

LESSON 39:***Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) – Part 1***

Ephesus was an incredibly powerful and wealthy city in the ancient world of Paul's time. It had marble streets, mosaic sidewalks, and a massive temple to Diana that was considered one of the wonders of the Greek world. It had a busy port, a popular athletic arena, one of the finest libraries of the first century, and villas filled with artwork, tapestries, silks, and exotic birds and animals. Even today, the restored coliseum at Ephesus is considered one of the finest performing arts centers in the world.

It was into this influential city of a half-million people that the Apostle Paul brought the gospel and planted a church. He worked longer here than anywhere else, staying for nearly three years (Acts 19). Later in his ministry, he called the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him in Miletus and exhorted them to be vigilant against the inevitable opposition – from within and without – that would come against the church after his death.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:28-32).

Paul is trying to “wolf-proof” these believers – and that is the reason for his teaching in the book of Ephesians!

Contrary to the experience of many religious people today, becoming a Christian is not like joining a social club, where you simply pay your dues once in awhile, hang out occasionally with casual friends at the group's facilities, and sit back to reap the prestigious benefits of 'membership.' No, becoming a Christian in the biblical sense of the word is more like enlisting in the army. We find out immediately that a conflict is raging with eternal consequences for us and for others, and that every experience of our new life with God is actually training for this intense spiritual warfare.

The good news is that our Commander is a brilliant military strategist, and He has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left it up to us to enforce every day in earth's trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a Believers Boot Camp, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. All that remains is for us to unseal our marching orders, take up our weapons, and storm the gates of Hell. Victory is ours if we fight for it! This is serious training for serious Christians.

The book of Ephesians is the NT equivalent of the OT book of Joshua.

These believers are people who have ceased from aimless wandering and have started warring. God has given them a promise, but has declared that they will have to fight some battles to lay claim to it. However, victory is assured because God's army is well-equipped! And that's why Paul begins Ephesians by talking about the resources of God.

1:3 – the reason God can bless us is that He is a blessed God – He is not frail or impoverished – He has every resource at His disposal – and the devil doesn't own anything!

God is a good parent – He is not only good to

us, He is good for us – sometimes He doesn't give us everything all at once for His own reasons (when the blessing comes, we need to be mature enough to handle it)

1:3 – God hath blessed us – past tense – we already have access to the resources of Heaven

The blessings of God are a finished work. From God's viewpoint, we possess our "promised land" right now. All of the blessings we can ever receive from God have already been created! The first step to possessing them is believing that God has what we need; the second step to possessing them is taking what has been promised to us.

Most believers spend their entire lives reading the "will" and shouting over the "contract" but never living in the promises that God has decreed. Why? Because they aren't willing to fight the necessary spiritual battles. You are rich beyond measure in Christ – do you actually believe that?!

Our blessings are first and foremost spiritual blessings – but when we focus on them, spiritual blessings have a way of working into the other realms of everyday living and producing abundant life.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

All spiritual blessings are eternal – they existed before we did, and when we became God's child He deposited them into our spiritual "bank account." Everything you need to live for God is already in you by His Spirit! Natural blessings are only temporary, but spiritual blessings last forever.

That's why God never goes into "emergency mode" – He has already done everything He needs to do to deliver you! You are not waiting

on your deliverance until God chooses to give it – you already possess it, but you just need to fight for it!

Jesus didn't "heal" the woman bowed over for eighteen years as much as He just made know unto her what she already possessed in the covenant!

"And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity" (Luke 13:12).

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16).

The process of maturing in Christ Jesus is simply learning how to work out what God has already placed in us. Spiritual maturity is living from the spiritual reality resident in us through the Holy Ghost, instead of living according to our outward circumstances.

A baby in its mother's womb has every gene, every chromosome, every trait of an adult already built into it from the moment of conception. That's the way it is with us when we receive the Holy Ghost – if we will allow it, God's Spirit in us will continually lead us into new capabilities and possibilities! You don't yet know everything God has planned for you, but it will be awesome!

No other believer possesses more of God than you possess right now, but some believers have learned how to walk in their inheritance much better!

When the devil comes against you, you need to recognize that he is not only challenging where you are, he is troubled over what has been deposited in you for the future. He is intimidated by your destiny, and is fighting to keep you from possessing it!

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of

man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

God has chosen you – so if not one person on the face of the earth showed any love toward you or valued you in the slightest way, this verse shatters all that rejection by telling you that God chose you even before He created the Heavens and the earth – you are loved and wanted!

1:4 – “He hath” (past) and “we should” (future) – that’s why we want to please God – because of the wonderful things He has done for us!

1:4 – “holy” (inner relationship) and “without blame” (outer relationship) – both lived “before him”

1:4 – “according” – same root as the musical term “chord” – in harmony with God’s pleasure, purpose and power (watch this word in Ephesians!) – no believer can live a holy and blameless life without God’s Spirit!

1:5 – “predestinated” – we had no influence on God choosing us, because we didn’t exist yet and had no access to Him – but God planned a “script” for our Christian lives (i.e. the last scene of a movie is often shot first, and then the other scenes shot in that context) - Note “according”

God is not making up His plan as He goes along! That’s the reason He doesn’t get hysterical about the things you get hysterical about. This is a fixed fight – God knows He is going to win in the end! Satan created a dilemma when he seduced Adam into sin, because he was trying to get God to work against Himself. As long as what God loved (man) was separated from what God hated (sin) there was no conflict, because God could love what He loved and hate what He hated. But when what He hated got into what He

loved, it created a conflict. If He killed what He hated, He would kill what He loved. And if He loved what He loved, He would have to love what He hated because what He loved now had what He hated inside. This was the dilemma ... but Satan has never been able to create a dilemma that God has not been able to out-strategize. In fact, there was already a lamb “slain from the foundation of the world”!

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

We don’t serve a God who reacts, we serve a God who sovereignly acts. He is never on the defensive, but always on the offensive. And nothing that the enemy ever does can abort what God has already done. There is no way Satan can out-manuever God!

God is not a contractor, He is an architect. We are building in time what He has designed in eternity – so just give up on your own little plan and build His plan in your life! Say yes to His design for you!

1:5 – “adopted” – people give birth to children they don’t want, but no one ever adopts anyone they don’t want – and adoption in Paul’s time was usually a childless family of means adopting a full-grown heir – God adopted us knowing fully who we were!

1:6 – “accepted in the beloved” – talk about self-esteem! – this is exactly why Christians don’t need to be “accepted in the crowd”! – we can be more concerned about the needs of others because our need are met by God!

1:7 – quit worrying about your current condition and start focusing on your eternal position - Note “according”

1:7 – “redemption” – you do not have to be dominated by sin, because you are liberated by Christ – Where your mind goes, your life goes!

Any time the devil says to you “that’s just normal human behavior,” remember two things – (1) normal for the believer is not the same as normal for the sinner, and (2) the devil cannot tell the truth!

- 1:8 - "abounded" = "overflowed" / "prudence" = "wisdom acted out" - you need abundance ("more than enough") so that your blessing can "overflow" on others and minister to them
1:9 – Note “according”

1:11 – “worketh” – God is constantly manipulating, moving, maneuvering, and arranging all things according to His purposes – things don’t happen at random or by coincidence for Christians!

1:13 - "sealed" - it is incontestable! (that's why they agreed to baptize the household of Cornelius - because the Holy Ghost already fell on them!)

1:14 - "earnest" = "downpayment" ("I'm coming back to claim my possession!")

1:17 – many believers are quick to see more of God’s power and mercy, but few are hungry to seek for His wisdom and revelation (Paul had a revelation on the road to Damascus and it made him a powerhouse for God!)

1:18 – “in the saints” – you don't need to know what you have in God, nearly as much as you need to know what God has in you

1:19 – “his power to us-ward” – this is inherent power, or power that is in our possession but dependent on our releasing it or activating it – and it works according to God’s dominion power or authority

1:20 – in the OT the defining event of God’s delivering power was the crossing of the Red Sea (Israel and the Lord continually referred back to it) – in the NT the defining event of God’s delivering power is the resurrection!

1:20 – “right hand” – figurative language for the

place of power 1:22-23 – if it is under His feet, and you are in His body – it is under you!

God’s army is the best equipped army in the world!

LESSON 40:

Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) – Part 2

The Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left it up to us to enforce every day in earth’s trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a Believers Boot Camp, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. Victory is ours if we fight for it! Ephesians is serious training for serious Christians.

In chapter one, Paul begins our training by talking about the resources of God, which are now given to us ...

- The blessings of God are a finished work – we already possess them
- But we have to fight for it, just as Joshua had to fight for his promise
- The devil is intimidated by your present and your future destiny
- We are predestinated by God for great things – this is a fixed fight!
- Nothing the enemy does can abort what God has already done
- Think about your eternal position, not just your current condition

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is to us as the crossing of the Red Sea was to Israel – it is our “point of reference” for God’s power in our lives – because death is the greatest enemy we ever have to confront!

2:1 – “and you” – you have the same resurrection power in you!

From the moment we are born we have a built-in desire to run the world around us so that it benefits and serves us. We are all born with a self-centered, me first identity – we feel that the world revolves around us. And this is the very essence of the sin nature. But God's purpose for our lives is that we have a God first identity. This goes against our pride.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Whatever you want God to bless, put Him first in that area!

So what causes us to leave God's plan for our lives and follow our own plan? We have a low tolerance for “delayed gratification”! We really think we can do it faster and better than God. That is just human pride.

2:1 – “were dead” – death in the Scriptures is “separation” – we were dead in the most significant way – dead spiritually

Just as your body separated from your spirit cannot function on earth, your spirit separated from God's spirit cannot function in God's Kingdom! Physical death “silences” the body, but spiritual death “silences” the spirit! We were walking around, but we were dead!

2:2 – because we were dead, we tried everything possible to make ourselves feel alive – that's basically where SIN comes from (but that little nagging voice from God continually says, “but you're still empty”)

According – same root as the musical term “chord” – in harmony with one's pleasure, purpose and power (watch this word in Ephesians!)

2:2 – “the air” – the atmosphere where human beings live
2:2 – “disobedience” – to be totally noncompliant (OT – “stiff necked”)

2:3 – “children of wrath” – warring and seething

against all that is holy by serving the god of self, fulfilling every carnal desire and inclination

The way we were before Salvation was ugly!

Satan was supernaturally powerful and much smarter than we were, the world system surrounded us from birth, and we were imprisoned in our carnal sin nature – yet we somehow managed to escape. How?

2:4 – “but God, who is rich in mercy” – there is no other solution but God!

2:5 – we were born dead, but God quickened us

Deliverance (think UPS or FedEx) happens not just when someone sends a package, but when someone else receives that package – we must reach out and take hold of the salvation and blessings God provided.

When people become Christians one of the hardest things to do is to retrain them not to continue to operate according to the world system. It took one night to get Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to get Egypt out of them. There is always a battle between the new man and the old man. And that is why we need teaching like Paul gives to us in Ephesians.

We are not dead anymore – so don't act like it!

By the way, we can protest all we want, but you can't get unregenerated people to live like saints. In fact, we have a hard enough time getting saints to live like saints! Sin is a heart issue – you can't fix men from the outside in, just from the inside out.

2:5 – “by grace” – grace is not God's ability to overlook our sin, it is the ability He gives to us to live above sin! (grace is the power to change!)

2:6 – “raised us up together” – you cannot be blessed outside God's body / “made us sit

together” – your victory depends on the body of Christ.

Without developing an “us mentality” the church will be forever divided, and forever less than God intends.

That is why the devil constantly seeks to bring division among the church, so God’s presence, provision and power can never be manifested in us.

2:7 – “he might show” – God likes to show US off (think about Job in the OT) – God even wants to use your past for His glory (“such were some of you”)

“Take up your bed and walk” – show the world that you are now able to carry what once carried you – Talk about your testimony!

In the ages of eternity God will say “Look how much I did with so little”

2:8-9 – “by grace” / “through faith” / “gift of God” / “not of works” – God did it, but we need to walk in it!

Wuest – “By grace you have been saved completely in past time, with the present result that you are in a state of salvation which persists through the present time”

Salvation is the most elastic word in the Bible

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Justification - Past – “I was saved” - Penalty of sin

Sanctification - Present – “I am being saved” - Power of sin

Glorification - Future – “I will be saved” - Presence of sin

2:10 – “we are His workmanship” – God is working to the outside what He has deposited on the inside – we were created to perform good works

2:10 – “that we should walk in them” – literally, we should order our lives within the sphere of the works God has destined for us to perform

2:11 – “remember” – look back with appreciation for what God has done

2:12 – “without Christ, being aliens ... strangers ... having no hope”

2:13 – “Made nigh by the blood of Christ”

2:14 – “he is our peace” – Christ not only gives peace (temporary), He is our peace (permanent)

2:14 – “made both one” – Jew and Gentile, (later in Ephesians) husband and wife – they are together what neither of them could be apart

2:14 – “broken down the middle wall of partition” – unity

2:15 – “enmity” – great hostility or extreme conflict – the law was the root cause of this hostility, but Jesus fulfilled the law and abolished the conflict

2:15 – “make in himself” – Jesus became sin that we might become righteous (i.e. injecting a virus in the bloodstream to create an antibody)

2:16-17 – “afar off” = Gentiles / “nigh” = Jews / now “one body”

2:18 – “access” – depicts a formal entrance into the presence of a king or deity (i.e. a “royal audience”)

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

“Let your conversation be without

covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

2:19 – “household of God” – you live here! (“what are you doing standing outside ringing the bell when Jesus died to give you the key?!”)

2:20 – we are built on the “foundation” of what the apostles (NT) and prophets (OT) said, and on the cornerstone of what Jesus did

2:21 – “fitly framed together” – you cannot be independent and be part of the Body of Christ / you are not “fitly framed” if you are not growing

How have you grown in your spiritual life in the last year? What is different about you today? Are you growing, or are you just “holding your own”?

2:22 – “builded together” – Satan’s only hope of overthrowing our faith is creating disunity (you have never seen two demons fighting, because they are united!)

You cannot love Christ without loving His body!

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

Oneness is more than a doctrine about the Godhead!

LESSON 41:

Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) – Part 3

The Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left

it up to us to enforce every day in earth’s trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a Believers Boot Camp, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. Victory is ours if we fight for it! Ephesians is serious training for serious Christians.

When people become Christians one of the hardest things to do is to retrain them not to continue to operate according to the world system. It took one night to get Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to get Egypt out of them. There is always a battle between the new man and the old man. And that is why we need teaching like Paul gives to us in Ephesians.

The attitude of worship we walk in daily is the classroom of the Holy Spirit. The more we cultivate a worshipful life, the more He can teach us the ways of God. As we grow up in the Lord, we understand more and we surrender more. As we remain faithful to God’s Word and follow the leading of His Spirit, we will give up idols, put off sinful thinking, and crucify the flesh – over and over and over again! And we each new revelation about God, our worship becomes richer.

When we consider worship in light of Ephesians, we can see why Paul waits until chapter three to declare that he is a prisoner. Worship is different than praise, because the worshipper has stepped beyond praising God for their condition to worshipping Him from their position. Paul was not forced to be a prisoner of Jesus Christ – he chose to become that!

Worship is not accomplished in “services” – rather, worship is our “service” to God.

The message is far more important than the messenger. In fact, the messenger’s life is just a canvas for the message. From the first moment of his encounter with the Lord, Paul signed up for hardships.

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5 - KJV).

“And Saul said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. It is dangerous and it will turn out badly for you to keep kicking against the goad [to offer vain and perilous resistance]” (Acts 9:5 - AMP).

“For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:16).

3:1 - Paul had a Jewish pedigree, but he became a prisoner on behalf of Gentiles he wouldn't have even spoken to before he knew Jesus Christ!

3:2 – “dispensation” – “administration” (Paul's role to the Gentiles)

3:3 – the church is “the mystery” – the carnal mind cannot understand it – unbelievers are supposed to think teachings of Scripture are ridiculous!

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

In Scripture, a mystery is not something “hidden” but something “revealed” – that is why a lifestyle of worship is foundational and non-negotiable, because it brings revelation to you!

3:5 – we are highly privileged to live in the church age

3:6 – God broke all protocol in saving the Gentiles!

“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have

bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (Luke 14:16-24).

Three Calls to the Feast:

- Them that were bidden – the Jews
- The poor, maimed, halt, and blind – the Gentiles
- Yet there is room / highways and hedges – last days revival!

3:7 – Paul is referring to the miraculous moment of his conversion

3:8 – “less than the least of all saints” – Paul stood in awe that God would save a murderer of Christians and call him to be an Apostle!

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9).

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15).

3:8 – “unsearchable” = “inexhaustible”

3:9 – “fellowship of the mystery / hid in God” – revelation of the church hidden in the Old

Testament, but even Gentiles who obeyed were blessed

“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:25-27).

“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Matthew 8:8-10).

3:9 – “created all things by Jesus Christ” – the same God who brought a world out of nothing brings His church out of nothing!

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

3:10 – “to the intent that now” – what was hidden before is revealed now

God always reveals Himself, His principles and His purposes progressively in stages. You couldn't take it all at once, that's why God waited until now in your life. With God, timing is everything – catch His “proceeding” Word!

Progressive Revelation – a nameless animal was sacrificed to be a covering for Adam's sins in Genesis, a lamb for Abel's sins later on, Exodus shows us that this blood sacrifice is to be applied, Leviticus tells us that it is to be a

spotless male lamb, Isaiah tells us that the lamb is actually a man, but we don't know which man until John the Baptist says, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth (continually) out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Hebrews 1:3).

“So shall my word be that goeth (continually) forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

When God says something, His Word continues to work (“let there be light”); the same Word that delivered you still says “You shall live ...”

3:11 – “eternal purpose” – what happens to you as a child of God in time was predestined in eternity – God didn't just redeem you in time, but in eternity (Rev. 13:8 – “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”)

God fixed it in eternity, and then manifested it in time.

That's why it is only “a matter of time” before God brings me out of my trouble, because He fixed it in eternity!

3:12 – “boldness and access with confidence” (!) 3:12 – “by the faith of him” – we live by his faith!

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave

himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

The only thing still alive when Jesus went into the tomb was the words He had spoken by faith. Many times, our faith and confidence in the Word is all we have when we are buried in our trials! And without the resurrection of Jesus, we would have no proof that “His faith” actually worked.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

3:13 – tribulation for the gospel’s sake brings glory to God and to His church – your tribulations are not only for you – your experiences impact others

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We are not going from battle to battle and from trial to trial, but we are going from revelation to revelation, from victory to victory, and from glory to glory!

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;” (2 Timothy 1:8).

“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Timothy 2:9).

You can’t do anything in your own strength that has eternal benefits anyway!

3:14 – “for this cause I bow” – Paul is in awe of the plan of God

3:15 – “the whole family” – the church is bigger than North America, and the church is also bigger than now (it reaches to the past and the future); the whole family includes an innumerable host of saints, and even the angels – remember that you have never worshipped alone!

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 12:1).

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psalms 34:7).

God knows how to use what we do and say today to bless someone around the world – or even someone in “the whole family” in a future generation!

3:16 – “inner man” – not “inner child” – you are called to be mature, strengthened by God to be mature, and expected to be mature!

3:17 – “dwell” – “to live in as a home” – this means that Christ is not just living in our hearts, but that He is “feeling at home” in us!

3:17 – “rooted and grounded” – securely fixed! 3:19 – “passeth knowledge” – greater than what you can figure out!

There is no dysfunction in a child who knows that they are truly loved – God’s love dispels our dependence on others for our happiness.

3:20 – “exceeding abundantly above all” – English translators are struggling a bit here to give us the sense that God’s power is “over the top”

3:20 – “according” – common word in Ephesians, meaning “in harmony with” – in the

first two chapters refers to something God or the devil did (in spirit realm) – here it is used to refer to something that we as the church allow!

3:21 – “Amen” – “absolutely, unequivocally true” – you can’t argue with a statement that has an “Amen” at the end of it!

“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Romans 16:20).

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

LESSON 42:

Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) – Part 4

The Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left it up to us to enforce every day in earth’s trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a Believers Boot Camp, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. Victory is ours if we fight for it! Ephesians is serious training for serious Christians.

When people become Christians one of the hardest things to do is to retrain them not to continue to operate according to the world system. It took one night to get Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to get Egypt out of them. There is always a battle between the new man and the old man. And that is why we need teaching like Paul gives to us in Ephesians.

4:1 - God often calls you to do things you cannot do (i.e. He called Peter to walk on the

water, and Lazarus to come out of the grave) – He imparts His ability to us as we walk with Him

4:1 – “walk worthy” – walk as though you were already at the place you are pursuing - don’t walk according to where you are (faith calls those things that are not as though they were)

4:2 – “with all lowliness” – the higher the call, the lower you must be; the more gifted you are, the more humble you must be

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

4:3 – fulfilling our calling is inseparably tied to our allegiance to one another; unity costs something, and unity will be a struggle

4:3 – “spirit of unity” – unity is impossible apart from the Holy Spirit (how the Spirit is leading our church is far more important than my preferences!)

4:4 – “one Body and one Spirit” – coming into God’s presence means that we have to come into each other’s presence – whether you understand and like me or not, He’s my God too!

4:6 – our “oneness” is a dynamic oneness – it takes God to hold it together

4:7 – “grace” = “graciousness” (the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life) – we need this to get along with each other!

4:8 – the OT saints were held captive by the grave but not the NT church!

4:9-10 – Jesus went into Hell itself – so we would never have to go there!

4:11 – five-fold leadership ministries in the church

Thumb Finger – Apostle - touches all other ministries

Index Finger - Prophet - gives direction

Middle Finger - Evangelist - reaches furthest

Ring Finger – Pastor - in covenant with local church

Little Finger - Teacher - brings balance

4:12 – this is not the “threefold job description of the fivefold ministry” – church leadership has one job, to perfect (“mature”) the saints – so they can do the work of the ministry and edify (“grow, build up”) the Body

4:13 – mature saints are unified – with each other, their pastor, the church

4:14 – “lie in wait to deceive” - Paul is again “wolf-proofing” them!

4:15 – “speaking the truth in love” - speaking the truth takes boldness, and speaking in love takes kindness - you need both

4:16 – to be “fitly joined” is not just being “loosely joined” – we are not independent, but interdependent

4:16 – “every joint ... every part” - when one part of the Body doesn't work properly, we all suffer for it

4:16 – “edifying” - a building term, basically meaning “renovating” - the human body is so smart that any time you introduce a foreign element, it will automatically resist it (sickness, diet) and compensate for it

In order to be loyal to that which you have been called to, you may have to be disloyal to that which you have been called from

4:17 – “vanity of their mind” – the human ego can't function in God's kingdom unless it has

been tempered by the Holy Spirit

4:18 – “ignorance” - they may be very intelligent, but they are ignorant in this area because they are in the dark (they are not walking in light)

4:19 – “lasciviousness” means unrestrained action (with no boundaries) - if we are not going to be like the world, we need to have “restrained action”

4:22 & 4:24 – “put off” and “put on”

4:23 – what is between “put off” and “put on”? – renew your mind (change your attitude)

Your “new clothes” may not immediately be as comfortable as your “old clothes” – but keep putting them on, by practicing until your new actions become a habit (“but doing that feels like a ‘put on,’ Pastor!” – exactly!)

This is not being a hypocrite, it is restraining yourself to walk with God and restraining your old self from walking in sin

Four Things To Put Off:

4:25 – **Lying** – be honest in word and spirit (the impressions you give)

4:26-27 – **Anger** – deal with your feelings immediately and biblically

4:28 – **Stealing** – get a job (!), and be generous with what you have

4:29 – **Corrupt Talk** – not just filthy talk, but negative talk as well

4:27 – “place” = “territory”

4:29 – “edifying ... minister grace” – if your communication destroys unity or damages a brother or sister, it may be “right” but it is still Wrong!

4:30 – “grieve” – to outrage and humiliate (i.e. a King deposed from his throne by his own subjects – Jesus' throne is your heart!)

4:31 – **Six things that grieve the Holy Spirit**
Bitterness – motivated by unforgiveness

Wrath – motivated by a desire for revenge

Anger – motivated by a loss of power

Clamor – motivated by discontent

Evil Speaking – motivated by jealousy

Malice – motivated by hatred

4:32 – “Be kind” (not “feel” kind)

4:32 – “as God” – when we begin to see others as God sees them, we will be “tender” toward them and forgive them even when they are undeserving

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15).

LESSON 43:

Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) – Part 5

The Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left it up to us to enforce every day in earth’s trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a Believers Boot Camp, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. Victory is ours if we fight for it! Ephesians is serious training for serious Christians.

When people become Christians one of the hardest things to do is to retrain them not to continue to operate according to the world system. It took one night to get Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to get Egypt out of them. There is always a battle between the new man and the old man. And that is why we need teaching like Paul gives to us in Ephesians.

5:1 – “followers of God” – the basic idea of Christianity is to imitate Christ (do outwardly for others what He has done inwardly for you)

5:2 - don't put all the blame on God for your shortcomings - you need to put your flesh on the altar as a sacrifice - just like Jesus did

5:3 – “fornication” – all kinds of sexual sin

5:4 – “filthiness” – don’t talk dirty / “foolish talking” – don’t talk silly

5:5 – “idolater” – idolatry is putting anything else before God in my life

5:8 – “children of light” = “native to the light”

5:11 – “unfruitful works” – when we are born again, the enemy has no right to reproduce his fruit in our lives anymore

5:11 – “reprove” = expose, rebuke, discipline, convict, correct and expel – there can be no compromise with the unfruitful works of darkness – shine the light on them and purge them!

5:12 - when you speak of something you magnify (intensify) it - that's why this generation is worse than any previous generation, because they have put immorality in “public” more than any generation before them - when you speak of something, it reproduces because you give it permission to exist – but the good news is that this works for good things too!

5:14 – if you are a Christian, don’t let the world lull you to sleep!

5:15 – “circumspectly” = carefully, purposefully, worthily, accurately

5:16 – “time” = “kairos” (special moments of God’s visitation) – not “chronos” (time measured by the clock)

5:18 – there are many parallels between the intoxication of wine and the intoxication of the Spirit (!) – they were mistaken for being drunk on the Day of Pentecost – you lose your inhibitions under Holy Ghost influence!

5:19 – speaking and singing to yourself - not just listening to others speak and sing about God - this is real relationship!

5:21 – God has chosen submission as the principle of the kingdom that sets the tone for all relationships

Submission is when you give up your will for mine (“sub-mission” - your mission under my mission) - there is no submission when there is not disagreement or conflict (that is not submission, that is just agreement)

5:22-33 – The Mystery Of Christian Marriage

- marriage is not the issue here, the "mystery" is the issue - God wants you to make your marriage a sacrifice unto Him so that people who do not see the "mystery" can see your marriage, and through seeing your marriage understand the "mystery" of Christ and His church!
- both the man and the woman are deeply challenged here to "play their part" - wives submit like the church, husbands love like Christ - God says, "in the process of you struggling to play your roles, you will appreciate even more what I have done for you"
- the only way a marriage can survive for years is for the man to crucify his flesh and for the wife to make her flesh submit ("not my will but thine")

5:26 - Christ loved something that He had to keep working on, but He didn't leave it - that is the pattern for Christian marriage!

5:28 - to the degree you love your wife, you love yourself; to the degree you hate your wife, you hate yourself

5:29 - "nourisheth" = "to feed" / "cherisheth" = "to esteem"

- the most intimate relationship I have on earth is what God wants to use to portray His relationship with His church - God wants to use our house to preach to our

community - who we are at home is who we really are

5:33 – commands are different – husbands love and wives reverence (“respect”)

When Satan tempted Eve, he was trying to get to Adam. Satan doesn't dare attack God directly (he already did that and lost!), so he attacks the church. If he can destroy our unity, he can hinder the work of God on earth.

When a man and a woman "connect" they produce fruit - just like God and His church - that's why the serpent attacked their union in Eden

The church is both the bride of Christ and the body of Christ - Eve was both the bride and the body of Adam (flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone).

The fall of humanity didn't take place when Eve was deceived and ate. It took place when Adam deliberately and intentionally ate. Eve was deceived, but Adam decided - and it was his decision that caused the fall of humanity.

The sins we commit that are borne of deception do not strike at the very nature of our relationship with God. These sins are readily confessed, repented, and cast aside. But the sins we commit out of our will – as a conscious decision and plan of action – are destructive and deadly to our relationship with God.

When Adam and Eve both entered into a state of death, everything under their domain came under death. That's what a kingdom is – a domain over which you have dominion. It is what you rule and govern. And when a king falls, his kingdom falls with him.

When Eve took the forbidden fruit, Adam knew she was going to die - he said, "I love her so much I am willing to die with her," and he ate too.

The first Adam's mistake was that he loved the gift more than he loved the giver. Everything they produced after that and everything they had domain over fell too!

In God's eyes there were only two men ever created - the first Adam and the second Adam - and everything else was born of one of them!

God brought forth a Bride out of the first Adam, and God brought forth a Bride out of the second Adam (out of his side came blood and water).

The first Adam said "since my wife is going to die, I'll die with her" - but the second Adam said "since my wife is already dead, I'll die for her!" (substitutionary sacrifice)

Sin is not normal behavior for the believer. Sin is never to be routine for the believer. Sin is not inevitable for the believer. We are set free!

LESSON 44:
Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) –
Part 6

The Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left it up to us to enforce every day in earth's trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a Believers Boot Camp, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. Victory is ours if we fight for it! Ephesians is serious training for serious Christians.

The book of Ephesians is the NT equivalent of the OT book of Joshua – we are people on the verge of an entirely new experience, ready to fight for the territory that God has promised us. This is the book where the Apostle Paul commands, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!" And that is just what God commanded Joshua – "Be strong and of a good courage!"

We are truly the Joshua Generation ...

- Serving the generation that came before us with submission
- Not murmuring against God or His appointed leadership
- Knowing that God could have fulfilled His promise before now (!)
- Ready to take God at His word and fight for new territory!

In chapter six, Paul is going to teach us about wearing the armor of God – but before he gets us ready to war, he teaches us to submit. That is what Believer's Bootcamp is about anyway – bringing a civilian's will into line with military standards, codes, rules, regulations, and ways of thinking.

Our relationship with God is the only relationship in which we know that the other party is right all the time. But God puts us in human relationships, where there are times that the authority we are submitted to is not right. Why? So we can learn submission to Him (not them!).

6:1 – the best time to learn obedience and submission is as a young child – parents, don't neglect to teach respect for authority to your children!

6:1 – God doesn't expect children to understand everything their parents tell them to do, He just expects them to obey – and this principle applies to His own (spiritual) children

6:2-3 – compare the lives of those having respect for authority with the lives of those who don't – all behavior has consequences – what a difference!

If you can learn a principle on any level (or at any age) you can learn it on every level (i.e. tithe on your first dollar!).

6:4 – God's plan for His people is filled with checks and balances – submission must occur in an environment of mutual submission

6:4 – the command is given to the father (our society leaves nurturing to the mother) - children learn their values from the authority figure at home

6:5-6 – your work ethic on your secular job is a concern to God because it concerns your character (how you act when no one is looking)

6:6 – “eyeservice” - you only do what is right when someone is looking!

6:7-8 – we are rewarded by the Lord, not necessarily by the person or place we invest in His Kingdom – we do all of our work for Him! (stop looking to others to compensate you for what you do for them!)

God simplified NT church structure by giving only one job opening to every member – slave (i.e. Jesus washed His disciples' feet) – the term means a servant so devoted that, even if they were offered their freedom, they would refuse it because of their lifelong commitment to their beloved master! As slaves to Christ, we are truly free!

“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever” (Exodus 21:5-6).

None of us has any justifiable excuse for ever saying, “That job is beneath me” – sorry if you think you’re too good for the job, but no other openings are available in God’s kingdom! None of us ever has a justifiable reason for ever saying, “They were using me at that church” – that’s why we got into God’s Kingdom, to be used by the Lord!

6:9 – God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), But He is a respecter of principles ... and of passion!

6:9 – when you are in a position of leadership, don't take advantage of others / no one should lead who has never followed! (Joshua was a great leader because he had submitted to a flawed leader like Moses)

Why has Paul spent so much time talking about submission? Because when soldiers are submitted they will not break rank, and they will win!

There are things that God will show you (and even let you taste), but then He will expect you to fight for it (i.e. the spies in Jericho).

6:10 – members of the NT church must be strong - that is a mandate from God - not weak, not passive, not indifferent, not whining, but strong

The strength of God is not proven by how much you can avoid, it is proven by how much you can endure (i.e. Jesus on the cross).

Some Christians have never really had to suffer anything, but yet they complain about their "light afflictions" - wouldn't a "testimony service" in Heaven be a bit embarrassing?!

6:11 – Put on the armour of God, and put off your own ideas and strategies – the devil is too smart for you if you fight in your own strength (“wiles” = “trickery”)

6:12 – don't respond in the flesh because you are actually being attacked in the spirit – don't let the problem back you off from the promise (we have become so secular that we think everything we are facing is natural; today we "counsel" instead of "wrestle" – but it doesn't help!)

6:13 – it is His armour, but it is your stand ... we must engage in spiritual warfare because Satan opposes every step we take ... one principle governing the receiving of God's blessings – not without struggle! (your promise is always locked up behind a problem – i.e.

Jericho)

We live simultaneously in two spheres of existence – the spiritual realm and the natural realm. The spiritual realm is the “parent” realm from which everything natural is given birth; the natural realm is simply an outworking of the spiritual realm. You cannot defeat the Enemy in the natural realm! You must defeat him in the spiritual realm, and then the natural realm will fall in line with what has been accomplished in the Spirit.

People are not your enemy – the devil is your enemy!

6:14-17 – every piece of the armour of God pertains to our identity in Christ

- Loins girt about with truth - Base your entire life on pure motives
- Breastplate of righteousness - Guard your heart with holiness
- Feet shod with peace - Lack of peace indicates lack of balance
- Shield of faith - “Soak your shield” in the Word of God
- Helmet of salvation - Keep your mind on one thing – salvation!
- Sword of the Spirit - To wield the sword you must know the Word

6:18 – this generation has done more with praise than any other generation, but they still haven't learned how to pray (must be a balance!)

When the church doesn't pray, we are not even on the battleground!

6:19-20 – those that carry the “mystery” are on the hit list of Hell, but the bonds can't stop the “ambassador in bonds”!

6:21-22 – “my affairs” – pray thoroughly, and with accurate information – Pray all the way through a problem – pray the details!

LESSON 45:

Cross My Heart, Part 1

Cardiologists use a procedure called an arteriogram to diagnose the health of a patient's heart. It is an X-ray of the arteries taken after dye is injected into the bloodstream, allowing doctors to pinpoint blockages in the arteries that serve as conduits carrying blood from the heart.

But apart from an arteriogram, a life-threatening heart problem can go undetected for years. An individual who has blockage will experience symptoms, but these symptoms may not seem to be directly associated with the heart. Arterial blockage can manifest itself through back pain, inability to sleep, anxiety, loss of appetite, indigestion, nausea, vision change, even loss of memory.

These symptoms are often treated as isolated issues unrelated to the health of the heart, and the right medications can take the edge off most of these symptoms. The problem, of course, is that treating the symptoms masks the real culprit. And it actually delays treatment of the problem, thus leaving the problem to worsen.

Physical heart disease parallels spiritual heart disease.

You have another heart:

- The invisible part of you that philosophers, poets and preachers refer to all the time
- The thing that got broken in the ninth grade when what's-her-name said she just wanted to be friends
- The part of you that swells up with pride when you see your kids do something great
- The thing that gets all nostalgic when you hear an old song from your dating days
- That mysterious, wonderful, confusing part of you that enables you to love, laugh, fear and experience life
- The sphere in which relationships happen and in which relationships are broken

We are also tempted to treat the symptoms that stem from an unhealthy spiritual heart while ignoring the deeper issues. But as is the case with the physical heart, eventually the root problem will become the real problem. Just as a heart attack has the potential to destroy your body, so spiritual heart disease has the potential to destroy you and your most valuable relationships.

Life can be hard on the heart, because the world is full of outside influences that have the power to disrupt its rhythm. Over time you develop habits that slowly erode your heart's sensitivity. The inevitable pain and disappointment of life cause you to set up walls around your heart. At the end of the day, your heart gets out of sync with the rhythm it was created to maintain. And if left alone, these "heart attackers" will linger for a lifetime and do incredible damage.

The reason we rarely stop to monitor our hearts is that it was never encouraged. As children, we were taught instead to monitor our behavior. If we behaved properly good things happened, regardless of what was going on in our hearts. We modified our behavior to avoid pain, and we've been doing it ever since. Consequently, we become much better at monitoring our behavior (actions and words) than our hearts.

But pretending all the time can be problematic because it allows you to ignore the true condition of your heart. Eventually your heart – the real you – will outpace your attempts to monitor and filter everything you say and do. The unresolved issues in your heart will eventually work their way to the surface. Specifically, they will seep into your actions, your character, and your relationships. If your heart continues to go unmonitored, things will worsen to the point that you are no longer able to contain it with carefully managed words and behaviors.

Maybe you've already noticed things starting to slip a bit. Maybe you've always been able to contain your anger, but lately there's an edge in your voice that scares even you. You know you should be happy about the good thing that happened to your friend, but for some reason you're not – in fact, you resent them for it. You behave like everything is okay – but it's not. These are merely symptoms of a deeper struggle. Your heart is under assault, and it could be that you are losing – primarily through neglect, because you have not been monitoring it closely.

Evidence of an internal battle includes statements like these:

- I can't believe I just said that.
- I can't believe I did that.
- That's not like me (or later on, "that's just the way I am").
- I just "lost it."
- I don't know where that came from.

So where did that come from? From the heart! You think your mistake was an exception – and in one way it was. It was an exception to your general rule of not allowing what's in your heart to be exposed to the rest of the world. But in reality, that embarrassing mistake was not an exception to what is in your heart – it was a reflection of it!

Have you ever heard this? "He's got a good heart." Wrong!

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 - ESV).

The people closest to you routinely catch the flak thrown off by the explosive stuff you work so hard to keep hidden. It's doesn't come out among casual acquaintances or in social settings; it comes out among those close to you, when you've turned off the safety valve and let down your defenses. That's why we actually hurt most those we love most.

We are mad but don't know why. We are discontent but can find no real reason to feel that way. We're resentful toward certain types of people, though they have done nothing to deserve it. We are jealous while knowing all the time that it is foolish to dislike somebody just for having something we don't. None of these things make any sense, but they are real. And if left unchecked, they have the potential to drive us into self-destructive and relationship-wrecking behavior patterns.

Your heart seeps into every conversation. It dictates every relationship. It impacts the intensity of your communication. It exaggerates your sensitivities and insensitivities. Everything passes through your heart.

People have even developed language to describe it when things get lodged in their hearts. ("I'll never let anyone hurt me like that again!") Out of their mouth pours the junk connected to a wounded heart – and they will insist that you are the problem. Hurt people hurt people.

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matthew 15:18).

Your mouth serves as a stethoscope to listen to your heart.

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:" (Matthew 15:19).

Heart issues make intimacy difficult to maintain because intimacy revolves around knowing and being known. Secrets can damage the heart, because they make us build walls in our relationships. That's because we usually suspect in others what we are guilty of ourselves.

Sometimes these unresolved hurts run so deep that they erase a person's faith in God. They just can't believe in a God who would let

that happen to them or to someone they love.

How are things with your heart? Not your career, your family, your reputation, or your finances. Your heart. It's an awkward question.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" (Proverbs 4:23 - NLT).

We need more than a sophisticated filter for our behavior, we need a new heart! Christianity is not about behaving (just having a Christian "filter"), it is about getting a new heart!

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Only God can give us a new heart. Note that He gave this promise to people who already had God's list of Top Ten Behaviors to guide them. But clearly it wasn't enough for them to know what to do, they needed to change from the inside out in order to follow through.

"Doctor, fix my heart (so I won't be so tired), then I'll exercise" – no – "exercise and it will fix your heart!"

How long do you plan to let the people and circumstances that have hurt you control you? Pick a date! (not just "pray this prayer" – make a decision!). How long will you let it go on? A day? A week? A month? A year? A decade? Until the day before you die?

Is everything okay with your heart?

- Are you angry at anybody?
- Are you waiting around for someone to come to you to make things right?
- Have you had any extended imaginary conversations with anyone lately?
- Do things come out of your mouth on a regular basis that you have to apologize for?
- Have you secretly celebrated someone's failure in the last several days?

- Do you have any secrets eating at you?
- Is there anything going on that you hope nobody discovers?
- Is there a question you hope nobody ever asks you?
- Have you lied recently to someone that you love?

Guilt – I owe you (confession)

Anger – you owe me (forgiveness)

Greed – I owe me (giving)

Jealousy – God owes me (celebration)

LESSON 46: *Cross My Heart, Part 2*

In the English language we have many heart idioms, and a few of them give away just how sick the heart can get ... a bleeding heart, a broken heart, pour your heart out, cry your heart out, eat your heart out, rip your heart out, a hard heart, a heart of stone, sick at heart, wear your heart on your sleeve ... (What is in the heart will eventually make itself known!)

“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:” (Matthew 15:18-19).

We have learned to guard our behavior, but we have never learned to monitor our hearts. That is what gets us in trouble.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23 - KJV).

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do” (Proverbs 4:23 - NLT).

We are tempted to treat the symptoms that stem from an unhealthy spiritual heart while ignoring the deeper issues. But as is the case with the physical heart, eventually the root problem will become the real problem. Just as

a heart attack has the potential to destroy your body, so spiritual heart disease has the potential to destroy you and your most valuable relationships.

Things that stay in the darkness grow exponentially over time, and finally break through the filter we have put in place. They cause us to act in ways that others don't understand, and develop habits that even we don't understand (and can't break).

We've already talked about the way these “heart attackers” work, but today we're going to start studying four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart. Each one of them causes an imbalance that makes us “sick.” And each one of them creates this imbalance through a debt – debtor relationship. Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid – it causes an awkward imbalance in the relationship (“an elephant in the room”) because there's a debt.

Guilt is the first of these factors. And let's say first thing that guilt should not be part of the culture of the New Testament church!

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).

Jesus didn't leverage guilt to manipulate people into following Him, because only guilty people use guilt to control others. He wasn't guilty!

Code Blue: Guilt says “I owe you.”

Think about it – “I owe you an apology” or “let me make it up to you.” Why do we say things like that? Because a debt – debtor relationship has been created! For example, you can't have a relationship with someone who won't tell you the truth because they have robbed you of something important. If someone leaves their spouse or family, they have robbed them of their future, their self-esteem, etc.

Guilt is simply that inner sense that says “I took something from someone” (I owe you), but we don’t experience it quite that accurately – guilt is simply experienced as a huge weight that we carry around. And we carry the unresolved guilt we pick up into all our other relationships! Our guilt becomes so much a part of us that we don’t even recognize it.

Underneath guilt is anger against ourselves – “I let me down!” So the only way I can excuse me not living up to my expectations is to never let you live up to my expectations either! That’s why it’s almost impossible to please a guilty person. Since I disappointed me, I have to figure out a way for you to disappoint me as well.

But I can’t change the past! Yes you can – because guilt grows in the darkness but it dissipates in the light. But there are only two options – you either have to pay the person back (which is often impossible in relationships), or you have to ask them to cancel the debt!

Open confession breaks the power of guilt! (spotlight)

The Bible has far more to say about confessing to other people than it does about confessing to God. God already knows! You only get rid of guilt when you go to the person you offended.

“Say to the Israelites: When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged” (Numbers 5:6-7 – NIV).

“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation

come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:8-9).

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).

Our relationship with God hinges on our relationship with others! You cannot resolve your differences with God if you are unwilling to resolve your differences with others. You cannot be in fellowship with God and out of fellowship with others over something you have done.

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

The goal of confession isn’t simply a clear conscience, the goal is a changed life. You live from your heart, so you have to shine God’s spotlight on its hidden parts to cure the disease of guilt. Confessing secretly to God is no substitute for confessing openly to someone you have wronged. Sins that you only confess to God you tend to repeat, because confession hasn’t changed you. (i.e. confessing that you cheated on a test to the teacher will probably prevent it in the future!) Besides, you didn’t steal from God, you stole from them!

But my life is much more complicated – I didn’t cheat on a test, I cheated on my marriage! Do you know how much it will hurt them if I confess? Confession doesn’t hurt people; concealment hurts people. They already know something is wrong ... and your heart is rotting away! This fear of consequences is why we see last-minute deathbed confessions – but what a tragedy that people live their whole life under such weight.

When you confess, your outside world may

become momentarily far more complicated, but your inside world will become free. When you confess, you'll be able to accept others with all their failures because their failures won't constantly remind you of your own. And you will finally be able to forgive yourself. You will be free!

The penalty for our sin has been dealt with once and for all; but the consequences of our sins are a different matter altogether.

The same Bible that assures us of God's forgiveness also teaches the principle of restitution. Forgiveness from God does not erase our need to take responsibility for what we have done. In fact, our gratitude alone should compel us to confess and clear the slate.

Open confession breaks the power of guilt!

Others may very well be held hostage to bitterness and anger over what you have done to them. You're kidding yourself if you think everyone you have wronged has simply forgiven you and gone on with their life. Sure, that's what they ought to do – but you didn't do what you ought to have done either!

If you really want to understand the power of confession, turn it around and put yourself on the receiving end. Whose apology do you most desire and least expect? Who is it that seems completely insensitive to the trouble or hurt they caused you? Imagine how you would feel if you got a surprise visit from that person. How would you feel if that individual walked in, sat down, and took full responsibility for what he or she had done? Imagine what might transpire in your heart if, with sincere humility, that person offered to do anything within his or her power to make restitution for what had been taken from you. You would never be the same! Likewise, your words may bring healing to a wounded soul.

How are things in your heart? Do you have any secrets?

Code Blue: Guilt

LESSON 47: ***Cross My Heart, Part 3***

Have you ever had a wasp in your car? A rat in your house? A hive of bees under your front step? If you did, you wouldn't think of just leaving it alone, you would deal with it!

But we leave things lodged in our hearts for years that are extremely dangerous to our relationships! That's just plain stupid!

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23 - KJV).

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" (Proverbs 4:23 - NLT).

We are tempted to treat the symptoms that stem from an unhealthy spiritual heart while ignoring the deeper issues. But as is the case with the physical heart, eventually the root problem will become the real problem. Just as a heart attack can destroy your body, spiritual heart disease will eventually destroy you and your most valuable relationships.

Today we're going to continue studying four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart. Each one of them causes an imbalance that makes us "sick." And each one of them creates this imbalance through a debt – debtor relationship. Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid – it causes an awkward imbalance in the relationship ("an elephant in the room") because there's a debt.

Guilt says, "I owe you."

A second factor that actually works the opposite way:

Code Red: Anger says "you owe me."

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26).

“Be ye angry” – for some of you, that could be your life verse! The problem is not getting angry, it is carrying anger into our relationships. The commandment here is not “don’t be angry!” It doesn’t deal with how you feel, it deals with what you do.

And remember that Paul wrote this Scripture from prison – he had definitely been treated unjustly! In doing so, he proves to us conclusively that anger is not an issue of circumstance, it is a heart issue.

Anger is the result of not getting what I want or deserve from others – you owe me! You stole my reputation, my purity, my childhood years; you owe me friendship, a happy marriage, a second chance.

It’s easy to believe that the remedy for anger is payback. After all, people ought to pay what they owe! So often you and I spend much of our lives waiting for debts to be paid that actually can’t be paid. And if anger gets lodged in my heart, I will eventually come to believe that everybody owes me. That’s why anger leaves a trail of destruction in its wake – because an angry person approaches life and relationships looking to be paid back.

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” means carry your anger as short a time as possible! Don’t carry anger from one relationship into another! Don’t carry anger from one season of life into another – let the sun set on that painful season!

“Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27).

When you carry anger, you actually open the door of your heart to the devil (“accuser”) and invite his influence into your life!

Anger is an open account (a debt – debtor relationship) in your heart. The problem is that most times you have forgotten the original source of your anger, and you have turned it

on others. But they can’t help you close the account because the account is not with them! It’s like they’re accidentally bumping up against old wounds – and you explode!

That’s why the closer someone gets to an angry person, the more likely it is that they will get “dumped on” for no apparent reason. That’s why you can’t please an angry person – even if you are not directly the cause of their anger. They can’t let you “get it right” or they would lose their excuse to complain about life in general.

If you feel compelled to excuse or defend your attitude, if you feel compelled to tell your side of the story – then you are an angry person! You like your tale of woe because it forces people to cut you some slack, and it explains your tendency to over-react, to say cutting things, to lash out, and to be moody. You think your anger not only explains your behavior, but justifies it. But you are wrong!

Your anger is a crutch. You are nursing an old injury that should have healed by now, but your “limp” has become a way of life.

Anger likes to hide in the dark corners of the heart, with its actual causes unexplained and unidentified, because your “real story” loses its potency when it is exposed to the light.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:” (Ephesians 4:31).

Paul lists every relational wedge he can think of. He says to clean out the garbage that is in your heart! Close the account on your anger!

If you just received a cancer diagnosis, your main concern would not be “how did I get it?” Your main concern would be “how do I get rid of it?” That’s the way it must be with your anger. The issue is not “who is responsible?” The issue is “how do I get rid of this anger?”

The only cure for anger is forgiveness. Forgiveness closes the account, shuts the

door, cancels the debt, and breaks the power of anger. “But if I forgive them, it lets them off the hook!” That’s exactly right – getting rid of anger bypasses “fairness,” overlooks “payback,” skips “resolving it,” and refuses “telling your side.” But it is still the best (and only) option, because remember that they can’t pay you back anyway!

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

When I cancel the debt, I decide that you don’t owe me any more! That’s hard, but it’s exactly what Jesus did for us – even when He didn’t share in the blame (like you do!). After we see what He did for us on Calvary, then maybe we can ask “now what was your story again?”

If God can close the account on me, then I can close the account on you.

Yes, life has been unfair to you – and people have been unfair to you. If we listened to your story long enough, we might even be tempted to join your crusade for fairness! Paul could have (and should have) felt the same way. The bottom line is that you can choose to be a victim.

- Victims are powerless
- Victims always have an excuse
- Victims have no control over their lives and their feelings
- Victims are at the mercy of others
- Victims can only react
- Victims are held prisoner by their circumstances

In time we come to believe the lie that it’s okay to be angry ... But you can be a victor instead of a victim.

- Identify who you are really angry with (look back a few seasons).
- Decide what was taken from you (know what is on the account).
- Cancel that debt (maybe burn it or bury it

literally – “gravesite”).

- Stay in the habit of canceling all debts from this point forward.

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells the story of two debt – debtor relationships. In the first, a servant with a debt of several million dollars is totally forgiven by his king. But in the second, a servant with a debt of a few thousand dollars is refused forgiveness – by the same forgiven debtor! As a result, the first debtor is placed back under the bondage of his original debt by the king. And Jesus says, “that’s what God will do to you if you refuse to ‘close the account’ with those who ‘owe’ you!”

Forgive, or you will pay dearly. If you demand payment, you will pay. To refuse forgiveness is to choose self-destruction. But if you cancel the debt, you will be set free along with your debtor! (Some of the feelings may remain for awhile, but you decide to cancel the debt.)

How long will you choose to keep that account open?

Yes, you have every right to remain angry – but do you really want to? You don’t have to let your past control your present and your future!

Throw away your crutch!

Code Red: Anger

Is everything okay with your heart today?

“For this reason, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn’t pay, so the king ordered that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt. But the man fell down before the king and begged him, ‘Oh, sir, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ Then the king was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow

servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient and I will pay it,' he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and jailed until the debt could be paid in full. When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him what had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison until he had paid every penny. That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters in your heart" (Matthew 18:23-35 - NLT).

LESSON 48:

Cross My Heart, Part 4

Today we're going to continue studying four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart. Each one of them causes an imbalance that makes us "sick." And each one of them creates this imbalance through a debt – debtor relationship. Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid – it causes an awkwardness in the relationship ("an elephant in the room") because there's a debt.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23 - KJV).

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" (Proverbs 4:23 - NLT).

We've already talked about guilt. Guilt says, "I owe you" and the only cure for guilt is confession.

We've also talked about anger. Anger says, "You owe me" and the only cure for anger is

forgiveness.

Today, we're going to talk about greed. Greed says, "I owe me" and – as you might expect – there is only one cure for greed.

Code Yellow: Greed says "I owe me."

The problem with greed is that it can be camouflaged as a virtue. No one ever says, "I'm greedy" – they say "I'm just careful with my money and my stuff." Greed disguises itself so well that you might just overlook it entirely, but the people around you know you have a problem because:

- Greedy people talk a lot and worry a lot about money
- Greedy people are not cheerful givers
- Greedy people are reluctant to share
- Greedy people are poor losers
- Greedy people quibble over insignificant sums of money
- Greedy people talk as if they have just enough to get by
- Greedy people often create a culture of secrecy around them
- Greedy people won't let them forget what they have done for you
- Greedy people attempt to control people with their money
- Greedy people are reluctant to express gratitude
- Greedy people are not content with what they have

Greedy people believe they deserve every good thing that could possibly come their way. Like angry people, they have a story to tell (why they are "careful") and an excuse for their behavior.

Greed is not a financial issue; it is a heart issue. You can be poor and greedy or rich and greedy! Greed is not just about possessions, it is about how you live out your relationships.

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life

consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15 - KJV).

“Then he said to them, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’” (Luke 12:15 - NIV).

This verse introduces one of Jesus’ parables about a rich landowner who achieves great wealth and decides to build bigger barns to store it all, only to find out that his life is going to be cut short and he will lose it all.

The landowner believes that he himself has earned this abundance, and never even considers the notion that God might have had anything to do with it! He never even considers that the extra he has been blessed with is intended for anyone’s consumption but his own!

That’s because greedy people don’t think that way at all. They just say, “Lucky me!” They can always come up with a plan for any extra that comes their way. They have “bigger barn syndrome.”

Tragically, this landowner runs out of time long before he runs out of stuff – and someone else gets everything he lived for, not because he is generous but because he is dead! Eventually, everything we claim to own will be owned by someone else (not a matter of “if” just “when”). Instead we should ask, “Lord, what do you want me to do with my extra?”

The greedy person lives his life as if his possessions are the most important thing. For him, stuff equals life, because his stuff is an extension of who he is. As a result, his friends and family often end up feeling like they are not nearly as important as his possessions.

Jesus concludes this parable with His definition of a greedy person – someone who saves carefully for himself, but gives sparingly to God.

“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

Ask yourself, “Why do I have so much more than I need?”

- It is more than your parents had at your age
- It is considerably more than most people in the world can lay claim to

As long as I’m continually on a quest for more, then when more comes along I automatically assume that it’s all for me! I’m consuming mentally what I hope to soon be consuming physically – and this attitude leaves no margin at all for generosity.

Has God provided more than enough just so you could ... Provide for your children? Not worry? Increase your standard of living? Retire early? Or maybe He has given you more so that you could share!

When we don’t have enough, we don’t hesitate to talk to God about it? So why don’t we do that when we have more than enough?!

You don’t have to have extra to be greedy. Where there is no margin financially, there is no way to avoid greed!

Fear is the driving force behind greed (“What if ...?”). Ultimately, it is the fear that God won’t take care of me, at least in the way I want to be taken care of! There is never enough to satisfy a greedy person.

If aliens could observe our North American lifestyle from space, don’t you think they would say, “If these beings didn’t shop, they would die”?!?

We live in a culture that reminds us every day what we don’t have! So, greed will not go away by itself. Here is the only cure ...

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay

up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (Matthew 6:19-20).

Jesus is not arguing against responsible living, He is arguing against hoarding. Why? Because the only way to store up heavenly treasures is to give away earthly treasures! And because the only way to break the power of greed is through giving.

“But I don’t have the cash to give!” That never seems to stop you when you want to spend. Why don’t you make your giving decisions the same way you make your spending decisions?

Jesus said, “If you want to know where your heart is, don’t follow your feelings, follow the money trail!” Why? Because your heart, your time, your care, and your attention follow your money. You can’t help it, because that is now something you have invested in.

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21).

The average Christian gives only 2% of their income. Your treasure is not just an indicator of where your heart is, but also where it “will be” in the future. That can be bad news, but it can also be very good news:

Since your heart follows your money, you can actually use your money to change your heart! How? Just invest differently! Send money outside your kingdom!

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23).

Jesus is saying here that just as the eye directs the body, so our treasure directs our heart. Your finances impact your whole life. (Just ask any person whose marriage

crumbled with financial problems.)

Giving breaks the power of greed by sending your money in a new direction. But what is the practical way to do this? After all, we can’t give away all our money and still live.

The practical way to apply this principle is to become ...

- a percentage giver (10% tithe)
- a priority giver (first expenditure)
- a progressive giver (increases over time)
- and a spontaneous giver (room for God’s leading)

Giving puts a lid on my lifestyle! Before I fund my kingdom, I give to God’s kingdom. “I gave first, before I walked through the mall to see what it is that I can’t live without (that I didn’t even know existed!).”

People who finally decide to become percentage givers (tithers) always talk about changes in their heart, not the changes in their money.

If you’re not willing to give to the point that it impacts your lifestyle, then you are greedy. Greed is not a feeling, it is a refusal to act. You can feel “compassion” and still be as stingy as Scrooge! Good intentions and greed can cohabit in your heart indefinitely. (God loves a cheerful giver, but He will put your money to good use whether you are cheerful or not!) You have to give your way out of greed!

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

Malachi 3:10 – God says, “I dare you to put Me to the test!”

LESSON 49:

Cross My Heart, Part 5

Today we're going to conclude our study of four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart. Each one of them causes an imbalance that makes us "sick." And each one of them creates this imbalance through a debt – debtor relationship. Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid – it causes an awkwardness in the relationship ("an elephant in the room") because there's a debt.

We are tempted to treat the symptoms that stem from an unhealthy spiritual heart while ignoring the deeper issues. But as is the case with the physical heart, eventually the root problem will become the real problem. Just as a heart attack has the potential to destroy your body, so spiritual heart disease has the potential to destroy you and your most valuable relationships.

Life can be hard on the heart, because the world is full of outside influences that have the power to disrupt its rhythm. Over time you develop habits that slowly erode your heart's sensitivity. The inevitable pain and disappointment of life cause you to set up walls around your heart. At the end of the day, your heart gets out of sync with the rhythm it was created to maintain. And if left alone, these "heart attackers" will linger for a lifetime and do incredible damage.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 - ESV).

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matthew 15:18).

Your mouth serves as a stethoscope to listen to your heart.

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false

witness, blasphemies:" (Matthew 15:19).

Heart issues make intimacy difficult to maintain because intimacy revolves around knowing and being known. Secrets can damage the heart, because they make us build walls in our relationships. That's because we usually suspect in others what we are guilty of ourselves.

How are things with your heart? Not your career, your family, your reputation, or your finances. Your heart. It's an awkward question.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23 - KJV).

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" (Proverbs 4:23 - NLT).

Code Blue: Guilt "I owe you" - confession

Code Red: Anger "You owe me" - forgiveness

Code Yellow: Greed "I owe me" - giving

And today we want to talk about ...

Code Green : Jealousy

Jealousy?! Jealousy just happens in kids! That's not true, but adults have a sophisticated "filter" and just refuse to admit it. After all, if we admitted we were jealous, someone would say "grow up" or "get over it"!

Can you be brave enough to admit it to yourself? There are people you don't like just because they are "ahead" of you in some way. When you see them, you immediately think of all the things they have that you lack – looks, intelligence, skills, a nicer car, a better job, a bigger house, health, height, build, opportunities, friends – the list goes on and on.

In your mind you say, "It's not fair!" But what you really want is not "fair" – what you really want is "more." In fact, "fair" on a world scale would put most Canadians back several steps in the scheme of things!

But having "more" wouldn't resolve the

problem anyway, because jealousy is a heart issue, not a people issue (or a “category of people” issue). Think about it! They are not your problem, because they can’t fix your problem!

The only thing others could possibly do to make you feel better is to fail! That reversal would make you feel better for a moment, but it actually magnifies that you have a problem (there is an inequity). People that surface jealousy in you are just a reflection of your problem.

You say, “That’s petty and immature.” Absolutely! You say, “I shouldn’t feel that way.” What does that indicate? A heart problem!

Illustration: Give out three “inequitable” gifts (i.e. iPod, gift certificate, apple)

Your problem is not with any of them. Their problem is not with each other. Your problem is with me, because I didn’t distribute these gifts fairly. And I won’t even try to make it fair! That’s what jealousy says ...

“If God hadn’t ... then I would have ...”

Code Green: Jealousy says “God owes me”

God has never claimed to be “fair.” In fact, fairness disappeared after man’s fall in the Garden of Eden. God just does what He wants to!

Three times in Daniel chapter four, judgment is pronounced on King Nebuchadnezzar, precisely because he doesn’t “get it” ...

“You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (Daniel 4:32 - NIV).

Finally, after seven years of degradation, Nebuchadnezzar admits ...

“All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?” (Daniel 4:35 - NIV).

Yes, God could have fixed all that for you. Yes, He could have remedied all the inequities in your life. If God hadn’t messed up, you would have been much better off! What in the world was God thinking?!

Our jealousy might register to us as a sin (that we confess), but it seldom registers as a grudge against God Himself. Yet that’s exactly what it is! When I’m jealous, I think “God owes me!”

But how could God owe me something? I owe Him everything! That’s exactly why my jealousy is so easily misdirected and so hard to root out. My problem is with my Creator (not with others), but my problem will surface in my relationships! As long as jealousy rages unchecked, no relationship that I have is safe!

Jealousy has been around for a long time! Cain and Abel. Esau and Jacob. Joseph and his brothers. And maybe you? Have you ever derived secret pleasure from watching a “rival” suffer a setback?!

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” (James 4:1 - NIV).

There is one cause of all relational conflicts – our desires. External conflicts are simply the result of our own internal conflicts that “spill over.” That’s why we say “we hurt most those we love most.” Why? Because they are in close proximity and get “spilled on.”

The common denominator in all my relational conflicts is me!

“You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have,

because you do not ask God” (James 4:2 - NIV).

That’s the source of every conflict – “I am not getting my way!”

“Covet” means to “hotly pursue” and it is a word picture of someone constantly trying to meet a need that can’t ever seem to be met.

Think about this: An appetite by its very nature can never be fully and finally satisfied, it can only be temporarily quenched. Human beings have many “unquenchable thirsts” – stuff, money, recognition, success, progress, happiness, intimacy, sex, relationship, partnership, friendship, fun, accomplishment ... we never get “enough” of these things!

C.S. Lewis: “Appetites grow through indulgence – not neglect. Gluttons think just as much about food as starving people.” (In other words, the more you feed an appetite, the more it escalates in intensity.)

So what is conflict? It’s someone trying to satisfy their desires in a way that conflicts with my desires!

Until I can own up to my share of the problem, I will always blame someone else. Blame is an admission that I can’t be happy without your cooperation. To blame is to acknowledge dependence – if you don’t act a certain way, I can’t be happy! But that ultimately means that I can’t be happy without controlling everyone in my life – and that’s impossible!

We’re trying to squeeze our happiness out of other people, and meanwhile they’re trying to squeeze their happiness out of us. Eventually, everyone suffocates!

So what do I do with my desires? Take them to God who created them in the first place! (“you have not because you do not ask God”) James is not telling us to pray that God will change “someone else” so that we can get our way! He is just telling us to bring our deepest

desires, hurts, feelings of unfairness and unmet needs to God.

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

If it’s important to you, it’s important to God. Tell Him about it! “But I think God owes me.” Tell Him that! “God, You owe me!” He already knows what you are thinking and feeling anyway!

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3 - NIV).

Be aware that God may (and probably will) still say “no” to your request. Why? Well, why did you deny some of your children’s requests? Because ultimately what they wanted wouldn’t have been good for them. God is the source of all good things, not all wished for things!

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

Jealousy is dangerous because it shapes our attitudes toward other people, when they have done nothing except pull ahead of us in a race they are not even aware of. Jealousy eventually becomes resentment, and then it begins to affect our entire life in a destructive way.

Who do you secretly resent? What category of people do you dislike in your heart of hearts? Can you see it? They are not the problem; they are just reflecting back what originated in your heart!

Pour out your heart to God! Say it – “God, You owe me!” And then, reread the New Testament ... who owes who?

There is only one cure for jealousy – celebration! You have to sincerely celebrate the blessings God has given to others!

Until you find a way to deal with jealousy, you can't follow the number one commandment of the Christian life – Love one another. Because love is the opposite of jealousy.

“Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - MES).

How are things with your heart?

LESSON 50:

Reformat – Apostolic Preaching (Part 1)

“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:7).

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Malachi 3:7).

The ministry of the church stands on three pillars – Apostolic preaching, Apostolic pattern, and Apostolic power. Remove any one of them, and the church is ineffective in fulfilling its mandate.

“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Today we will look at Apostolic preaching. Preaching involves a who and a what. The “who” is the preacher, and the “what” is the message.

One of the most common words used for pastors in the Bible is also translated “shepherd,” one who tends flocks, feeding, guiding and supervising them. The concept of shepherding is one of the oldest in the Bible. The “shepherding ministry” was an abomination to the Egyptians, just like the “pastoral ministry” is offensive today to a godless world.

“That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians” (Genesis 46:34).

Sheep are different than any other animal. Without a shepherd ...

- they wander astray and cannot find their way home.
- they are helpless and defenseless against their enemies.
- they cannot cleanse themselves.
- they cannot lead themselves.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

You need a pastor preaching God's Word to you in order to be saved!

There are several enemies of the sheep mentioned in John 10:

- **The Stranger** (v.5) whose voice the sheep do not recognize, so they wander away.
- **The Thief** (v.1,9,10) who steals from the flock by craftiness.
- **The Robber** (v.1,9,10) who steals from the flock by violent force.

- **The Hireling** (v.12,13) who leads the flock only for pay, and flees when the wolf comes.
- **The Wolf** (v.12,13) who devours and scatters the flock. (Did you know the phrase “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” came originally from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 7:15?)

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

It seems like everyone is an “armchair preacher/pastor” today, knowing exactly what should be done in the church. That’s an Absalom spirit!

“And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:2-6).

Preach to me, preacher! Don’t just tell me what I want to hear, tell me what I need to hear!

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;” (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

Preaching involves a “who” – the preacher who stands up to declare God’s Word. It also involves a “you” – the people who hear the Word and do the Word willingly. They have an “attitude of Amen!”

Preaching also involves a “what” – the message that is preached. This must be Biblically correct if it is to have Apostolic power!

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Doctrine – what to believe

Reproof – what not to believe

Correction – how not to behave

Instruction – how to behave

Upon the return of the exiles from Babylonian captivity, their primary focus was to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. That part of their story is found in the book of Ezra, a record of this rebuilding project which took 20 years from its inception until the Temple was completed. It was then dedicated in the year 516 BC. God’s promise of their return, and of their Temple’s restoration, had been fulfilled.

However, two full generations had elapsed – 90 years since the first families’ return, and 70 years since the completion of the Temple. And as the Jews gathered for joyous worship, one thing was still missing – the walls of their city still lay in ruins. The city sits in embarrassment. Here is a people who have been able to reestablish their worship (temple), but unable to reestablish rulership (walls). They have complete rebirth, but not complete recovery.

And as such, they are a type of those in the church who are saved – but still broken. They have been fouled up by accident, dented by

disobedience, smashed by sin, ruined by rebellion, or injured through ignorance. They may well have been forgiven for the foolish seeds of sin sown “B.C.” – before Christ – but the harvest of “sowing to the flesh” doesn’t disappear overnight. There is still some “rubble” around.

Rulership means the recovery of self-control, personal identity, stabilized temperament, outward holiness and inward character, all of which was lost in the fall. Rulership is not just being a believer, but one with maturity. Not just a city, but one with walls. A city without walls was open prey to oppressors. A city without walls will eventually forfeit its Temple!

Into the rubble walks a preacher named Nehemiah with a message and a mission from God!

In chapter 3 of Nehemiah, the Bible tells us in great detail about the gates of Jerusalem being rebuilt. Why? Because there is a picture here of what Apostolic preaching is supposed to do for us.

- The Sheep Gate – Maturity - Nehemiah 3:1
- The Fish Gate – Evangelism - Nehemiah 3:3
- The Old Gate – Doctrine - Nehemiah 3:6
- The Valley Gate – Compassion - Nehemiah 3:13 (Hanun – “to stoop in kindness to another”)
- The Dung Gate – Repentance - Nehemiah 3:14
- The Fountain Gate – Holy Ghost - Nehemiah 3:15
- The Water Gate – Baptism - Nehemiah 3:26
- The Horse Gate – Lifting of Burdens - Nehemiah 3:28
- The East Gate – The Coming of the Lord - Nehemiah 3:29

LESSON 51:

Reformat – Apostolic Pattern (Part 2)

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will

return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Malachi 3:7).

The ministry of the church stands on three pillars – Apostolic preaching, Apostolic pattern, and Apostolic power. Remove any one of them, and the church is ineffective in fulfilling its mandate.

“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Today we will look at Apostolic Pattern ...

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19).

The words “bind” and “loose” are perfect passive participles in the Greek language, indicating things that have already been forbidden or permitted. We can’t just do whatever we want and expect God to bless it; we must do what He wants, and the blessing will come automatically.

If a contractor builds a house for someone, he sticks to the blueprint, which is the will of the purchaser. If we want to build a church, we need to stick to the blueprint (Bible), which is the will of the purchaser (God). Otherwise, we are not really building a church!

One Accord (Homothumadon) – This unique Greek word, used six times to refer to the church in the Book of Acts, helps us understand the uniqueness of the Christian community. It is a compound of two words meaning to “rush along” and “in unison”. The image is a musical one – a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. Like the instruments of a

great concert under the direction of a concertmaster, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church to accomplish His purpose. Unity is a critical part of God's pattern for His Church!

Unity means that we work as a team!

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:1-4 - KJV).

"murmur" – "to mutter, or grumble, in a low undertone"

Paul says to the saints, "Neither murmur ye!" (1 Corinthians 10:10) and "Do all things without murmuring!" (Philippians 2:14)

The problem was not that the pastors weren't doing their job; it was that there was too much work for the pastors to do alone!

God's solution was to appoint deacons ("diakonas" = "a servant, one called to serve, to wait on, or an attendant"). These men were to be of honest report (having a good testimony inside and outside the church), to be full of the Holy Ghost (having a real relationship with God), and to be full of wisdom (having the necessary skills for the job). The word "deacon" does not refer to a position, but to a ministry role.

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For ("so that") the perfecting of the saints, for ("so that") the work

of the ministry, for ("so that") the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

This is not a three-fold job description of the five-fold ministry, but rather God's plan for team ministry!

During the Dark Ages, a distinction was made between clergy and laity, a trick of Satan to reduce and confine ministry. This was first taught by Nicolas, who was one of the original deacons in Act 6:5! He was not content with having a ministry, but wanted to have a role of "pastoral authority." But his teaching that exalted "pastors" above measure actually reduced the overall effectiveness of the church drastically.

"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Revelation 2:15). (Pergamos)

We must be unified – around the purpose of evangelism.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

The narrative between Acts 1:8 and Acts 6:7 covers a period of about ten years. It contains an important lesson to the church that most people miss: Blessing is not a sure sign of God's favor.

During these years, the Jerusalem church was blessed with divine visitation, miracles of healing, holy boldness, and numerical growth. The church grew in spite of persecution,

opposition, and internal disputes. There were 3000 people in Acts 2:41, 5000 men in Acts 4:4, multitudes of men and women in Acts 5:14, and even a great company of Jewish priests in Acts 6:7. But it all happened inside Jerusalem!

Jerusalem might have been enjoying the blessing of the Lord, and many souls within her walls may have even come to salvation during that ten year span ... but what about the 99.99% of people alive in the world at that time who did not live in that city? What about the other cultures that God specifically told them to reach?

How much blessing does the church have to receive before she is willing and ready to fulfill the Great Commission left to her by Jesus Christ? One of the great dangers when we go from a struggling small congregation to a successful larger congregation is that we lose our dependence on God's power. We become self-centered instead of God centered, more focused on ease than on evangelism.

In many of our meetings, the focus is mainly on "our Jerusalem," that it may grow and prosper so that it may continue to minister to us! We have "received power" (the first promise of Acts 1:8) but we have not "become witnesses" (the second promise of Acts 1:8). And the second promise is much more significant than the first!

Thousands of Christians use the baptism of the Holy Spirit for purposes other than the purpose it was given! For that, we will someday give answer to God. We are stewards, not bosses, of His blessings! The baptism of the Holy Spirit is so exciting that we think the experience is all there is to it. Not so! This was the battle in the early church.

They did start out in obedience to Acts 1:8, but they stopped too soon. They wanted to reach out in Jerusalem, among their own kind, but

they did not want to go to the ends of the earth – or even Samaria!

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6 - KJV).

The early church needed a reversal in their thinking! They wanted to sit in a state of spiritual blessing in Jerusalem and have the nations flow to them. Jesus wanted them to be servants of the Kingdom who would leave their comfort zone and go to others, just as He had left heaven to come to us! Their responsibility was not just to care for the lost who came to find them, but to seek them out!

The question might now be asked, "so what?" So what if the church holds these concepts? So what if we are not as evangelistic as we should be? Can't we still just have church for ourselves? But look at what happened to the Jerusalem church!

At first, the Jerusalem church grew strong spiritually and numerically, and even the attacks and setbacks they experienced turned to gain and expansion. But the honeymoon was shattered with the martyrdom of Stephen and the intense persecution of Saul of Tarsus. Suddenly, disciples are being scattered everywhere, and while things grow worse in Jerusalem, great things are happening in Judea and even Samaria! When the church wouldn't go on their own, God gave them a shove!

If we will not go, God only has two alternatives when we continue to rest in our "Jerusalem comfort zone" ...

- Persecution, to drive us out
- Substitution, to find someone else who will go willingly

"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem;

and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1).

God loves lost people so much that He will allow anything to happen in order to fulfill His purpose of reaching them! God is not primarily committed to individuals, ministries or even great churches – He is primarily committed to the Great Commission. Nothing is secure, nothing is permanent, nothing is guaranteed to have God’s favor forever, even if it seems to have been built by Him and to have His anointing.

Only the church that obeys His commands can be assured of His continuing favor!

The Jerusalem church could not seem to manage the kind of vision and commitment that was required in this period of church history. So, God used persecution first (with some results) and then substitution when they continued to resist.

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21 - KJV).

Antioch was a mostly Gentile city, and it is inconceivable that they should ignore all but a small minority of Jews, assuming they were the only ones God wanted to save! But that’s what the first group did! However, thank God there was a second group not from Jerusalem that preached to the Greeks – and the hand of the Lord was with them!

This is a moment of destiny, when the church at Antioch was born! Not just a few transplants

from the Jerusalem Jewish subculture, but some sinfully irreverent, Biblically illiterate Gentiles came to God!

Jerusalem never did know how to deal with revolutionary revivalists like the Apostle Paul, who continually jumped fences, ignored boundaries, and broke rules to win the lost. That’s why Jerusalem never sent out history’s greatest missionary – Antioch sent him out!

The Jerusalem church was originally chosen, richly anointed, full of New Testament teaching, experiencing amazing miracles and basking in rich worship. But God still turned His attention to Antioch because Jerusalem would not embrace God’s command to witness! If our church building and program becomes the sum total of our vision, our church will not last beyond a second or third generation!

But a Great Commission church is different! Generation after generation they run with vision. No matter what they achieve, they have never arrived, because there is always one more soul just beyond their borders that needs to hear about Jesus! Jerusalem held on to their resources, but Antioch accepted that Jesus had the right to demand of them any resource He wanted to use – people, prayer, finance, whatever!

The Jerusalem church was unwilling to change to reach the culture of the world around it. The same thing happens today, and because change is hard, most churches simply don’t want to be uncomfortable. They just want to touch their Jerusalem and leave it at that.

There are only two New Testament church models in the Bible, the Jerusalem Church and the Antioch Church. We have to be one or the other, and the choice is ours. The Antioch church was full of risk-takers.

“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he

brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26 - KJV).

But what will the other Christians think? That’s not the question that begs to be answered. What will Jesus think?

C.T. Studd: “Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell, I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

The greatest danger is always at the edge (where the church meets the culture). But so is the greatest opportunity for rescue and redemption. The New Testament church lived “on the edge” – never safe, always one step from disaster if God didn’t intervene! Jude felt the tension:

“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,” (Jude 1:22-24).

Many Apostolic people have gotten too comfortable with the status quo. Church has become a comfortable place, a place that is always the same ... same friends, same events, same songs, same sermons, same faces, same size, same methods, and same results! That mentality is an affront to God, who called us to impact our culture with the gospel.

People say, “I want to have an Acts 2 church, where we preach the message of the Apostles!” That’s great, but Acts 2 is not the whole pattern for the early church. We also need to have ...

- An Acts 3 church where miracles happen at prayer meeting

- An Acts 4 church where our services are literally shaken by God’s power
- An Acts 5 church where we have church from house to house
- An Acts 6 church where saints take on ministry so pastors can seek God
- An Acts 7 church where ordinary Christians are used powerfully by God
- An Acts 8 church where we reach people of influence for God’s kingdom
- An Acts 9 church where we see religious people powerfully converted
- An Acts 10 church where we are willing to reach people who not like us
- An Acts 11 church where even persecution spreads the gospel
- An Acts 12 church where God gives miraculous answers to prayer
- An Acts 13 church where we send out people to do missionary work

LESSON 52:

Reformat – Apostolic Power (Part 3)

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Malachi 3:7).

The ministry of the church stands on three pillars – Apostolic preaching, Apostolic pattern, and Apostolic power. Remove any one of them, and the church is ineffective in fulfilling its mandate.

“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Today we will look at Apostolic Power ...

Revival means that some spiritual practice that has fallen out of use or become rarely experienced reappears to grip Christians with living force.

Revival is an interruption of the status quo so that ideas and experiences that had fallen out of use can get reintroduced.

Revival begins as people become determined that things will not remain the same!

Hallelujah! Thine the glory! Hallelujah! Amen!
Hallelujah! Thine the glory! Revive us again!

The church cannot survive without Apostolic power. We need it like we need air to breathe! Look how much Luke wrote about power:

Luke 1:17; 1:35; 4:6; 4:14; 4:32; 4:36; 5:17; 5:24; 9:1; 9:43; 10:19; 21:27; 22:53; 22:69; 24:49; Acts 1:7; 1:8; 3:12; 4:7; 4:33; 6:8; 8:10; 8:19; 10:38; and 26:18.

Luke prefers these two words for power:

- Exousia, which means authority
- Dynamis, which means ability

“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7). (Authority).

“But ye shall receive power (Dynamis), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

These are “prayer words” – both of them are used to apply to Jesus and both of them are used to apply to us – But we only get this kind of power in prayer!

What is the church not to be? When we strip away all the junk that is cluttering up our lives, when we “reformat” back to the original “operating system,” then we find out what church is supposed to be!

Even a slight misalignment in the church’s purpose causes a subtle, gradual shift ... and we begin to depend on man’s power instead of

God’s power. Just 5 degrees out can lead a boat far off course!

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psalm 20:7).

The reason we get together to worship with other believers is so we can experience God’s presence, because only His presence brings Apostolic Power!

Many churches today have “worship-based prayer.” That is, the only time they pray is when they are in an atmosphere of worship. But Apostolic churches have “prayer-based worship.” That is, their worship is deeper and accomplishes more because it comes out of a life of prayer!

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24 - KJV).

In Acts 15, nearly 20 years after God poured out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the New Testament Church was still trying to find this balance between Word and Spirit, Jew and Gentile, Law and Grace, Old Covenant and New Covenant. They convened a church council in Jerusalem to discuss the issue, and after everyone had spoken the final word came from the Apostle James, who appealed to the Scripture:

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is

called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:14-17 - KJV).

Why would God want to rebuild David’s tabernacle, instead of Moses’ tabernacle or Solomon’s temple? David’s makeshift tent barely qualifies as a Tabernacle! But David’s Tabernacle was God’s favorite house (God has wonderful memories of what happened there!)

David’s tabernacle was less structure and more event; church today is more structure and less event! What is impressive to God and what is impressive to man are obviously two different things!

“And when he had removed [Saul], he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will” (Acts 13:22 - KJV).

The most powerful component of David’s tabernacle began long before it was built, in the heart of a worshipping shepherd boy! David had an unusual hunger for God, always pursuing God’s presence, chasing “after” God’s heart! He had a “passion for the presence!”

Years later, when David began to talk about bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, he wasn’t interested in the gold-covered box with the artifacts inside. He was interested in the blue flame that hovered between the outstretched wings of the cherubim on top of the ark – the Shekinah presence of God!

In Moses’ Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple, the Ark resided behind a veil. God never did like that veil! He had to have it to preserve the life of sinful humanity as they came to worship Him, but He didn’t like it. When Jesus died on Calvary, God ripped the veil from top to bottom in such a way that it could never be rewoven

again! God doesn’t want to be separated from us!

This is why God loved David’s Tabernacle – there was no veil or walls of any kind to separate mankind from His presence. The only thing encircling God’s presence was the worshippers! They ministered non-stop to the Lord 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for nearly 36 years! In David’s Tabernacle, the glory was seen by everyone!

David was so passionate for God’s presence that he began to dance as the ark entered Jerusalem. David valued the things that God values, but his wife Michal valued dignity over Deity! God cursed her with barrenness! You can’t seek His Deity and maintain your dignity! It is time to abandon spectator services and become a participator! Are we willing to pay the price David paid for God’s presence?

Immediately when they set the ark down, David demanded that the Levites begin offering 24-hour-a-day worship to the Lord! The worshippers became the veil around the ark – they had to turn their back on man to worship God in their midst! The world doesn’t need better sermons or songs. They need “gap people” who can reach for God with one hand and for the world with the other. We “prop open the heavens” with our upraised hands! David kept heaven open for nearly 36 years ... and God wants to rebuild the tabernacle that fell when they got tired!

When the Ark was in its right place, Israel was blessed. Worship is putting God in His rightful place! The Bible is filled with sacrificial worship! We don’t apologize for our exuberance in worship. We apologize that more churches are not this way! With so many commands in the Bible to praise God, who in their right mind could call themselves a Christian and not praise God with exuberance?!

In fact, this is one of the crucial differences between the Tabernacle of Moses, where

worship consisted of animal sacrifices, and the Tabernacle of David, where worship consisted of sacrifices of praise. David's Tabernacle, according to James in Acts 15, is the pattern for our worship today!

None of these forms of worship were present in Moses' Tabernacle, but they were all prevalent in David's Tabernacle: Singers & Singing, Instruments of Music, Thanksgiving, Praise, Singing of Psalms, Rejoicing and Joy, Clapping, Shouting, Dancing, Lifting Up Hands.

Spiritually hungry people don't come to church to be educated about God, but to have an encounter with God. Worship, by its very nature, is a bit illogical because it is totally abandoned devotion.

"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

We didn't do this the "sensible way" anyway!

"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:" (Psalms 124:1-2).