

# **UNIT ONE: OPEN EARS TO OBEY**

## **KEY SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR UNIT ONE**

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. -1 Corinthians 2:6-7

## **CLASS 1: THE MYSTERY REVEALED**

*1 Reading, 1 Exercise, 1 Evaluation*

The mystery of all ages has been revealed to us by the Spirit of the Lord. God has put His own Spirit inside of us so that we can live to reveal His glory.

## **CLASS 2: GUIDANCE FROM GOD**

*2 Readings, 1 Evaluation, 1 Exercise*

God's purpose for mankind has not changed since creation. But now, God guides us by His Spirit into His purposes for our lives so that we can manifest His glory to all the earth.

## **CLASS 3: TESTING THE SPIRIT**

*2 Readings, 2 Exercises*

As we turn ourselves over to guidance from the Holy Spirit, other voices of influence will seek to distort God's word or distract us from God's purposes. Therefore, we must learn to test the spirit.

## **CLASS 4: ABIDING & OBEDIENCE**

*1 Reading, 1 Evaluation, 1 Exercise*

Jesus said if we love Him we will keep His commands. As we remain connected and faithful to Jesus, He guides us by His Spirit into all that He has for us.

## **KEY QUESTIONS**

## **GROUP EXERCISES**



## CHRIST IN YOU – THE MYSTERY REVEALED

God's original purpose for mankind has not changed. He created the world to be filled with people who would give Him glory by willingly and obediently tending and keeping the earth and everything in it according to His ways. This will happen – just not in the way it originally seemed.

In the Garden of Eden, the first woman gave way to the wiles of the evil one and disobeyed God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was with her and also disobeyed God's order. They did it because they were deceived into believing that disobeying God would make them wise and like God. Through this self-serving act of treason and anarchy against God, they whored themselves out into the service of the evil one. Through their attempt to usurp God's authority and become like God, iniquity was found in their hearts and innocence was lost. Their lack of knowledge and understanding of God's ways combined with their ignorance of the evil one's schemes left them vulnerable to his tactics of deception.

Since then, all of mankind – including you and me – have been usurpers, anarchists, and self-serving whores who attempt in numerous ways to be our own gods while unknowingly remaining in subjection to the evil one's many deceptions. All of mankind has fallen very short of the glory of God and God's original design and purpose for mankind.

*Romans 3:10-18: As it is written: "There is **no one righteous, not even one**; there is **no one who understands**; there is **no one who seeks God. All have turned away**, they have together become worthless; there is **no one who does good, not even one.**" "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Jesus is coming back for His Bride. He laid down His life to have her. Jesus came the first time to cleanse her from sin through His perfect life, sacrificial death, resurrection to eternal life, and ascension to the Father's right hand in heaven. He washes her with the water of the Word so that she can be holy and undefiled for her wedding day. The Bride that Jesus is coming for will have willingly cleansed herself from all whoredom, impurity, and iniquity in expectation of the return of her Bridegroom King. This Bride will be supernaturally strengthened to not bow to the wiles of the evil one but will stand in faith with boldness even at the expense of her own life in order to not rebel against the command of God.

*Ephesians 5:29-32: After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." **This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.***

The first Adam's wife was in a perfect paradise. Paradise was lost due to failure to correctly discern deception and, therefore, caving in to sin. At the end of the age, the Bride of Jesus will stand in a world of chaos, disorder, lawlessness, and deep darkness from the evil one's deceit and power over the world. She will gain paradise for eternity with Jesus by walking in the light of the truth and not bowing to any of the devices of the ancient serpent.

This is God's purpose for the church. People from every nation, tribe, and tongue are included in the salvation and inheritance obtained by Jesus through His death and resurrection to declare and reveal God's ultimate and eternal victory over the evil one. (See Revelation 5:9.)

*Ephesians 3:4-11: In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into **the mystery of Christ**, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. **This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel**, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and **to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery**, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. **His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

What is the mystery that was so important to God that He kept it hidden for all ages until the fullness of time had come?

*Colossians 1:26-27: the **mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles **the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

Christ in you. The hope of the glory of God and eternal life with Him. Only Christ in us gives us this hope. This hope drives us to live by the power of Christ in us to resist the lusts and temptations of this world, our flesh, and the devil.

The only way that God could create a Bride for His Son, who would be able to withstand the days of evil in this world before He returns to make all things new, was to put His very own Spirit inside of us – His enemies. But, if God tried to put His Spirit inside of sinful flesh, we would instantly die. Therefore, before He could put His Spirit inside of us, He had to cleanse us of our sin so that we could become holy vessels able to hold His indwelling presence. This is why Jesus came the first time. The sinless life and sacrificial death of Jesus cleansed our sin through the shedding of His blood. His resurrection proves God's acceptance of His offering and that His life was truly and totally righteous. Death could not hold Him because eternal life is the divine promise to the righteous.

Through our faith in Jesus, we are cleansed from our sin and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside of us. (See Ephesians 1:13.) In fact, all of the blessings and benefits of the righteous become available to us freely by faith in what Jesus has done for us.

*Colossians 2:2-3: My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the **full riches of complete understanding**, in order that they may **know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

God kept this hidden for ages because if the rulers of this world had known that this would be the ultimate result of Jesus' death on a cross, they would never have crucified Him.

*1 Corinthians 2:6-16: We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. **No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.** None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen,*

what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him— **these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.** The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. **What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.** This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" **But we have the mind of Christ.**

Through His Spirit inside of us, God has given us the mind of Christ so that we can know Him, understand His ways and what He has done for us, and discern the deceptions of the enemy and ways of this world so that we are not ensnared into anarchy like the first woman was. The Holy Spirit in our hearts guides us into all truth—not just a little bit of the truth, but all the truth. This is why we are encouraged to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking so that we can continue to receive, find, and have more and more of God's goodness opened to us.

*John 16:13: But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all the truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

*Matthew 7:7-8: **Ask** and it will be given to you; **seek** and you will find; **knock** and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

When we do this, we discover that God has revealed the biggest mystery of all redemptive history to us so that we can steward the mystery to the rest of the world. The mystery is this: Jesus Christ was born as God in the flesh who came, died, was raised to everlasting life, ascended to heaven, and poured out His Spirit into our hearts so that we can be just like Him while we are still here on earth.

*1 Timothy 3:16: Beyond all question, the **mystery from which true godliness springs is great:** He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

*Romans 16:25-27: Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the **revelation of the mystery** hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come **to the obedience that comes from faith**—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

The first Adam's wife was made out of his rib and he exclaimed, "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." (See Genesis 2:23.) The second Adam's Bride is made not by flesh and blood but by the Spirit of the Lord indwelling jars of clay to bring Him glory through personal godliness exhibited by righteousness, holiness, purity, and obedience to God's commands from the heart. When He returns for her, He will recognize her by her likeness to Him. Knowing that she will reign with her King for eternity in the world to come, she lives on earth now for this eternal hope refusing to submit herself to the temporal temptations put before her in this world.



## **The Mystery Revealed: A New Creation in Christ**

As we place our faith in Jesus, the nature of God and the very Spirit of Christ dwell inside of us and we are given power and ability to live as children of God and as a totally new creation in Christ.

*John 1:12-13: Yet to all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he **gave the right to become children of God**-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, **but born of God.***

*John 14:23 - Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and **we will come to them and make our home with them.***

*2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!***

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

Through faith in Christ, we have been given the right to participate with God's nature dwelling inside of us. But we must be born again by submitting ourselves to the regenerating power of the Spirit of the Lord to renew our minds into the will of God and away from our own Adamic inclinations toward sin, self-exaltation, anarchy, and usurping God's authority in our life.

*John 3:5-8 - Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, **no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

*1 John 3:9 - **No one who is born of God will continue to sin,** because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*

By the power of the Holy Spirit within us, we can live lives of purity and holiness to reveal God to the world. In fact, as we are led by the Spirit of the Lord, we prove ourselves to be the sons of God, calling out to our Father in Heaven to help us in our time of need through the trials and tribulations of this world.

*Romans 8:13-17: For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but **if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.** The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.***

As believers, we have become stewards of the mysteries of God. To live them out and to share them with anyone who will listen. Jesus readily explained His parables to His closest followers while they remained a mystery to those without ears to hear. Moreover, if we obey Jesus, He calls us His friends; and as His friends, He shares with us everything the Father has shared with Him.

*1 Corinthians 4:1: This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the **mysteries God has revealed.***

*Matthew 13:11: He replied, "Because the **knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.**"*

*John 15:14-15: You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, **I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.***

The mystery revealed is that through Christ dwelling inside of us, we can be like Him. We can attain to spiritual maturity and the likeness of God as we await Christ's return.

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

*Luke 6:40 - The student is not above the teacher, but **everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.***

Therefore, we must press on to maturity by putting off our old self, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, and submitting ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit as He guides us into all righteousness and goodness. This was God's eternal purpose and the reason for Christ's sacrifice.

*Titus 2:11-14: For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to **say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age**, while we wait for the blessed hope--the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, **Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.***

May God be glorified as we trust in His Son and reveal His love to the world. Let us strive to attain all that Christ attained for us.

## DIVINE NATURE

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

### DESCRIPTION

God has given us what we need in order for us to be like Him. Godliness is the reason He created mankind – to reflect His image and His likeness. But since Adam, no one except Jesus has been able to do this fully. When we believe Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. This is the same Spirit of the Lord that came upon Mary, causing her to conceive and give birth to the Son of God. The same Spirit that dwelt inside of Jesus to guide Him in a perfect and sinless life now dwells inside of us. We have divine nature inside us.

From the moment the Holy Spirit enters our hearts, a conflict begins between this divine nature and our own corrupt and fleshly desires. As we allow ourselves to be led by divine nature instead of our flesh, we become more and more like Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord within us will give us strength to resist our own urges and replace them with righteous thoughts and actions. The more the Holy Spirit transforms us in this way, the more of God's image we reflect.

Practicing participation in Divine Nature is about becoming increasingly conscious of the Spirit of God dwelling within us and choosing to obey His leadings as superior to our own inclinations.

### PRAYER

Father, thank you for placing your Holy Spirit inside of me to help me become like Jesus. Help me submit to your guidance from within and strengthen me with your power for godliness. In Jesus' name. Amen.



### PURPOSE:

To become increasingly godly and reflect God's image.

To be led by the Holy Spirit in righteous and pure thoughts.

To be empowered by the Holy Spirit for right words and actions.

### SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Holiness. Christlikeness. Godliness.

Increasing in the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

Growing evidence of our calling and election through the attributes listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

## TALK WITH GOD

Jesus was perfect in all of His thoughts, words, and actions. How does this increase your respect and worship for Him? Tell Him about it.

How have you experienced the conflict between your own desires and what the Holy Spirit within you desires? In your life so far, who has been winning this conflict?

How does knowing that Jesus dwells inside you change your concept of approaching godliness? How does God want you to put this into practice in your life?

How is God inviting you to participate more deeply in His divine nature? What area of your thoughts, words, and actions does Jesus want you to reform right now?

Do you think it is possible for a person to be so renewed by the Holy Spirit that they do not sin? Why or why not? What is God's desire in this?

### PRACTICE

1. Use the Talk with God points above to have a conversation with God about participating in Divine Nature. Listen to what He shares and put it into practice.
2. As you go through your day, find a way to regularly remind yourself that Jesus dwells inside of you. When you remember, take a moment to re-center your thoughts on Him. Allow Him to guide and strengthen you from within.
3. As you engage with others, remember that the Spirit of the Lord dwells inside of you. Turn yourself over to His guidance. How is Jesus engaging with this person? What is Jesus saying to them? It is not "what would Jesus do?" but "what is Jesus doing right now?" ... through you!
4. Journal to Jesus about the areas of your life or times of day when it seems to be more challenging to obey the Holy Spirit rather than your flesh. Seek the Lord for His insight and assistance with this.

### NOTES:

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### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

- Ephesians 4:23-24
- 2 Peter 2:20
- 1 John 3:9
- 1 John 5:18
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 7:14-20
- Romans 8:1-15
- Hebrews 1:3
- Galatians 5:17-22

## LIVING FOR GOD INSPECTION

<i>1 = Needs improvement</i>	<i>2 = In Refining Process</i>	<i>3 = Doing Well for Now</i>	
Am I more focused on the things of God than the things of this world?	1	2	3
Am I spending enough time with God and communing with Him?	1	2	3
Am I enjoying the Word of God and prayer?	1	2	3
Am I regularly sharing faith with others?	1	2	3
Do I disobey God in anything?	1	2	3
Do I continue to do something which makes my conscience uneasy?	1	2	3
Do I pray about how I spend my time and with whom?	1	2	3
Do I pray about the money I spend?	1	2	3
Do I choose my own preferences, desires, or ideas over God's instructions or commands?	1	2	3
Do I have a healthy rhythm of life, service, and rest? Do I get enough sleep?	1	2	3
Do I spend my "free" time in holy activities or with worldliness, lusts, or sin?	1	2	3
Am I a hearer of the Word or a do-er of the Word? Am I self-deceived?	1	2	3
Am I doing the things I tell/teach others to do? Am I without hypocrisy?	1	2	3
Am I honest in all my acts and words? Do I exaggerate or lie?	1	2	3
Do I thank God that I am not like other people, like the Pharisee at the tax collector?	1	2	3
Is there anyone I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, disregard, or hold resentment towards?	1	2	3
Do I look at others with sexual/sensual lust or fantasy in my heart?	1	2	3
Do I dress to entice others with my physical appearance?	1	2	3
Am I in any way creating the impression that I am better than I really am?	1	2	3
Do I use my outward appearance as a façade, mask, or cover up for insecurity?	1	2	3
Do I pass on confidential information to other people? Can I be trusted?	1	2	3
Am I a slave to anything? (Habits, diet, dress, image, other people's approval, etc.)	1	2	3
Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?	1	2	3
Do I deflect, blame-shift, self-deceive, or otherwise avoid God's dealings with me?	1	2	3
Am I living victoriously in all areas of life?	1	2	3
Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?	1	2	3
Do I grumble or complain? Am I angry or frustrated in any area of my life?	1	2	3
Have I been loving, joyful, at peace, patient, kind, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled?	1	2	3
Am I totally honest with myself about what God is doing in my life?	1	2	3
Am I totally honest with at least one person about what God is doing in my life?	1	2	3
Can I accept correction with an open heart and willingness to change for God's purpose?	1	2	3
Do I have difficulty submitting to authority which God has placed over me in life, work, or ministry? Do I ignore their counsel or go my own way in my heart?	1	2	3
<i>The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.</i> <i>1 Timothy 1:5</i>			





## GUIDANCE FROM GOD\*

As descendants of Adam, in our human minds, we can never figure out what Jesus would do. And even if we could, it would not be in our nature to do it. Without the Holy Spirit, even disciples who had walked with Jesus for three years did not know what to do. After the resurrection, they returned to their former occupations because they did not realize that their work for Messiah had only just begun. (See John 21:3.) During their time of waiting in Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' command to them, they did what seemed right to them according to their own interpretation of Scripture. But when it came to the point of decision, they were stuck flipping a coin for divine guidance. (See Acts 1:26.) The point is that without the Holy Spirit, even those who walked most closely with God in the flesh were totally without the ability to know what they were supposed to do next and how they were supposed to execute God's will for their lives.

In this condition, Jesus did not want them to do a thing for Him or in His name. In this condition, the disciples were still focused on worldly things and interpreting things from a fleshly perspective. They still thought that it was time for the Messiah to come and conquer all of Israel's enemies in earthly and political battles for power and dominance. Their hearts were bent on war and judgment of God's enemies in the final and catastrophic *day of the Lord*, which they knew about from the Scriptures. (See Acts 1:6.) They were constantly arguing with one another over who was the greatest and who would have positions of power in Jesus' Kingdom. (See Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46, 22:23-24.) They were also most likely expecting Jesus to come back imminently to lead them in His army, slaying all their enemies.

They were, indeed, entering into war. But this was a war for the hearts and souls of men. This war would only be won by doing what Jesus did by the guidance and power of God from within.

On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out from heaven, the 120 believers who received the Holy Spirit became animated by the Spirit of the Lord. Their war against evil began through the words of their mouths as they made known the completed work of the cross, declaring the enemy's defeat. (See Acts 2:7-11.)

Only after Christ's followers had received the Holy Spirit were their hearts transformed. Their hearts became circumcised and softened to be compassionate rather than conquering. All of their plans for the future were replaced with a higher calling to the Kingdom of God. From this day forward, Jesus would be leading them step-by-step as if He were there in person, but now He was *Christ-in-them* who would guide them into all truth and every good work He had prepared for them. The disciples became ambassadors of heaven who extended offers of peace to sinners, religious rebels, and enemies of God.

### **Manifesting Christ**

We have the same assignment today that the first believers did – to manifest the love of Jesus as His representatives in the earth until He returns. Unfortunately, just like the first 120 believers, if left to ourselves without the Holy Spirit, we may as well be tossing a coin. Even “righteous” deeds are nothing but *filthy rags* before God when they are done without the leading of the Holy Spirit. (See Isaiah 64:6.) These works, no matter how good they may be, are eternally profitless. Unrestrained, our sinful nature is jealous, selfishly ambitious, greedy, and lusty. To live from this operating system results in every evil thing. Basically, when we do not obey the Holy Spirit, we are really no different from the people of the world.

The Holy Spirit is willing to guide us step by step, moment by moment into our Kingdom tasks. As believers, we have the opportunity to offer ourselves as Christ's willing and obedient subjects to allow Him to change us to live for Him and not for ourselves. (See Romans 12:1-2.)

This is a choice. It is not done for us just because we have put our faith in Jesus. Out of gratitude for the salvation God has given us in Christ, we must willingly offer ourselves to live by the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord. This is not rooted in obligation or dogmatic religious fear but in love and thankfulness, prompting us to the genuine pursuit of God. We do not become robots of God but retain our free will to live according to our own desires or live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit that God has put within us. (See Romans 8:5-8,12-14.)

This said, the Christian life is not a democracy, it is a monarchy, and Christ is our King. Therefore, we do not ask Jesus to co-labor with us in our goals, dreams, and desires; rather, we co-labor with Christ to do the Kingdom works that He has designed for us. (See 1 Corinthians 3:9.) The Holy Spirit will not lead us into worldly wisdom or set our aims on the things of this world or the kingdoms of this world which are doomed to burn and perish. In fact, the things that the Holy Spirit is focused on will seem like foolishness to those who do not have the Holy Spirit. But Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world, and His wisdom is higher than any earthly wisdom. (See 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.) The Holy Spirit will not guide us into satisfying our own desires and lusts of our flesh but into the will of God which is for our holiness, purity, righteousness, and moral goodness. (See Galatians 5:16-25.)

When Christ died on the cross, we died with Him. Now, our calling is to live as if we are dead to our own ideas, plans, and concepts of good and godliness in order to live fully and exclusively for Jesus and His guidance for His Kingdom. We must live for God even if this involves pain, loss, suffering, or selfless acts.

*Colossians 3:2-3: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.***

*1Peter 4:1-2 NLT: So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, **you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had**, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. **You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.***

Without overstating it, living life according to the Holy Spirit is the occupation of the Christian life here on earth. God's purpose in sending Jesus was to cleanse us from our sin in order to restore us to right standing with Himself so that each of us draws near to Him and hears His voice.

Moreover, as we progress in the Christian life towards spiritual maturity, we do not become LESS dependent on the Holy Spirit; we become MORE dependent on Jesus and His guidance. We realize that we are not only dead in His death, but we are totally useless without Him. The more we do the things that Jesus did, which are completely out of the realm of human capacity, the more we NEED Him to guide, lead, and empower us for our Kingdom tasks. Even more so, if we undergo hardship, trials, and opposition, we NEED His comfort and strength in order to endure. Therefore, no matter what is happening in our lives, we NEED Jesus and God's guidance through the Holy Spirit.

Oftentimes, this means that, just like the first 120 disciples who eagerly and expectantly waited to hear from Jesus about what they were supposed to do next, we have to wait for the Holy Spirit to give us our divine marching orders. Waiting on God is challenging because our flesh naturally desires to fulfill itself, satisfy its lusts, and be exalted as powerful, busy, needed, useful, and successful. Additionally, our flesh is tempted to consider our natural abilities to procure results that seem like what God revealed His will to be to "make things happen" or "use our God-given gifts and skills." Sometimes, waiting for God seems irresponsible, complacent, or disobedient. Other times, we simply grow impatient, and the pressures of conformity and temptations towards "easier" or "faster" solutions, seem to bear down on us. When this

happens, we are likely to resort to our own interpretations of God's Word or will and set out on a course of our own design rather than continuing to wait for God's guidance into His will, ways, and purposes. Rebellion against God often presents itself as the logical solution to our problems, the fulfillment of our truest desires, or even what God has promised. This is exactly what Eve thought before eating from the wrong tree.

This is serious stuff. God gave us His Spirit within us, but we retain our free will to obey the Spirit of the Lord or not. We have the ability to obey God or disobey Him. We have free will to acknowledge Jesus or to deny Him. We retain the right to submit to Christ or renounce Him. (See 2 Timothy 2:12.) This is why true waiting on God is the token mark of spiritual maturity and submission to God. Waiting acknowledges an authority higher than ourselves and submits willingly to that authority's timing and purpose. True waiting is not stagnancy because God will always be faithful to prompt us at the right time into the right action with the right motive for His purpose, which will always be rooted in eternity.

The only way that we will be able to *fight the good fight of faith* (see 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7) and endure through the trials of life is to listen to and obey the Holy Spirit DAILY and to constantly encourage one another in living our lives by the direction of the Holy Spirit. All we have to do is ASK God for wisdom and He will freely give it to us. (See James 1:5-8.)

*Hebrews 3:7-8, 12-15: So, **as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts** as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, (quoting Psalm 95:7-11) ... See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.** We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: **"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts** as you did in the rebellion."*

Keep it simple, listen to Jesus and do what He says. Stay available to the Lord and be flexible when He sends you in a different direction than what you were expecting. The true Christian life of spiritual maturity is a life that is yielded to God so that it can manifest the love of Jesus to all mankind.

*John 10:27: **My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.***

## EXAMPLES FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Book of Acts gives us various examples of how God speaks to followers of Jesus. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit said go and other times stay. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit prevented believers from going where they desired to go and other times compelled them to go even in the face of great suffering.

Examples can be found in Acts 8:29-30, 10:19-21, 16:6-7, 18:21, 20:22-24, 22:18.

All of this is to say that Christ-followers no longer made decisions for themselves based on their own logic or way of thinking about things. They lived their lives by literally obeying the promptings of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

### **Prophecy, Dreams & Visions**

Examples of prophecy, dreams, and visions are prevalent throughout the Book of Acts. In fact, once a believer received the Holy Spirit, it was normal for ordinary men and women to prophesy. Prophetic revelation is given to believers for ourselves and for one another to comfort us in our trials, encourage us into our Kingdom purpose, and build up our faith in Jesus Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 14:3, 12.) All believers are encouraged to eagerly desire to prophesy so that they may build up the Church. (See 1 Corinthians 14:1, 39.)

Examples can be found in Acts 15:32, 19:6, 21:8-9, 16:9-10, 18:9-11, 9:10-17, 10:9-20.

Visions God gave to believers photographically depicted something God was revealing, but He also spoke directly about its meaning. The people receiving the visions remained of sound mind and were able to converse with God to see what He was showing them and hear what He was giving them as an interpretation. God spoke through the vision, during the visions, and after the visions. Once the vision was received, the recipients set out to obey what God had instructed them or were led by the Lord into the situations, which would clearly demonstrate what the vision had portrayed. (See Acts 11:4-18.)

Prophecy can include rebukes and warnings for the purpose of helping one another stay on track in our walk of faith and holiness. For example, a prophetic warning was issued through Paul to the Ephesian elders regarding false teachers who would spring up out of the ranks of the Church. Paul and the elders also prophetically discerned that they would never see each other again. (See Acts 20:25-32.) God also uses prophecy to reveal His omniscience by disclosing the secrets of our hearts and by accurately foretelling the things which are to come. (See 1 Corinthians 14:24-25.) For example, prophetic discernment about the inner workings of Ananias and Sapphira's hearts was given to Peter in order to keep the Church unpolluted by those who were deceptive. (See Acts 5:3-9.)

Most of the time, prophecy, dreams, and visions are subject to interpretation. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit will give us the interpretation, but other times He will not, and we must receive by faith what the Lord has revealed to us in the way that He has given it to us. This said, revelation, which the Holy Spirit gives us, no matter which form it takes, will always be aligned with the *whole counsel of God*, His character, and the completed work of Christ, which helps us to *test the spirit* and discern that God is speaking. Sometimes, God's message is crystal clear but, most often, it seems as if we are seeing imperfectly like puzzling reflections in a dimly lit mirror. (See 1 Corinthians 13:12; Numbers 12:6-8.) This is by design and keeps us dependent on Christ and the Holy Spirit.

For example, prophetic insight was given to Paul and the believers in every city about the suffering that laid ahead for Paul as he journeyed on towards Jerusalem. The prophet Agabus even acted it out. (See Acts 20:22-23, 21:4, 10-15.) What these believers spiritually discerned was all true, but God's will in the matter was subject to interpretation. Everyone listening to the Holy Spirit knew that suffering awaited Paul



if he went to Jerusalem, so they urged him not to go but Paul knew that it was God's will for him to go, in spite of the suffering that was in store. This is somewhat reminiscent of Jesus' encounter with Peter when Peter admonished Jesus that He would not have to suffer and die on a cross. (See Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33.) In a similar way, the believers prophesying to Paul heard the Holy Spirit correctly, but their interpretation was carnal and selfish. On the other hand, Paul had already been imprisoned, whipped, beaten, stoned, and left for dead on account of the Gospel, and he was willing to go through it all again because the love of Christ compelled him to selflessness. He was ready to pay the ultimate price for Christ, and nothing would deter him from obeying God.

Prophetic revelation was also given to believers in order to speak warnings to His people regarding the things that were to come in the world. (See Acts 11:27-29.) Notice that Agabus' prophecy of famine was not given as a proclamation of judgment against the Roman world. Instead, it was interpreted as a grace of God for the preparation of His people because they perceived that the prophecy was given for the building up of the Church. To dig into this a little bit, no matter what Jesus taught, His resounding underlying message was always *repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. When Jesus was asked about disasters and calamities happening in the world, this message remained the same. Essentially, Jesus instructed His followers not to consider those who experience catastrophe or misfortune to be worse sinners who were more deserving of God's apparent judgment. Rather, Jesus conveyed that disasters speak warnings that anyone who does not repent and place their faith in Him as Lord and Savior will suffer the ultimate calamity on the *day of judgment* which is to come. (See Luke 13:1-5.) Jesus never went on sin hunts to expose the reasons why bad things were happening in the world but steadfastly continued proclaiming to *repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand* so that everyone could come to know Him and be saved. This is totally consistent with how God functioned throughout the Old Testament. God often gave conditional prophetic warnings of what would happen if people would not repent. This said, in most cases, God was clear that if people repented, He would relent of the impending calamity. (See Jeremiah 7:3, 18:8, 26:13, 36:3; Ezekiel 18:21; Joel 2:14; Jonah 3:10.) However, other times, God reached the limit of His mercy, and the sin of the people attained to full measure. By then, repentance would profit the people nothing because it was too late. Jesus prophesied about the coming *day of judgment* as an appointed time that has been set, which only God (not even Jesus and definitely none of us) knows, when God's vengeance will be poured out on the earth because the sin of all mankind has reached its full measure. (See Matthew 24:1-51; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 12:35-59, 21:5-38.) God's judgment and wrath was satisfied when He poured it out on Christ on the cross, and therefore, for everyone who has repented and placed their faith in Jesus, God relents of the judgment that we deserve. This is why the message of *repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand* is of utmost importance and is the loving tone of all true prophecy. The day of God's wrath is yet to come and will bring destruction for everyone who has not placed their faith in Jesus.

Until then, the purpose of revelation for cities or nations is not to decree judgment or to bless ignorance or lawlessness. The purpose is to inspire faithfulness to the Lord and invite unbelievers into God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. According to the apostle Paul, God marked out the boundary lines of all the nations and the appointed times when they would rise and fall since before the creation of the earth. His purpose was that everyone in all nations would seek Him and try to find Him or, in other words, that they would *repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. (See Acts 17:26-27.) As God's foreordained plans are fulfilled on the earth, He reveals them to His people through prophetic revelation. (See Amos 3:7.) This encourages God's people and is a testimony to unbelievers of God's omniscience and that Christ is King. The Old Testament is filled with examples of this type of prophecy. For example, the Books of 1 and 2 Kings were written to encourage the people of Israel in their faithfulness to God, and are both packed full of historical accounts of God speaking through a person and then *it came to pass just as the man of God had said*. As a smattering of other examples, the prophet Isaiah prophesied the events of the reign of

Cyrus of Persia approximately 150 years before it came to pass, Jeremiah accurately predicted that the people of Israel would be in Babylonian exile for 70 years, 20 years before the 70 years began. Daniel accurately foretold the events in the lives of the kings of Babylon whom he served while he was in exile. (See Isaiah 44:28; Jeremiah 25:11-12; Daniel 2:29-45, 4:19-33, 5:13-31.) Interestingly, all of these prophets also prophesied things which are still yet to come. For us today, when believers prophesy about the things going on in the world and they come to pass, we are encouraged by knowing that God already knows the end from the beginning. Our faith is built up so that we are able to stand firm in Christ no matter what happens between now and when He returns. (See Isaiah 46:10; Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13.) We will cover this in more depth in Unit Two of this course.

## **Angels**

God also sent His angels to guide believers in the Book of Acts. Throughout the Old Testament, God sent angels to His people to bring words of encouragement, to assist with dramatic escapes, to fight battles with them and for God's people, and to reveal heaven's agenda. (See Genesis 18:2, 19:1-22, 32:1; Joshua 5:13-15; 2 Kings 6:17; Isaiah 6:5, etc.) Jesus Christ is the *Lord of Hosts* which means that He is the captain and commander of God's army of angels who carry out His commands. This is one of God's most commonly used names in the Scriptures, mentioned over 250 times. Angels can take the form of human beings who supernaturally appear and disappear, or they may be seen only through eyes which God has granted to see in the spiritual realm.

Angels were responsible for releasing Peter from prison on two occasions, once with John and once on his own. The second time it happened, it was so surreal that Peter thought it was a vision, but it wasn't. (See Acts 5:19-20, 12:7-11.) An angel of the Lord told Philip to take a certain road to his next divine appointment. (See Acts 8:26-27.) God sent an angel to Cornelius so that he would send for Peter and hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (See Acts 10:3-8, 10:21-22.) An angel appeared to Paul to encourage and reassure him in spite of the impending shipwreck. (See Acts 27:21-26.) An angel of the Lord struck Herod down dead when he did not give glory to God. This instilled the fear of God in many people, and they placed their faith in Jesus. (See Acts 12:23-24.) Angels ministered to believers constantly and were sent to care for God's people. (See Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 34:7, 91:4, 11-12.) Sometimes they were seen and sometimes not, but they were there carrying out God's commands.

## **The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever**

God speaks and guides us today the same way He guided the first followers of Christ in the Book of Acts.

## PRAYER INSPECTION

1 = Needs improvement

2 = In Refining Process

3 = Doing Well for Now

**Prayer Inspection** – *praying at all times in all situations – nothing earthly, sensual, or demonic*

Have I <b>asked</b> God what His will is in this situation?	1	2	3
Have I <b>listened</b> to God for His perspective, wisdom, and insight into the situation?	1	2	3
Am I praying this because God guided me about it or because it is what I want?	1	2	3
Am I praying this because it is what I <i>think</i> God would want?	1	2	3
Am I praying this to manipulate, control, or impose my will on a person or situation?	1	2	3
Am I misusing or abusing Scripture in prayer?	1	2	3
Am I misusing or abusing “ <i>agreement</i> ” between believers in prayer?	1	2	3
Am I imitating a prayer technique or method to try to obtain or force results?	1	2	3
Am I praying out of genuine love for God and others?	1	2	3
Have I taken the planks out of my own eyes before praying for someone else to change?	1	2	3
Am I praying according to the ways of God or of this world?	1	2	3
Am I praying for my own promotion or for Jesus to be exalted?	1	2	3
Am I praying a prayer of faith, or out of flesh or fear?	1	2	3

*Lord, teach us to pray...*

*Luke 11:1*

## OBEDIENCE TO THE MASTER

Romans 6:16-17 NIV - Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

### DESCRIPTION

The Apostle Paul knew that He had been bought with a price. God purchased us for Himself with the precious blood of Jesus. This redemption sets us free from wrong "masters" so that we can obey God.

It is true that Jesus calls us His friends but He is also our King. The Kingdom is a monarchy, not a democracy. Our King has the right to give us orders, instructions, and daily tasks. Unfortunately, we often live according to our own agenda, desires, ambitions, the pattern of this world, or the expectations of others rather than turning ourselves over to obey God exclusively.

We are God's servants. A servant eagerly awaits their master's orders and executes them without argument or contradiction. The master sets the agenda each day for their own purposes and has the right to shift the focus of the servant anytime they need to.

To practice Obedience to the Master is about receiving daily "orders" from the Lord about the things that He has for us **today** so that we can obey Him even if it means we have to alter our own plans.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Has there been a time when you knew that God was telling you to do something other than what you had planned? What was this like for you? What did you do? What difficulties do you encounter when thinking of yourself as a servant/slave? Why are you offended? Are you willing to allow God to change your plans today? This week? This year? For your life?



### PURPOSE:

- To listen to God's voice.
- To discern the will of the Lord for us for today.
- To present ourselves to God to do His will.

### SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

- Greater alignment with God's will.
- Increased awareness of God in our daily life and routine.
- Increased worship through offering of ourselves.
- Improved clarity of God's desires for us.

### PRAYER

Jesus, you are my King. Forgive me for the times I have treated You too casually by not listening to or obeying Your instructions. I come before You now as a servant to my Master to receive Your directions and to do Your will. Speak to me now so I can obey Your voice. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### PRACTICE

- Each morning, set a time and find a quiet and private place where you can spend time with God.
  - If you need to wake up earlier to make this time, do so.
  - Bring your Bible and a notebook to take note of anything significant the Lord may share with you.
- Be still for a moment. Then, offer yourself to God.
  - Offer the day ahead to God, saying, "Jesus, I offer this day to you as a sacrifice. I desire to do Your will today."
  - Wait for anything He might say to you before you begin.



### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

- John 10:27
- Psalms 123:2
- 1 Corinthians 6:20
- 1 Corinthians 7:23
- Isaiah 30:21
- Hebrews 3:7-15
- Jeremiah 31:33
- Romans 12:1
- Philippians 2:6-8

- Thank the Lord for His guidance. Ask Him to help you to do the things He has revealed to you **today**, without making excuses – especially the things you might not desire to do.

### NOTES:

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## TESTING THE SPIRIT

In spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit was poured out so powerfully on the first believers in the early churches, even they were subject to error and turning to wrong spirits, counterfeits of Jesus, and so-called gospels. This was because even though they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they had not yet been fully transformed by the Holy Spirit and brought into the full reality of the Christian existence.

*Galatians 1:6-8: I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel-- which is really no gospel at all**. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even **if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!***

*2 Corinthians 11:3-4: But I am afraid that just as **Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ**. For if someone comes to you and **preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached**, or if you receive **a different spirit from the Spirit** you received, or **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.*

*1 John 4:1: Dear friends, **do not believe every spirit**, but **test the spirits to see whether they are from God**, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

As we set out to pursue God through obedience to the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will be vulnerable to the same counterfeits, deceptions, and wrong spirits that early believers were until, by reason of use, we have been trained by the Holy Spirit to discern good from evil. (See Hebrews 5:14.)

This means that we must test the spirit behind everything. If a spirit whispers something to us, or a prophet prophesies, or a teacher teaches, or a preacher preaches, or an angel comes to us, or we have a vision beyond description, or feel physical sensations all over our body, or we have spiritual experience beyond human comprehension but the message and direction of the spirit, prophet, teacher, preacher, angel, vision, sensation, or experience does not line up with the truth of God's Word or the teachings and commands of Jesus, it is a lie from the pit of Hell.

This calls for discernment. We cannot and **MUST** not accept everything as if it is from God. Even if it seems like God or is delivered in the name of God or the name of Jesus, if it does not line up with the truth of God, it is a lie from the evil one.

We must test the spirit. In the Book of Job, Job says that the "ear tests words like the tongue tests foods." (See Job 12:11.) Just like a trained tongue can taste the different ingredients mixed into a dish of food, the trained ear can distinguish when flesh, ignorance, prejudice, presumption, or evil has been mixed into the truth. Those who have ears to hear will **HEAR** what God is saying. Moreover, we have been given the Holy Spirit to discern not only by the ear but by the Spirit. Spiritual people test and discern **ALL** things by whether or not the Spirit within them bears witness to the truth. Therefore, each of us **MUST** learn to discern by the Spirit of the Lord.

This said, the following gives some Scriptural guideline to assist you in cultivating the ability to discern what is from the Holy Spirit and what is not so that you can know God's voice from the other "voices" trying to influence you.

## **Holiness**

First and foremost, let's state the obvious. The Holy Spirit is HOLY and the Holy Spirit will lead us in holiness. To be holy means to be *set apart* or *consecrated* or *sanctified* to the Lord exclusively for His purposes. The first use of holy in the Scriptures is used to describe the seventh day which God sanctified to Himself as different from all the other days of the week. (See Genesis 2:3.) Holiness is not somberness or some feigned religiosity. It is more about being reserved for special use according to God's will and not man's purposes. For example, the priests and Levites were appointed by God to teach the people to distinguish the holy from the common. (See Leviticus 10:10; Ezekiel 44:23.) When we give ourselves to Jesus, we become sanctified by His blood so that we can become holy through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit's work within us. (See Hebrews 10:14; Titus 3:5.) We have been set apart from the world and its purposes for God and His purposes.

*1 John 4:2-6: **This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.***

Exalts Jesus as God in flesh: The Holy Spirit will acknowledge Jesus as God in the flesh, who came to the world and is now raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God in heaven.

Any spirit that will not say the name of Jesus or cannot declare that Jesus is Lord, or says that Jesus was a good teacher but not God or the Son of God, or that Jesus didn't die, or that Jesus was not raised from the dead is NOT the Holy Spirit. (See also 1 Corinthians 12:3.)

Not of this world: The Holy Spirit will lead us in the ways of God and not the ways of this world. We have been chosen to be set apart from this world and declare the works of the world to be evil. (See John 7:7.)

Any spirit that aligns with the ways of this world or seeks to advance the ways of this world or its kingdoms is NOT the Holy Spirit. Jesus clearly forewarned that His followers would be hated by the world for following Him and proclaimed a curse on those who are well spoken of by the world because it is evidence of them being in the same spirit of the false prophets. (See John 15:18-20; Luke 6:26.)

## **Conviction of Sin, Righteousness, Judgment**

Jesus said this about what the Holy Spirit does:

*John 16:8-11 ESV - And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will **convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

Convict the world: The Holy Spirit shows the world to be wrong. Its works are evil and rebellious against God. The world proved this to be true when they unanimously rejected and crucified Jesus, who is God in the flesh walking in perfect obedience to the Holy Spirit. The whole world is guilty before God and the Holy Spirit will not endorse the world or its ways.

Any spirit which aligns with the methodologies of this world or does not dissuade you from the perspective and beliefs of this world is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit which endorses lawlessness or neglects to bring correction for ungodly behaviors is NOT the Holy Spirit.

Sin: By definition, sin is missing the mark. Anywhere on the target that is not a bullseye is missing the mark of perfection. Jesus demonstrated a sinless life in total submission to God. The greatest mark to miss is the free gift of salvation offered by God when He gave His Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for sin.

Any spirit prompting unbelief in who Jesus is or what He has done for us is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit denying the human need for Jesus due to self-righteousness or self-sufficiency is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any person who says they have no sin is a liar and does not know God. (See 1 John 1:8-10.)

Righteousness: Righteousness is Biblically synonymous with justice or what is right in any given situation. It can also mean right standing or right relationship. Jesus demonstrated God's perfect righteousness in His conduct and perfect relationship with God. The prophet Amos described Him as a plumb line which is the device used by builders to assess whether something is upright or not. (See Amos 7:7-8.) Even though He was hated in the world, He is now seated at the right hand of God.

Any spirit which allows for unjust or unrighteous behavior which is not upright is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit that will not submit itself to the justice of God or will not accept and submit itself to God's dealings is NOT the Holy Spirit.

Judgment: The whole world is under the power of the evil one. (See 1 John 5:19.) But the ancient serpent was judged and triumphed over through Jesus' death and resurrection. (See Colossians 2:15.) Jesus is coming back to judge the world with fire and the wrath of God. (See 2 Peter 3:7.) The Holy Spirit will bring a deep sense of knowing that this world and everything in it is prepared for judgment by fire alongside a deep gratitude for the salvation Jesus gives us from the day of God's wrath.

Any spirit which distracts from, nullifies, minimizes, or leaves out the cross of Christ is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit which claims that Jesus is not returning, that there will not be a day of judgment, that Jesus is delayed, or tries to predict the exact time of Jesus' return is NOT the Holy Spirit.

### **Exalt Jesus & Uphold His Teachings**

Jesus also said this about what the Holy Spirit does:

*John 16:13-14 NIV - But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all the truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will **tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me** because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.*

*John 14:26: But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will **remind you of everything I have said to you.***

Guide into all truth: The word for *truth* used here means the actual reality of something as it truly is. The Word of God is truth. The Holy Spirit will guide us into the full experience of faith and faithfulness to God and all of His ways. When our lives are submitted to the Holy Spirit, they will start to resemble the Bible and we will understand God's Word and ways due to our practical experience of it.

Any spirit which nullifies, distorts, or neglects God's Word is NOT the Holy Spirit. (See 2 Timothy 3:16.) Any spirit which promotes a pattern of life which is contrary to the Word of God is NOT the Holy Spirit.

Tell you what is to come: God knows the end from the beginning. On several occasions, Jesus told His disciples in advance what was going to happen so that they would be strengthened with fore-knowledge when it did actually happen. (See John 16:1.) The Holy Spirit will continue in this type of revelation and

advance notification of what is to come in order to equip and prepare us for what God is doing so that we can stand through various trials and temptations.

Unfortunately, there are also many false spirits or fortune-telling, divination, or psychic readings that counterfeit the Holy Spirit to reveal the things that the false spirit has been charged with declaring. We will cover this more later. Just because someone is telling you what is to come is NOT evidence of the Holy Spirit. You must test the spirit.

Exalt Jesus: The Holy Spirit will never exalt Himself – only JESUS. The Holy Spirit will not exalt you – only JESUS. The Holy Spirit will speak of the one true God, the only Creator of Heaven and earth as the Father of JESUS because it is only through JESUS that we can access the Father and anyone who has learned from the Father turns to JESUS. (See John 6:45, 14:6.)

Any spirit exalting or declaring a non-specific, all-encompassing “god” is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit exalting the spirit is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit claiming to know God but that does not point to Jesus as the only way to God is NOT the Holy Spirit. Any spirit that exalts man, this world, or anything in it is NOT the Holy Spirit.

Remind of Jesus' teachings: Jesus has perfect theology because He is God. As such, Jesus is the living demonstration of perfect theology in all of His words and deeds. The Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance the teachings and life of Jesus as our guide and example of how to live for God.

Any spirit which contradicts, diminishes, or neglects the teachings of Jesus is NOT the Holy Spirit.

#### **Four Kinds of Wisdom**

The apostle James corrected the behavior of some early believers by calling upon them to recognize the source of the “wisdom” they were functioning in. Our wisdom is demonstrated through our actions and our motives. A basic definition of wisdom is right application and use of knowledge. As such, wisdom in action is the practical application of knowledge based on our understanding of the facts. Someone can have much knowledge about many things but if they do not apply this knowledge correctly, they are a fool. God's wisdom applies God's knowledge (and He knows everything) to do things the way that God does them (and He does all things well.)

*James 3:13-18 NKJV - Who is wise and understanding among you? **Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.** But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth [reality]. **This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.** For where envy and self-seeking [selfish ambition] exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.** Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Earthly: Earthly wisdom is according to the terrestrial, natural, and common order of things and sets its aim on the pleasures and good things of this earth. This kind of wisdom will seek stability and comfort by worldly standards and the pursuit of earthly things. This kind of wisdom might be referred to as “common sense” but remember, the Holy Spirit teaches us to distinguish between the common and the holy. Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world. The very things that are valued in this earth are of very little value in God's sight. (See Luke 12:15, 16:15.)

Sensual: Sensual wisdom is from our sensuality, lusts, passions, and animal nature. This kind of wisdom is rooted in our sinful nature and passions. These are the very things we are called to put to death and reckon ourselves dead to in order to not indulge our carnality. (See Romans 6:11-14; Galatians 5:17.)



Sensual wisdom can also be evidenced through unsanctified emotions and physical sensations, even if these emotions or sensations occur while we are doing something spiritual. For example, strong emotional outbursts during a time of prayer might be evidence of the Holy Spirit touching a heart or it might just be emotions that have not yet been renewed in the Lord. Emotions are the least stable element of our soul and following emotions as if they are evidence of the Lord speaking will result in much instability.

Similarly, physical manifestations or sensations which occur during times with the Lord are not always evidence that the Holy Spirit is speaking. We do not confirm the word of the Lord by the evidence of getting a goosebump or any other kind of outward sensory physical feeling or "presence." These things are of the senses and as such, it is sensual. I do not deny that these things happen. However, we discern the truth of God by the Holy Spirit and the truth, NOT by anything in the sensual realm. The Holy Spirit leads us by faith in the truth whether we "feel it" or not. If we follow manifestations in the sensory realm as if they are God's guidance or confirmation we will be led from goosebump to goosebump rather than from glory to glory and can very quickly fall into many errors.

Demonic: Satan's sin is rebellion against God through self-exaltation. Satan was designed by God to be the chief worshipper but at some point decided that he wanted worship for himself. Demonic wisdom takes the form of selfish ambition, self-exaltation, and attempting to usurp God's position of supreme authority and power. Any so-called "wisdom" which subjugates, enslaves, or looks down upon others, coveting what others have, is from the evil one.

In contrast, Jesus took on the form of a servant, the lowest place, and obeyed God even unto death on a cross at the hands of the very ones He was sent to save, forgiving them as they killed Him. He tells us to take up our cross, deny ourselves daily, and pour our lives out for God and others. Any spirit which is self-protective, unforgiving, holds a grudge, demands restitution, or seeks vengeance is NOT the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom from Above: Notice that the first quality of wisdom from above is pure. James specifically noted and highlighted this. God will never compromise truth in order to make peace. He will die first. This said, without going into each aspect in detail, the other attributes of wisdom from above will also encompass the nature and character of God, which is to love and give freely without expecting anything in return. Godly wisdom has no partiality or prejudice in any matter but sees all for what it really is. Godly wisdom is never hypocritical or pretending to be something it is not. Godly wisdom leads people to make peace in God's way. The way God made peace with us was by incarnating flesh and dying on a cross for us when we were His enemies. (See Luke 19:42; Romans 5:8-10.)

### **Setting Itself Up Against God**

When false apostles were persuading the Corinthians believers away from the true teachings of Jesus and ways of God, the apostle Paul corrected them about their incorrect assessments of spiritual realities and wrong application of the truth.

*2 Corinthians 10:4-5, 7: The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish **strongholds**. We demolish **arguments** [imagination] and every **pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we **take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**... You are **judging by appearances**. If anyone is confident that they belong to Christ, they should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as they do.*

Strongholds: In the Old Testament, a stronghold was a tower in the center of a city where people would run for safety when an enemy attacked. Spiritually speaking, a stronghold is anything we run to other than Jesus when we feel under an attack of the enemy. It is a false comfort. For example, the rich man's wealth is his stronghold because he thinks his security is in money. (See Proverbs 10:15, 18:11.) However, a wise man scales the city of the might and pulls down the stronghold they trust in. (See Proverbs 21:22.) The

apostle Paul was a wise man. He made it his aim to identify and pull down every false trust anyone had put confidence in so that the name of Jesus could be their stronghold and salvation in all things. (See Proverbs 18:10; Psalm 62:7, 71:7, etc.) God will always lead us into living by FAITH, and the Holy Spirit will never exalt a false trust – only JESUS.

Arguments, Reasonings, Computations, Imaginations: Pride, carnal nature, logic, "figuring it out," and our own fabricated fantasies can cause us to resist God's dealings with us and fall into deception. In short, it is in our nature to not want God to be God because we want to be our own god. Yes, it is our glory to search out the matters of God. (See Proverbs 25:2.) But the true discovery of God and His ways does not puff us up with knowledge but causes us to humble ourselves more deeply before His excellence and wisdom. (See 1 Corinthians 8:1.)

Anything calculating or capitalizing on our natural abilities or the logic of this world is NOT the Holy Spirit. For example, it was a grave sin inspired by Satan when David took a census of Israel to assess his own military strength. (See 1 Chronicles 21:1.) By contrast, when God used Gideon to defeat the Midianites, he reduced Gideon's army from thirty thousand to three hundred so that Gideon would have no doubt that the victory had not been accomplished through his own strength.

Any desire fabricated by our lusts or false hopes is a fantasy. If pursued under the premise that God wants to give us the "desires of our heart," we have abused the word of God and will find ourselves disappointed. It is important to remember that our flesh desires what is contrary to God and that our flesh has no value to God apart from our willingness to submit ourselves to Him and obey Him.

Pretensions or high things raised up against God: Anything claiming or exalting itself as the solution to your problems that is not JESUS is NOT from the Holy Spirit. Anything done with the motive of self-protection, self-defense, self-advancement, or independence from God is NOT the Holy Spirit. Anything claiming to be a god that is not God is NOT the Holy Spirit.

In an even finer analysis, any false assumptions we have about Jesus, God or His Word are NOT the Holy Spirit. Any presumptions we have about God's will or the way He does things is NOT the Holy Spirit. Even our zeal for God without true knowledge of Him is NOT the Holy Spirit. Remember that with all of his religious zeal, the apostle Paul was zealously against Christians (and therefore against Jesus) until God finally got a hold of him and showed him the truth. All the religious leaders in Jesus' day completely missed the fact that Jesus was God in the flesh. This shows us that we cannot base our "spiritual" discernment on our own concepts of God. We must ASK God in every situation what He is doing and what He wants us to do.

Judging by Appearances: Man judges by appearances but God looks at the heart. (See 1 Samuel 16:7.) The Book of Proverbs warns about judging by appearances and being hasty to "take our neighbor to court" based on what we have seen. (See Proverbs 25:8.) It is very dangerous to presume that we know something based on what it appears to be. The truth of the matter may be very different from how it appears. Instead, we can ASK the Lord about anything and everything and He will tell us what we need to know about it or He might tell us to mind our own business.

It is also important to consider that by outward observation according to man's standards of success, Jesus was a failure. What is esteemed by men is an abomination to God and vice-versa. (See Luke 6:15.) The world assesses "success" primarily by money, power, status, followers, fame, and influence. God does not see it that way. When the crowds wanted to make Jesus king in an earthly manner, He pointed out that they only followed Him out of selfishness and challenged them with a hard teaching. Almost everyone abandoned Him. (See John 6:15-71.) We follow a King who was crucified by the powers of this world, not one who came to exalt Himself or strive to be chummy with the powers of this world.

## **Practical Experience: What Is and Is Not God**

If you are reading this, it is assumed that you already have some basic understanding and experience with the Holy Spirit and how God communicates with us. Therefore, we will discuss here some of the ways God speaks and some things to look out for as you prepare yourself to listen to Him and obey.

Internal Impressions: God's guidance is INTERNAL. He put His Spirit INSIDE of us. Yes, I know that Gideon held out a fleece and the first disciples cast lots, but that was before the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. Now, God dwells WITHIN us and guides us from within.

Notice from the examples of the Holy Spirit's guidance in the Book of Acts that the direction was always simple and clear. It was not muddy or plagued by uncertainty, and it was usually given one step at a time. God's guidance is never forceful, condemning, pushy, or obsessive. The only exception to this is in the case of urgency, but even in urgency, the Lord is kind. Pressure, condemnation, fear of missing out, fear of missing God, fear of God's punishment or displeasure, obsessively recurring thoughts, and things like this are NOT from God. Imitation of others, copycatting, regurgitating what others say or teach, and any kind of hypocrisy that causes our words to be out of line with our actions is NOT from God. God has ordained good works for us, but His aim is on spiritual fruitfulness – which is the condition of our hearts. Good works done with wrong motives are not of God and will burn.

God guides us into the truth in love. He knows exactly where we are on our journey with Him and He is never in a rush. He prefers the slow-cooker method to genuine transformation over the microwave approach to busy-ness and activities that dodge the genuine work of His Spirit.

Scripture Reading: God can and does speak to us through His Word. He delights to reveal Himself to us and cause us to understand His will and His ways. His Word is absolutely perfect in every possible way and will never lie to you or lead you astray.

However, the evil one also knows the Scriptures. His first successful deception of man in the Garden of Eden was accomplished through distorting the command of God for selfish purposes. He is still doing the same thing with God's word today.

I realize that there are many teachings about the difference between a *logos* word and a *rhema* word. Essentially these teachings say that the *logos* word is the original context but the *rhema* word is the “right now” voice of God through the Scripture on any given subject. There may be some validity to the dissection of these two Greek words as it pertains to how God speaks. However, and unfortunately, these teachings have also been used by many people to wrench the Scriptures out of their Biblical and historical context to say something in the frame of “thus sayeth the Lord through His Word” that God never intended from those passages of Scripture and that God would never say. Usually, this involves applying the Scripture for personal gain or advancement. Hmm... sounds an awful lot like Eden to me.

God can use His Scriptures to assure our hearts of something that He is doing. But it is important to consider that Jesus (who is the Word in flesh) never abused or misused Scripture to advance Himself. Moreover, Paul reasoned from the Scriptures to explain God's redemptive plan and said his hands were innocent of blood because he had declared the whole counsel of God. (See Acts 20:27.) A fully trained servant of the Lord will be skilled in dividing the Word of God accurately, not selfishly. (See 2 Timothy 2:15.)

Prophecy, Dreams, Visions: Prophetic words, dreams, and visions can be from God but are not always from God. We need spiritual discernment to weigh what is revealed before we act upon it as if it is guidance from God.

There are numerous examples of false prophets throughout the Bible who were all functioning in dreams and visions and saying “thus says the Lord” when God was not speaking to them or through them. It is no different today, even among well-meaning believers who desire to hear God and be used by Him to

proclaim His Word. We ourselves must TEST everything to see if it lines up with the revealed will of God through the Scriptures and what God has already been speaking to us about individually.

It is also important to note that the false prophets in Scripture were always and only blessing people and proclaiming peace upon sinful rebels rather than urging them to repent before God. (See Lamentations 2:14.) The same is true today. Prophecies that bless sin, which are overly focused on nations, government, or politics, or which bless nations in sin are NOT from the Holy Spirit. Jesus only spoke of Caesar one time and it was to answer a question about paying taxes. (See Luke 20:22.) He knew that no ruler in the world had any authority other than what God had given them. (See John 19:11; Romans 13:1.) Jesus was constantly speaking and prophesying about His Kingdom, which is not of this world. (See John 18:36.)

False prophecies can be accompanied by events or even miracles which do occur. Miracle power is NOT confirmation that something is from God. If it is out of alignment with God's will, word, or ways, it is false. We will cover this in-depth in Unit Six of this course.

False dreams and visions can reveal Satan's plans and purposes in attempt to lure well-meaning believers out of the will of God and into shipwreck through a "supernatural encounter." Not everything supernatural is always from God. There are many false spirits and antichrists already released in the world and this will only increase until the return of Christ.

Please also note from the examples in the Book of Acts that believers receiving visions remained alert and in their right mind. They did not enter into a passive state of "emptying" but were mentally aware enough to converse with God while they were having the vision. Functioning in the Holy Spirit brings us into the fullness of God's design for mankind including mental faculties and does not make us drones or zombies stripped of free will or function. In contrast, passivity and emptying the mind according to other spirituality techniques is an open invitation for wrong spirits to enter in and counterfeit the workings of God.

God in Circumstances: Noticing coincidences is NOT guidance from God. Yes, God is sovereign over all things but we do not make life decisions based on external events or circumstances. The enemy is able to maneuver all manner of events in this world but that does not mean that they are acts of God or God's way of communicating. (See Job Chapter 1.)

There is a difference between divine guidance and divination. Divination by definition is observing signs or omens. When we interpret an event or occurrence as an omen or sign from God, we are functioning in divination, not divine direction. By contrast, the men of the tribe of Issachar *understood* the times and knew what Israel must do. (See 1 Chronicles 12:32.) They had divinely inspired intelligence to discern the will of God and the hand of God upon the events taking place. They knew that God knows the end from the beginning and assessed the circumstances in accordance with the revealed will and word of God. Similarly, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders in His day for their apparent inability to discern the times correctly, even though they read the weather very well. (See Luke 12:56.) Similar to the word used to describe what the men of Issachar did so well, the word Jesus used means to examine like a jeweler inspecting a jewel or metals for authenticity and imperfections. All of this is to say that we discern things that happen according to how they line up with the revealed will of God. We do not receive guidance and make decisions based on things that happen – no matter how coincidental they may seem.

Angels: God does send angels for many purposes to serve us who will inherit salvation. (See Hebrews 1:14.) Angels can be from God but are not always from God. We must be aware that Satan's messengers disguise themselves as angels of light and messengers of righteousness. (See 2 Corinthians 11:14.)

Without going into excessive teaching on angels, it is important to note that there is no example in Scripture of any human ever commanding the angels. Even Jesus was ministered to by angels but did not call upon them or command them when He was in need. (See Matthew 4:11; 26:53.) God commands His angels concerning us. (See Psalm 91:11.) In all Biblical instances, the angels were commanded by God

and appeared to mankind to tell them of God's plans and assist them in carrying out God's plans. If an angel comes to us with a message other than the truth of Christ, the angel and their message is cursed and condemned. (See Galatians 1:8.) Moreover, we do not worship angels – even ones sent by God. (See Revelation 19:10, 22:9.)

### **Do Not Be Deceived**

The point of all these examples is to assist you in standing in the truth of God as you give yourself over to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never fail you or lead you astray. But the enemy is always deceiving and counterfeiting the work of God. Those who give way to his schemes have lost their connection with the Head of the Body, who is Christ.

*Colossians 2:8, 18-19 NIV - See to it that no one takes you captive through **hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.** ... Do not let anyone who delights in **false humility** and the **worship of angels** disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are **puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.** They have **lost connection with the head**, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

If you have gone astray and lost your connection, repent. Submit yourself to God. Resist the techniques of the enemy which have snared you and receive afresh the mind of Christ.

## THE PATTERN OF OBEDIENCE

The Bible is full of stories of those who obeyed God and those who did not. We could not possibly explore every Biblical example of what faithful obedience to God looks like. However, we will very briefly explore a few examples of obedience and disobedience to give a basic guideline of the ways we will be tempted to submit ourselves to God's guidance...or not.

### Moses and the Israelites

Moses was a special child from birth, ordained by God from the womb to be the deliverer of His people. Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter in all the skills and knowledge of Egypt and, while in Egypt, came to know his calling as God's chosen deliverer. At that time, he **presumed** that his people would recognize that God had chosen him to be their leader and took action accordingly. This did not go well for Moses and he wound up fleeing to the wilderness of Midian for forty years. (See Exodus 1-3; Acts 7:20-29.)

After forty years, it was time for Moses to fulfill his calling. By the time God appeared to him in the burning bush, he was insecure and did not feel qualified to speak to or lead God's people. This was evidence of his readiness for such a serious task. God led Moses **step by step** to carry out His purposes to deliver Israel from Egyptian slavery and to bury Pharaoh and his army in the depths of the sea. When Moses **obeyed God's instructions by faith**, everything went exactly as God intended. Even the waters of the sea were parted by the hand of God to fulfill His promise to His people.

Once they arrived in the wilderness, the Israelites constantly tested God. Their **flesh craved** meat and they **did not wait for God's counsel**. (See Psalm 106:13.) They desired to return to Egypt and considered slavery in Egypt better than service to God. They tested God through **stubborn unbelief** that God would be able to fulfill His promises to them. (See Psalm 78.) When spies were sent in to explore the land that God had promised them, they were impressed with the land but **did not believe** that God could destroy their giant enemies. Due to their unbelief, God sentenced them to die in the wilderness until forty years were complete. At that time, they **presumed to take the land in their own strength** even though God was not with them. In a humiliating defeat, they were chased out by their enemies as if by a swarm of bees. (See Numbers 13-14; Deuteronomy 1:44.)

### Joshua and the Israelites

When Joshua became the leader of God's people, he was instructed by Moses to **mediate on the Law of God day and night** and not let it depart from his mouth. (See Joshua 1:1-8.) Joshua had seen how God led Moses in victorious battles against giants on the eastern side of the Jordan River and Moses instructed him to approach his battles on the other side of the Jordan in the same fashion of **faith**.

During the battle of Jericho, Joshua **followed God's instructions precisely** and the walls of the city came tumbling down. However, at the next battle, Joshua **did not consult with God**, took counsel from others who **judged by appearances** and **presumed that it would be easy** to conquer such a small city. Instead, they were defeated. (See Joshua 7.) When Joshua **sought the Lord** about this, the Lord pointed out the problem and instructed Joshua on how to fix it, and they obeyed. God then sent them back into Ai and they conquered Ai.

In another instance, Joshua **did not consult the Lord** when Gibeonites came cloaked as friends from a distant land. Unfortunately, they were part of the peoples that God had instructed to destroy and not to offer any kind of treaty. Because Joshua **did not consult the Lord**, Israel entered into a treaty with them. (See Joshua 9.)

### David and Saul

David was not a perfect man but he was a man after God's own heart. David was anointed by Samuel as a teenager but it was not yet his time to be king. He **did not presume** to become king **ahead of God's appointed time** and he **served faithfully** in the kingdom of Israel **under God's appointed leader** at the time, Saul. Unfortunately, Saul **became jealous** of David, the anointing upon his life, and the victories God gave him, so Saul tried to kill David. David had to flee for his life and live in caves as an outlaw. When David had the chance to kill Saul, he **refused to lay a hand against God's anointed leader**. Instead, he **waited patiently** for it to be his time to lead God's people.

Even though David was a skilled warrior, he **consulted the Lord before his battles**. (See 1 Samuel 23:1-29, 30:8-9; 2 Samuel 2:1-2, 5:17-25, 21:1, etc.) When David sinned and became aware of his sin, he **repented quickly**. (See Psalm 51.) When God decreed justice against David, David **accepted God's dealings** with him as righteous and true. (See 2 Samuel 12:10, 16:10.) When David sinned and it caused a plague to break out on the people of Israel, he **offered himself in their place**. (See 1 Chronicles 21:17; 2 Samuel 24:17.) It was constantly in David's heart to **build a house for God** to dwell in, and he spent the second half of his life making preparations for God's Temple to be the most splendid in all the earth.

In contrast, was Saul's kingship. Saul was also anointed by Samuel, who told Saul that after the Spirit of the Lord had changed his heart, he could do whatever he found fit to do. However, when it came to the important matters, Saul was told to **wait for his next instructions** from Samuel, who was God's representative at the time. (See 1 Samuel 9:15-8.) For a while, Saul experienced victory because the Spirit of the Lord was with him. Unfortunately, Saul eventually **grew impatient and found it difficult to wait** for Samuel to come and give him his next instructions. He started **looking at his circumstances and the strength of his enemies**. As things seemed to slip **out of his control and look formidable** for his people, Saul decided to **override God's orders with his own will**. He **did what he thought he should do according to his own way of seeing things** and, simply put, **protect his ego**. When the Lord did not respond to Saul the way Saul thought He should, Saul **consulted a medium** and engaged in the **spiritual practices of the nations** rather than earnestly and persistently seeking the Lord, the Most High God of Israel. It cost Saul his kingship. (See 1 Samuel 13:7-14, 15:23; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14.)

After God took the kingdom from Saul (though he remained in office as Israel's king) and put His anointing on David, Saul became **tormented by an evil spirit and murder filled his heart**. Saul came to his end by **falling on his own sword** because he didn't want to be tortured by his enemies or look weak to his people. Saul's trust in God's protection had completely given way to the **self-protection of his ego**.

### **The Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith**

Hebrews 11 is known as the Bible's "Hall of Faith" because it lists many of the heroes of the Bible and how they obeyed God with all their heart, soul, and life. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and others lived in close fellowship with God, were called a friend of God, who spoke with God face to face, and who were men after God's own heart. (See Genesis 5:21-24, 6:9, 17:1, 24:40; Exodus 33:11; Numbers 12:8; 1 Samuel 13:14; 2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23; Isaiah 41:8; Acts 13:22.)

Each of these men was **consumed with God's heart and His purposes**. They were **willing to look foolish by worldly standards** in order to **maintain close fellowship with the Lord** and **follow His instructions**. They did not use their faith or the power of God or the privilege of being God's people for their own gain, purpose, or advantage. They **discarded their own plans** in order to **keep their minds on the Kingdom of Heaven**. They **submitted themselves to God's will** even at the expense of their lives. Their hearts were focused on a city whose builder and maker was God, **not the kingdoms of this world**. For this reason, God was not ashamed to be called their God.

Hebrews 11 is also referred to as the great cloud of witnesses. They are not witnesses of us and our walk of faith and they are not cheering us on from heaven. Heaven's worship is entirely consumed with JESUS.

They are witnesses who can testify truthfully of the faithfulness of God and how eternal matters of God are far more important than anything of this world could ever be.

### **Jesus: the Author and Perfecter of our Faith**

Hebrews 11 leads into Hebrews 12, which reveals that Jesus is the ultimate example of obedience to God and the ultimate champion of faith and faithfulness.

*Hebrews 12:1-4: Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.***

Jesus left the riches and glory of heaven to **take the lowly place** of being born in a barn. Jesus lived a **sinless life** from birth and **submitted Himself** to earthly parents even though He was God. Jesus was **skilled in the Scriptures** by age twelve but **waited for God** to release Him in **God's timing** to begin His earthly ministry, which was eighteen years later. During His ministry years, He was misunderstood, followed by people full of selfishness, and even His own disciples did not understand what He was saying most of the time. He was ridiculed, mocked, rejected, accused of blasphemy, and ultimately crucified as a criminal at the hands of those He had been sent to save.

*Philippians 2:6-8: Who, being in very nature God, **did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing** by taking the very **nature of a servant**, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled himself by becoming obedient** to death—even death on a cross!*

Jesus was **not trying to make a name for Himself** or to build a ministry so that He could be famous. And yet, He is the most famous person who ever lived. He **humbled Himself** in absolute **submission and obedience to God**. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called His God or His Father. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him the name above every name in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

### **The Apostle Paul: the Pattern of Obedience**

The Apostle Paul gave this example of Christ's mindset and then referenced the pattern of his own life as an example of one who is truly following Jesus in spite of the fact that he had started out as one of Christ's primary persecutors.<sup>1</sup> (Note: We will dig a bit more into discerning false apostles in Unit Six of this course.)

Paul had been a passionate Pharisee with the best training in the Scriptures that the world had to offer at that time. He had been on a mission to eradicate Christianity from the face of the earth and to kill any Christians who would not deny that Jesus is Lord. But after an encounter with the living Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul became a believer. Then, following his conversion, he went into the wilderness of Arabia for three years. During this time, the Lord revealed to Paul that all the Scriptures point to Him and have been fulfilled through His death and resurrection. Paul's extensive knowledge of the Scriptures was **converted from the perspective of a condemning Law-enforcer to the Lord's heart of love, grace, mercy, and faith**.

Paul's **approach to life was also completely renovated**. Following his conversion, Paul was rejected by his

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<sup>1</sup> The story of Paul's conversion and transformation can be found in Acts 9:3-9, 11:25-30, 13:1-3, 22:3-21, 26:1-23; Philippians 3:3-9; Galatians 1:13-2:1; 2 Corinthians 11



old comrades as a traitor, heretic, brainwashed idiot, and runaway. At the same time, the people in the Church did not believe that Paul had really become a follower of Jesus so they were afraid of him and did not accept him either. Paul **did not care what they thought or what happened to his career** or any part of life as he had known it. This was his mindset:

*Philippians 3:7-9: But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*

After the wilderness in Arabia, Paul spent over ten years in Cilicia, and historians are not certain exactly what he was doing while he was there. No doubt, Paul was **wholly devoted to the Lord**, but it did not seem that God was using Paul too powerfully at all, at least for a season. But, all the while, God was transforming Paul into the most influential advocate for Christianity that the world has ever known.

Eventually, believers from the church at Antioch came to fetch Paul and bring him back in order to **teach the church in the ways of the Lord**. Soon enough, the Holy Spirit set Paul apart for ministry and his missionary journeys began. Paul and his teams changed the world through the proclamation of the Gospel, first to the Jew and then to the Gentile, in every territory where the Lord sent him. Paul **endured through persecution, riots, beatings, imprisonments, and attacks by false teachers and joyously suffered for the name of Jesus**. He was eventually beheaded for our faith, is now with the Lord in glory, and will rule and reign with Jesus for 1,000 years. (See Revelation 20:4-5.) The Church as we know it today was largely established through Paul's simple devotion to Christ.

Not everyone is called to martyrdom, but every believer is called to **take up their cross, crucify their flesh, and follow Jesus**. Not everyone is called to give away everything that they own, but every believer is called **to love nothing more than Jesus and to cling to nothing of this world**. Not everyone is called to be the Apostle Paul, but every believer is called to **be like Jesus**.

This is the pattern of obedience.

## FOUR KINDS OF WISDOM

James 3:15-17 NKJV - This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking [exist], confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

### DESCRIPTION

Whether we are wise or not is revealed by our actions and the long-term outcomes our actions produce. A basic definition of wisdom is the right application of knowledge. A person with much knowledge who uses it incorrectly will prove to be a fool.

Jesus Christ IS the wisdom of God and the perfect demonstration of walking in God's ways. When He died on a cross, He looked like the world's biggest fool. But when God raised Him from the dead, those who crucified Jesus proved to be the foolish ones. In their selfish zeal of being wise in their own sight and in the ways of this world, they had killed God in the flesh. But God proved His wisdom, justice, and power through His Son's resurrection.

The Apostle James highlighted four different kinds of wisdom and only one of them is from above. He listed characteristics of these wisdoms to help us discern what we were placing our confidence in and basing our actions upon.

To put Four Kinds of Wisdom into practice is about asking the Lord to reveal the differences between the various influences which seek to guide our decisions so that we can align ourselves with His voice and His eternal purposes for our lives.

### PRAYER

Father, thank you that you are the source of wisdom from above and you give it to us liberally when we ask for it. We ask now that you give us wisdom. Help us to discern the other wisdoms which are not of you and help us to resist them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Category: Discernment

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### PURPOSE:

To discern the voices of the enemy which seek to lead us astray.

To turn from evil and walk according to the wisdom of God.

### SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Increased discernment of the attacks of the enemy.

Faithfulness to God and His voice and purposes.

Distinguishing holy from common.

Restored faith and hope.

Repentance from focus on self.

Purging of evil, pride, and discouragement.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Consider these aspects of the four kinds of wisdom:

### Wisdoms NOT from Above:

- **Earthly:** of this world or the natural order; "common sense"
- **Sensual:** satiating desires of the flesh; emotional; physical
- **Demonic:** self-exalting, ambitious, covetous, subjugating

### Wisdom from Above:

- **First of All Pure:** uncompromising about the truth
- **Peaceable, willing to yield:** not insisting on its own way
- **Fruit of the Spirit:** reflective of the Lord's character
- **Impartial:** not tainted by personal preference
- **Without an act:** consistent in word and deed, not phony

### PRACTICE

1. Ask the Lord to highlight to you a decision in your life for which you need wisdom. *(Hint: this should be ALL decisions.)*

2. As you consider this decision, listen to the thoughts going through your head for or against certain possible choices. Write your various thoughts on a piece of paper.
  - Do these thoughts line up with aspects of the wisdoms that are not from God or the wisdom that is from above?
  - If the thoughts do not line up with wisdom from above, ask the Lord to give you wisdom from above and listen to what He says.

3. With each thought you have written down, ask the Lord to show you what kind of wisdom that thought represents.
  - If the thoughts do not line up with wisdom from above, repent and thank God for showing you the ungodly source of the wisdom.

4. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom from above and listen to what He says.

5. Ask the Lord to help you to do whatever He says.

### NOTES:

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### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

James 1:5  
 Proverbs 3:13-18  
 Ephesians 5:15-17  
 Proverbs 10:23  
 Colossians 3:16  
 Psalm 111:10  
 Proverbs 3:7  
 James 3:13  
 Colossians 2:8  
 Matthew 7:24  
 Matthew 11:19  
 Wisdom & Folly:  
 Proverbs 9

Category: Discernment

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## AT HIS FEET

Luke 10:38-42 NIV – As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

### DESCRIPTION

Jesus said that only one thing was needed in our life with Him. This thing is time At His Feet.

Two sisters, Mary and Martha, provide a vivid example of how we sometimes approach our life with Jesus. Both sisters loved Jesus. Martha busied herself with much serving and Jesus loved her. But Mary sat at His feet, positioned to hear, receive, and partake of everything that He may convey to her. He said that she chose the better portion; and the one that would remain with her forever.

As we walk with and worship Jesus, placing ourselves At His Feet is essentially doing the same things that Mary did. We let go of control, set aside our concerns, anxieties, and even other forms of service to God in order to allow Jesus to speak to us and minister to us however He sees fit. When we do this, we will be refreshed in His presence and receive from Him things that will remain with us forever.

### PRAYER

Father, thank you allow me and encourage me to take time to rest in your presence and sit at the feet of Jesus. Help me to still my heart and mind as I prioritize your desires over my own forms of serving you. Speak to me Lord, I am listening. In Jesus' name, Amen.



### PURPOSE:

To sit in the presence of Jesus and receive from Him.

To take a time out from other forms of serving to be with God.

To grow in our relationship with Jesus by offering our time to Him over other things.

### SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Closer relationship with Jesus through drawing near to Him.

Deeper rest in Christ.

Fuller experience of God's peace and love.

Re-alignment to Christ-centered priorities.

## CONSIDERATIONS

How and when can you make time to sit at Jesus feet? What is required for you to choose this over other demands of life?

How long can you sit At His Feet? (Recommendation: Start with at least 20 minutes.) If needed, set a timer so you can relax and not be anxious about exceeding the time allotted.

Where will you sit At His Feet so distractions are minimized? Will you turn off or silence electronics or leave them behind?

Will you play gentle worship music or not? There is value in music or silence. Ask God what He desires for your time.

Prayerfully consider your bodily position for being at the feet of Jesus. (For this exercise, I recommend being comfortable.)

Bring your Bible and a notebook to write down what Jesus reveals to you.

## PRACTICE

- Once you are in the place and position for your time:
  - Invite the Holy Spirit to minister to however He desires.
  - Be still and quiet in His presence.
  - Open your heart to receive from the Lord. Listen to Him and receive all that He reveals, heals, speaks, imparts to you, or instructs you to do. Watch with the eyes of your heart for any visions He may want to show you.
  - Don't worry if you fall asleep. He gives you rest as a gift.
- After your time At His Feet, take a moment to write down any impressions you had about what Jesus was saying or doing during your time together.
  - What is one thing you sense Jesus spoke to you?
  - How do you feel different after time with Him compared to before time At His Feet?
  - Thank God for what He has done during your time.
- Resume your regular duties rested and refreshed by Jesus.

## NOTES:

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## ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 11:28-30

Psalms 16:11

John 15:1-11

James 4:8

Psalms 27:4

Genesis 2:2

Hebrews 4:1-11

Romans 4:1-8





## ABIDING & OBEDIENCE

Jesus gave His followers a new command, “Love one another as I have loved you.” (See John 13:34, 15:12-17.) By fulfilling God’s perfect righteous standard for us and putting Himself inside of us, Jesus now calls us to be like Him and empowers us to do it. First, we have to receive the love of Jesus for ourselves so that we can love others as He loves us. This is entirely impossible without the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This is part of what I call God’s “you first” policy. We cannot give out what we have not received for ourselves. If a “you first” policy seems selfish to you, then I urge you to consider how important it was to the Father that Jesus was assured of His love for Him. Before Jesus began His ministry and at certain other significant moments, God spoke from heaven in an audible voice in order for His Son and everyone else around to unquestionably know of His love and approval for His Son. (See Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Mark 11:1; Luke 3:22, 9:35.) In the same way, because of what Jesus did for us, we can be assured of God’s love for us before we have done anything to deserve it. (See Ephesians 2:8-9.) In order for us to love others as Jesus loves us, we have to let Him love us first.

### Simple Abiding

Jesus tells His followers to abide in His love. To *abide* means *to remain, not depart from, continue, endure in, to be held and kept, and to wait.*

*John 15:1-10 ESV - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **Abide in me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,** just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.*

The word for *abide* in this passage means *to remain, to not depart, to continue, to endure, to keep, to wait for, and to not become different.* When we place our faith in Jesus, learn His words and teachings, and hear His voice, we are to stay and not depart from what He said. We **MUST** continue, endure, and wait for Him to prove Himself faithful without turning our hearts away from what He said or giving up or giving in when trials and temptations come along.

While abiding can be difficult, it is not strenuous or strained. Staying connected to Jesus is as natural as a branch staying connected to a vine. The branch does not try to be a branch; it just is. The branch does not try to produce fruit; it just does. The branch does not ask itself, *Am I really a branch?, Am I a good enough branch?, Have I done enough branching today?, Does the vine approve of me?, Will I ever produce fruit?, or Are there better vines across town?* The branch does not come up with its own branching strategy or create a fruit fulfillment agenda. No. The branch is a branch because that’s what

it was made to be. A branch simply cannot live without the vine. The branch receives all of its sustenance and life from the vine, and all the branch has to do is allow the vine to fill it with sap and receive all that the vine has to give it. Then, the branch can't help but produce fruit – much fruit. Then, the vine and the gardener receive praise because the branch has fulfilled its purpose by simply abiding.

Abiding in truth and faith is the only work that God requires of us.

*John 6:29 NLT - Jesus told them, "This is **the only work God wants from you: Believe** in the one he has sent."*

Jesus is the vine that we abide in as branches. When we believe that Jesus is whom He says He is and remain connected to Him, we can ask for anything, and He will give it to us. When we believe what He did for us, all things are possible. But we have to REMAIN in the simplicity of devotion to Him and not depart from Him and what He taught in favor of human wisdom or our own ideas. Genuine abiding organically produces genuine obedience – from the heart.

### **Simple Obedience**

The Christian life is not a democracy. It is a monarchy—we have a King. Our King has commandments. If we truly believe that Jesus is Lord and King of all the earth and if we truly love Him for what He has done for us, we will keep His commandments even more seriously than we would submit ourselves to any king of this world. Jesus specifically says that His purpose in sending the Holy Spirit is to help us to keep His commandments. This is because doing so is contrary to our human nature.

*John 14:15-18: "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another advocate to help you** and be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for **he lives with you and will be in you**. I will **not leave you as orphans**; I will come to you.*

God adopts us as His own and puts Himself inside of us so that we can hear His voice and obey Him. This means that we have no need for any other person to speak to God for us because we can speak to Him directly ourselves, as our Father. We no longer have to go to someone else to receive the word of the Lord to us because we can each hear God for ourselves. We no longer have to guess what God's will is for us. We can stop presuming and hypothetically imitating Jesus or other people whom we believe to be godly. We can simply listen to God for ourselves and be led by the Holy Spirit directly. (See 1 John 2:27; John 10:14,27; Hebrews 3:7-8, 4:7-11.)

Sometimes, our approach to obedience can become overly passive in the name of "God's sovereignty," thinking that God has predetermined His will, and it is both totally inescapable and unaffected by the choices of man. Other times, we can think that doing God's will lies entirely on our ability to obey Him perfectly or the rest of eternity could be altered by our decisions. Another methodology is to make plans according to what we believe to be the good things that God desires for us to be doing and then ask God to bless what we do.

However, none of these reflect the relationship of the Father and His child cooperating to bring about God's will on the earth. To put it plainly, God does have His will, and He gives us free will to cooperate with Him or not. God's will was Eden. Adam's free will messed it up. (See Genesis 3.) Jesus, on the other hand, surrendered His free will to do only what the Father wanted. On a daily and even a moment-by-moment basis, Jesus said and did only what He heard and saw His Father doing by living in obedience to the Holy Spirit. (See John 4:34, 5:19, 6:38, 12:49.)

Obedience is simple. All we have to do is listen to God and do what He says. In fact, this is our New Covenant form of worship. Under the old system, the life of an animal was offered to God as a sacrifice of worship. But Jesus as our perfect example of living the fulfillment of God's will, offered His own life

through obedience to His Father, even unto death. Even though He could have used His *Son of God* status and power for His own benefit, He chose to submit Himself entirely to doing His Father's will by dying on the cross. We follow a crucified King.

*Philippians 2:5-8 - In your relationships with one another, **have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, **he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,** being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled himself by becoming obedient** to death— even death on a cross! (Also Romans 12:1.)*

Jesus does not ask us to do anything for Him that He has not already done Himself. We learn obedience by submitting to God's will and ways of doing things even at the expense of our desires, pride, plans, timing, reputation, and way of doing things. (See Hebrews 5:8, 12:3-11; James 1:4; Romans 5:3-5.) In everything that we encounter, the Holy Spirit reveals God's path for us, shows us God's standard of purity, and strengthens us to do things God's way so that, like Jesus, we live our lives in a way that says to God, "Not my will but Yours be done." (See Luke 22:42.) Anything we do from the motivation or reasoning of our flesh has absolutely no eternal value. (See John 6:63; Matthew 26:41.)

As we walk in obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we quickly discover that God's ways of doing things are much different from our natural inclinations, common sensibilities, short-term and long-term objectives, and earthly perspectives. God knows the end from the beginning and often uses supernatural or miraculous methods of executing His plans because His ways are a lot higher than ours and have a holy and eternal objective. (See Isaiah 55:8-11.) For this reason, He often leads us in ways that make absolutely no earthly sense whatsoever to demonstrate His love, mercy, and power and so that only HIS name is exalted.

God doesn't really need our help. He wants our cooperation as His children as He fulfills His eternal plans in all the earth. Sometimes, it seems that He tells us everything because we are His friends, and other times, it seems that we are on a need-to-know basis because if He told us everything our minds would explode. This said, when we trust that He loves us and is working for our good and the good of others, we are free to obey even when we don't know exactly what He is doing. In fact, we stop trusting in ourselves and our own ways and truly begin to know to the depths of our being that God is real and He is good to us. Through this, our mind, will, and emotions are changed to be like Jesus as we keep our attention on Him and press into deeper levels of knowing and doing God's will for our lives. (See Romans 12:2; James 3:15-17; Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 2:13.) Although submission may sound like subjection, obedience to God is the only submission that leads to absolute liberty. When our abiding leads us into obedience to the truth, the truth will set us free.

### **Walking as Jesus Walked**

The Biblical writer who best expressed this abiding and obedience relationship of us in Christ and Christ in us through the Holy Spirit was John. John emphasized Jesus' teaching about His relationship with God the Father and our relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit. These are a mirror image of one another. When we are truly following Christ and living by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we walk on the earth in the same way that Jesus walked on the earth by God's guidance. We even say the same things He said and do the same things He did. It is only through this abiding and obedient relationship that we are empowered to carry out God's purposes on the earth. In fact, this is the evidence that we truly know Him.

*1 John 2:4-6 ESV - Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.***

## COMMANDS OF JESUS - EVALUATION

"IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDS." JOHN 14:15

<i>1 = Not obeying/Not enough</i>				<i>2 = Some/Partial Obedience</i>				<i>3 = Regular Obedient Application</i>
Repent	1	2	3	Hearing Jesus/Listening carefully	1	2	3	
Believe	1	2	3	Not judging	1	2	3	
Following Jesus	1	2	3	Not condemning	1	2	3	
Rejoicing at Persecution	1	2	3	Forgiving repeatedly	1	2	3	
Reconciling with adversaries	1	2	3	Taking planks out of own eyes	1	2	3	
Cut hand & Pluck eye (cut out sin)	1	2	3	Helping others with speck in eyes	1	2	3	
No taking oaths	1	2	3	Not putting pearls before pigs	1	2	3	
Not resisting evil person/people	1	2	3	Asking, Seeking, Knocking	1	2	3	
Turning other cheek	1	2	3	Doing unto others as you want to you	1	2	3	
Giving more than demanded	1	2	3	Entering through narrow gate	1	2	3	
Going extra mile	1	2	3	Every effort through narrow door	1	2	3	
Giving to everyone who asks	1	2	3	Watching out for false prophets	1	2	3	
Loving enemies & persecutors	1	2	3	Receiving healing (Be clean, loosed)	1	2	3	
Blessing those who hate you	1	2	3	Letting dead bury the dead	1	2	3	
Be perfect/merciful as God is	1	2	3	Showing mercy, more than sacrifice	1	2	3	
Doing good deeds in secret	1	2	3	Praying for laborers	1	2	3	
Giving in secret	1	2	3	Proclaiming Kingdom	1	2	3	
Few words in prayer (no babbling)	1	2	3	Healing sick, casting out demons, etc.	1	2	3	
Praying the Lord's prayer	1	2	3	Freely receiving & giving	1	2	3	
Fasting without show	1	2	3	Shaking dust off feet	1	2	3	
Not storing treasures on earth	1	2	3	Not rejoicing in spiritual power	1	2	3	
Storing treasures in heaven	1	2	3	Being wise as serpent, harmless as dove	1	2	3	
Not worrying about your life	1	2	3	Not worrying about what to say	1	2	3	
Heart not set on food or clothes	1	2	3	Speaking out what Jesus has revealed	1	2	3	
Seeking Kingdom First	1	2	3	Not fearing man, fearing only God	1	2	3	
Not worrying about finances/\$\$	1	2	3	Not supposing peace, but sword	1	2	3	
Guarding against greed	1	2	3	Not stopping false teachers	1	2	3	
Coming to Jesus for rest	1	2	3	Believing God	1	2	3	
Learning of Jesus	1	2	3	Believing also in Jesus	1	2	3	
Denying self, taking up cross	1	2	3	Keeping commands of God	1	2	3	
Having no fear	1	2	3	Not separating marriages	1	2	3	

Being aware of yeast: religion	1	2	3	Watching out that no one deceives you	1	2	3
Being aware of yeast: unbelief	1	2	3	Being ready for service	1	2	3
Being aware of yeast: worldliness	1	2	3	Not taking place of honor for self	1	2	3
Paying taxes to Caesar	1	2	3	Taking lowest place	1	2	3
Coming to God like a child	1	2	3	Not inviting friends to banquet	1	2	3
Going to those who sin against you	1	2	3	Inviting those who cannot repay	1	2	3
Selling possessions, giving to poor	1	2	3	Hating own life (compared to Jesus)	1	2	3
Being a servant of all	1	2	3	Hating family (by comparison)	1	2	3
Loving God	1	2	3	Using wealth to make heavenly friends	1	2	3
Loving neighbor as self	1	2	3	Hating money	1	2	3
Not chasing Kingdom, anointing	1	2	3	Rebuking those in sin	1	2	3
Being ready for Jesus' return	1	2	3	Not fearing end times wars and battles	1	2	3
Keeping watch for Jesus' return	1	2	3	Remembering Lot's wife	1	2	3
Showing mercy (Good Samaritan)	1	2	3	Praying to not fall into temptation	1	2	3
Generously giving to the poor	1	2	3	Being born again by the Spirit	1	2	3
Feeding the hungry, thirsty	1	2	3	Not turning God's house into marketplace	1	2	3
Taking in strangers	1	2	3	Worshipping in spirit and truth	1	2	3
Clothing the naked	1	2	3	No excuses (take up mat and walk)	1	2	3
Caring for the sick	1	2	3	Stop sinning, sin no more	1	2	3
Visiting prisoners	1	2	3	Not working for food that spoils	1	2	3
Taking Communion rightly	1	2	3	Not judging by appearances	1	2	3
Going to all nations (fulfill calling)	1	2	3	Judging with right judgment	1	2	3
Making disciples	1	2	3	Obedying teachings of Jesus	1	2	3
Baptizing others into faith	1	2	3	Obedying commands of Jesus	1	2	3
Teaching the teachings of Jesus	1	2	3	Washing feet of others	1	2	3
Feeding God's sheep, lambs	1	2	3	Doing the works as at first (first love)	1	2	3
Waiting on God	1	2	3	Not afraid of suffering	1	2	3
Witnessing for Jesus	1	2	3	Being faithful even unto death	1	2	3
Doing the works of Jesus	1	2	3	Holding on to what you have	1	2	3
Abiding in Jesus, remaining	1	2	3	Waking up! Re-Strengthening to finish	1	2	3
Loving one another as Jesus loves	1	2	3	Being earnest	1	2	3
Laying down life for others	1	2	3	Being hot or cold	1	2	3



## COUNT THE COST

Luke 14:27-33 ESV - Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

### DESCRIPTION

Jesus made the terms of following Him explicitly clear. When we agree to be a disciple of Jesus, we enter in knowing that it will cost us everything, like a king who knows that he does not have enough strength, soldiers, or resources to win the battle or the war. We serve a God who gave up everything and died on a cross for us. The evidence of our understanding of what our God did for us is found in the cost we are willing to pay as we obediently follow Jesus.

Jesus imperatively said His disciples must take up our cross and renounce all that we have in order to follow Him. The cross is an instrument of death and as such, disciples must be willing to suffer humiliation, loss, and even pay the ultimate price if God so wills. Not that we pursue sacrifice of our own design but that we position our hearts in readiness to sacrifice whatever might be required of us on our path with God. There is no such thing as a 50% disciple, a good-times only disciple, or a have it my way disciple. We must be hot or cold, all in or not in at all.

Practicing Count the Cost is about examining our willingness to follow Jesus, even when it hurts and even if it costs us everything.

## PRAYER

Father, thank you for paying the ultimate price for me. Help me to understand the worth of your sacrifice and increase my willingness to give my all for you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Consider the following aspects Jesus alluded to as the potential cost of following Him. Listed in no particular order:

- Hated by family, mother, father for name of Jesus.
- Homelessness: Foxes have holes but not Son of Man.
- Losing/giving up all possessions to follow Jesus.
- Persecuted/ridiculed by family, friends, etc.
- Hated by world. Hated by all people.
- Death to self: arrogance, pride, selfishness, "my way," etc.
- Death to flesh: passions, sensual desires, preferences, etc.
- Ultimate price: death, loss of life for the name of Jesus.

## TALK WITH GOD

In what ways have you followed God because He gives you what you want or has the power to bless you?

If Jesus never blessed you again, (material blessing, healing, guidance, etc.) would you still want to follow Him?

If you knew that God's purpose was for you to be martyred for Jesus, how would that change your walk of faith?

In what ways have you experienced persecution from family, friends, or others for following Jesus? What is your response?

In what ways have you been called upon to suffer or sacrifice for following Jesus? Did you do it? Joyfully?

In what ways has Jesus asked you to take up your cross and die to yourself or your flesh? How did it change you?

What do you think motivated Jesus to take up His cross? How did He do it? What example does that set for you?

After counting the cost, do you still want to be a disciple of Jesus? Why?

## NOTES:

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### PURPOSE:

To understand the terms and requirements of following Jesus.

To realistically assess our commitment to following Jesus.

To increase our willingness to give all for Jesus.

### SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Absolute surrender to God and following Jesus.

Increased humility.

Increased readiness to suffer and sacrifice for Jesus and His Kingdom.



### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 5:10

Luke 9:58

Matthew 24:9

Luke 4:26

John 13:18-25

James 1:2-3, 12

Acts 14:22

Mark 8:36

Luke 9:23

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 6:24

1 John 2:15-17

Revelation 3:16

# UNIT ONE – KEY QUESTIONS

## Open Ears to Obey

Use this worksheet to test your grasp of the material and exercises of Unit One.

<b>What is the mystery that God has revealed to us by His Spirit? (in your own words)</b>	
<b>Why did Jesus send the Holy Spirit?</b>	<b>How does God speak to us today?</b>
<b>In what ways can we test the spirit?</b>	<b>What does obedience mean in the New Covenant?</b>
<b>What is the goal of the spiritually mature person?</b>	<b>What does it mean to abide in Christ?</b>
<b>What is one thing you learned that you did not know before?</b>	<b>What questions do you still have about this subject?</b>

## NO AGENDA

### SCRIPTURE PORTION: 1 SAMUEL 3:4-10

Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

### DESCRIPTION

In the passage above, the Lord wanted to speak to Samuel and tried three times before Samuel knew to simply listen to God and what God wanted to say. Samuel was readily attentive to the order of man but not yet to the voice of God. Sometimes, we are just like this with the Lord. Other times, we present ourselves repeatedly before Him with lists of requests of what we need, want, or long to see happen but fail to listen to Him about His desires. While there is nothing wrong with listening to people or prayers of petition, there is great value in taking the time to simply listen to God with No Agenda. When we take time to disconnect from the pulls of life and set aside our own demands, we can hear the heart and instruction of God.

As believers we are called to pray for one another, including listening to the Lord on one another's behalf. The word the Lord gave Samuel was actually for the house of Eli. When we come before God as a group with No Agenda, God can do wonderful and unexpected things among us.

### GROUP PRACTICE

1. Pray and invite the Lord to speak to your hearts. Encourage each person to say quietly, "Speak, Jesus, for your servant is listening."
2. Take time in silence to sit and listen to what the Lord wants to reveal. (About 5-10 minutes is a good start.)
  - Resist the urge to bring your own ideas and requests to God.
  - Open your heart to hear anything God might want to speak to you about any subject pertaining to your life, other people's lives, or other matters.

3. When the allotted time is complete, write down what the Lord revealed to you.

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4. Invite group members to share what the Lord has revealed to them during this time.

- Were there any common themes of what God revealed to the members of your group?
- Was the Lord highlighting any particular person, problem, or subject for prayer?
- Was the Lord giving insight for the group or its members?

5. Pray for one another and exhort one another in your pursuit of God and His purposes.

6. Take a few moments as a group to discuss the difference between a typical prayer meeting with prayer requests and coming before the Lord with No Agenda.
  - How will you incorporate this into your group practice?



**PURPOSE:**  
Listen to God for His addenda and insight.

Share the insights of God with one another.

Encourage one another in our pursuit of God.

**GROUP SIZE:**  
Any size group.

### SCRIPTURES:

- John 10:27
- Jeremiah 33:3
- Isaiah 30:21
- John 16:13
- Luke 11:28
- Psalms 32:8-9