting our capacity for some of life's most essential functions. Faith, love, self-worth, fear, and every other core value and belief that directs our life is a matter of the heart.

A broken or wounded heart suffers from the fear that what happened in the past will occur again; therefore, trust becomes subservient to our fearful expectations, based on wounds of the past. Without a model for faithfulness, we have difficulty trusting in the faithfulness of God. All the pain of the past, manifesting in irrational emotions or behavior in the present, is a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that producing more

pain and falsely confirming our fears.

Healing the broken heart is the beginning of an inner journey that leads to emotional health and ultimately to the Kingdom of God. The parables of the Kingdom only benefit us when they are believed from a heart that fully trusts Jesus' representation of God. As freewill beings, created in God's image, every step along the path to a better life than we have ever known must be a choice based on our trust for God and what He accomplished through the Lord Jesus. Before a clear choice can be made, we must first be able to "see." This only happens when the light of God's reality shines into the darkness of our corrupt thoughts and beliefs.

When Jesus referred to "... *the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 5:3), the word **poor** is not a reference to the financially poor. The word *poor* means *to crouch down with an extended hand like a beggar*. In the Hebrew alphabet, the letter **Lamed** portrays a man kneeling in prayer, with an outstretched hand, calling on God from his heart—the image of an empty cup ready to be filled with a heavenly message.

The **poor in spirit** understand their destitution and captivity to spiritual poverty. The outstretched hand represents the realization of the need, plus desire and willingness to receive what God has to say. For that reason, the Kingdom of Heaven (in context to poor beggars) points us to the resources of provision and protection always available in the Kingdom, depicting the believer making God his only source.

Jesus' authoritative proclamation in Luke 4:18 declares freedom from the captivity that keeps us bound in the destitution of our worldly paradigm. The word **captives** in this verse represents not only *those who do not have what they need to be set free* but the fact that they are *prisoners of war, captured by their arch enemy (fear and unbelief) through the deceitfulness of sin*. Sin is always motivated by the illusion of lack, a feeling of being disqualified for the life we desire. The deficiency in a person's life may be real, but it is an illusion when we consider that God's resources are always available to those who trust Him.

Recovering sight to the blind appears to be the pivotal point in the progression of a healed heart, freedom, and access to the resources of heaven. The New Testament word for *blind* does not always mean physical blindness; it can also refer to *an impairment, dim, partial, or distorted perception*. Jesus

Himself is the light of the world. When we believe the truth about Him and what He taught, we have the light we need to see from God's perspective. Jesus wants us to see our way clear to the Father and His resources.

Jesus came to make the crooked path straight, plain, and safe to walk. He is the way, so we know where we are going.

Jesus came to make the crooked path straight, plain, and safe to walk. He is the way, so we know where we are going. He is our Shepherd to protect and prevent us from being frightened or lost along the way. Ironically, the obvious path to safety may look dark and foreboding. To those who do not have the light, this path is an

unknown. Jesus is only our light when we believe what He taught, lived, and accomplished through His resurrection. A Christian unsundered to His Lordship does not have the light. They have His name on their lips, but their hearts are from Him; they cannot see the way out of captivity and into freedom.

Jesus preached that the gospel of the Kingdom has the power to heal and set free those who are crushed, broken, and bruised, but only for those who are willing to hear and yield to the truth (repentance). It is generally agreed when proclaiming His purpose in Luke 4 that Jesus was quoting Isaiah 58:6, "*Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?*" The **bonds of wickedness** represent anything that puts us in pain, distress, hardship, or suffering.

Isaiah completes this passage by preceding it with the Year of Jubilee (v. 5), for which he says Jesus will "*proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*" Every 50 years the Hebrews were commanded to celebrate the **Year of Jubilee**: a time when all debts were paid. It did not matter if the debt had been incurred responsibly or irresponsibly; every debt was paid and the inheritance restored to those in debt.

This undeserved freedom was based on the love, faithfulness, and goodness of God. From this, we can clearly see God's goodness is intended to bring us to repentance. Until we repent (change our minds) of the beliefs and behaviors that have taken us captive, we will never escape captivity. The message the *poor in spirit* hear must be the Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom, which expresses how God's goodness released us from our

Opening the Eyes of Our Heart

captivity, and we now have a choice to live in that freedom or remain in bondage.

This messianic prophecy has always intrigued me concerning opening blind eyes:

I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.⁷²

The **prisoners** he refers to are *those who remain captive to the darkness of their beliefs* and cannot see that the prison door is open. Their *blindness* is the consequence of their beliefs. To see, we must first open our eyes to the choices: believe God's reality or continue in our reality; trust self

or God; insist that we see, and God does not; believe our circumstance(s) or God's promise. Although we may be Christians, until we hear the gospel of the Kingdom, we may never realize we have a choice.

Because we are conditioned by the imaginary prison door of our beliefs, we remain stuck in darkness; stopping at an imaginary boundary determined by our beliefs.

In our home, we have a room that is the safe zone for our cats. I conditioned my dog to never go into that room. I established an invisible boundary he was not allowed to cross. Through conditioning, that version of reality was programmed into his brain by repetition, reward, and response. Now, when he walks up to the doorway, he stops to wait for my permission to cross that invisible line. Because we are conditioned by the imaginary prison door of our beliefs, we remain stuck in darkness; stopping at an imaginary boundary determined by our beliefs. These beliefs hold us in poverty, sickness, unhappiness, and a lifetime of continual lack! We need only to realize that the door only exists in our beliefs. It is not locked; we can believe the truth about Jesus, see the situation for what it is, and choose to walk out the door!

When Jesus fed the five thousand, He had the opportunity to doubt God's power working through Him. If I had a few fish and loaves of bread and

needed to feed thousands, I know what my temptation would be: doubt. I would compare my resources to the need and immediately feel lack or limitation. Since Jesus was tempted like us in every way, He would also be His tempted to feel lack or limitation.

Mark 6:41 (KJV) says, “*And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves ...*” Before attempting to operate in faith, Jesus modeled what we should do when we find ourselves in fear and doubt: “*He looked to heaven.*” The original language reveals that He did more than look up in the sky. This phrase has the same root word as the one in Luke 4:18, “*opening blind eyes.*” Opening the eyes of the blind is not about physical blindness; it is about the beliefs that blind us. It is this blindness that keeps us from perceiving not only our freedom but our access to the Kingdom of Heaven: the reality of God's unlimited resources. Jesus looked to the Kingdom of Heaven, connected with the Father, and *recovered His sight*. He no longer looked to His natural resources to feed the massive crowd; He looked to God's resources.

All we must do is make a choice to trust God to walk out of our prison of unbelief and into the limitless possibilities of His Kingdom.

Do we see our circumstances from God's perspective of limitless possibilities or the perspective determined by our life experiences? When our life paradigm is shaped by our experiences rather than God's reality, our circumstances cause us to perceive and ultimately believe that we

are limited to our abilities, resources, health, family, race, environment, etc. Fixating on circumstances to determine our course of action instead of looking to the promises we have in Christ blinds us to God's resources, leaving us stuck in a distorted reality: lack with no perception of provision!

When we perceive and choose to believe what God has accomplished in Christ, we realize the metaphorical prison door of our circumstances is open, and all we must do is make a choice to trust God to walk out of our prison of unbelief and into the limitless possibilities of His Kingdom. Remember, we are not imprisoned by Satan; there are no demons to fight. Our battle is our mind and in our limiting beliefs. The writer of Proverbs warns us to guard our heart vigilantly because *out it flows the issues of life*, (4:23b). **Issues** could just as well have been translated as *boundaries*.

All we must believe for the door to open is what Jesus already accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection. When we hear and believe the truth in our heart, we move the boundaries and release the perceived limitations—an act of repentance. Repentance need not be an emotionally defined, individual step in a religious process. It is the way of the believer, the natural progression from recognizing our unbelief to choosing to believe the truth. *Changing our mind* becomes an organic process.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 10:17, “*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*” In Greek, **Word** refers to *the topic or specific utterance of the one preaching the message*. We tend to lift this verse out of context and translate it as *repeatedly hearing the Scripture*, but a hard, crooked, or darkened heart will not interpret the Scripture consistent with God’s intention. Hearing the same Scripture over and over, apart from repentance, only reinforces the corrupt interpretation that holds us in bondage. As someone once said, “Practice does not make perfect; it makes permanent.” Reading and rereading a passage of Scripture is of no value unless we surrender our interpretation.

To grasp what this verse means, we must keep it in context. To do this, we must look back at verse 15, where it specifically states that the Gospel of Peace must be proclaimed and believed if we are to have true biblical faith.⁷³ The Gospel of Peace is the good news of the Covenant of Peace God made with Jesus, who obtained our inheritance: The resources of the Kingdom of Heaven and available to us now.

When we believe on His resurrection from our hearts, we are baptized into His body, making His inheritance legally ours. When we confess Him as Lord, i.e., accept His interpretation and representation of God, we learn how to enter the Kingdom where we share in His inheritance. Everything we are delivered from (wrath, judgment, and death) and all the promises are received by His faith in the resurrection and the confession of our heart that Jesus is our Lord (Rom. 10:9–10).

In His life, Jesus revealed the character and nature of God. On the cross, He suffered as we should suffer. In His death, He paid the price we should pay and freed us from the debt we owed. He died the death we should die; therefore, we are free from death. He defeated the devil; therefore, we do not have to fight the devil. In His victory over death, He freed us from the fear of death.

Heaven on Earth: Unveiling the Mysteries of God's Kingdom

In His resurrection, He won the victory, and we share in that victory. He rose from the dead, giving us resurrection life. He obtained an inheritance that He shares with us. God made the covenant with Jesus, so we do not have to earn the inheritance. We share in His covenant!

Our responsibility is to persuade our hearts of what Jesus accomplished and what we have in Him until our hearts are fully convinced (immovable faith). Since we are in Christ, we share in all He accomplished and all He has. We believe we have peace with God because Jesus is at peace with God. It was with Jesus that God established the covenant of peace, according to Isaiah 54:10. The Good News is that we have peace with God because we are in Jesus! Because we trust Him, we follow Him through the narrow gate of godliness and faith into the Kingdom where we live in the inheritance!

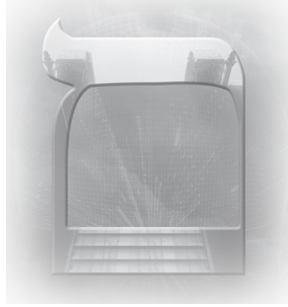
This is the Good News message of the cross! Whether unbelievers who are coming to Jesus for the first time or believers who are facing the challenges of life, experiencing all that we are and all that is rightfully ours (our inheritance) in Him is based solely on our faith in all that Christ is and all He accomplished. The Good News of the Gospel of Peace is the message of light that reveals God's love, opening our eyes in the midst of our darkness and enabling us to walk out the open door!

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

The following questions are an exercise that could last for months or a lifetime. One of the ways we realize if we believe the truth is how we live it with others.

1. Do I believe I have a repentant teachable attitude?
2. Am I willing to question my traditional and cultural values in light of Scripture, or do I automatically interpret scripture based on my life experiences?
3. Do I challenge my feelings of lack and limitation with Scriptural promises of limitlessness?
4. Do I intend to reread in prayerful consideration portions of the Scripture?
30. This would mean asking God to teach me how the principles in Scripture can be applied to my life.
5. Consider keeping a journal of what God speaks to you.
6. Select a translation of the Bible you enjoy reading and is easy to understand.
7. Start by reading the gospel of John at a comfortable pace.
8. Then read one chapter of Proverbs per day



CHAPTER 18

My Version of Paradise

For the selfish to live in paradise, the rest of the world must live in hell!

In every decision, it seems we only have two choices: life or death, blessing or cursing, the head or tail, above or beneath, lender or borrower. Every decision is leading us in one direction or the other, with no middle ground. One is the way of the world, and the other is the way of the Kingdom of God!

The way of the world always leads to death; the way of the Kingdom always leads to life. Death is a continuum which is likely to be experienced first in its most subtle form: the stress that emerges from the incongruence between our spirit and soul. We are righteous in Jesus; whether that is our conscious reality does not matter—it is a fact. When we do not walk in righteousness, it creates an internal conflict. Even though the stress may be subtle, it still has a derogatory effect.

God did not tell Adam he would die when he ate from the tree. The Hebrew language reveals that He said he would *begin* to die! All sin *begins* the death process. Based on our internal pain and pleasure mechanism, we are deceived by the temporary pleasures of sin. While we experience the immediate gratification of sin, the pain of it is usually delayed, particularly when our heart is already hardened. Subsequently, our heart and mind never make a clear connection between our sin and its consequences.

God made a way for us always to have the very best life has to offer, and God defines that way in the form of His promises. If we trust God and His promises, we find ourselves walking in the way of His Kingdom: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ If not, we find ourselves in the flesh, wandering in the wilderness of lack. The fact that sin does not immediately kill us is a merciful aspect of the way we are created. When we come to our senses, we can repent, put off the old man and all its fruit, then put on the new man without being destroyed.

While the Kingdom of God is a realm into which we enter through the beliefs of our heart, it may be better understood as a path. The concept of a path does represent a way of life, but it also helps to consider it as a process of steps we make into or out of the Kingdom of God with each decision.

2 Peter 1:3–4 tells us,

As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the [experiential] 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.

Trusting and following God is the only path into His Kingdom. He is attempting to lead us to something we have never seen, a place we have never been that is exorbitantly better than anything we have ever experienced. Not everyone, however, is willing to trust Him to that extent, and, surprisingly, some do not want God's version of the good life.

The greatest commandment to Israel is:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. (Deut. 6:4–6)

We know the high regard held for this verse because of Hebrew history and the traditions related to regularly reciting this commandment. Jesus, however, shows us the correct understanding and application of this verse. He proclaimed it to be the most important of all commandments, so we

must understand it if we are to understand any of God's Word. He put the application of this commandment into perspective when He quoted Leviticus 19:18, "... *you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*"

By adding the second commandment, the first commandment received context for its application in our lives! Jesus even went further to explain, "*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*" (Matt. 22:40). From the moment they were uttered, the commandments were prescriptions for how to express love to others as God Himself expresses it. It is the sages who insist God's Words are not legalistic rules but, instead, are prescriptions for how to be holy like God is holy and how to walk in love.

Loving God is twisted into every extreme form of legalism imaginable without this context, which is exactly what the Jews did. Because they did not understand God's love for man, they were able to heap all manner of burdens on the people according to the command, "*If you love God, you will obey Him.*"⁷⁵ The commandments became the basis for judging and controlling others instead of the foundation for how to treat one another fairly. What should have been internalized for application to their lives became the microscope under which they scrutinized others.

The ruling religious body attempted to do what God Himself would not do: force mankind to love Him. Even worse, the religious basis for love had nothing to do with heart beliefs. When Jesus quoted from Leviticus, it became clear that love for God, experienced and expressed from every part of our being, was the same love we must have for our fellow man. We cannot, therefore, take God's prescription for loving Him to be interpreted and applied in any way that violates love toward our neighbor or ourselves.

In the prescription to "*love our neighbor as ourselves,*" we encounter one of the most critical foundational truths in all of Jesus' teaching. It provides the most concise way of understanding God's will and original intention for mankind, opening the door to theological interpretation concerning all matters. It is the cornerstone of New Covenant theology, as it should have been for the Old Covenant. It is the supreme guide to understanding everything God has ever said or done, and it defines the New Covenant believers' connection to the Old Testament commandments. It identifies the narrow path that leads to Kingdom life, and more than any Word ever uttered by God, it indicates whether we are surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus or religious workers of iniquity.

The nation of Israel is a *type*, or example, of the believer in the pursuit of the Kingdom of God. Canaan was a place promised to the Children of Israel, which could only be entered by trusting and following God's prescriptions. The legalistic heart interprets God's prescriptions as a means of earning His promises. To those who know and trust the love of God, commandments are viewed as prescriptions for an abundant life. To the faithful of heart, commandments are not misconstrued as rules by which we earn anything from God but rather the fatherly wisdom by which God guides us to the true treasures of life.

If the Israelites had walked in love as God defined it, they would have always enjoyed peace, prosperity, and security. They would have been a light to all the nations of the world, demonstrating the justice of God. Theirs would have

been the Kingdom of God, a nation in full compliance with the wisdom of God, making it possible for Him to be their Divine Leader and Protector. Theirs would have been the Kingdom of Heaven, wherein they could experience divine provision, true justice, and incredible abundance.

To those who know and trust the love of God, commandments are viewed as prescriptions for an abundant life.

God's love and wisdom rules and reigns the Kingdom of God. By trusting and following His love and wisdom, He reigned in their heart, making it possible for Him to be both Provider and Protector. Nevertheless, with the capacity to interpret good and evil, they sometimes trusted God and sometimes themselves. God offered them the wisdom for a peaceful government, justice for all, protection from their enemies, fertile land, a stable economy, and everything else needed for a life of righteousness, peace, and joy.

According to the Apostle Paul, the nation of Israel's history is also a *type* for us to understand the way to live. It demonstrates how sin can set us off course, while simultaneously encouraging the repentance that can get us back on the path in our journey toward our inheritance: The Kingdom of God!

The writer of Hebrews addresses believers who have not entered rest. We often assume this conversation to be directed to the lost and the *rest* to be a reference to the born-again experience, but that is not the case. The

Israelites were given a promise of entering a land that would be theirs, but only by following God's wisdom. Why is it so vital to trust and obey God? The nations that inhabited Canaan were wicked haters of God. They were *types* of our flesh, representative of our fear, doubt, and unbelief. We cannot defeat them in our power. We need God to provide the strategy and the power for us to live victoriously in our inheritance.

The Apostle Paul parallels the Israelites exodus from Egypt with the believer abandoning the control of this world's system. Delivered from slavery, the Israelites represent our freedom from sin. Their participation in the first Passover typifies our deliverance from wrath, judgment, and death by the blood of Christ. The crossing of the Red Sea illustrates our baptism into Christ. His Word and His wisdom would have led them to their inheritance, but sadly, it was never allowed to take root in their hearts. Like the hearts described in the parable of the sower, they refused to trust God; consequently, they did not have the power or the wisdom to enter the Promised Land, the Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 3:18 describes what the Israelites could not and would not do as a result of their unbelief, *"And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?"* The legalist interprets this to mean that God would not allow them to enter this rest as punishment for unbelief. Verse 19, however, explains, they could not come in because of their unbelief. It was their choice not to trust God to overcome the inhabitants of the land, not God's punishment.

Would people who refused to trust God for daily provision and basic needs be ready to enter the land of Canaan and conquer the enemy, many of whom were giants? No! If God had attempted to take them into a land where they could not trust Him for deliverance, the entire nation would have been destroyed, and the bloodline of the Messiah lost. It was not a matter of God predicting what they would do when they arrived in Canaan and thwarting their opportunity; the Israelites had previously reached the shores of the Jordan and had the chance to enter the land. They did not trust God could or would deliver the promise. As Hebrews explains, it was in their unbelief that they put God on trial and declared Him guilty of perjury on His promise. By choosing to wander the wilderness rather than trust God, they got exactly what they chose: a life less than what they could have had.

As we find our sense of identity and fulfillment in life through our natural senses—hearing, seeing, taste, touch, smell, and the pride of life—we become addicted to its pleasures. Giving up the way of life that gives us pleasure is the death to self we are not willing to accept. After all, we have no other life experience. We are no different than any other addict; we will destroy ourselves and everyone around us rather than give up our addiction to self-gratification.

Today's culture sees walking in love, mercy, and forgiveness as being weak. We have no desire for those characteristics, nor do we want what the Kingdom of God promises. We do not want to walk in love or prefer others above ourselves, but we daily bemoan the pain of the life we have chosen... and, yet, it is the life we have chosen, and God will not violate our will.

Today's culture sees walking in love, mercy, and forgiveness as being weak.

It is relatively easy to identify this behavior in gangs or extreme groups, but it is, in fact, this same, illogical rationale that keeps us from living in the Kingdom today. Attempting to control a spouse through fear proves that we do not trust the power of love to work in their heart. Rather than give up the need to control and establish peace, we hold to that which we think is giving us what we want.

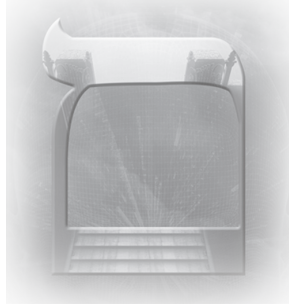
The Bible tells us to *taste and see that the Lord is good*. We can never intellectually know how great it is to live in righteousness, peace, and joy until we taste it for ourselves. Every time we have a positive experience walking in God's love, we gain the confidence to branch out into other areas of life. As our life's experiences prove His way to be superior, we will ultimately decide to take the plunge and surrender our life. We could save ourselves from years of pain if we would merely trust His Word and begin the journey now. Growth by trial and error is a long, arduous journey!

We have all worked our plan in a vain attempt to create heaven on earth, but it is never abiding, always fleeting! It seems we consider our plan better than God's and ourselves smarter than God. We can continue to experience the version of heaven we create, or we can trust God, our Creator, and enter a dimension beyond our wildest dreams!

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. What are you afraid you will lose if you stop controlling and begin walking in love?
2. Is your present approach to having the life you desire working?
3. Does your current approach give you peace and joy in your heart?
4. Does your present approach allow others to exercise their free will and make choices for themselves, or does it require control and manipulation on your part?
5. Does the Gospel you believe present a positive, life-affirming concept of Kingdom living that is so compelling it provides all you want and all you need?



CHAPTER 19

I Get What I Choose

I may not get what I want, but I always get what I choose!

Our understanding of cause and effect is incredibly distorted when it comes to God, man, authority, and free will. Once again, we revisit the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:12 (NIV), “*Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken away from them.*” When there is a lack of trust for God and His Word, we are in doubt or unbelief. *Doubt* can be the struggle between two opinions, or it can mean that we are determined to be unpersuaded. *Unbelief* is to judge God as untrustworthy. To justify our behavior, we sanitize that definition rather than admit we do not consider Him faithful to His Word! In effect, we pronounce Him a liar, and our doubt and unbelief put the promise beyond our capacity to receive.

Religion has perpetrated the Luciferian interpretation of sovereignty: God can do anything He wants on Planet Earth. To follow that logic, we must believe God has absolute power and control, which means, when anything bad happens, it is His will. To support this belief, we must then task ourselves with developing a twisted, circumstantial theology to explain why we are not experiencing the promises of God. At the end of it, we still never accept our responsibility for the outcome in our lives.

Understanding the universal laws governing man’s and God’s interaction begins with believing we have a free will, having been created in His like-

ness and image. We must then accept that God cannot give us free will and then force us to do anything. He leads but does not push, convicts (persuades) but does not force, teaches but does not demand. He provides the prescription, and if we trust Him, we follow it. The choice is always ours, and the consequences cannot be separated from that choice.

All our beliefs and behavior are the fruit of the seed we have sown in our heart.

The ***law of the seed*** is the universal law upholding all things in the universe, tangible, emotional, or spiritual. The first law of the seed says, “Every seed bears after its own

kind.” There is no exception to this law. Every decision is a seed that produces fruit in our lives, consistent with that seed. The seed is not just the spoken words; it includes the thoughts or information we entertain. The quality of the seed is linked to the intention, motive, and sometimes, even the way we say the words.

All our beliefs and behavior are the fruit of the seed we have sown in our heart; therefore, how we treat others is a manifestation of the continuum of the seed and the fruit it bears. Any failure to walk in love, as God defines it, is the fruit of the bad seeds sown in our heart. The fruit of that corrupt seed is multiplied anytime we think or act on it. The continuum of sowing and reaping bad fruit grows exponentially through thoughts, imagination, and application. Each time we repeat the cycle, we plant more seed more fruit grows, giving rise to Jesus’ exclamation that we will always get more of what we already have!⁷⁶

Through this process the bad seed affecting our life expands; it not only comes back to us from our heart but eventually, we plant these seeds that multiply back to us based on the way we treat others. Jesus said it like this,

Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. (Luke 6:38)

Our current paradigms of faith completely ignore the law of the seed. We have twisted faith from being what God has already done for us through Jesus to the belief that it is what He will do for us in response to our

prayer, rejecting Jesus' teaching of the law of the seed—the one law by which we understand everything He taught about the Kingdom.

Through man's corrupt logic surrounding God's sovereignty, we have the distorted idea that if God loves us, He should keep anything bad from happening to us, even if it means contradicting His Word and violating our will. What the Bible calls a **curse** is nothing more than *the fruit of the seed we plant*.

I often hear those who seek to exempt themselves from reality claim to have no fear because God loves them, and His love drives out all fear. The problem is that we cannot ignore the one absolute truth: it is not the love of God that drives out fear; it is the perfect love which exists between God and man. **Perfect love** is *love that has been brought to its goal*. The goal of God's love is to bring us to repentance, which opens the door to a relationship built on reciprocal love.

Perfect love is experienced when we receive God's love and manifest the same love back to Him. It is relational. 1 John 4:18 tells us, "*Perfect love drives out all fear because fear has to do with punishment.*" In other words, perfect love is fully received, experienced, and reciprocated because God is not the one punishing us for our choice. Our consequences, good or bad, are the fruit of the seed we plant.

Due to an unscriptural definition of love, unbelief deceives us into thinking we can walk a path other than the one God has prescribed and still experience His promises. The New Covenant says we are delivered from the curse of the law.⁷⁷ That does not, however, void the law of the seed. The word *curse* in the original language presents a most intriguing concept of falling into peril after receiving the fulfillment of the pursuit of God's promises in contradiction to His prescribed manner. A drug addict does not choose to have their teeth fall out, be evicted, or become homeless; a prostitute or thief does not intend to lose custody of their children, die from AIDS or end up in prison, but that is the fruit growing from the seed planted.

When we do not choose life, by default, we choose death. Sadly, we convince ourselves we can plant a seed without considering the inevitable fruit of that seed. That is why we are warned to, "... *Consider your ways!*"⁷⁸ We want drugs without addiction, gluttony without the weight gain, stress without sickness or pain, immorality without disease, selfishness without

loss of being loved...the list is endless! Choosing the path of death brings us under the curse we have chosen. The *curse* is the harvest produced by the seed we have chosen; it is the universal law of sin and death.

In Romans 8:2, Paul tells us we are delivered from the law of sin and death. If we lift that scripture out of context, it can take on a wide variety of meanings. Put into context of this verse, along with the entire book of Romans and the overall Word of God, we have a more precise understanding. First, that which frees us from the law of sin and death is our choice to operate in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, thereby rejecting the carnal mindset on gratifying the desires of the flesh.

It is noteworthy, in this same Epistle, Paul warns that even though we are Christians, sin still brings death. In Galatians 6:7, Paul warns believers to stop deceiving themselves, “... *whatever a man sows that shall he also reap*,” a direct application of the law of the seed.

When we were sinners by nature, we had no freedom of choice. We were slaves in Egypt, and that is all we knew. In Christ, we have the Truth, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the freedom of choice. In this, our every choice is a seed, and every seed bears fruit after its own kind! If we trust Jesus' teaching, we will make this universal law of the seed work for us. If we ignore it, it will work against us.

Our unbelief concerning the law of sin and death corrupts our interaction with God and our role in managing our life choices. He does not put the curse on us; the curse emerges as a result of our choices. The addict's decision to abuse drugs has made inheriting righteousness, peace, and joy an impossibility. The happiness and fulfillment of the addict are limited to the momentary pleasure of gratifying the flesh. The addict will continue living in the fruit of those choices until new decisions are made (repentance). It is the life and power of God that makes it possible for the addict to repent at any time, turn to Him wholeheartedly, and experience true freedom.

Repentance is not our attempt to change God's mind. God's mind is already decided on every point. *Repentance* is when we change our minds about the path we have chosen to walk. Regardless of where we are in life, Jesus has already provided a way for us to enter the Kingdom. Like the father in the story of the prodigal, he did not cause any of the good or bad

consequences experienced by the rebellious son. The consequences were the result of the son's decisions. He could stay in a relationship with His father and continue to have access to the father's resources or cut himself off from those resources by pursuing fulfillment in another way. When he repented (changed his mind), he returned first to the relationship with his father and then began to experience the father's resources.

The promise of God is like a map to a buried treasure given by God to warn us of the obstacles we will face along the way while simultaneously giving us assurances, tools, and insight to help us find and enjoy the treasure. The only caveat is that if we want the treasure, we must follow the map, and we will only follow the map if we trust the one who drew it.

The promise of God is like a map to a buried treasure

On the path to the treasure, we encounter many ways unbelief can set us off course, giving rise to chaos (evil). The metastatic nature of chaos sets us on a course of making one destructive decision after another. To add insult to injury, should we find ourselves surrounded by danger, miles from the treasure and lost time, we blame God. Thankfully, God will not punish us, but it is we who destroy ourselves through the chaos inherited from the path we chose to walk.

Jesus modeled God's desire to help and heal all who came to Him. Many wanted Jesus to come to them and walk their path, but Jesus never deviated from following God. He merely invited them to follow Him. We can choose to stay where we are, continuing the path we have chosen. As such, we will experience what that path holds. We can, however, choose to follow Him and experience whatever benefits exist in the path He is walking.

The second pillar of faith is the fact that we are created in the likeness and image of God. As such, no one can violate our choices. We are, in fact, the only created species with the capacity to change the quality of our life by merely changing our mind—repentance that occurs from making a choice! And, neither God nor the devil can violate our choices.

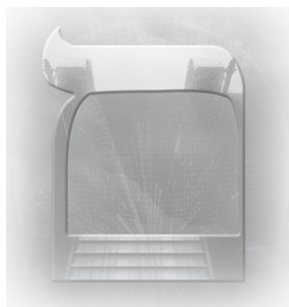
Moses told the children of Israel to choose life or death.⁷⁹ Rationally, we all choose life, but we fail to recognize that choosing life equates to choosing the path of righteousness. In actuality, we have not chosen the result of anything until we have chosen the path that leads to that outcome.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Do I tend to think God is responsible for the consequences of my actions and decisions?
2. Do I think the consequences of a bad decision are the punishment of God?
3. When I realize I have made a destructive choice, can I own that choice without feeling guilt or condemnation?

When I have made a bad decision, do I look to God's Word for a better solution?



CHAPTER 20

I Do Not Want to Understand

People tend to misunderstand in a way that always benefits them!

When a person says, “I do not understand,” it is difficult to know to what they are referring. Are they saying, “I do not understand why I should do this” or “I do not understand how I should do this?” Or, maybe they are saying, “This makes no sense to me; therefore, I refuse to do it.” Based on the Biblical definition of the word, what we do or do not understand can reflect our character and ethics.

One thing I have noticed is this: when people misunderstand, they usually misunderstand in a way that benefits them or supports their predetermined point of view. For example, I have never had anyone misunderstand a business agreement where they paid me more than we agreed. Amazingly, every time there was a misunderstanding about the payment due, they always thought they should pay me less than we agreed. Why does that happen? Simple! Understanding is a matter of the heart.

The Hebrew language reveals that *hear* and *obey* are the same root word. The greatest commandment tells us to hear. To the Hebrew believer, that meant to *hear with a readiness to obey*, the product of loving God with our entire being. The person who is not willing to obey cannot hear the direction of the Lord, or they do not understand it as God’s Word says it. Not hearing, whether due to complete spiritual deafness or a lack of understanding, reaches the same result: disobedience. To enter the King-

dom (heaven on earth), Jesus said we must see and perceive, hear, and understand.

As already established, the Kingdom of God is a moral Kingdom, not dead works, works-righteousness, or reverting to the law. It is a Kingdom that requires its citizens to be born-again of a righteous nature. We must have a repentant, teachable heart. The one law that governs every aspect of the Kingdom is "... *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: *'Love your neighbor as yourself,'*" (Matt. 22:37–39).

We all want the benefits of the Kingdom, but we somehow misunderstand how we can get what we want by walking in love.

The New Testament candidly states that not everyone will enter the Kingdom of God. While the Kingdom is available to all, if we are committed to an opposing lifestyle, we cannot inherit what Jesus has freely provided. Although saved, believers who are selfish, immoral,

ungodly, and carnal (natural/fleshly) cannot enter because they do not trust their deepest needs can be fulfilled by walking in God's love and righteousness.

Believers who define love by unscriptural humanistic concepts cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Many who rave the most about love reject righteousness; therefore, they cannot experience God's peace and joy. We all want the benefits of the Kingdom, but we somehow *misunderstand* how we can get what we want by walking in love. Love, as God defines it, is the core of the Gospel: the definition of God's character, the heart of righteousness, and the motivation of all God has ever said or done. In fact, when we walk in God's love, we have inadvertently fulfilled His intention of the law (Rom. 13:10).

The Apostle Paul explained what should be obvious: "... *faith [trust] working through love*" (Gal. 5:6). We cannot trust anyone beyond the love (value) they hold for us. The Apostle John points out that when we do not walk in love, it is merely because we are not experiencing love.⁸⁰ Love, like many factors of the heart, is a continuum: the love we give cannot be separated from the love we receive (experience). The love that motivates us, and in

turn, acts upon others through us, is the love that was first acted upon us. The Apostle John called it *perfect love*.

The Hebrew language has another word for a love that is given, received, and reciprocated, a word for which there is no Greek equivalent. The closest we find are the phrases: *perfect love*, *love perfected*, or *love completed*. These Greek words are used to describe the type of love relationship God desires with us. Furthermore, it describes not just the love God gives to us, but how that love affects our relationships with others.

Love that is perfected is brought to the goal, or fulfillment, of its intention. In other words, those who truly experience the love of God bring it to completion, give it back to God, begin to love what God loves, and, very specifically, love others. "*If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us*" (1 John 4:12).

The love to which God has called us is not a selfish endeavor where we give love only to receive love and enjoy the benefits. The love to which God has called us is a love that becomes the core of our character, our motivation, our supreme expression. This love becomes the guiding factor in all we do. Our every deep-seated, emotional need can be resolved in knowing, feeling, and giving God's love.

Having humanized the Gospel and paganized our definition of love, we have adopted a "faith-free" concept that says, "The love of God will change the world." That is just not true. If it were, the world would be changed because God already loves the world. For love to transform someone, it must be *perfected*: experienced and then expressed to others. For it to be experienced, it must be received. For it to be received, it must be believed. The only evidence we have that an individual is experiencing God's love is the fruit in their life. "*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*" (1 John 4:8).

The word *know* in the previous verse is *an experiential knowing*. It would not be a stretch to say, then: "The person who does not express love is not experiencing love." The question is not, "Does God love me?" The question is, "Do I experience that love; do I feel loved?" This verse reveals the fact that God's love has no benefit or value in our lives until it is experienced, and the only proof of that experience is what we express to Him and the world around us. It is this reciprocal love that drives out fear,

brings forth faith, and inspires obedience.⁸¹ This love compels us to love one another, and loving one another is how the world is changed!

The profile of the believer unwilling to obey the commandment to love their neighbor is not typically a viscous blasphemer, perpetrator, or career criminal. Defying the command to love our neighbor is more often expressed when we are unwilling to walk in forgiveness or mercy, when we are divisive or slanderous or, more specifically, when we are selfish. It is visible when, as we are motivated by fear, we behave selfishly rather than lovingly serve others. Why? Because we have not yet become disciples. We live by our emotions while deceiving ourselves that we are fully committed to the Lord. Our fear or unwillingness to walk in love must be justified, and the very best justification is, "I do not understand." Regardless of the excuse, if we are not committed to walking in love, as defined by the commandments, we are not committed to God!

When we have predetermined what we will or will not do, we have automatically, by default, negated the capacity to hear and understand with our heart.

The resistant believer will nearly always claim to need more explanation or clarification before complying with "the complications" of walking in love. We can never judge the motive of a person's actions, but my experience in counseling and personal ministry usually concluded with people not wanting to understand.

We must remember, however, if we knew and trusted the God of the Word, we would trust the Word of God. It seems that what we want is justification for refusing to choose love as God's way of life.

The question, "*Who is my neighbor?*"⁸² was presented to Jesus by someone who claimed not to understand these two love commands. It sounds like a reasonable question, but as we learned, confusion is usually the result of selfish ambition.

For wherever there is jealousy (envy) and contention (rivalry and selfish ambition), there will also be confusion (unrest, disharmony, rebellion) and all sorts of evil and vile practices. (James 3:16, AMP)

When we have predetermined what we will or will not do, we have auto-

matically, by default, negated the capacity to hear and understand with our heart. In the case of the expert of the law who posed this question in Luke 10:29, we know that his motivation was not to understand, but to “*justify himself*.” He wanted to justify racism, prejudice, and self-righteousness.

The desire for understanding is healthy and expected. The book of Proverbs repeatedly advises us to seek understanding. In fact, along the continuum of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, a faithful heart that trusts God is the only means by which we can understand. For the heart that does not trust, however, the need to understand is a form of testing God. We are essentially putting Him on trial to prove Himself beyond what He has already proven in Christ. By exercising our determination of what is right and wrong, we judge God and His Word, and on some level, believe we are more just, righteous, and fair than God. We require an explanation so we can determine whether we think He is right or wrong.

The disciple, however, trusts Jesus’ representation of God’s character, His interpretation of God’s commandments, and His teaching about faith and love as the motive for the application of God’s truth. The disciple believes that quality of life is based on two factors: 1) the degree to which we experience God through Jesus determines the quality of our inner life, and 2) the degree we walk in love, as defined by God’s commandments, determines the quality of our interrelationships. Out of a faith-filled heart, the disciple experiences the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection life. A repentant, teachable heart hears, understands, believes, and receives, even in the absence of doctrinal definitions because it is a heart phenomenon, not an intellectual comprehension.

One of the first laws of the Kingdom is found in the parable of the pearl of great price where the objective is clear: to get this magnificent pearl, we must be ready to give up all else. The pearl is not accessible to us unless we want God and Kingdom life more than anything else. When we do not want the Kingdom more than anything else, we will face the same fate as explained in the parable of the sower. We will keep getting more of what we already have!

When we want the pearl more than anything else—the opportunity for life at its best—we cannot be drawn away. What we hear will resonate in the deepest part of our being; we will walk a path that cannot be explained but, rather, experienced. We will have a connection to God that is more

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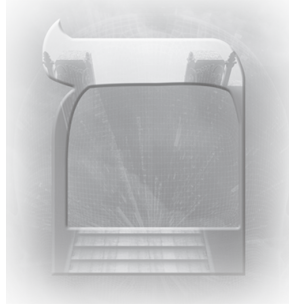
valuable than anything else in life. We will experience a peace that makes no sense to the intellectual mind but, for which, our heart will continually rejoice!

We have convinced ourselves that we will believe when we understand. That is, however, the reverse of what Hebrews 11:3 teaches, "*By faith we understand...*" When we are willing to believe, we will, by God's grace, gain the capacity to understand.

HeartWork

Read This Aloud Before Every HeartWork Session: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Can I honestly say, “I seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness above of all things?”
2. When I am unsure of the “right” thing, do I first seek to treat the other person fairly, or do I first determine what will meet my needs?
3. Am I afraid that by treating the other person fairly it will cause me to lose somehow?
4. Consider this: In every situation, I do not understand, I will seek to walk in love.



CHAPTER 21

Walking in the Spirit

Truth is always absolute, but the application of truth is always variable.

The Pentecostal influence on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit tended to define the exaggerated emotional phenomenon as a movement of the “Holy Ghost!” It seems many who came before us seeking to walk in the Spirit prioritized signs and wonders above character. They, like Israel, wanted to see the miracles, signs, and wonders more than they wanted to know God intimately. Sadly, many of the Pentecostal extremes, combined with very poor scriptural interpretation, caused the mainstream church to become even more opposed to the Biblically defined ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Charismatics brought the ministry of the Holy Spirit another step forward with a primary emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit. It seemed, however, that, once again, the primary pursuit was the gifts, not the Giver. An overemphasis on speaking in tongues was both an attraction to some of the church body but equally repelling to others.

More mainline denominations, like Baptists and Methodists, acknowledged the presence of the Holy Spirit, but any actual “manifestation” was shunned as emotionalism and sometimes attributed to the devil. What seemed to be lacking in every group was an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to manifest the character and nature of God in our lives. Historically, the church, like Israel, has sought external manifestations and minimized internal godliness.

Interestingly, in the early seventies, the Southern Baptist denomination embraced the fruit of the Spirit but vehemently rejected all other biblically-based manifestations of the Holy Spirit. It was not uncommon for those who spoke in tongues or prayed for the sick to be expelled from their local congregation. Even more confusing was the acceptance and embrace of the fruit of the Spirit but with absolutely no teaching on the subject. The Baptists, like many other denominations, were Calvinistic in their doctrine; thus, embracing a doctrine meant that if God wants a manifestation to occur in our lives, He will make it happen, independent of our will or our choice.

For the last 50–60 years, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Word of Faith teachers, have preached the promises of God. Where the water became too murky to follow was in the area of application. Most of what we were taught about application was formula-based. As often as not, attempts to stir the movement of the Holy Spirit were reduced to personal testimonies designed to manipulate listeners into emulating their journeys, i.e., a formula-based “faith.” The problem with formulas is they have no allowance for the personal beliefs of the heart or the leadership of the Holy Spirit, nor do they allow for the millions of variables which can be present in two seemingly similar situations.

One of the greatest deceptions in formula-based ministry is that sometimes they work.

One of the greatest deceptions in formula-based ministry is that sometimes they work. When there are enough similarities in two people’s situations and personal beliefs, they may be able to produce a similar outcome in both cases. This gives false proof that the formula works. Once people believe in the formula, they stop trusting in God, His promise, and the finished work of Jesus. They replace faith in God with faith in the formula. It allows no room for God to lead a person in the way they should walk.

Truth is absolute, but the application is 100% variable. Sadly, average Christians in America seem more committed to their methods of application than the truth they seek to apply. In my experience, I see many godly people who believe God’s promise, know it is theirs through the finished work of Jesus but are incapable of hearing God amid their life-storm. They do not know how to walk with the Holy Spirit in the way He is leading them. They pay more attention to the people speaking into their lives than

the voice of God speaking in their heart!

One of the most repeated phrases in the New Testament is, “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*”⁸³ Why is this verse repeated so often? Simple! Once we believe the truth, as presented in the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the only thing we lack to live in the promise is hearing and following the Holy Spirit. The repentant, teachable heart of a disciple hears based on the predetermination to obey; therefore, they hear. As previously discussed, we can and will only hear that which we are willing to obey (put into practice).

The 23rd Psalm is one of the most quoted and memorized passages in the Bible. Evidently, however, it is one of the least believed. If the Lord is our Shepherd, and the 23rd Psalm describes where and how He leads us, why do we not believe and live by this Psalm? Since the Lord is our Shepherd, we can be sure He always attempts to lead us in the path of Life! The Good Shepherd always leads us away from lack. He always leads us to a place of peace, provision, protection, and security! If we want still waters of peace, green pastures of abundance, paths of righteousness, freedom from fear, and a victorious celebration, the ultimate key is to follow His leadership. If we believe this, our first effort in resolving any problem would be to get alone, into our heart, and listen for the direction of our Great Shepherd. He will always lead us to the solution.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Wisdom. Wisdom is about practical application; therefore, the Spirit of Wisdom will always lead us into the practical application of truth. When a promise of God is not manifesting in our lives, there are only four possible reasons:

1. Unbelief
2. Doubt (wavering)
3. Disobedience
4. The refusal or inability to hear and obey the voice of God

Unbelief is when we do not believe the truth of what Jesus accomplished. *Doubt* is to choose or vacillate between two beliefs. ***Disobedience*** is *either the inability to hear and follow the Holy Spirit or the unwillingness to trust and follow the Holy Spirit*. When we cannot or do not hear the voice of Wisdom, we default to a formula or to something we have tried in the past!

As discussed previously, one of the greatest fears of mankind is the fear of the unknown. Researchers tell us, the mind takes everything it hears and compares it to all our life experiences to make it known (familiar), which can work for us or against us. People who have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and similar fears or phobias relate the present with what is familiar from the past; in the case of a war veteran who hears a car backfire, and his mind associates the sound with an explosion. Before being able to process the information rationally, an irrational reaction occurs. All past experiences that negatively affect us today are, in fact, a form of PTSD.

When given a great opportunity beyond the scope of our previous experiences, our mind looks for similarities between the new opportunity and those previous experiences or sources of knowledge. When they cannot be found, we act on this new opportunity the way we have done things in the past. Unfortunately, when we apply a new truth based on an old logic, the Bible likens it to putting new wine in old wineskins, in which the new truth is lost or corrupted.

We may even try changing the terminology or rearranging certain aspects of the application, but that is a bait and switch. We eventually try what we tried before, even though it did not work the first time, and are surprised when it does not work this time. We convince ourselves we are following God, but the truth is, we are following the path that makes sense to us. This is one of the factors that keeps us repeating our mistakes. We do not want to venture into the unknown. If we are believers who recognize the voice of God, we always have a “known” in what is, otherwise, an unknown journey. What can always be known with God is the One who is leading us along the new path.

Among godly people sincerely seeking God’s solutions, this may be the main reason they do not see the promise manifest as it should. We are facing a disaster, but in our hearts, we know God has already met this need in Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit speaks to our heart to assure us of God’s promise. We are right on track... but then we kick into carnal control mode. Rather than face the insecurity of walking an unknown path, we gratefully thank God for what He is showing us, and then in as kind of a way as possible, inform Him, “I will take it from here!” It is one thing to believe God for the promise, but it is a different thing to trust Him for a process (path) that is foreign or unknown.

The process (path) is the application of truth. Nearly every situation presents so many unknown variables that no human being could consider or navigate them all. Navigation becomes impossible because the variables are changing daily. For physical healing, the needs of the body or the spread of infection can change from moment to moment. In a business deal, no one can know all the players, much less their intent. The market can change for better or worse. We need wisdom superior to our own if we hope to be overcomers in every scenario. God is all-knowing! He knows everything that is changing and will change; He knows everything about everyone involved. He knows what is coming next; therefore, He can lead us through the process. So why do we want Him to explain the process? Simple! We do not know Him well enough to trust Him. We want to put Him on trial and judge Him by our perspective, knowledge, circumstances, and experience.

Walking in the Spirit is when we harmonize our choices with His.

Our past experiences define how we can manifest the miracle we need while still feeling safe. Now, instead of following the Holy Spirit and walking on the path He is leading, we want to walk the path we trust. We want Him to come to our path and bless our decision rather than walk the path He is walking. We are in total disharmony with the Holy Spirit but somehow convince ourselves we will end up at the same destination. We convince ourselves, "Since I believe the promise, I am walking in and with the Spirit." Believing the promise is what starts the journey, following His leadership is the assurance of reaching the desired destination.

When the Bible tells us to walk in the Spirit, an array of biblical pictures come to mind, all of which reveal what it means to *walk in the Spirit*. One concept of walking in the Spirit is to **yoke** up with Him, like pairs of oxen that must keep in step to pull the load. The picture within this picture, however, makes the metaphor even more straightforward. *Yoking* together implies harmonization. In other words, **walking in the Spirit** is *when we harmonize our choices with His*.

As the information about this book cover explains, the open Mem represents the revealed knowledge of God, that which is written in the scripture and interpreted by Jesus. We must renew our minds if we want to confidently recognize the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the most general manner. If we

do not know God's Word, we can easily be deceived by our own emotions and preferences.

When we accept the open Mem, we can then experience the closed Mem. This letter represents the secret knowledge of God, not secret theology or doctrine. This is God privately teaching us how to apply His Truth to our current situation. It is employing the Holy Spirit as our personal and private life coach and mentor. Once we know His Word and recognize His voice, His leadership becomes as clear as the cloud by day and the fire by night. It is unmistakable, and the benefits are tangible.

God is always attempting to lead us along a path that our heart can trust. We are like a person standing on the bank of a river looking at the solution to our problem on the other side. Based on our perception, we look across the river to see the treasure we seek and decide to cross the river. God warns, "But there are crocodiles in the river." We reply, "That is not a problem; you can make me walk on water." God knows you lack the faith to walk on water, especially if you see the crocodiles. So, He tries to lead you another way, a journey He knows you can make because you already have the faith for it. You, however, insist on crossing the river, because you trust your way more than God's. Good luck with those crocodiles!

God is not merely attempting to bring us into individual promises; He is seeking to bring us into this realm called the *Kingdom of Heaven*. In this realm, we do not wait until there is a problem and then try to get delivered. In this realm, we live in the promises and avoid the problems. It is a way of life that is only possible when we walk in the Spirit, thereby avoiding the lusts of the flesh. This way of life depends on the Spirit of grace to empower our righteous nature.

We sometimes forget that Kingdom living is not just righteousness, peace, and joy, but it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ This is not just an internal destination that can only be found by harmonizing with the Holy Spirit by listening to His voice and following in His footsteps—it is a way of life! In a prophecy to Israel about living in the Promised Land, we are told what has its ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom of God, "*I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers...*" (Eze. 36:27–28).

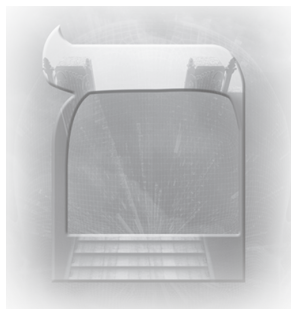
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Since we know God's names and His promises, we know where God is leading. What we do not know is the path on which He will take us to get us there. The path is the way, and we want a way that is familiar to us. We want to put our faith in the path or the process. On our journey into Kingdom living—personal intimacy with God and enjoying access to all His resources—we will either put our faith in the path (process) or the One who leads us on the path. One way is the tree of life; the other is the knowledge of good and evil as we see it! Which one makes you feel safe?

HeartWork

Read Every time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. What comes to my mind when I think of walking in the Spirit?
2. Do I ever recognize God speaking or leading me?
3. Do I trust God is always attempting to lead me to the very best life possible?
4. Am I uncomfortable when I feel led to walk a path that is foreign to me?



CHAPTER 22

The Secret Place

The first door to the secret place is in my heart; the second door is God's heart!

Psalm 91 begins with one of the most endearing and alluring statements in the Bible, “*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*” I have heard hours of discussion about what and where the secret place is and how to find it. Regardless of the academic debate, believers seeking intimacy with God feel a tug on their heartstrings when this verse is read. Like so many spiritual realities, we tend to over-think or over-define them. **Secret place** means *to be hidden or concealed*.⁸⁵ Like many Hebrew words, the concept is more important than theological translation.

The root Hebrew word translated as *secret place* is spelled with the letters Samek, Taw, and Resh. Samek is a circle representing being concealed, protected, and covered over by God. Taw represents God's absolute truth, and Resh is a picture of being led by the Holy Spirit, facilitated by our repentant heart. Together they form a picture of spending time with God in a special, secret place wherein we receive truth for our lives that leads to divine perfection.

Based on other scriptures regarding intimacy with God, especially from the Song of Solomon, we easily conclude the secret place to be where He takes His lover to share in secret, that which is for no one else to see or hear. In this place, He shares His secrets and plans for the one who has stolen

His heart with her love. He speaks to her about what He longs to give her. He assures her of His protection. The secret place is a heart-to-heart connection shared only by those who love one another deeply, openly, and honestly, holding nothing back! God desires this reciprocal (perfect) love with all His children.

Motivated only by love, God is always attempting to connect deeply and personally with us, wherein He shares His heart and gives us the wisdom we need to resolve our current dilemmas, help us avoid future struggles, keep us from harm, and provide loving, protective guidance. The caveat is that He does so only in our private times of intimacy.

Often, God would call the children of Israel to *sanctify* themselves—*set themselves apart for time with Him*. In these times they would receive incredibly important revelation about upcoming events. It was usually in this time of *being set apart* when the prophets would receive important revelation about the future.

This call to intimacy is built on a fourth Hebrew word for love. Unfortunately, neither Greek nor English have a single word for this type of love, but the closest we can come to describing it is with the words

shared or *reciprocal*. In the Greek New Testament, the Greek word *agape* is used to describe the kind of love God gives. *Agape*, however, is not a word that describes a reciprocal love relationship. It is a quality of love that God gives because of His character and the same kind of love we are called to give to others.

Agape is a selfless love that is not conditional.

Agape is a *selfless love that is not conditional*. Those to whom this love is given may or may not receive it, but it is still given. It is this love of God that prevents Him from pouring out wrath and judgment on the earth now. It is this type of love that, because of its unwavering nature, can eventually draw a person to repentance, but it is not a relational or reciprocal love.

In recent years, shallow theologians have tried to imply that the agape of God is such a quality of love that we need not love Him back to enjoy the benefits of His love. The outcrop of this error has produced such as philosophies as universalism, ultimate reconciliation, and other false doctrines that insist there is no need for personal faith or relationship. God's

love is misconstrued to be so phenomenal that He will violate one's will to give them what He desires. They forget that faith and love are the key components of a relationship; thus, the opposite is true: God is love, and He will never violate our free will. We can have the life we choose, even if it destroys us. He tries to warn and redirect us, but if we reject Him, He will not force us. Love is never expressed through control!

We will now have a short review. Since the Greek has no one word to express the Hebrew word for reciprocal love, it uses two words which are usually translated as *perfect love* or *love completed*. Perfect love is a Hebrew concept of shared love between two people. In other words, God's agape love has not reached its goal until it is believed, experienced, and given back to God and the world. Although we are all called to this type of loving relationship with our Heavenly Father, only a few will ever respond.

Intimate knowledge
of God begins
with knowing Him
through what He has
chosen to reveal to
all: The Scripture.

John 3:16 says, "*For God so loved the world ...*" This word for love comes from the Greek *agapeo*. Agapeo describes God's selfless love born from His character and nature but is not the expression of a relationship. God's incredible love (agapeo)

does not, however, benefit anyone until it is believed, received, and experienced. As previously stated, if God loving us is all we need, the entire world would be saved, healed, and enjoying heaven on earth because He already loves the whole world. God's love, however, is a not factor for most of the world, because they reject it or attempt to take advantage of it.

People often misquote 1 John 4:18–19 when they say love drives out fear. Technically, that is not what that passage says. It says PERFECT love casts out fear—love experienced. The New Living Translation says it best, "... *perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully **experienced** his **perfect love**.*" It is only after we experience His love that we free ourselves from the fear of Him hurting us, which is the prerequisite for faith (trust). After all, "*faith works by love.*"⁸⁶ We can only fully trust the One, through whose character and promises and our personal involvement, we are sure has no intent to hurt us. A lack of personal knowledge and intimacy has rendered most people completely unaware of God's love.

Intimate knowledge of God begins with knowing Him through what He has chosen to reveal to all: The Scripture. The Scripture is the revealed knowledge of God. More than any place in the Bible, God's love is revealed in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (1 John 4:9–10). Jesus' proactive and preemptive sacrifice for a world that does not deserve it is God's ultimate expression of His love and His call to the entire world to trust and come to Him!

As mentioned previously, every letter in the Hebrew Alphabet has its own meaning. When translating and interpreting a word, one step in the process is to research the meanings of each of the letters in the root word. The definitions of the three root letters become part of the overall interpretation of every Hebrew word.

Once again, we will review the Hebrew letter called MEM, which is where we get the *M* sound. The original symbol even looks somewhat like our letter M. Although there are two different MEMs (open and closed), both having to do with knowledge. The difference is that the second type of knowledge is personal and intimate, which will be discussed in the next chapter. To understand the second MEM, we must understand the first.

The MEM represents the knowledge of God. The first MEM looks like a rectangle standing on its end with the left bottom corner slightly open, symbolizing this knowledge is revealed, or poured out to the world, through the Word of God. We sometimes forget that the first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch or Torah, are the Words spoken directly by God Himself. They are not the inspirational words of a prophet, but actual direct quotes made by God. All subsequent biblical truth is based on the Torah, and anyone who rejects these words rejects God's testimony of Himself.

Unfortunately, modern Christianity has moved so far away from what God Himself spoke from His mouth that it embraces the concept of a progressive revelation of God (dispensationalism).

In modern church terminology, we often hear the phrase *revelation knowledge*, which in our religious culture represents the idea of a special revelation from God. Unfortunately, modern Christianity has moved so far

away from what God Himself spoke from His mouth that it embraces the concept of a progressive revelation of God (dispensationalism). Catholicism believes in the Pope's infallibility and power to speak Ex-Cathedra, a self-appointed authority that gives him the right to reinterpret or replace the written Word of God.

Charismatics and Pentecostals, while condemning Catholicism, will interpret a personal prophecy or word of knowledge incongruent with the Word of God and base their faith on its fulfillment. Universalists, other inclusionists, and New-Agers believe, like the early Gnostics, that their personal revelations of God are as reliable and relevant as anything in the Bible. Despite what the God's Word says, carnal Christians believe personal experience and subjective interpretations are equal to the Word of God.

When we do not believe and receive the Word of God as taught, modeled, and revealed through the life, teachings, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we are subscribing to our version of revelation knowledge, not God's. Revelation knowledge is not a special or private revelation; it is what God has revealed in His Word. Every group has some way of twisting the Word of God to their personal preference and justifying it! Revelation knowledge may not have been how the Apostle Paul phrased; it was more likely qualified as *revealed knowledge*, which points us back to the Scripture as our source of definitive knowledge.

Our connection to God is heart to heart; it is relational, and, like all intimate relationships, it is built on love, truth, and trust. A dimension of intimate knowledge and personal revelation between God and the believer does exist, but it never violates or rejects what God has previously stated. When our revelation is not in the Bible, or incongruent with the Bible, or in opposition to the Bible, it is a deception. Intimate knowledge and personal revelation are never experienced by the person who rejects God's revealed knowledge—the first MEM.

At some point, we must decide our attitude toward God's Word. "Do I believe the testimony God has given of Himself?" If the response is positive, the next question is, "Do I want to move from intellectual knowledge to more personal application?" If not, we have made God a liar. There can be no intimate relationship with one we consider to be a liar, a myth, or some part of our imagination.

The Secret Place

Remember, the letter MEM also represents water. In the ancient world, water always symbolized a mystery. Although from the shore or a boat a few feet beneath the surface can be visible, everyone knew there were mysteries hidden out of sight, in the deep. One could stand on the shore and speculate all that lay beneath the surface, but that was just theory. The serious-minded, however, would dive into the water to discover the mysteries for themselves.

God's revealed knowledge is like that water: we can stand on the shore and speculate or dive in to discover for ourselves what God longs to say to every living soul through the open MEM, but, even more importantly, what He desires to share with us personally in the closed MEM. The revealed knowledge that becomes experiential knowledge is what leads us to know the truth of God and His love for us. It is the starting place of what can become a deep intimate relationship wherein we hear the His voice in our heart!

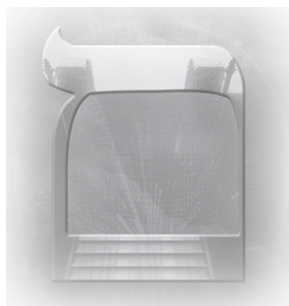
Kingdom living is not theory or mere information. "*For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power*" (1 Cor 4:20, NLT). Entering the Kingdom realm through the door of our heart is the place where our faith finds its full expression, and involvement becomes a relationship as we experience the Secret Place of God. In this secret place, we internally live, move, and have our being⁸⁷ in a realm that cannot be seen or heard by those who do not experience it!

The path we walk is internal. The righteousness, peace, and joy we experience is internal. The outward observer can see its fruit, but the source is only visible to those making the journey. Walking this path is an enigma, a literal walking mystery, in which we move freely through this world but are never bound by it! We can tell others about it, but it can never be known by explanation.

HeartWork

Read Every Time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Do I desire to find and enter the secret place of God?
2. Do I set aside time for Bible study, prayer, and meditation?
3. Even though I may not understand it, do I accept God's Word as the only basis for the knowledge of God?
4. List five things you are doing to develop your faith (trust for God).
5. Write down your plan to daily interact with God.



CHAPTER 23

Being Taught of the Lord

Will you know your spouse's love through a passionate kiss or by reading your marriage license?

The determining factor for how our walk with the Lord will progress is based on how the journey is started and the destination we choose. The world is growing more lawless and less teachable. With the rise of lawlessness worldwide, the failure of parents to teach children personal responsibility, humanistic philosophy taught in our schools, political correctness reverberating in the halls of government, and the continual seduction for self-gratification equals a vast majority of people who may realize their need for Christ but are rarely ready for Kingdom living. We are a generation of people who want relief without the effort of resolving problems!

Many believers start their journey with God resistant to the fundamental truths that bring about salvation. In the name of freedom, new Christians seldom surrender their personal opinions; they approach God's Word as a judge who decides if the evidence is enough to prove the case. The two truths involved in the born-again experience are: 1) believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and 2) confess Him as Lord. When we do those two things, our heart is poised to take on a new identity.

Our identity is a factor of the heart. One of the ways to know when you develop a new heart belief is when your sense of self changes. The only way to put on our new identity in Christ is to believe in and, thereby, become

one with Him in His resurrection. Few believers ever establish a sense of their new identity, struggling their entire life with the sins and temptations of the old man. Even fewer ever commit to Jesus as Lord, never experiencing His grace working in their heart to live in righteousness. Even more devastating is this: in the absence of a commitment to Lordship, the new believer is not a disciple; they are not repentant and teachable because they cling to their opinion and live in lawlessness. It seems that the modern salvation message is akin to, “Hey, would you like a free ticket to heaven?”

Lawlessness, or as the KJV translates it, *iniquity*, is the core evil that launched the rebellion of Lucifer in heaven, Adam's rebellion in the garden and will earmark the rise of the antichrist, and the final rebellion at the end of the Millennium. Between the beginning and end of this rebellion, every woe that has come, and will come upon humanity, is the result of iniquity.

To believe only that
Jesus conquered
physical death brings
no hope or promise.

The word *iniquity* literally means *no law* and launches the rejection or twisting of God's prescriptive commands, replacing them with humanistic philosophies. One of the earmarks of the last days is that love will grow cold. The command-

ments teach us how to treat people with love, but in the current humanist culture, love is no longer defined by God's Word; it is replaced with an insidious infection that defines love as nothing more than permissiveness and self-indulgence. This corrupt definition is a bold declaration that says, “I am more just, fairer, more loving, and more righteous than God. My opinion is more reliable than His Word.”

Salvation means *to be saved, healed, delivered, blessed, prospered, protected, made whole, i.e., all the promises of the Kingdom*, and it starts with the heart-belief that God raised Jesus from the dead—not just physical death but death according to the Scriptures. We are easily compelled to surrender to His Lordship when we embrace the belief that Jesus, through His resurrection, conquered death, sin, hell, the devil, and obtained eternal life for us. To believe only that Jesus conquered physical death brings no hope or promise.

The word **confess** literally means *to say the same thing*. It is not, however, a mere recitation of the words, “Jesus is Lord;” it is saying the same thing Scripture says about His death, burial, and resurrection with our heart in

full agreement. Jesus is not just Lord, “Jesus is MY Lord!” By making Him Lord, we are choosing to follow Him in His interpretation of God’s Word, His representation of God’s character, and His manifestation of God’s love at the cross.

Yielding to Lordship is the doorway of salvation that begins our journey on the path of discipleship. The concept of Lordship is almost extinct in many forms of modern Christianity, although the empty words are quoted by religious workers of iniquity daily. **Lordship** is, by default, *a decision for discipleship that leads to an interactive relationship*. Through this interaction, we experience the reality of God’s Word, producing inward changes that manifest in how we manage our lives. As we believe and apply truth, our character changes and our relationships flourish. Chaos (evil) is replaced with peace and harmony. Even those in hostile environments, who are persecuted for their faith, experience a peace that passes understanding. The more we “*taste and see that the Lord is good,*”⁸⁸ the more we value Him and His sacrifice, the more we love the wisdom of His Word, and the more we develop intimacy. This is the way of the disciple.

Disciples do not read the Bible from obligation, nor do they try to live godly to appease or earn anything from God. Disciples are in an interactive love relationship... a reciprocal giving and receiving that places them in the unique position for continuous communication with God in their heart. By evaluating all they hear concerning Jesus, disciples are in an ever-ready state of trustful obedience (yielding) to the truth.

The open MEM, which we have discussed, represents the revealed knowledge of God given to all mankind. The second is the closed MEM. It looks just like the first except for the fact that its bottom left-hand corner is closed, signifying **secret knowledge**. This knowledge, as referred to in the Greek New Testament, is *experiential*, not merely intellectual. To know God refers to the capacity of the heart, soul, mind, and body to experience intimacy. It is not a subjective or private interpretation of God’s revealed knowledge but an application of His wisdom that imparts personal leadership in decision-making. Experiential knowledge is a whisper from the mouth of God that cannot be expressed in words but is imprinted onto and understood with our heart, just as that which transpires between two lovers in their most intimate moments. It is not for preaching or sharing—it is for living!

The top of the MEM looks like waves of water. Water, in all ancient cultures, was mysterious. One could look at the top of the water and see some of the life just below the surface. As previously stated, to intimately know the secrets of the deep, one must dive in and see for themselves. All others stand at a distance and theorize concerning what is held in the deep, but all they have is theory. The difference between a student and a disciple is theory versus experience. This level of intimate sharing is the difference between what happens among friends and what happens among lovers!

The mysterious secret place of God is where we experience intimacy and trust that cannot be conveyed in mere words.

Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments depict God's relationship with the believer as a deep, loving intimacy between a husband and wife, but not just any wife. As Chaim Bentorah⁸⁹ points out in his excellent teaching of the He-

brew language, in ancient times men often had more than one wife. Just the fact that a man would bring a woman into his home, provide for her, and have children with her would represent a level of love. Quite often, though, he would have one wife that had stolen his heart. She was the one he adored. This is the passionate relationship described throughout the Song of Solomon.

You have ravished my heart, My sister, my spouse; You have ravished my heart With one look of your eyes, With one link of your necklace. How fair is your love, My sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, And the scent of your perfumes Than all spices! Your lips, O my spouse, Drip as the honeycomb; Honey and milk are under your tongue; And the fragrance of your garments Is like the fragrance of Lebanon. A garden enclosed Is my sister, my spouse. Song 4:9–12

The mysterious secret place of God is where we experience intimacy and trust that cannot be conveyed in mere words. The favored wife, like the Shulamite was to Solomon or Bathsheba was to David, would enter that secret place when returning to her husband the same genuine love that he was expressing to her. The legalist interprets Jesus' references to some believers who experience communion, instruction, and leadership not experienced by all believers as something earned because they do not understand the importance of the relationship. All born-again believers are the Bride of Christ.

The invitation for intimacy and involvement is available to all, and it is an unconditional offer. We have all been received by the Groom, and we all have the promises extended to us. Not all believers, however, have entered intimacy and reciprocal love where those promises are shared and experienced.

Grace is the power, capacity, strength, and ability, given without merit, expressed from the heart, that makes us able to do and be all God says we are. The modern “Grace Movement” teaches that grace is experienced by the person who knows the doctrine of grace. The key element, however, is that grace works in and through the heart. It is a power that is exchanged in the intimacy of giving and receiving love. The strength to be who God says we are is the direct result of experiencing who we are unto Him and with Him.

Believers who pray, meditate, and listen (to obey), hear and access the promises of God that others do not, are those who seek God Himself more than seeking what God has to offer. The difference is made clear in the event of Mary and Martha, who both loved Jesus, “... *Mary chose that good part*” (Luke 10:41–42), to be close to the Lord while Martha chose to be busy with the details. The parable of the prodigal son further illustrates how the father did not show prejudice to the elder son while the younger son rebelled. The elder son experienced the benefits of closeness, not through perfection or earned benefits, but simply because he remained in fellowship with the father.

We vainly expect the deeper realities of God to be the result of studying or serving. Both of those are valuable and essential, but they are not relational. I know who I am to my wife because of what we share through our intimate connection. My heart is open to communication and vulnerability because of the love and trust we share. Likewise, our connection to God is a relationship. Who we are to Him grows from our personal involvement and intimacy with Him.

The *zoe* life of God is experienced—transmitted heart to heart, not brain to brain. Sometimes we get busy doing things for God, or, as is too often the case, the bulk of our involvement with God is to get what we need. We seldom have that private experience of heart-to-heart exchange; we simply use Him to meet our needs. How often do we really commune with God just because we want to know Him better or experience a deeper, intimate closeness?

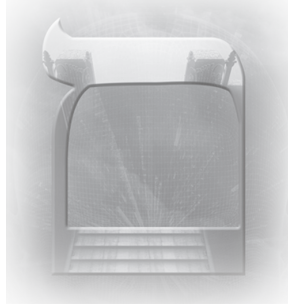
Many times, Brenda and I will lie in bed and hold one another for no reason other than the desire to experience closeness. In those moments, our relationship is strengthened, and we experience a love unexpressed by words. We share the secret knowledge that is only for us. We know things about one another without saying a word. The closed MEM represents what God imprints on our hearts when we are connected and intimate, experiencing the loving uniqueness of our relationship.

When two lovers kiss, they do not explain why they are kissing; there is no need. Through this passionate exchange, a download of information occurs that solidifies the relationship, conveying more than a million spoken: "I love you's." It is this unspoken, unexplained connection that causes us to know one another in a way that bonds us together in love beyond words! This is what God desires between Himself and those He loves. What He teaches us in these moments is not doctrinal... it's relational. It is the bond of love that supersedes all the information available!

HeartWork

Read Every Time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Write a description of your relationship with the Lord.
2. Explain in detail what intimacy between you and God looks like and how it is expressed.
3. Write a few paragraphs about how you would like to hear, know, and experience the leadership of God.
4. Now, express your desire to intimately know God and how you plan to initiate this type of relationship.



CHAPTER 24

The Truth That Sets Free

Freedom is useless to the man who intends to stay a criminal!

God created earth as an eternal habitat for the human race;⁹⁰ therefore, every aspect of our planet, our solar system, the universe, and all universes was optimally designed to sustain human life. After each act of creation, God saw that “*it was good.*”⁹¹ The Hebrew word for *good* means *pleasant, pleasing, and joyful* and always includes the concept of *harmony*. The Hebrew letters indicate that all of creation was in harmony with the heart of God and man.

God created man His own likeness and image.⁹² As such, man had to have free will to rule over his dominion. Not only do numerous Scriptures discuss the authority of man, modern science now confirms it. Quantum science proves that the world is continually becoming what we believe, perceive, and expect it to become. A Nobel Peace Prize winner in quantum science once explained that we are not merely observing the world, but we are in interplay with the world.

Testing reveals that the outcome of subatomic experiments can change based on who is observing. In Psalm 82, God made it clear that the world and all of mankind is becoming what we choose it to become. Both Christian and pagans (who do not believe man was created in God’s likeness and image), blame God for the condition of the world. This widespread belief exposes the degree to which Luciferian ideology has penetrated Christian theology.

The Truth that Sets Free

God created the earth and man to live in harmony with their Creator. Eden is the only time we have seen the will of God expressed collectively in Planet Earth. The reason for paradise was simple: man lived in perfect harmony with God, one another, and the earth. When man determined to reject God's truth and pursue his own truth, he took the world into the disharmony that reflected the disharmony of his own heart.

The concept and pursuit of truth have been corrupted since man's rebellion. In paradise, there was no sin, sickness, disease, or death—no lack of any kind! Man had the truth, and it was trusting and following God's truth that sustained paradise.

Man's rebellion began under the assumption that God could not be trusted; therefore, truth would now be what man deemed it to be and not what God expressed it to be. From that time until now, we tend to reject God's Word as truth and pursue a truth that harmonizes with our own ego, lusts, and intentions. The world continues to be transformed to reflect the collective state of the hearts of the human race.

Like a corrupt politician, the serpent, Lucifer, deceived man and destroyed paradise. When paradise is destroyed, we feel lack and fear, giving rise to codependency—the goal of those who destroyed it. Then, those who created the problem, offer to fix if you will just trust and follow them.

The religious concept of a *curse* is when God punishes us for ungodly deeds, but the biblical concept depicts as a curse as the result of pursuing that which is not harmonious with God. The *curse* is not the choice or action of God; it is the consequence of which God warned, but we ignore.

Planet Earth, under the authority of man, became cursed as a result of man becoming disharmonious with God.

Planet Earth, under the authority of man, became cursed as a result of man becoming disharmonious with God. We have recreated earth into what we have judged as good, or harmonious with what is in our hearts, and that is what the world has become. Incidentally, after the fall, Lucifer criticized God for what man and the world became. Once again, acting like the consummate politician, he created the crisis, blamed God, and then promised to fix the problem by bringing man into enlightenment.

Wicked human beings seek enlightenment apart from God. Also known as science, education, and a host of other names, it is the promise of paradise apart from God and His commandments. We have been fooled into believing that the one who caused the problem could also fix the problem. Why are we so vulnerable to such a ridiculous and obvious lie? Simple! We are deceived by our lusts. The destroyer promised that we could live out of our lusts, selfishness, and carnality and still have the paradise God had created. Tragically, nothing has changed in nearly 6,000 years of recorded human history! We are still attempting to find our way back to paradise without surrendering to God's wisdom.

The pursuit of a utopian world comes from the very core of our being. We were created to live in paradise. We do not possess the capacity to abide in physical or emotional distress. We were given a nervous system that avoids pain and seeks pleasure. We are designed to end the chaos and return to peace as quickly as possible. Failure to do so introduces stress, which leads to death, i.e., we begin to die when we are not in peace. However, because of what man did to the world through his rebellion, there can be no utopia, paradise, or externally manifested Kingdom of God until the earth is purged of those who do not want the Kingdom of God.⁹³ They may be wicked and ungodly, but as human beings, they still have authority. They are part of the collective belief and authority exerting influence on the earth.

Lucifer is the father of all lies. In other words, everything man believes that is incongruent with God's Word, wisdom, and intention was introduced by Lucifer and has been propagated by believers through the world's system. Because those lies are passed down through false science, educational facilities, corrupt political philosophies, and secret organizations, they are venerated. More than that, however, they appeal to the desire to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The strength of every con man is to play on the victim's greed... desire (lust)! We want paradise, but we have come to believe fulfilling the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is the only way to fulfill the utopian pursuit. Modern humanistic psychiatry, socialistic government, and the Luciferian influence all promise that we will only be free and fulfilled when we gratify every lust of the flesh. That is our greed. The great con is that there is a way to have paradise and never give up these

desires. Medical science encourages sin of every type. Sadly, it is no longer just the wicked who believe this lie; a massive part of the church has twisted the truth to convince themselves they can sin and still have paradise!

The root of sin and the ultimate message of Satanism is self-gratification. When we do not believe and experience what we have in God, we feel lack, insufficient, and unfulfilled. If we do not believe the truth about God, we will not look to Him to meet our needs. Instead, we use other people to gratify our flesh and our ego! The Apostle Paul says these selfish pursuits are, in fact, idolatry, “*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry*” (Col. 3:5). It is Satanists who, in recent years, have defined selfishness as the primary form of Satan worship!

Our need for
paradise is legitimate
and God-given.

The humanistic promise of a utopian world is to cast off the restraints of morality and gratify ourselves. Evidently, no one has “done the math.” When everyone uses others for gratification, we create war, abuse, and constant conflict—not paradise! Utopia then becomes only for those who have the power to rule over and abuse others.

What the foolish American fails to realize about the false promises of socialism is this: it will only be a utopia for the elite. The poor will be equally poor, and the rich will be equally rich. Yet, we close our eyes and follow the same lies God warns us about in the bible and which history has proven for thousands of years will never produce what they promise.

Our need for paradise is legitimate and God-given. It is more than the need for fulfillment; it is the inherent desire to once again live in a world that provides the resources of God. This can only exist when we are in harmony with God. When we return to harmony with God, Planet Earth will return to harmony with God’s will for us.

Lucifer and his followers, which include many religious and political philosophies, claim the way to peace and fulfillment is to cast off moral restraints and superstitious beliefs in God. If you do believe in God, then you must realize He is the problem in Planet Earth. Their corrupt message of sovereignty says He is in control; therefore, the world’s chaos proves He is not good and cannot be trusted.

Their argument claims that we are bound to the Creator, who uses His commandments to control us by guilt. Lucifer presents himself as our true savior because he gave us knowledge which sets us free from the oppressive Creator. According to his philosophy, when we reject the commandments of God, cast off the restraints of morality and ethics, we can gratify every lust of the flesh with no guilt or shame. Saul Alinsky's book, *Rules for Radicals*, used by many modern politicians as a handbook to conquer America by creating chaos, is dedicated to Lucifer who rebelled against the "establishment" to win his own kingdom.

Truth can only be found in the context of prayer and Scripture.

The way to this utopian paradise is enlightenment, while the enlightened claim to have more insight than the average person and beyond God's Word. They claim to have obtained unique secret knowledge passed down from generation to generation through the elite. In reality, it is all based on what the Bible calls *iniquity*: the rejection of God's commandments as the standard for morals, values, and ethics. Iniquity is propagated and proliferated through false science, humanism, public education, socialism, compromised Christian organizations, cults, and the occults.

All of us are seeking the truth we need to experience heaven on earth. Realistically, though, most truth-seeking is nothing more than a search for knowledge—for the Truth can only be found in the context of prayer and Scripture. The goal of the enlightened is to find the knowledge to live in paradise apart from God's morals, values, and ethics as expressed in His commandments. Through perverted definitions of love, which amount to little more than selfish gratification, love, as God defines it, is rejected in favor of our definition of love that fulfills our lusts.

In John 8:31-32, Jesus makes a statement which is continually lifted out of context and misquoted, "*The truth shall set you free.*" Because that phrase is embedded within a very important declaration, out of context, it becomes false! The Word only brings freedom to those who believe and seek to live it, i.e., disciples. When we believe Jesus is the exact representation of God⁹⁴ and choose the life He proclaims, we become disciples, to which He exclaims, "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*" The English Standard Version (ESV) translates the next word as "and," when

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it would be more properly translated as “then,” “*THEN you shall know (experience) the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (NIV).

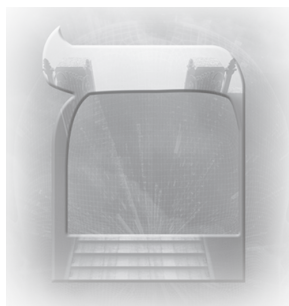
Jesus is only stating what He has said in many ways, on many occasions: intellectually knowing the information is not truth nor has it ever set anyone free. Experiencing the truth is what sets us free. The only people who experience the truth are disciples who seek to put it into practice. They desire to live in the Kingdom of God, a realm of power—not talk! They want to live the life God intended from the beginning; to walk in love with God and man.

When the New Testament speaks of freedom, it always points to two factors: 1) What did we get set free from? Sin! 2) What did we get set free to do? Walk in love! Without the commitment to follow Jesus, we are like newly paroled prisoners whose only intention is to get out and live a life of crime, and whose freedom becomes their destruction. The choice to follow Jesus as Lord is to use that same freedom to enjoy a life better than anything we have ever dreamed: the Kingdom of God—heaven on earth! The Word of God is always true, but it is of no value until what is true is believed in our heart and empowers us to live a different quality of life.

HeartWork

Read Every Time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Begin reading God's Word looking to know and relate to God?
2. When you read the Gospel, remind yourself everything Jesus is doing for people is exactly what the Father has always desired?
3. When you realize you've held beliefs about God that are not in harmony with how Jesus portrayed God, repent.
4. Consider and list the top five ways you want to begin experiencing and expressing your freedom in Christ.



CHAPTER 25

The Law of the Seed

You can determine what comes into your life tomorrow by the seeds you plant today!

Jesus came to a world that had the intellectual knowledge of God's Word, which worked for and against them. Those who found security in their knowledge were threatened by His message, but those who longed to know and experience God intimately were drawn to Him. His words ignited a flame of passion in their hearts. His were not the mere words of instruction; His words were the Words of life, for which they craved.

Jesus was a preacher and teacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom. His primary means of helping people grasp the truth of the Kingdom was through parables. Parables made it possible for the listener to perceive how to apply God's Word practically based on His original intention.

By refocusing on the heart, as God had done when issuing the commandments, Jesus demonstrated how we could develop our hearts to experience transformation through the Word. Through the parable of the seed, Jesus brought believers back to the core of faith, i.e., the one universal law that would deliver us from the perversion of legalism and ritualism and return us to a simple truth that was at the heart of both the Old and New Covenants, "*The just shall live by faith!*" (Rom. 1:17).

While there are exceptions, parables usually only convey one or two key

points which are more conceptual than behavioral. Since parables address heart issues, they can only be understood by the heart, and they can only be applied in a life-giving way when the attitudes of the heart are harmonized with God's intention. As such, the motive for application must be rooted in faith and love, both of which are qualities of the heart!

Jesus' method of teaching was powerful because it bypassed the conscious, intellectual mind and drew understanding from the heart.

Parables convey spiritual reality by comparing natural principles listeners understand to spiritual principles they may not understand. Jesus spoke of farming, shepherding, weddings, and other common norms based on culture, morals, and values. If a listener had a repentant heart, the stories were

subconsciously adapted to spiritual truth with real-life application. He cut through the incredibly complicated and legalistic Jewish codes of the Talmud and helped people return to the Torah as God originally intended.

Jesus' method of teaching was powerful because it bypassed the conscious, intellectual mind and drew understanding from the heart. Our foremost hindrance to understanding and trusting God's Word is the need to make it fit our life experience. Since parables are metaphorical in nature, we can tap into the knowledge of God on a meditative level, even while wide awake with our eyes open, when we have a repentant (teachable) attitude. Communication techniques like those of Jesus have been studied and developed in recent centuries because of their incredible effectiveness.

Most of the people in His time could not read the Bible; therefore, their beliefs were shaped by the religious elite who used it to "hammer" them into submission. God's Word was not used as a manual for how to love others; it was used to judge others. They knew the Word of God, but their wrong interpretations led to unfruitful application.

If Jesus had approached people doctrinally, several negative things would have happened: their conscious minds would have reacted by arguing on behalf of their opinions, and the religious elite would have found a basis for accusing Jesus. His approach, however, kept them from becoming too defensive, as they were able to open their hearts and minds. Through storytelling and intimate knowledge of God's Word, He led people through

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personal transition without confrontation. He made truth simple... to those who wanted it! Since the parables are principle-based, every person was allowed the freedom to hear, interpret, and apply from their own heart.

All the parables of the seed contain the key to interpreting and applying God's Word from a Kingdom perspective. Like all of God's mysteries, it is hidden in plain sight. Only those who are willing to become like little children can grasp their simple, but obvious, revelations of spiritual reality.

In Mark 4:13, Jesus reveals the master key for interpreting and applying all scripture relating to the Kingdom, *"Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"* It could be in these parables of the seed that we not only understand the Kingdom, but we may also possess the key for opening the door to all things!

For God to create a material world, He had to first conceive every law of physics in His heart.

God created the universe based on what I call absolute *universal laws*. The third book in this trilogy of the Kingdom explores the Law of the seed in a way that unravels all the mysteries of faith, making personal development and your walk with God incredibly simple! For now, though, we will preview the concept of a universal law.

The physical world functions based on the laws of physics. For God to create a material world, He had to first conceive every law of physics in His heart. Just think, the number of mathematical calculations for the size, weight, distance, and energetic factors of all things; the temperature of all the suns in all the universes, all the stars, their weight, size, rotation had to be calculated in order to create a perfect, energetic, atmospheric balance on Planet Earth that would sustain life. All the billions of cellular interactions in the physical body, every second, had to be formulated before He spoke them into existence.

All of creation had to be harmonized with the heart of God and the life of mankind! As previously mentioned, the word *good* in the Old Testament nearly always implies the idea of harmony. Through many of the phases of creation, God said, "It is good." It was good because it was in harmony with God and man.

The concept of harmony, as it relates to every dimension of life, faith, and the natural world, seems to be lost on the entire western world. The Europeans, who were great at organizing and creating structures, built empires that could outlast any on earth. In the expansion, however, it seems harmony with the earth was never considered. Harmony among people, races, countries, the human body and medicine, Planet Earth and the ecosystem has been ignored for the sake of financial and governmental control. A world driven by financial gain with no consideration for the many dimensions of harmony has been the decimation of our planet.

One essential, yet overlooked, factor of creation is polarity. Before there could be a physical creation, polarity had to be introduced. Without it, the physical world could not exist. Polarity is the presence of complementary opposites, creating the field wherein a physical world can exist, and energies can organize to create the seen and unseen creation. Some believe the first mention of light and darkness in Genesis was a referral to polarity. With no sun or moon yet to be created, this possibility is credible. Whether or not it is factual does not negate the fact that everything in this realm must have polarity to exist.

Polarity is probably the first law of creation. Polarity represents balance and harmony. All things, if they are to produce life continuously, must be in harmony with God and balanced internally. By polarity all things exist, maintain their existence, and reproduce! The Ancient world would have unlikely grasped the laws of polarity. Interestingly, the ancient Chinese who originally worshipped Jehovah and have the same account of creation, the fall of man, and Noah's flood as the Bible, recorded in their ancient language, realized the need for polarity, balance, and harmony.

The idea of polarity and balance is addressed metaphorically by many other ancient civilizations. Despite the way ignorant Europeans and Americans have vilified the concept as pagan, it is actually very scientific. The Chinese refer to it as yin and yang, which are not occult or religious concepts; they are words describing the two complementary forces of energy by which all things exist: positive and negative polarities.

Since Jesus had no need or interest in sparking a philosophical debate about the science of creation, He found a better way to convey what is probably the most significant law of the universe: the seed. Polarity was the precursor to the law of the seed, which is the foundation of creation; it is the

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way of the natural world, and it is the law of all things. Understanding the law of the seed opens so many doors of understanding in every arena of life; but more than anything, the law of the seed is the key to understanding and applying the parables of the Kingdom!

The first law of the seed is that every seed bears after its own kind. We cannot reap what we do not sow, and we cannot sow one type of seed and expect a different kind of crop to grow. This introduces a level of personal responsibility opposed to the codependent, victim mentality utilized by the world's system. The political systems, medical "science," and other philosophies aimed at taking the masses captive by insecurity, greed, and laziness produce codependency that can be easily exploited.

Choice is a unique ability available only to mankind. We are the only species that can change our quality of life by the choices we make. Since we are created in the likeness and image of God, implementation of the law of the seed, whether intentional or not, is executed by what we choose to think and believe. We are continuously and effortlessly creating a worldview in our heart, which manifests in the world around us; therefore, personal, intentional responsibility must be our preeminent discipline.

God has done everything possible to provide life for us, but it is still our choice.

The concept of personal responsibility is woven through all the parables of the Kingdom, Jesus' teaching, and all the commandments of God. No wonder the Word of God is hated by those who seek to enslave others. When people discover they can change their world by changing what they believe no longer depend on corrupt leaders (con artists) for survival. We choose what seeds we sow in the garden of our heart; then, we live in that garden and partake of the fruit. No one can change that for us! It is an immutable law.

I have heard many debates about why God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden, along with the tree of life. Most explanations descended into ridiculous theories that did nothing more than paint God in a negative light by employing doctrines that contradict the revealed knowledge of God. To be like God, with the capacity for experiencing love, there must always be freedom of choice and options. Even in paradise, man had to have the choice to follow God or follow his own way.

In the Old Testament, God made it clear that life or death is a choice that can only be made by the individual,

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them. (Deut. 30:19-20)

God has done everything possible to provide life for us, but it is still our choice. We know life is found in the path of righteousness, which embodies the desire and intention to have the same character as God. His commandments reveal His character, love, and righteousness. We know, from this passage, that choosing life and blessing is not merely choosing the end result; it is also choosing the path to that end result. Ultimately, choosing to love God and His commandments is the prescription for abiding in the Kingdom of God and Heaven.

The law of the seed shows us it is impossible to receive what we do not give: every seed bears after its own kind!

If we believed what Jesus and the entire Word of God says about personal responsibility, our social programs would be designed to help people develop a sense of personal responsibility instead of turning them into codependent

victims with an entitlement mentality. People would be rewarded for honesty and a good work ethic. Instead, much of the church has become infected with the lawlessness Jesus warned would bring the destruction of our world, giving rise to the antichrist.

The law of the seed teaches that a constant exchange is taking place between us and everything in existence. This concept is far more multi-dimensional than it appears, but for the sake of discussion, I will address the law of exchange. Polarity facilitates a continuous flux or exchange, and everything in the universe operates around these laws of exchange.

The law of the seed shows us it is impossible to receive what we do not give: every seed bears after its own kind! Our heart is the soil, and the

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seed is the information, whether true or false, that becomes a belief. Beliefs drive our emotions and behavior without any conscious effort. The parable of the sower clearly teaches that the degree of thoughtful reflection, study, pondering, remembering, re-living, or attention we give to anything is like tending the garden after the seed is planted. These internal actions determine to what degree any idea we entertain will affect our lives—how much fruit it bears.

That to which we give the most attention grows, which is why Paul says,

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Phil 4:8-9)

This, and other Scriptures, remind us that we choose what we will think, ponder, and meditate. By default, we choose the emotions and deep feelings associated with our thoughts. By our persistent thoughts, we command our brain to produce hormones and biological functions that physiologically express these emotions. Over time, neurochemicals become ever-present in the brain and can be diagnosed as a disease, which we use to excuse our thoughts, feelings, and emotions to escape personal responsibility.

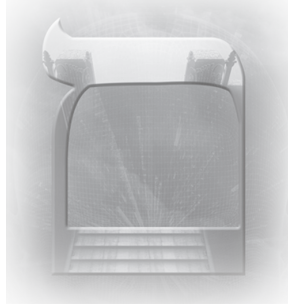
Sadly, we plant seeds of fear, unbelief, sadness, and sorrow. Through continual reflection, we water and fertilize these seeds, while ignorantly expecting a little religious prayer to violate an immutable law of God and miraculously give us peace. If we want peace, we should follow the teachings of Paul, Jesus, and God Himself in the Torah by choosing life and the path of righteousness, on which we focus of our attention and magnify the Lord instead of the problem!

God provided the simple truths in many ways throughout His Word, but Jesus explicitly taught the law of the seed as the pivotal understanding for Kingdom living. We can choose to make this law work for us, or we can, by default, have it continually working against us. Instead of trying to use our faith to get God to give what He has already given, through Jesus, we can use our faith to believe life works by the laws He established and, then, operate them!

HeartWork

Read Every Time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Write what comes to your mind as you read the following statements:
 - a. Every thought is a seed.
 - b. Pondering or reflecting on that thought is nurturing the seed.
 - c. That which grows in my life can be no different than the seed I plant and nurture.
2. The only way I can stop the corrupt seed growing in my life is:
 - a. Stop planting those seeds over and over again by thought and conversation.
 - b. Stop nurturing the thorns; let them die from a lack of attention.
 - c. Plant new seeds based on God's Word.
3. All it takes to change my life dramatically is to change the seeds I plant and nourish them!
4. You may want to consider ordering a Belief Band. Visit www.impact-ministries.com for instructions about how to interrupt destructive thoughts by using the Belief Band.



CHAPTER 26

My Sheep Hear My Voice

Believers are not dumb sheep; we are wise sheep who realize the need for a shepherd!

“*The Lord is my Shepherd*” is the opening line from the 23rd Psalm, which may be one of the most recognized phrases in the entire Bible. Yet, like so many passages that hold immeasurable life, wisdom, and hope, it seems we fail to take it to heart and experience its fulfillment in our lives. The entire 23rd Psalm is a portrait of God’s continual attempt to lead us into an incredible quality of life. The one condition is we must be willing to follow.

Implicit in the phrase “*The Lord is my Shepherd*” is the fact that He is only capable of being a Shepherd to those who are willing to follow. Since we all have free will in every aspect of life, we must make the conscious choice to follow our Shepherd into His promises. The great paradox of the promises is this: all the promises of God are free but conditional, a fact that is lost on the religious mind. They are free in the sense that Jesus obtained them, and our behavior does not earn them; but, since we are created in the likeness and image of God, we must always choose to follow Him and take hold of the promise! Always remember, God is a heart God, and all **matters of the heart** are a continuum that exists in a paradox!

In John 10:27, Jesus says, “*My sheep hear My voice..., and they follow Me.*” This implies that those who are not hearing and recognizing His voice;

therefore, they are not following. It forces us to answer the question, "Aren't all Christians God's sheep?" In a very general sense, all Christians are God's sheep; however, the language may indicate something that has been overlooked. Asking if all Christians are God's sheep is the wrong question. Religion has always managed to force us into wasting our time struggling to find answers to questions that are meaningless. The real question is, "As a believer, do I accept Jesus as my Shepherd; do I recognize and follow His voice?"

Developing the ability to hear the voice of God in our heart is a process ... not a gift!

The answer to any question being applied to the church in a general, global sense is all but meaningless to the individual believer. If we are to enjoy the benefits, we must believe, understand, and apply truth to our lives just like Je-

sus did. The Kingdom of God is a group of individuals participating in God's plan; it is not a group standing before God as an individual. It does not matter who Jesus is referring to concerning His Sheep; what matters is whether you and I follow Him as our Shepherd!

Hearing God's voice should be at the center of our decision-making process for every aspect of life. It should be our basis for peace and confidence in times of trouble and difficulty. Nonetheless, it seems to be one of the things about which many Christians are deeply confused and conflicted. Regardless of our doctrinal stance or personal interpretation, we cannot deny Jesus words, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*" We can understand this statement by reviewing some previously mentioned factors to shed light on this verse. At least several things are immediately apparent that, if we choose to be sheep, we should:

- Be able to hear and recognize His voice. Hearing and obeying are a continuum. We will not or cannot hear that which we are not willing to obey. The degree to which we surrender to the Lordship of Jesus, determines the clarity and areas of life we are capable of hearing God.
- God's voice is usually recognized in "knowing" more than in literal hearing. In other words, we must cultivate this part of our life. Developing the ability to hear the voice of God in our heart is a process... not a gift! It occurs because we choose to hear His voice, surrender to Him, and put our process to the test through continual use.

My Sheep Hear My Voice

- God leads us by impressions that we translate into words. Understanding His impressions and properly translating them is based on the heart. Jesus explained that a repentant, teachable heart can hear and understand, see and perceive.
- We must first believe the revealed Word of God before being open to the private and personal Word of God! Rejecting God's written Word is tantamount to calling God a liar—an intellectual choice to close our heart to how God would teach us to apply His Word in our life.
- The sheep and the Shepherd must be intimate. The personal application of the Word of God occurs in the intimate knowing between God and us.

The symbiotic relationship between a shepherd and his sheep is revealed by the very words: *sheep* and *shepherd*. The Greek root word for ***sheep*** means *something that walks forward*. The word ***shepherd*** is *one leading the herd forward*.⁹⁵ The ability of the shepherd to lead the sheep to provision and provide protection occurs between two interesting dynamics: 1) the character of the shepherd, and 2) the trust of the sheep. In every bad situation, this means that it is either a lack of character in the shepherd or the unwillingness of the sheep to follow.

Jesus is identified as the Good Shepherd. Moses, David, and Jesus have all been identified as Shepherds of Israel. Since Jesus came to do exactly what God does, He is always the good shepherd. The word *good* has a long list of positive attributes, but in Hebrew, it always implies harmony. Moses and David were good shepherds because they sought first and foremost to bring the children of Israel into harmony with God. Jesus' entire life and ministry revealed the true character and nature of God and compel people to come into harmony with His revelation of God.

The Shepherd of Psalm 23 only leads us in paths of righteousness. In other words, He is always attempting to lead us on a path that keeps us in harmony with the character and nature of God. All the benefits listed in Psalms 23 are the fruit of righteousness. As Proverb 12:28 states, "*In the way of righteousness is life, And in its pathway there is no death.*" Kingdom living is a realm wherein we dwell by choice, and in that realm resides the presence and provision of God. That realm is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy!

Early in the implementation of the New Covenant, there were those who attempted to twist the grace of God into a license for permissiveness. The epistles (letters) of the apostles were written to bring people back to godliness without legalism. Carnal Christians, religious frauds, and one-dimensional thinkers did with the New Covenant precisely what had been done with the Old Covenant: they twisted it into something that justified their personal concepts and true intentions!

The Letter to the Church at Rome is considered by many to be the most challenging book of the New Testament to understand. The complexity of the Roman Epistle lies in the subject of faith righteousness. According to the writer of Hebrews, the teaching of righteousness is comprehensible only to those who: 1) “... *for the mature, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*” Mature believers walk in right-

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teousness as a way of life and have developed their heart to discern good and evil as God's Word reveals it. 2) They must first be stable in the foundational doctrines of the faith. Unstable believers do not, as a way of life, qualify all their beliefs based on the foundations

of faith. The more they gather new beliefs, the more they deny the foundational ones. Sadly, after nearly two thousand years, the modern church cannot broach the doctrine of faith righteousness without going to an extreme in legalism or permissiveness.

In Romans, Paul makes it clear: even though our sins are forgiven, we have a new righteous nature with the choice to yield to sin or righteousness. He warns, more than once, that the wages of sin are death. Sin is the channel through which death enters our being, and righteousness is the channel through which we enter the life of God by grace. We do not live righteous to earn grace; grace is freely given. We choose righteousness and are empowered by grace to live in the righteousness we choose. Yielding to the Good Shepherd, who is always leading us into harmony with God's quality of life, is yielding to righteousness.

Being “in Christ” has been nominalized to nothing more than a position. Believing in our heart that we are in Christ means we believe to be one with Him just as He was with God. We believe in the power to live like

My Sheep Hear My Voice

Him, minister like Him, and represent God as He did. Having the mind of Christ is more than a cliché; it is choosing to take on His mind, His doctrine, His view, opinion, and representation of God! This is part and parcel of what it means to yield to Him as our Shepherd. Those who fail to love righteousness and hate wickedness have no capacity to follow Jesus as Lord. Only those with a humble, repentant, teachable heart long for this way of life.

Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life...*” (John 14:6). He meant it. The life of God is not given as a gift or reward. The life of God is only found in knowing God through Jesus! The way of righteousness is the life He lives. The life of God is the life that raised Him from the dead and is experienced only in Him. The truth is all the law and prophets interpreted and applied the way He interpreted and applied them. This can never be sorted out intellectually or lived in our own strength; it can only be enjoyed when our top priority is to abide in Him.

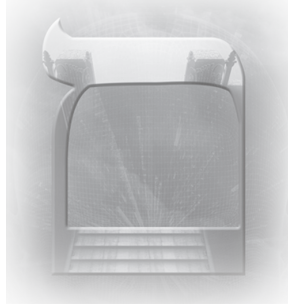
As was modeled in the fire by day and the cloud by night that led the children of Israel, we are ready to move when He moves and abide where we are until He moves. Too often we assume we are following God in our heart simply because that is our intention. The truth is that subjective, intellectual evaluations of our heart can never be trusted. The Bible says we can only know a tree by its fruit. What fruit is manifesting in our life as a result of what we believe and how we seek to apply it? How can we know whether we are following Jesus as our Shepherd or some religious idea we have about following Jesus? The only way we can know for sure is by the fruit.

HeartWork

Prayerfully read Psalm 23 and, without guilt or condemnation, ask yourself, “Do I live in lack? Am I experiencing the fruit of resting in green pastures with my soul being refreshed, a sense of peace and protection through difficult situations, and all the other benefits of following the Good Shepherd?”

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

If you find your life lacking in many of these benefits, do not despair. Open your heart to God; declare your willingness to listen, learn, and repent. If you are willing and obedient, He will begin where you are to lead you in these paths of righteousness!



CHAPTER 27

Prescriptions For The Heart

A student wants to know what the teacher knows; a disciple wants to live like the teacher lives!

The teachings of Jesus, contrary to popular opinion, were not a contradiction to the commandments; they were a clarification. Jesus' teaching was a revelation of God's original intention and application of the commandments. He revealed God by making God's Word clear, simple, and understandable.

God initially provided ten commandments. According to Dennis Prager, eight of the ten explained how to relate to one another.⁹⁶ Contrary to legalistic ideology, the commandments were not a set of rules for earning righteousness. In fact, some scholars say the word *commandment* is a poor translation of Hebrew and could be more accurately translated as *prescription*. A *prescription* is that which either prevents or cures illness. God gave us Ten Prescriptions for walking in love toward God and man.

The Ten Prescriptions are straight forward expressions of love toward God, toward people and ourselves. Specifically, they are prescriptions for the heart... the heart that desires to love as God loves, to express the character and nature of God, and to live in harmony with its Creator.

Jesus taught that every Word of God, all the law, and all the prophets could only be understood and applied from the intention to love God,

love others, and love ourselves! When love is not the motive, God's prescriptions become commandments used to judge, criticize, and control.

Upon becoming a nation, the Israelites expanded the Ten Prescriptions to 613, basing them all on these on the 10 original laws. The expansion was intended to explain how the Ten Commandments would be applied in a civil society. Applying the original Ten Prescriptions from the motive of love would fulfill the other 613 laws and make them a nation of love, justice, and power, unlike any other nation, by revealing the justice, kindness, and wisdom of God to the world.

Jesus continually reiterated in the parables of the Kingdom that our connection to God and our life in Him is a matter of the heart.

From the beginning, the Jews wove their sinful desires, their pagan beliefs from Egypt, and the religious influence of surrounding nations into their interpretation of God's Word. This kept them in an endless cycle of defeat, recovery, and backsliding until they collapsed

as a nation and were taken into captivity. To remedy the situation, they wrote thousands of laws whereby they interpreted the commandments of God. This is what Jesus was referring to when He stated that it was their tradition that made the Word of God of no effect.⁹⁷

Jesus came to show us what the Word looked like in the flesh, in real life, in a person who trusted God and was empowered by the Holy Spirit. He revealed what our lives would be if we rejected all religion and harmonized ourselves with God. He did not merely show us the way; He was and is the way!

In His teaching are all the principles and prescriptions for applying God's commandments from the motive of love. If we trust Him as Lord and accept that He is the Way, we become His disciples who seek to believe as He believed and live as He lived, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus continually reiterated in the parables of the Kingdom that our connection to God and our life in Him is a matter of the heart. From the very beginning, God told the children of Israel that the commandments had to be a matter of their heart motivated by love. Nevertheless, it seems that they ignored the essential part of those instructions.

The parable of the sower is the key to understanding all the parables, and Jesus not only emphasized the heart, but He showed us how to influence our heart! As we read the parables and the commandments, we must understand that unless they are beliefs of the heart motivated by love, we will turn them into dead legalism!

Jesus said this, “*The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord...*” (Matt. 10:24-25). The one question it seems modern converts are never asked is, “Do you want to be like Jesus?” Until that question is answered in the heart of a convert, he or she has not yet decided to be a disciple; and, therefore, cannot walk the path of Kingdom life—heaven on earth. Instead, they linger in the wilderness journey. Even though they do not want to go back to Egypt, they are not ready to enter Canaan!

Thousands of books have been written to theologically justify why the Christian life does not work the way God promises. We create what I call “circumstance theology.”⁹⁸ In a vain attempt to save face when our lives are incongruent with God’s promises, we create a theology that justifies a compromised, powerless life rather than put off the old man, renew my mind, and put on the new man. These innumerable books, written through the centuries, have made God, the Bible, and Christian life more complicated than the Jews did by creating the thousands of laws they required for daily living.

For the disciple, Jesus is Lord. His life, teaching, interpretation, and application of God’s Word, coupled with His death, burial, and resurrection is the only source for knowing God. It is not complicated unless, of course, we need to justify our unacceptable behavior or cling to our religious beliefs. Sadly, many people never get the opportunity to become disciples, while others start the journey only to stop later!

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, there were those, identified as disciples, who made excuses not to follow Him. There were also those who started following Him, but for various reasons stopped. Some wanted to cling to religious doctrines, cultural traditions, or sinful behaviors. Others trusted in money or power more than they trusted in Him and His teachings. Then, there was the constant threat of persecution that stopped many “dead in their tracks.”

Discipleship (Kingdom Living) is not a one-time decision, which is why a repentant, teachable attitude must be ever-present.

Discipleship (Kingdom Living) is not a one-time decision, which is why a repentant, teachable attitude must be ever-present. The day we become unwilling to accept God's written Word, His personal direction, or our personal commitment to walk in love, is the day we stop making the journey

of the disciple. At that moment, we leave the path of righteousness in exchange for little more than religious talk. Once we walk away from our commitment to righteousness—harmonizing with God's character and nature—we leave the path of life and begin the process of death.

Jesus repeatedly, in various ways, instructed those who desired to be disciples to count the cost:

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:27-29, 33)

The message of discipleship is all but lost in the 21st-century church. Many people want what Jesus offers, but very few have the desire to live as Christ lived. Religion teaches that it is impossible and to desire to do so is a vanity. If we desire to have heaven on earth, we must start by answering this question. "Do I want to live the way Jesus lived?"

Nothing about Kingdom Living is hard; in fact, Jesus said it was easy and light when we harmonize with His philosophy of God! It is easy to understand, unless we have rejected walking in love, as God defines it, and replaced it with other philosophies and values. Exchanging God's definition of love for any other is what the Bible calls lawlessness (iniquity). Romans 10:6-8 dispels the confusion surrounding this,

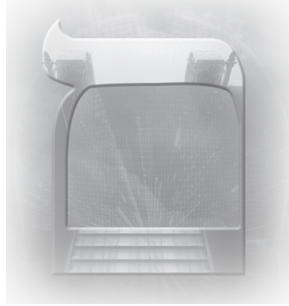
But the righteousness that is by faith says: Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.

Prescriptions for the Heart

It is not complicated! Once you choose to believe God's Word, the Holy Spirit will become your private tutor, not in the intricacies of theology but to lead and empower you in the application of the Word in your life so that you can experience the same quality of life as Christ!

It is past time we stop interpreting the parables as teaching on how to get "saved" and recognize His teaching as the Bible identifies it. He was a teacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is life in a realm where Jesus is Lord, and we choose to surrender to Him. The Kingdom of Heaven is a realm wherein all the resources of God are available and enable us to experience heaven on earth! We become citizens of that realm where, as such, we enjoy the benefits, resources, and protection of our King.

Our only other choice is to wander aimlessly in the wilderness, waiting to die so that we may finally experience the promise of heaven. We need only to identify the key beliefs and principles revealed in the parables to have heaven on earth now, and I refer to these as Prescriptions for our heart! Your HeartWork for this chapter is the next chapter of this book, in which you will discover many prescriptions for the heart and life!



CHAPTER 28

Laws or Prescriptions

Jesus' teachings, like everything God has ever said, will either be viewed as a prescription for a great life or as a law whereby we attempt to earn a great life. When reading and pondering God's Word, you must always be seeking to hear what God is saying to you about how to apply the truth to your life. Sometimes, instead of asking, "What does this mean?" We should be asking, "What does this mean to my life?" Pray: *"Father, what are you showing me in this parable that applies to my life today?"*

HeartWork

Read Every Time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Prayerfully read and ponder scriptures to determine what Heart Prescriptions God is giving you for Kingdom Living.
2. Consider whether your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors align with these essential prescriptions and principles.
3. When there is disharmony between your attitude and God's truth, reconcile that difference by aligning your heart with His.
4. In the upcoming days, weeks, and months, review these and incorporate them into your life and decisions.
5. Remind yourself daily, "I am seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!"
6. Besides these listed below, always be ready for God to reveal a prescription for your life and the situations you face at this moment.
7. Make notes of the things God speaks to your heart about how to apply this. Let this exercise reshape how you prayerfully read God's Word!

The Kingdom Of God Is Not Just Salvation

"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

The new birth gives us the capacity to see and perceive that which has been given but not yet experienced. The Kingdom of God is a realm we enter when we trust and surrender to God's rule in our lives through the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The Lordship Of Jesus

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

We must be surrendered to the King and His understanding and application of God's Word if we expect to enter His realm. The Lordship of Jesus is required for salvation (Rom. 10:9-10), which opens our eyes to perceive the Kingdom (John 3:3). Every kingdom has a king, and the King's words are prescriptions (laws) for life at its best. We are not seeking to earn the benefits of the realm; we are seeking to live in harmony with God and man through love, as Jesus taught!

The Kingdom Is Internal

“The Kingdom of God does not come with observation...For indeed, the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

The Kingdom cannot be perceived naturally nor by scientific observation, self-scrutiny, self-discipline, or keeping the laws.⁹⁹ Nothing external provides entrance or evidence to the Kingdom, nor does it open the doors of the Kingdom. According to the parable of the sower, the Kingdom is a realm we enter when our heart receives the Word of the Kingdom, and we facilitate that fruit-bearing seed as our reality.

Live By The Prescriptions for the Heart

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven...depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. (Matt. 7:21-23)

Prescriptions are not the rules we obey to gain entry or acquire improved benefits. Prescriptions reveal the beliefs and intentions of the heart that bring us into harmony with God.

Those who reject or replace God's morals, values, and standards with other philosophies are workers of iniquity, i.e., lawlessness. When the growing seed of their heart is based on the world's philosophies, the fruit that is produced is the fruit of this world.

Internal Reality Determines External Manifestation

“All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:23).

Everything Jesus taught was about the Kingdom of God and the prescriptions from which we govern thoughts and intentions, which direct our behavior. The Hebrew word for both *heaven* and *mind* are connected. The way we think and believe produces an inner reality whereby heaven on earth is experienced no matter what the external circumstances. The words *heaven* and *mind* are also related to the word *robber* or *thief*. Our thoughts, our belief system, can rob us of heaven on earth, causing us to live in hell on earth, or facilitate heaven on earth.

The Kingdom Realm Manifests The Inheritance

“The Kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy” (Rom. 14:17).

Righteousness is a continuum—a state of being, a power, and a heartfelt perspective describing a realm wherein we abide. Righteousness is also a behavioral standard. The basic meaning of *righteousness* is *as it should be*, which describes our spiritual, emotional, physical, and behavioral state when we are as we were created to be.

The word *peace* in both the Old and New Testaments describes a state of tranquility based on the confidence that all the resources for the quality of life God offers are available. Unlike the peace the world gives, which is purely circumstantial, the peace of God is based on the resources of God. The confidence that His resources are ours is based on the quality of the relationship.

Joy is the celebration of a festive heart that is internally experiencing intimacy with God and has access to all His provision. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is the fruit of Kingdom living as well as the proof!¹⁰⁰ When these are not being manifested, we are not abiding in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom, Commandments, and Covenant Do Not Conflict

“Till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law” (Matt. 5:18).

Jesus said,

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of

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these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:17-19)

The word *fulfill* does not mean *to be done away with*; it means *to be brought to its original goal or intention*. When we walk in love, we fulfill the commandments; when we use them to understand how to walk in love, we fulfill them! Love has always been God's goal. The commandments were not only the prescription for how to walk in love; they are the description, so we can know what it looks like when put into practice.

God never intended for the commandments to be twisted into legalistic laws used to judge one another. The commandments are God's prescription for love and, when applied from that motive and intention, the commandments define the meaning of our actions. When we commit to walk in God's love, we will treat people in accordance with the commandments because we want to express God's love to others, not to appease God. The Apostle Paul taught that when we walk in love, we fulfill the commandments.¹⁰¹

God is not the author of chaos and confusion. The **Word** of God in the Greek comes from *logos*, meaning *every word is congruent and true only when connected to every other Word of God*. People who see conflicts in the Word of God, contradictions between the Old and New Testaments and inconsistencies in doctrine are those who have embraced the doctrines of men, poor interpretations or hold a personal bias. Congruence is essential because "... *every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ...*" (Matt. 12:25). Interpreting the commandments from Jesus' teaching brings an end to all seeming inconsistencies!

Jesus Is The Way, The Truth, And The Life

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Jesus is the way to the Kingdom and the model for the way to live in the Kingdom. His life is the path we walk. He is the truth. His life and teachings are the perfect representation of God. His interpretation and application of the commandments is the truth God always intended and is the fulfillment of Scripture. Life is in Him personally, not in doctrine about Him. We access the Resurrection Life through our fellowship with Him.

Any interpretation or application of Scripture not based on Jesus' life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection is in opposition to the Lordship of Jesus. Any hope to experience life through our doctrine is the rejection of a call to know Him!

Seek The Kingdom And Righteousness First

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33)

While the Kingdom of God is the rule of God, the kingdom of heaven represents the provision and protection within that realm. Matthew 6:33 tells us not to worry about provision. Prayer was never intended to get things from God. All that we need is available within His realm. Prayer is how we commune with God, but it is also a means of exercising our authority.

Like all things to do with the heart, there is a significant paradox about trusting God for provision. As a Shepherd and Father, God provides for His own. We access all the Father's resources through our relationship with Him, but to seek Him for what we can get borderlines the corrupt and evil. Recognizing God as our Provider and Source is our motivation to be aware of the prize set before us, but when our desire to "get" exceeds our desire to "live" under Lordship and pursue a life lived in righteousness, it is nothing more than spiritualized greed.

Surrender to Lordship and walk in the way of righteousness, and you will find only life and no death. No more will you waste your prayer life trying to get what is already yours.

The Kingdom Above All Else

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:45-46)

The way of the Kingdom is counter-intuitive: **we must die to live and give to receive**. In the world, we do what we do to get the things we desire or meet our needs. We think gratifying the desires of the flesh will satisfy our longing, and this is the "... way that seems right, but in the end leads to death" (Pro. 14:12). We cling to our self-destructive ways to meet needs that can only be met in a relationship with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ. Fear of losing these things keeps us from seeking the Lordship of Jesus and living in the righteousness of God; therefore, we choose to trust our carnal ways and reject faith in Jesus as Lord, whom we do not trust.

Until we want God and His righteousness more than anything else, our heart cannot grasp it! That will not, however, happen until we believe God to be just as Jesus represented Him. He never turned anyone away; He never refused to heal; He never oppressed; He only set free. When this is how we see God, trusting Him will be easy!

The Yoke Of Jesus

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. (Matt. 11:29-30)

The concept of a **yoke** in the Hebrew mindset represented a person's doctrine—that individual's interpretation and application of Scripture. The idea of a yoke also represents walking in harmony with another. Taking Jesus' yoke¹⁰² means to harmonize our life and beliefs with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our every doctrine and application of Scripture must be in harmony with what He taught and modeled.

Jesus based His life, teaching, ministry, and conduct on everything God had ever spoken, as well as the meaning and intention behind what God said. When we take on His yoke, we enter the Kingdom realm, where life gets easy and light. When we hold to our own philosophies or religious ideas, life is always going to be hard.

No Iniquity Of Heart

"I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matt. 7:23).

We cannot grasp the Kingdom of God if we harbor iniquity or wickedness in our heart. The Old Testament references the *crooked heart*—a heart that is not straight, aligned, or in harmony with God's truth. When we have a crooked, bent, broken, or wounded heart, it distorts everything we hear and see. Our understanding becomes darkened and corrupted. We become incapable of finding the good God offers.¹⁰³

Matthew 7:21 describes the difference between a worker of iniquity and a

disciple. Disciples trust in and build their house (life) on the solid foundation of God's Word—not because it is required, but because it is perceived as wisdom superior to their own wisdom. Workers of iniquity reject God's Word as the absolute truth and twist it to fit their personal preferences. Without this firm foundation, the house cannot stand when subjected to wind, rain, and floods. The subsequent destruction is not God's doing; the house is destroyed because of the their own foolishness. Workers of iniquity choose to trust their own wisdom more than they trust God's wisdom.

The description of a true disciple is a person who builds every aspect of life, as much as can be understood, on the life and teachings, and the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. (Matt. 7:23-24, 26-27)

In the strictest sense, the foundation upon which we build our life is not just the commandments of God; it is Jesus' interpretation of the commandments of God! He is the rock—the foundation upon which we build our life!

Finding The Door

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

After 45 years of counseling and ministry, the number of people who would not eliminate chaos (evil) from their lives is too numerous to count. Sadly, no amount of sharing the Word of God, or Godly counsel, was able to help them. The most common default phrase among those who could not be helped is, “I don't understand.” The plain truth is, when we choose to believe the Word, understanding will always follow. When we choose not to believe, we will never understand the Word. The refusal to trust God's Word is most often the fact that it conflicts with our established thoughts and opinions. We find it difficult to envision how God's Word could come to pass in our situation; therefore, we trust in and “... *lean... on our own understanding*” (Pr. 3:5).

A teachable person has a repentant heart. By trusting God, they experience grace, which makes them the capable of understanding the reality of

the Kingdom and finding the door to that Kingdom. A repentant attitude facilitates believing, but the unrepentant and unteachable never even perceive that deliverance is near.

Salvation, deliverance, help, and healing are always near but never perceived by the unteachable. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries with the same message, “*Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.*”¹⁰⁴ Without a repentant heart, this Kingdom cannot be perceived, seen, heard, or understood. The unrepentant, unteachable heart never even realizes there is a door of escape from the problem.

We Must Be As Children

Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3-4)

It is hard to imagine all the possibilities of what it means to become like a little child. In Greek, *little child* can mean anything from a young child to an embryo. The key factor in being a little child, however, appears to be the fact that a child is not yet fully developed and is ready to learn and be taught about all things. Little children have inquisitive minds that always seek to learn but, amazingly, are not interested in all the technicalities.

To become like a little child means that we must *turn*, which includes both turning *away* from something and turning *toward* something else. The main thing from which we must turn is our insistence that we understand life, God, good, and evil.

Children do not make things complicated. A complication is a form of internal resistance. If we make something hard, difficult, or confusing, we can pretend our intention to put them in practice will come as soon as we figure it out.... which never happens!

As humble children of God, we are teachable and ready to surrender our view and opinion to God's view and opinion. While the humble yield and align with God, the proud resist and oppose the Lord. When our hearts are full of pride, we try to find safety by our reasoning, success by our logic, and love by our standards. The simple truth is, since we are not as children, we trust our way more than God's.

The little child trusts the Father for protection and provision and does not need to understand all the complication of the world. He plays all day with the certainty that God will care for him.

The Kingdom Is Inherited, Not Earned

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

While the Kingdom is inherited and not earned, 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5 clarify that we cannot inherit the Kingdom if we choose ungodly, unethical, and immoral ways of life. This does not mean God takes it away from us; it means that we cannot inherit the Kingdom because we have rejected it. We experience the path we walk. The path we choose is that life philosophy with which we harmonize our thoughts, goals, and beliefs.

The Kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy,¹⁰⁵ so those who reject righteousness, reject peace, and, therefore, have no joy. Choosing darkness over light brings with it the path of pain and destruction. Those who seek evil are, by default, choosing the fruit of evil, and God has no choice but to give them over to their desires.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Most believers who live evil (chaotic), destructive lives would insist their lives are not evil. They would insist they are trusting God. The problem is, however, they defaulted to the original temptation to define good (harmony with God, and evil (harmony with the world) independent of God's Word. Rather than repent and become teachable, they blame God for their pain and suffering, instead of admitting they are eating the fruit of the seeds they have planted!

The Kingdom Is A Mystery

“To you it has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God” (Mark 4:11).

The Kingdom of God is a mystery, revealed through a series of initiations. God tells us exactly what He offers in the Kingdom, and He clearly explains the process for accessing it. Intellectually knowing the process is not, however, the same as making the journey. We do not know because we have the information; we know because we experience the information.

As we walk with God, He leads us through learning how to apply His wisdom in this present moment, which prepares us for how to apply His wisdom in the next moment. Once we have mastered what God wants to teach us, and we get it to work, we are ready to move to the next step. In these initiations of the heart, we do not skip steps. We take each step, incorporating each truth into our lives.

The information-based believer feels too spiritual for some of the steps. They want to jump ahead thinking that memorizing the information (truth) is the same as living it. While they may have elaborate discussions and debates about all manner of doctrine, they lack the power to live it. They are impotent Christians not realizing the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power!

Every time we get a heart revelation and true understanding of God's Word and how He is leading us to apply it at this moment, grace enables us to walk through that current aspect of truth to the next stepping-stone. The next stepping-stone is not necessarily a hierarchy of spirituality; it is usually the truth that will help us move away from the old man and step more into the new man.

Everything Is Based On Faith

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Every aspect of entering and living in the Kingdom is based on faith—trusting God with our heart. "...without faith, it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Why? Faith is trust, and if we do not trust God, we consider Him to be an unfaithful liar. There can be no relationship apart from trust.

It was very easy for the Hebrew people to believe what Jesus taught about the Kingdom because they knew the Scriptures. They very quickly recognized His interpretation and application of the Word of God was truly

correct. Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom bore witness in their heart because it aligned with the names of God. Not only that, but it was for the people and not against them. Jesus made God easy to trust.

Faith in God starts with faith in what God has said, most specifically what He said about Himself. Until we know what God said about Himself, we may have faith, but it is more likely to be faith in our culture, denomination, or our opinion.

The ultimate faith is in Jesus, not that He lived, but He was who He said He was. Believing on Jesus starts with believing His representation of God and is consummated by believing what He accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection to such an extent, that we surrender to Him as Lord.

Preach The Message Of The Kingdom

"And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

The Gospel of the Kingdom was the message Jesus proclaimed. The inheritance of the Kingdom was what Jesus provided through His death, burial, and resurrection.

From Eden until New Jerusalem, it was and will always be God's goal to provide a Kingdom for His children, wherein all of our needs are met, and we experience continual fellowship with God and one another. The Gospel of the Kingdom reveals every step of that plan beginning with Jesus revealing God to the world, then to His crucifixion and resurrection, obtaining and sharing the inheritance, the need for godly living, His Second Coming and entering into eternity, when New Jerusalem comes to earth. The absence of the Kingdom message is responsible for the absence of disciples, which explains an impotent church that fails to reach the world and struggles with personal victory.

The church has somehow managed to take many aspects of the gospel to the world but not the Gospel of the Kingdom. When the Gospel of the Kingdom becomes our goal, everything about how we present the gospel to the world will change. It will start with the intention to make disciples instead of converts. It will produce stable believers who multiply the message through their lives instead of trying to be "soul winners."

It will be the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world that will open the way for the second coming of Jesus. When people give up their religious, superstitious beliefs about the second coming, they will not fear the coming of Jesus; they will usher it in!

The Seed grows by itself

The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. (Mark 4:26-27)

The soil is the heart. Our responsibility is to plant the seed and tend the soil. The seed does not grow because we have all the answers or the perfect doctrine. The fruit that grows in our life is the product of two simple factors: 1) the kind of seed we plant, and 2) whether we work the soil.

The seed, i.e., the Word of the Kingdom, is God's Word based on Jesus' interpretation. Pondering, considering, and meditating on the Word is like working and watering the soil. There are only two things that can keep the seed of God's Word from growing and producing fruit (manifesting): 1) failure to nurture the seed, and 2) planting thorns among the good seed.

The Law Of Personal Responsibility

"Each of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

Through many of the Kingdom parables, a conclusion emerges without words ever being spoken: personal responsibility. We are all free-will agents who make our own personal choices and, therefore, must live with the consequences of those choices. Our personal responsibility is in stark contradiction to pop psychology, humanism, and socialism, which have become the predominant basis for rejection of God's personal Word.

Scripture leads us to believe every human being has the law of God and all it implies written in the deepest part of their being, and even legitimate testing shows that we all have the capacity for the same moral compass. The way of the wicked, however, is to want others to be responsible for our bad behavior. This prevalent iniquity will be the destruction of civilization as we know it; it will give rise to the man of iniquity, "the antichrist," and it will take the world to the brink of destruction. The world will only be saved by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will establish

Kingdom rule for one thousand years before the final rebellion and the establishment of New Jerusalem here on earth!

The first law of the seed is this: every seed bears after its own kind! This is the ultimate expression of personal responsibility. We choose what kind of seed we plant in our heart by what we listen to and contemplate. Because we are created in the likeness and image of God, we are the only species with the ability to change the direction and quality of our life by making choices. When we choose to listen to and entertain that which conflicts with God's Word, we choose death.

The Law of the Seed

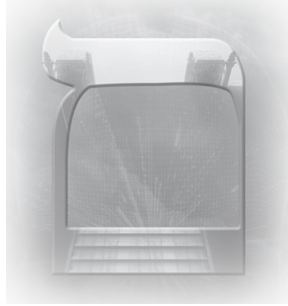
The law of the seed is the ultimate law of God. All things in the physical and non-physical creation operate by the law of the seed.

Like the law of gravity, it is not enforced by God for or against anyone. It is a law that always works. It works in favor of those who know, trust, and yield to it. It works against those who ignore and try to violate it!

In this Kingdom Series, I will take you through the main phases necessary for Kingdom living. The next book and audio teaching in this series will show you how to use the keys to the kingdom to open and close the doors. Based on Jesus' teaching, you will learn how to open the door to what the scripture promises and how to close the doors to that which will destroy you.

The third in the Kingdom Series will be *The Law of the Seed*. These three books can provide you with the foundation that will give you the life you were seeking when you started this journey.

Be sure to watch for the release of each new book in the Kingdom series. You can pre-order your copy of the next installment: *The Keys of the Kingdom: Opening the Doors of Heaven Through Prayer* by visiting: <https://www.impactministries.com/HeavenonEarth/> Don't forget to join our mailing list for updates, free audio programs, and all kinds of research to help you to experience Life at its Best!



CHAPTER 29

Delegated Authority

As a delegated representative, we are here to establish God's will in the earth!

We, the body of Christ, are a nation of priests and kings; we are members of the eternal royal family. We have access to all the resources of heaven. By nature of our family, we have a realm of authority that is unparalleled in the earth. While it is passionately proclaimed in demonstrative sermons, it is seldom understood, believed, or put into practice. We would think that the promise of personal authority would inspire a worldwide-revival.

When believers begin to operate in personal authority, there will be an unprecedented outbreak of miracles of every kind. But even more impressive to a world that hates the church, they could finally see a church walking in love the way God intended, because we would overcome our personal issues. But... that is not happening. Why?

Unlike the religious leaders of His day, Jesus taught as one having authority (Mark 1:22). His connection, confidence, and representation of God was sure, unwavering, and unshakable; therefore, He was confident, sure, unwavering, and unshakable. Unlike the theoretical teaching of religionists, Jesus' teaching and subsequent actions produced quantifiable results. Instead of people walking away feeling confused, condemned, and more burdened, they walked away with answers, insights, but most importantly: solutions. His disciples wanted a connection with God that produced the same results in their lives as they saw in Him personally. After all, a

disciple seeks to live as the master lives, and Jesus lived as a man with authority.

Authority is often confused with power. The loss of the distinction renders the believer powerless, unsure, and afraid to act. **Power** is *the strength or energy that makes something happen*, but **authority** is *the right to use that power*. God's Word violently departs from religion in this significant way: power belongs to God, but here on Planet Earth, authority has been delegated to mankind! The loss of authority and power is rooted in an area of fundamental unbelief.

The two pillars of faith are 1) the Biblical account of creation, and 2) the Biblical account of the creation of man. Until we are clear and immovable in these two areas, we will never have consistent, unshakable faith. The creation account shows us how to operate in "God's kind of faith." Since we are created in the likeness and image of God, He is the model for operating faith. When Jesus taught His famous lesson on the faith of God, in Mark 11, He was outlining the model God established in the creation of the world.

The second pillar of faith is the creation of mankind: 1) we are created in the likeness and image of God, and 2) we have dominion in Planet Earth (Gen. 1:26). The Psalmist says it like this, "*The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men*" (Psalm 115:16). It would seem that neither God nor the devil can do anything in earth apart from human beings who use their authority to make it so. Planet Earth only becomes what God desires to the degree that we establish it. It would be impossible for God to create free-will beings and put them in an environment He controlled. We have the mandate to establish the will of God in the earth, whether we do or not is our choice

Luciferian doctrine ignores man's authority on earth, thereby creating a *straw man*¹⁰⁶ argument against God. Based on erroneous concepts of sovereignty, the argument against God is as follows: since the Creator is in control of everything, He is obviously evil; otherwise, we would not have war, murder, and oppression on earth. God is blamed for what man does!

This Luciferian concept has intentionally, subtly woven its way into the doctrinal fabric of mainstream Christianity to create subterfuge in crippling us. The character and nature of God are brought into question as

man is gas-lit by religion. The purpose behind the false sovereignty doctrine is twofold: 1) undermine our authority, and 2) portray God as the source of man's problems. For as long as we succumb to Luciferian concepts of sovereignty, we will never know when to act or what kind of action to take. We are forever waiting on God to do what He has already done through the Lord Jesus.

The logical derivative of this doctrine is to blame God for all the evil in the world. Since God is responsible, we are not responsible. If we have no responsibility, we have no authority. Modern psychiatry, along with all forms of humanistic and socialist philosophy, always makes others accountable for the actions and consequences of the individual. And yet, the silver thread of personal responsibility woven throughout Jesus' teaching is opposed to God being in control of our fate. It is we who are to use our delegated, God-given authority over our lives, temptations, and desires.

Our irrational willingness to buy into the false sovereignty doctrine may be readily received because it pacifies one of our most carnal human tendencies: the rejection of personal responsibility. Our deep-rooted insecurities and low self-worth drive us to look for someone or something outside ourselves to blame for our problems. We reject the first law of the seed: *every seed bears after its own kind*. In other words, we are living the beliefs which are the fruit of the seeds we have planted in our heart!

We sometimes forget that while Jesus worked powerful and persuasive miracles, an equally powerful and persuasive testimony to His faith was His personal character, integrity, ethics, morality, and emotional stability. The disciples had seen Jesus challenge the money-changers in the temple, face threats against His life, and incur vicious slander from the religious leaders, yet He still lived in peace and walked in love. Most amazingly, He stayed on course with God's purpose for His life. Unlike the Jews who violated the very law they claimed to believe, His message and His life were in complete congruence.

Considering the obvious hypocrisy of the religious rulers, witnessing One with such power and authority, who was not corrupt or self-righteous, had to be a persuasive testimony for Jesus' followers, as well as a glaring indictment against those who accused Him. The disciples witnessed that Jesus first used His authority over His own life, temptations, and struggles, which led to authority in His ministry.

At some point, the disciples wanted what Jesus had. They knew power belonged to God, so they, like us, had to wonder, “How do I function in God’s power with the same confidence Jesus displays?” They evidently knew Jesus’ authority came as a result of His personal connection to God. For that reason, they finally asked Him to teach them to pray.

Today, people would think the capacity for Jesus’ level of authority must be the result of a special anointing. Once the gospel spread to the Gentiles and Christianity embraced Gnosticism, believers began an endless pursuit for an anointing, deep knowledge, and private revelations. Like all religion, they would ignore what Jesus taught and spend their lives searching for something they would never find, an endless search for an illusive anointing!

The Hebrew believer had no vain illusions of personal anointing or access to God’s resources apart from a personal connection and relationship. Seeking God’s resources without first knowing God is hypocritical. The disciples knew power

Prayer, meditation, communion, and His Word was the only way of life for a committed believer.

belonged to God. Like the prophets of old, those who flowed in personal power were those who remained intimately connected to God. They were merely a vessel through which God flowed to fulfill His purposes. Prayer, meditation, communion, and His Word was the only way of life for a committed believer. Every true follower of God knew life revolved around walking with God which, from the beginning, was a matter of the heart, not the legalistic observance of the commandments. The true follower of God wanted to understand how Jesus connected with God and how that manifested in such dynamic personal authority.

The various Hebrew and Greek words for *prayer* each point to different types of prayer. The core understanding of the Hebrew word for **pray** means *to assess and reconcile* or *assess and decide*.¹⁰⁷ This type of biblically based prayer only occurs from a person who understands authority. Jesus referenced this exact definition both times He used the term **bind and loose**. *Binding and loosing is an execution of authoritative prayer*. The believer operates authority based on God’s Word and what Jesus accomplished at the cross.

Binding and loosing in Matthew 16:19 is better understood from the

Amplified translation *“And whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven.”*

We must know what God says to be true, what God has clearly stated as His will, and specifically what Jesus accomplished in His death, burial, and resurrection. If we know and believe what Jesus accomplished, we know God's will; there is nothing to ask. Asking God if something accomplished through the cross is His will is a declaration of our unbelief in the finished work! If it is settled at the cross, the only acceptable prayer is the prayer of authority: binding and loosing!

In Jesus, we are free from all the curse of the law,¹⁰⁸ and we have an inheritance of all the promises God has ever made to anyone.¹⁰⁹ This powerful information is the basis upon which we take our rightful authority. Religion has taught us to ignore what God has declared legal or illegal through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, which is tantamount to rejecting His finished work. Instead of using the authority God has given to establish His will in our life, we ask God to use His authority. Nevertheless, only the opposite is legal in Planet Earth: God provides the power when we act on the authority He has given through the finished work of Jesus.

Authority activates His power, and we have been given a unique authority in Christ. Every person, saved or lost, has authority on Planet Earth, but believers have the authority to bind the curse and loose the blessing. Galatians 3:13, *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law ...”* is not referring to an automated process occurring independently of our faith. We are legally freed from the curse and legally qualified for the inheritance. That only happens, however, when we pray the prayer of authority: binding and loosing!

Why did Jesus never pray and seek God's will before casting out demons or healing the sick? Simple! He knew who God was and trusted in His names. Jesus knew He had the right, as well as the responsibility, to act on God's Word and His names. We, too, are responsible for manifesting God to the world, which we do by acting on His revealed will for mankind, and we have the finished work of Jesus as our ultimate authority!

Jesus' teaching did not introduce new doctrine; he merely clarified what God said in Deuteronomy 30:15,19: *“I have set before you life (good) and*

*death (evil), blessing and cursing; therefore choose life.” He made it abundantly clear: when faced with the challenges of life or death, good or evil, we do not need to pray for God to act; we need to make a choice. **Choosing** is more than merely desiring; it is substantiated with intention and followed by commitment.*

In Romans 10:6-8, Paul repeats what Moses said thousands of years earlier, and a concept very nearly lost on the modern believer:

For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. (Deut. 30:11-14)

Even under the Old Covenant, there was nothing to pray about, no big mystery regarding what God wants for us. It is merely a choice! When you trust and believe what God has already said, you make a choice. How much more can we be sure of God’s

Binding and loosing
are how we execute
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occurring in our life.

will in the New Covenant than the resurrection of Jesus? We do not need a new revelation; we do not require someone to bring or explain God’s will to us. By trusting in God’s Word, character and nature, believing what Jesus accomplished through His resurrection and who we are in Him, we are empowered to act with inherent authority—our right to choose—which has been given to all mankind by our Creator!

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus reveals His secret of personal authority: use the keys of the Kingdom to open the doors to all the blessings that are yours in Christ, while closing all the doors to the curse. This is what He meant by *binding and loosing*. Jesus has provided for every area of lack we encounter; therefore, we must *loose* His provision into our present experience. We must declare what is legal in our lives according to the will of God, as declared legal by the resurrection. We call it forth and command it to be so! Likewise, anything from which Jesus set us free through the cross, we must *bind* and declare illegal. We must command it to depart. There is

nothing to wonder regarding the will of God, nor is there anything else that needs to be done other than what Jesus has already done!

Apart from expressing and manifesting our personal authority through binding and loosing as the Keys of the Kingdom, we will never experience what has been freely given. We will know about the Kingdom, but we will be hindered by every opposing factor. Binding and loosing are how we execute our authority by assessing what is occurring in our life. If we determine it is not in harmony with what Jesus provided through the cross, we must assess and reconcile (pray) it.

There was a man who came to Jesus with a need that made Him marvel. He was a Gentile centurion who had a sick servant. Jesus offered to come, lay hands on the servant, and heal him. But the centurion said, *“For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it”* (Matt 8:9).

This Gentile understood delegated authority. He was sent forth by Rome to uphold the laws of the “Kingdom” (Roman Empire). Since he already knew the law, he did not have to check with Caesar to see if it was his will nor would he have ever considered asking Caesar to do for him that which Caesar had instructed him to do. Every time he made a decision, he did so in harmony with the will of the Emperor because he knew the law. He had the authority granted by the Emperor and the power of the Empire with which to make it happen. He understood more about the delegated authority than anyone Jesus had encountered among all the Israelites.

God delegated authority over Planet Earth to man. The laws of life wherein we operate are based on the Word of God as represented by Jesus. The power to enforce those laws of life is no less than the resurrection power of Jesus.

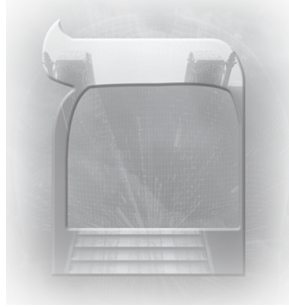
God gave us free will, which He will not violate. He gave us resurrection power, which is activated by our faith and our choices. The truth only sets us free when we apply it. If you know and believe what God has done for you in Jesus, it is left to you to use your authority to close the door to the curse and open the door to the blessing. God will provide power when you apply the truth!

HeartWork

Read Every Time: The Kingdom of God is internal. HeartWork is designed to remove any internal obstacles that prevent me from entering the realm where I experience Heaven on Earth!

1. Do I find myself wavering when faced with a situation that needs to be overcome?
2. Do I find myself asking God to take authority when I should be taking authority?
3. Do I trust that God will manifest His power when I express my authority?
4. Create a personal meditation of yourself facing a storm, with fierce wind and rain. Use your imagination to see, hear, and experience it as completely real. Then, imagine yourself speaking to the storm. As you stand waiting, feel the confidence and assurance that what YOU say comes to pass. Then notice the wind and rain decreasing. Imagine the sound of the rain becoming softer and softer until it has all stopped and become completely peaceful. Do this exercise every night as you are drifting off to sleep for at least a month.

If you are interested in developing your heart to be immovable in your trust for God, learn more about our Heart Physics program by clicking here: <http://heartphysics.com/>



CHAPTER 30

Secular or Sacred

I may be in this world, but I don't have to be of this world!

Quality of life is a continuum of spiritual, emotional, physical, financial, and relational health. It is holistic in nature! The secular-sacred dichotomy has been a key factor in corrupting the concept of righteousness. Quality of life is the fruit of righteousness... not a legalistic, religious righteousness wherein we seek to qualify to receive God's promises in exchange for good behavior.

Religious concepts of righteousness are rooted in legalistic perfectionism, which only serves to magnify failures. Throughout the New Testament, it is easy to become confused about the law. It seems that everyone from Jesus to the Apostles would, at times, praise the efficacy of the law, only to condemn the law in another statement. That is not, however, the case.

In the Greek language, there is a difference when the word *the* is used in conjunction with the word *law*. When the definite article is present, i.e., ***the law***, it is referencing specifically the law of Moses given directly from the mouth of God.

When the definite article is not present in the Greek, it should read *law*. Unfortunately, the translators are very inconsistent in properly translating the difference. In almost every case where *law* is found in the Greek, the definite article is added, in my opinion, to satisfy the bias of legalism that

had permeated the church, coupled with deep theological ignorance.

When we read anything negative about *the Law*, it only takes a 10-second computer search to see it is not derogatory toward the law of Moses. With respect to *law* that is not the law of Moses, what is it referring to and why is it important?

When the definite article is not present, it could be a reference to any form of law, e.g., The Hammurabi Code, The Talmud, or any other code of law that defines and governs morals and ethics. It is safe to say, anytime the word *law* is used without the definite article *the*, it is referring to legalism as opposed to faith in the Word of God. Jesus did not come to do away with *the Law*, but He vehemently condemns legalism.

Law cannot make anyone righteous. Romans 3:20 has been famously misinterpreted by everyone seeking justification for lawlessness, “*Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” The first half of this verse explains that no one using any legalistic approach can earn righteousness by performance, and that includes the Law of Moses. We know God is a faith God. Abraham was considered righteous because he believed God and is the father of faith righteousness. When we believe God’s account of Jesus’ resurrection in our heart, we are made righteous.

The second half of this verse is where the religious perversion manifests. The Law of Moses does not promote knowledge of sin. The original language points out that *law* (the realm of legalism) promotes the experiential knowledge of sin. Why? Because no matter how perfectly we obey any law, it never gives witness to righteousness in our heart. In fact, it does just the opposite. Like any addictive substance, it requires more and more to sustain the deceitful, false feelings of works-righteousness.

We know, based on Jesus’ teaching, that loving God, your neighbor, and yourself is the interpretive basis for all the law and all the prophets.

We know, based on Jesus’ teaching, that loving God, your neighbor, and yourself is the interpretive basis for all the law and all the prophets. God’s commandments teach us how to treat others in the same manner as God

would treat them: love from a pure heart! The Law of Moses, when applied from God's motive and intention, reveals and manifests love as God defines.

Romans 3:21-22 says, "*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.*" Apart from law, or any realm of legalism, God's righteousness is revealed and manifested through word and deed.¹¹⁰ While there are many ways righteousness is made apparent, one of the most important for us as believers is the witness of God in our conscience.

This faith-righteousness is portrayed in The Law and The Prophets (Old Testament). The Law of Moses never claimed to make anyone righteous, but it prophesied about a righteousness which would come by faith. The concept of faith-righteousness did not begin in the New Covenant; it has always been God's way and attested to Abraham and God's relationship, as well as all the Old Testament people of faith. The entire chapter of Hebrews 11 records those who lived by faith. The only difference is that our faith is in Jesus; it is not merely a positional righteousness. It is a powerful righteousness that gives us access to grace—the power to live in our righteousness!

The final phrase of Romans 3:22 brings this righteousness into perspective: while it is offered to all, it is only experienced by faith in Jesus. Does this not mean a general belief in Jesus? Paul answers this in Romans 10:9-10:

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto (into, toward) righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Kingdom of God (Heaven on earth) is a realm we enter once we willfully surrender to the Lordship of Jesus, based on the heart-felt belief that God raised Him from the dead. This includes all the Scriptures that describe what was accomplished through His resurrection.

The secular-sacred dichotomy implies that your sacred life is based on religious observance of law: legalism pertaining specifically to relating to God. All other aspects of your beliefs and behavior are secular and do

not involve God; therefore, righteousness is narrowed down to religious observances.

As human beings, we live from our heart. Every word, behavior, belief, and emotion is ultimately a manifestation of our heart. Since it is the seat of our beliefs, the heart is the seat of our identity! All of life is spiritual, and there is no secular: not holy. This is the uniqueness and power of the New Covenant. We are not merely attempting to believe in a philosophy; we believe in a person, who by God's power, was resurrected, conquering sin, death, and hell!

Since our heart determines our identity, belief in Jesus, accompanied by surrendering to His Lordship, means we come to perceive and experience ourselves as one with Him. His victories become our victories. The ultimate, unique factor is that by the power of the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, we experience the same resurrection power.¹¹¹ The Bible calls it *grace*: a strength, power, and capacity that works from our heart and comes by unmerited favor.

This belief in righteousness means we experience the power of righteousness... the same righteousness that worked in and empowered Jesus' life, ministry, and resurrection. Faith-righteousness gives us access to grace, empowering us to stand and live in His righteousness (Rom. 5:1-2).

Jesus explained that it is only when we have the intention to put God's Word into application that we will come to know and experience the truth (John 7:17). It is only in the experience and application of the truth that we are set free (John 8:31-32).

Righteousness is a continuum that starts with God's truth and incorporated into the beliefs of our heart, our sense of identity, our intention to live righteously, and our willingness to yield to and express righteousness in our behavior. Along the path of righteousness is life and no death (Pro. 12:28). The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy!

Like all matters of the heart, righteousness is a continuum that can only be grasped within the paradox. Righteousness does not come by behavior, but a righteous heart will always manifest in our behavior through words and deeds. Righteousness in the heart leads us along a path, in a realm to an internal reality called *The Kingdom of God*, or Heaven on Earth!

Your intention concerning righteousness, if you desire to abide in God's Kingdom, must be a way of life that begins with God's Word and permeates every aspect of your life, every relationship, the way you treat others, the way you conduct business... EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE!

If, according to "*Webster's 1828 Dictionary*," being *secular* has to do with the world, then you have no secular life. You are to be holy as He is holy.¹¹² Without developing a performance mentality, it must be your intention to be uncommon in all that you do, just as God is uncommon. Declare this, "I will do all I do with the motive of expressing and revealing the love of God to the world!"

The truth presented in this book is not hidden, nor is it complicated! For those who believe in Jesus as Lord, it is not burdensome. Take a moment to reflect on these statements in the personal, positive, and present tense:

- Jesus came to bring me abundant life (John 10:10).
- My ability to live the abundant life is the by-product of my personal, intimate, experiential knowledge of God, and the Lord Jesus (John 17:3).
- Being born again is not the only prerequisite for this abundant life, but it does open the eyes of my heart to the possibility of experiencing this life (John 3:3).
- I can live as a carnal Christian, modeled by the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, or I can trust God and follow Him into the Kingdom, depicted by the Israelites who believed God and entered Canaan (1 Cor. 10:6-11, Heb 4:1-2).
- The Kingdom cannot be perceived or seen outwardly (Luke 17:20).
- The Kingdom can only be entered internally (Luke 17:21).
- To live in the Kingdom, I must believe in the resurrection of the King and surrender to His reign (Rom. 10:9-10).
- There are Keys to the Kingdom (Matt 16:19).
- The keys are based on my personal authority (Matt. 16:19).
- It is our responsibility to establish the Kingdom in our lives through binding and loosing, Matt. 16:19.

Heaven on Earth is the first in this trilogy. This volume serves to unveil the mystery of the Kingdom of God, showing you, the believer, the simplicity of entering a realm called *The Kingdom of God*.

Now that you know what Jesus taught about the Kingdom, the next step is to apply this information based on Jesus' teaching. In Volume Two, *The Keys of the Kingdom: Opening the Doors of Heaven Through Prayer*, I will remove the religious influences that have made authority seem far away and difficult by showing you the simplicity of operating in personal authority! You will discover the power and simplicity of establishing the Kingdom in your life.

Jesus is our Lord, our model, and our teacher. When we remove the religious mysticism, His teaching becomes abundantly clear. Get ready to see Jesus in an entirely new light that will change the way you see and experience yourself. For the first time, by Jesus' own words and example, you will know precisely how to establish God's will in your life!

Please visit <https://www.impactministries.com/HeavenonEarth/> to pre-order your copy of *The Keys of the Kingdom: Opening the Doors of Heaven Through Prayer*.

About the Author

In 1972, Dr. James B. Richards

accepted Christ and answered the call to ministry. His dramatic conversion and passion for helping hurting people launched him onto the streets of Huntsville, Alabama.

Early on in his mission to reach

teenagers and drug abusers, his ministry quickly grew into a home church that eventually led to the birth of Impact Ministries.



Before his salvation, Jim was a professional musician with all the trappings of a worldly lifestyle. More than anything, he was searching for true freedom. Sick of himself and his empty pursuits, he hated all that his life had become. He turned to drugs as a means of escape and relief. Although he was desperate to find God, his emotional outrage made people afraid to tell him about Jesus. As he searched for help, he only became more confused and hopeless than ever.

After listening to his bass player grumbling about a verse of Scripture that a Christian had shared with him, Jim had a miraculous encounter with God. From this one Scripture, he was able to experience God's love! He gave his life to the Lord and was set free from his addictions. His whole life changed! Now, after years of ministry, Jim still believes there is no one that God cannot help, and there is no one God does not love. He has committed his life to help people experience that love. If his life is a model for anything, it is that God never quits on anyone.

With doctorates in theology, human behavior and alternative medicine, and an honorary doctorate in world evangelism, Jim has received certified training as a detox specialist and drug counselor. His uncompromising, yet positive, approach to the gospel strengthens, instructs and challenges peo-

ple to new levels of victory, power, and service. Jim's extensive experience in working with substance abuse, codependency, and other social/emotional issues has led him to pioneer effective, creative, Bible-based approaches to ministry that meet the needs of today's world.

Most importantly, Jim believes that people need to be made whole by experiencing God's unconditional love. His messages are simple, practical, and powerful. His passion is to change the way the world sees God so that people can experience a relationship with Him through Jesus.

Jim and his wife, Brenda, have six daughters, 15 grandchildren, and continue to reside in Huntsville, Alabama.

For additional content and resources, please visit this book's companion website: <https://www.impactministries.com/heavenonearth>

Endnotes

- 1 Herman Cremer, *Biblico–Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1895), 270–274.
- 2 Daniel 9:25–26
- 3 Genesis 3:15
- 4 **Selective processing** occurs when a person’s desires, prejudices, or judgments cause them to only perceive that which supports their position.
- 5 Luke 10:26, (AMP)
- 6 **Heartwork** a term in HeartPhysics® that explains the biblical process for influencing our heart and changing our beliefs.
- 7 Matthew 13:14, (DARBY)
- 8 Matthew 13:15, (DARBY)
- 9 Matthew 13:15, (DARBY)
- 10 Matthew 13:15, (DARBY)
- 11 Luke 10:26, (NIV)
- 12 **Logos** Greek word normally translated as “Word” in the New Testament.
- 13 Matthew 3:2, (ESV)
- 14 Matthew 4:17, (ESV)
- 15 Matthew 13:15
- 16 R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1946), 511.
- 17 Hebrew 4:15
- 18 **(an-ab-lep’-o)**; from NT:303 and NT:991: to look up; by implication, to recover sight. Biblesoft, *New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Con-*

cordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary (Seattle: Biblessoft, 2006).

19 Matthew 13:19, (NIV)

20 Jim Richards, *Moving Your Invisible Boundaries: The Key to Limitless Living* (Travelers Rest: True Potential, 2013).

21 James Richards, *Grace: The Power To Change* (New Kensington: Whitaker, 1993).

22 Richards, *Moving Your Invisible Boundaries: The Key to Limitless Living*.

23 **Luciferianism** was introduced in the Garden of Eden and has since been passed down from generation to generation. It is any religious doctrine, human philosophy, or political opinion that offers what God offers through any process which opposes God's Word, as taught by Jesus.

24 Hebrews 1:3

25 Isaiah 53:1, (KJV)

26 Hebrews 3:19

27 Hebrews 4:2

28 1 Corinthians 2:9–10

29 Geoffrey Bromley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985)

30 1 Corinthians 2:9–10, (KJV)

31 **Dispensationalism** is a religious interpretive system for the Bible. It considers biblical history as divided by God into periods or ages to which God reveals Himself and His truth to mankind.

32 Genesis 3:17, (NASB)

33 Jim Richards, *Apocalypse: A Spiritual Guide to the Second Coming* (Travelers Rest: True Potential, 2015).

34 Proverbs 7:3

35 **Occult** incapable of being understood by ordinary human beings, secret or known only to the initiated, Encarta dictionary.

36 John 9:41, (NASB)

37 2 Corinthians 5:7, (KJV)

- 38 Ephesians 6:10
- 39 Mark 11:23
- 40 1 Peter 1:9,
- 41 Galatians 3:13
- 42 2 Corinthians 1:20
- 43 Colossians 1:12
- 44 2 Peter 1:3
- 45 Chaim Bentorah: based on the actual Hebrew language (www.chaim-bentorah.com).
- 46 1 Peter 1:16
- 47 Matthew 5:14
- 48 Matthew 5:44
- 49 Chaim Bentorah, *Hebrew Word Study: A Hebrew Teacher Finds Rest in the Heart of God*, (New Kingston: Whitaker, 2016), 111.
- 50 Romans 2:4
- 51 Mark 12:31
- 52 Harris, Gleason, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980).
- 53 Hebrews 11:6
- 54 2 Corinthians 1:20
- 55 Proverbs 6:27, (NIV)
- 56 Luke 8:18, (AMP)
- 57 Proverbs 14:8, (TLB)
- 58 James 1:8, (KJV)
- 59 Psalms 78:41 and Hebrews 3:9
- 60 Luke 10:25, (AMP)
- 61 Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon*, 270–274, 721.
- 62 Proverbs 29:14, (NIV)
- 63 Luke 17:20–21
- 64 Galatians 5:6

- 65 John 10:10
- 66 Genesis 3:16
- 67 Matthew 7:2
- 68 Matthew 22:37–40
- 69 Matthew 25:29
- 70 Luke 10:26, (NIV)
- 71 Biblesoft, *Strong's Numbers and Concordance*.
- 72 Isaiah 42:6–7
- 73 Romans 10:15, (KJV)
- 74 Romans 14:17
- 75 John 14:15
- 76 Matthew 13:12
- 77 Galatians 3:13
- 78 Haggai 1:7
- 79 Deuteronomy 30:1
- 80 1 John 4:8
- 81 John 14:15
- 82 Luke 10:29
- 83 Matthew 11:15
- 84 Romans 14:17
- 85 Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* (Ontario: Woodside, 1993).
- 86 Galatians 5:6
- 87 Acts 17:28
- 88 Psalm 34:8
- 89 Bentorah, www.chaimbentorah.com
- 90 Despite the ridiculous, religious concept of spending eternity floating on clouds, eternity will be spent here on Planet Earth. God will bring New Jerusalem to earth where we will abide with Him (Revelation 21).
- 91 Genesis 1:31

- 92 Genesis 1:26
- 93 For a full understanding of why Jesus must return and when He can return, read: Richards, *Apocalypse*, 2015.
- 94 Hebrews 1:3
- 95 NT:4263, **Sheep** something that walks forward; Biblesoft, *Strong's Numbers and Concordance*.
- 96 Dennis Prager, *Exodus: God Slavery and Freedom, The Rational Bible* (Washington, D.C.: Regenery Faith, 2018).
- 97 Mark 7:13
- 98 James Richards, *Taking The Limits Off God* (Huntsville: Impact Ministries, 1989).
- 99 Bromley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1985.
- 100 Romans 14:17
- 101 Romans 13:8
- 102 Matthew 11:29-30
- 103 Proverbs 17:20
- 104 Matthew 3:2, (ESV)
- 105 Romans 14:17
- 106 **Straw man** is a form of argument and an informal fallacy based on giving the impression of refuting an opponent's argument, while actually refuting an argument that was not presented by that opponent.
- 107 Harris, Gleason, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1980.
- 108 Galatians 3:13
- 109 2 Corinthians 1:20
- 110 John 3:20-21 and NT:5319, **phaneroo**: Thayer, *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* (Biblesoft, 2006).
- 111 Romans 8:11
- 112 1 Peter 1:16



HEAVEN ON EARTH

UNVEILING THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Jesus taught us how to experience heaven on earth. It's actually pretty straightforward. He called it the Kingdom of God. There's nothing complicated about it. This book is written, based on Jesus' teaching, to unravel the Mystery of the Kingdom



DR. JIM RICHARDS

Jesus said He came to give us the abundant life. The Greek word for life is "zoe." Its literal meaning is: *the quality of life possessed by the one who gives it!* In other words, Jesus wants us to have the same quality of life He is experiencing with God!

This book has one very simple purpose! I want to give you the information and the tools needed to experience the very best quality of life possible, while you are on planet earth: the abundant life.

Intention Statement:

As you begin this book, let the following intention statement direct your thoughts and understanding as you read.

"I intend to live the abundant life! I will read this material with an open mind, remaining loyal to the scripture, while allowing the Holy Spirit to be my personal teacher! I desire to live, move and have my being in the realm Jesus called the Kingdom of God, and enjoy all the associated benefits!"

Please visit www.impactministries.com/HeavenonEarth for additional resources.

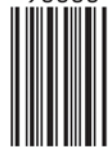


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