

HOW TO
READ THE
BIBLE
Supernaturally

BOB WINE

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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How to Read the Bible Supernaturally

“It’s puzzling that so many Christians try to live the Christian life without reading their Bible, except for sporadic perusals of God’s Word, seeking a pithy thought for the day.

The Word of God is not merely a source of helpful suggestions, preventive warnings, or inspirational thoughts: it is life itself!”

Henry Blackaby

SESSION 1: HOW TO HEAR THE KING’S TRUTH

Open by discussing the following based on *Why the Bible?*

- What do you really believe about the Bible? Do you approach the book looking for pithy statements, options to consider about how to live a better life? Or commandments or precepts to obey?
- What would motivate such a dramatic response as described in the parables?
- What possessions do you have that might rival the treasures and pearls you will find about God’s kingdom as you dig deeper in the Bible?

HOW DO WE HEAR THE KING’S TRUTH?

God designed believers to live in two worlds: the seen/physical and the unseen/spiritual. He has given us the gift of His Spirit to guide us to live simultaneously in both worlds as Jesus did.

The Bible is a book. However, we should not read God's word like a book. We must read it with tools from both worlds. We must read in the physical world to listen. In the invisible world, we must pray to hear the King's (God's) whispers about what we read.

Jesus said, "God is **spirit**, and those who worship him must worship in **spirit** (invisible, not physical) and truth." (John 4:24, ESV) While He can audibly express Himself, He normally does so inaudibly. God is a triune spirit who made humans in "our image to be like us." (Genesis 1:26) God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created humans with **three parts**. "Then the LORD God **formed** (physical) the man from the dust of the ground. He **breathed** the breath of life (spirit) into the man's nostrils, and the **man became** a living being (soul)." (Genesis 2:7, NLT2)

Jesus told parables from this premise of there being two worlds. He spoke to those focused on God's kingdom (above) and those focused on the ways of this world (earth). He said to His disciples, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders." (Mark 4:10-11, NLT2)

Review Spirit, Soul, Body Diagram.

NOTE: The term *flesh* in Paul's writings occasionally refers to the body; otherwise, flesh primarily refers to the fallen soul (will, mind, and emotions). The term *heart* often refers to a combination of spirit and soul, especially the will. The context determines its meaning.

God, being a spirit, most frequently speaks to us through our spirit (intuition). Therefore, if we only expect Him to speak to our body (ears) or soul (mind), we will miss the important things He is saying to us. Hearing with our spirits is hearing the voice of the King of

the Kingdom. In fact, we can **only** discern the powerful Bible truths with our spirit. (See 1 Corinthians 2:14, Matthew 13:13-17, Luke 8:9-10, 24:31-32, John 5:39-40)

Praying with our spirit puts us in direct contact with the invisible world. That is why prayer from our spirits versus our souls is so powerful and essential to our spiritual journey. Often, we pray in agreement with our thoughts and feelings rather than what we sense in our spirit.

Suppose a hard situation has arisen, and we feel compelled to pray. What we think to be the correct solution may be close but not the correct solution. Only the Holy Spirit has the wisdom to know the right solution, so we must trust Him by praying in a prayer language the Spirit uses to speak through us.

Paul explains in Ephesians 5:18 that a person filled with the Holy Spirit is like an inebriated person who is NOT in control of the situation. We can communicate with the Spirit without speaking in tongues if we understand only the Spirit knows the correct way to pray. However, not using our prayer language limits our prayers to what our soul (mind or feelings) interprets as the best way to pray, not necessarily what the Spirit knows is the best way to pray for a situation.

Bottom line: being filled with the Spirit is all about surrendering control (our reasoning) as happens when a person is inebriated. Praying in tongues is not trusting in ourselves (our wisdom or otherwise) but trusting Him alone.

Review and discuss *The Mind's Role as Gatekeeper.*

- What caught your attention? What questions came to mind?

God **intends us to use our minds**, for sure. However, when what our minds understand what we read (the Bible or other books) or we hear something which suddenly becomes an *ab ha* moment, we are hearing the whispers of His Spirit. Such an experience will include a form of a strange conviction/certainty and peace deep within as Paul pointed out in Colossians 3:15, “let the **peace that comes from Christ’s rule** (serving as umpire) in your **hearts**.” This is not natural peace, but divine peace connecting us with the unseen world.

DISCUSSION:

1. We can learn to identify the practical difference between spirit and soul when we experience an internal argument between what we **feel** or **think** in contrast to our sense of **oughtness**, God’s spirit warning us. Share a time this happened in your life.
2. The same is true when we receive insight we never knew before or a deep sense that someone is going to call or something bad is coming. Share a time this happened in your life.

AN EXERCISE TO HELP YOU GROW IN HEARING THE VOICE OF YOUR SPIRIT:

We can learn to identify the practical difference between spirit and soul when we experience an internal argument between what we **feel** or **think** in contrast to our sense of **oughtness**, God’s spirit warning us. Share a time this happened in your life. The same is true when we receive insight we never knew before or a deep sense that someone is going to call or something bad is coming. Share a time

this happened in your life. Pause and visualize implementing these thoughts in your world.

What would Jesus do? was a popular slogan focuses on logic and imagination. However, God's thoughts and ways are NOT our thoughts or ways. A better question might be to examine the **right** thing to do in each situation. Do we turn to what friends, parents, pastors, politicians or teachers say? Or is God wiser, and therefore the only one capable of deciding what is right? In that context...

- Think of a decision you are facing.
- Quiet your soul and tune your spirit to listen to God's Spirit.
- Ask yourself, what does your gut (intuition/spirit) tell you God is saying?
- Confirm this with the Bible. God will never contradict His word.

Notes:

- Keep Hebrews 11:6 in mind. "And without faith (God's gift of faith)* it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe (expect) that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (NIV) Our **outlook** determines our **outcome**. We must believe He is waiting to give you of His wisdom.
- Expect to experience a strange warmth welling up in your inner being (spirit/intuition).
- The more you stretch yourself to identify the voices of your soul versus your spirit, the more you will hear the King whispering to you throughout a normal day.

*Faith is like love. Faith can be soul manufactured or spirit given. Humans can think positively about God, but this is

different than a deep conviction given by God. Dallas Willard points out several different levels of God-given faith. Faith of Propriety or Obedience, Faith of Desperation, and Faith of Sufficiency.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Read Matthew 5-7 at least twice, in 2-3 different translations.
2. Circle words in Matthew 5:1-12 that capture your attention.

SESSION 2: KINGDOM CULTURE

WHAT IS KINGDOM CULTURE?

Embracing the Kingdom culture helps us see the stark difference between the culture of the Kingdom of God and our world's culture.

Imagine you are an American ambassador living in Somalia. You live by the laws of Somalia as you live in two worlds, but your actual home dominates your thoughts. Similarly, we live in the **invisible** Kingdom of God while living in our **physical** world. (2 Corinthians 5:20) "So we fix our eyes **not** on what is **seen**, but on what is **unseen**. For what is **seen** is **temporary**, but what is **unseen** is **eternal**." (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV)

Watch *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis who wrote an allegory comparing our physical world and the kingdom of God (Narnia). Notice the cultural shift when the four children enter the wardrobe. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWKj41HZBzM>

Discuss:

1. How might you describe living in two drastically different cultures?
2. Do children adapt faster than adults? What can we do to prepare ourselves to adapt quicker?
3. Which is our real world? Which existed first and will outlast the other? How does this affect your thinking process? (Is it like moving your goalposts?)

We tend to view the kingdom of heaven as fantasy, but which **existed first** and which **will last forever**? The Bible is more logical than man's hypothesis of earth's origin, more consistent than science that changes with each new discovery, and far more socially

healthy than the dysfunctional life called progressive. For example: what was the energy source for the Big Bang Theory?

Wrestle with this. We can prepare ourselves to adapt to God's kingdom quicker by **expecting** to hear the Spirit's whispers and pause long enough to hear them. God's truth is spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Our problem is not just a difference between East/West, language, or young and old. Scholars in Jesus' day did not understand passages about the Messiah or the kingdom. (John 5:37-39, Matt 10:13-17, 22:29). Neither did Jesus' disciples until the Spirit revealed it to them. (Luke 24:44-47, John 20:9) A person must spiritually discern the Bible truths.

Jesus lived in both kingdoms at the same time. He came to show us how to do the same. In what ways might practicing this truth change a person's thought-life and lifestyle?

- A different perspective provides hope for dealing with the worst of life's problems.
- The King has given us life-changing and peace-giving kingdom truths in the Bible.
- Processing every aspect of our lives from the invisible spiritual perspective is in our best interest because heaven is our **real** world. This world is only temporary. (Romans 8:6)

The Kingdom of God is not a place/land but a cultural **condition** where everyone submitted to His authority can access His presence and power. Paul wrote, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14 NIV)

By better understanding the invisible kingdom of God's culture, our perspective will allow us to live beyond the limitations of the physical culture. A different perspective provides hope for dealing with the worst of life's problems.

With this interpretation of the Beatitudes in mind, could this passage actually be a list of those who are 'well-off' (Blessed) when they are living in the kingdom? Their having to cope with a painful tragedy or grievous loss has been lifted and Christ is now carrying it and even making into a blessing for you and those in His kingdom. (Roman 8:28) Or, perhaps Blessed are the aged or overweight or whatever you might be experiencing.

Note: The English translation of the word *blessed* refers to the highest type of well-being possible for humans often contrasted with *cursed*. (Deuteronomy 30:1,19) *Righteousness* means routinely acting in the character and power of Jesus because of His empowerment dwelling within you. (Isaiah 66:2)

This world is only temporary. Thus, we must process our lives from the invisible spiritual perspective of God's kingdom. "For to set the mind on the flesh (seen) is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit (unseen) is life and peace." (Romans 8:6, ESV)

Share what you circled/highlighted in Matthew 5:1-12. What caught your attention or resonated deep within you? What could be game changing/defining for you or others.

Jesus said, "Seek **first** the kingdom of God." (Matthew 6:33) So, let us reflect on this kingdom as we read the Beatitudes.

Imagine yourself in the crowd who gathered in front of Jesus to listen to Him teach. What social status might the people be in who

are sitting next to you or in the crowd closest to you. Then slowly and reflectively read Matthew 5:1-12

Jesus most likely spoke to the marginalized crowd, those broken by poverty, rejection or abuse. He gave them hope that they, too, could enter the kingdom of God. The Beatitudes are NOT entry qualifications for the kingdom, which is available to everyone. The grammar here indicates Jesus is not telling anyone **to do** anything. Rather than a list of what to do, the Beatitudes puts the weight **not on our circumstances, but on the kingdom**. Jesus mentions life's problems to offer proof that in Him, God's kingdom rule is greater than all hopeless cases. The blessing is having peace and joy amidst pain and trials. In His kingdom a person can live a blessed life—a perfectly safe place. The kingdom of God is not a place but a condition where His authority, presence and power flow in and through His people. We're blessed because we can live in His kingdom by surrendering our kingdom to His rule because "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

The English translation of *blessed* refers to the highest type of well-being possible for humans. The word is often contrasted with cursed or esteemed lightly. The Beatitudes can also offer a peephole into some of God's core values. We're not simply blessed because we prayed the sinner's prayer at some point. We are blessed because God, the king resides within us, bringing peace and joy despite our daily struggles. His Spirit flips the script of painful situations to make them opportunities to grow in His grace. He gradually transforms the thinking of an apprentice of Jesus, much like He develops the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in a believer's life. The remainder of the chapter through Chapter 7 shows how the kingdom values work in real life.

DISCUSSION:

1. Who would you like to add to the list of blessed people. Aging? Widows or Widowers?
2. Would they be blessed simply because they prayed the sinner's prayer at some point?
3. What do you imagine goes through God's mind when he sees Christians settle for just experiencing the salvation event? Does He have a Heavenly car wash arranged where He runs us through to get rid of all our self-centered sins? If God is king and He resides within, would He bring peace and joy despite our daily struggles? Would He flip the script on our giants and turn them into steppingstones of grace, nurturing our thinking, working and joy in Jesus?
4. Close your eyes and think back to Narnia. Try to imagine entering a door into an environment where cultural values and authority are totally different. What do you like? Are you in charge? What might make you uncomfortable? Is there anything you must reorient about how you think and behave?

Remember, the Kingdom of God is not a place/land but a cultural **condition** wherever every person or thing lives in submission to His sovereign authority. Similar to Narnia, everyone, except the rebellious, gladly submits to God's benevolent dictatorship.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Read John 3:1-12
2. Review *Typical Internal Stages for Entering the Kingdom* and *Structure of the Bible*.

SESSION 3: THE UNSEEN CULTURE OF THE KINGDOM

Notice how belief or disbelief operates in our spirits, souls and bodies. Based on Genesis 3:6, 23-24, we are put outside the kingdom through disbelief in our **spirit**, a decision to reject in our **soul**, and the words we speak through our **body**. We enter the kingdom through believing God with our **spirit**, deciding to submit with our **soul** and verbalizing God's authority through our **body**.

Review *The Role of the Mind as Gatekeeper*. Satan is the father of lies and will attempt to plant deceit to lead a person to doubt God's truth. As with Eve, he leveraged her own desire to want the fruit and to be like God.

Heart worship is the most critical factor for entering His kingdom. Read Isaiah 1:13-15 and Revelation 2:1-5. He told the believers at Ephesus, "You have abandoned the **love** you had at first." (Revelation 2:4, ESV) Classic temptation.

One's heart, not just head knowledge, words, or behavior is paramount. God insists on unadulterated love with **all** we are and possess. We express that love by loving, obeying and serving Jesus as Jesus loved, obeyed and served His Father.

Review *Typical Internal Stages for Entering the Kingdom of God*. Note the progressive change of heart. These transitions can happen subtly or in rapid spurts, sometimes making transitions hard to distinguish. What begins in the subconscious progresses with increased intensity as a person responds to the inner compelling of the Holy Spirit.

When we surrender our life to God, He gives us a new heart and a new spirit. God's Spirit fills with a deep desire to become like Jesus as His disciple/apprentice. (Ezekiel 36:25-27) More powerful than

self-discipline, this bond is like the attachment bond between a mother and her newborn or a mother duck when her ducklings hatch. Philippians 2:13 confirms, “He causes us to will and to do His good pleasure.” Further, the bond also makes us a part of God’s family of those who also have been restored or regenerated.

Suppose you found a very old letter. How would you go about understanding what the author might be saying in the letter? The **first** level would be trying to **understand** the recipient’s culture (metaphors; definitions of beauty or truth; worldview). With that information (and the Spirit’s help in the case of the Bible), the reader would then understand the **translation and apply** the message in daily decisions.

Let’s take a brief closer look at the book that describes God’s Kingdom culture. Since the Bible describes God’s Kingdom, regardless of the genre, we look for what the passage tells us about God.

Review *Structure of the Bible*. God’s Old Testament includes the Pentateuch, History, Wisdom and messages from the Prophets. Within the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible the Jews call the Torah) were three types of laws.

- Moral Laws. People were commanded to practice these absolute laws. The Ten Commandments were absolute, nonnegotiable.
- Ritual or Ceremonial Laws. These laws restored a relationship with God until Christ’s death fulfilled the law to offer blood sacrifices.
- Civil Laws. These laws included how to live as a testimony of God’s laws as well as judicial laws regarding safety and settling disputes.

God's New Testament includes the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. Throughout the Bible, God's overall relentless message to mankind is that we are outside God's kingdom, but Jesus Christ is the key to enter His kingdom.

SESSION 4: GAME-CHANGING PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is our authority as God's communication with us. Because He is the author, He has ultimate power and authority over the interpretation. For the written words to carry their full authority, they require the Spirit to reveal understanding and applicable meaning to us. Imagine God is speaking to you.

In wrestling with the perplexing words and concepts, the Holy Spirit reveals His whispers of wisdom. Just as He breathed His life into Adam, so He breathes His truth to us, resulting in holy moments of understanding and awe. His Word then becomes the authority we must obey and follow.

While He speaks unique words to each of us in our differing places of our spiritual journey, His whispers will align with the Bible.

When our girls were small, they had tricycles. Connie and I explained they could ride on the sidewalk and driveway but not across the street. Doing so would result in disciplinary action. As they grew older and rode bicycles, we continued to change the rules as they learned to recognize the danger of riding near moving vehicles. This law had an absolute factor for my daughter's safety but became relative.

Absolute laws never change, applicable to all people always.

Relative laws apply to specific people for a specific time.

God gave us both absolute and relative guidance in the Bible. Interpreting an **absolute law** as **relative** is **liberalism** or liberal theology. Interpreting a **relative law as absolute** is **legalism**. You will not go to heaven if you don't follow this law.

A third and more complex rule is a **relative absolute law** based on **context**. Occasionally, the Bible says things that sound contradictory to us.

For example, let's contrast these two verses:

1. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)
2. "Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works." (James 2:26 NLT2)

How should we process these apparent contradictions?

First, truth is found in the tension between two opposites. **Both/and** versus **either/or**. God is both merciful and just, two apparent opposites. If you carefully exam biblical love and fear, you will find different sides of the same coin, both needed to validate its worth.

An absolute may temporarily become a relative, depending on unique factors. For example, stop for a red light, except for a funeral procession or police direction.

God is consistent with keeping holy what He named as holy. For example, though the law stated not to work on the Sabbath, if an ox fell into a pit, work was permissible to rescue the animal. (Luke 14:5). In unique circumstances, an absolute could temporarily change.

God hates sins because it separates man from God. Therefore, sin and holiness are never compatible. The two will never be a both/and issue. Our minds have difficulty reconciling such things, but God is King. He decides what is truth.

Rationalism and **Hyper-Spirituality** are two extreme **soul-driven** approaches to God, both of which are manifestations of our human independence or sin nature.

Rationalism puts man's **thinking/mind** above God and His word. This reduces God down to a cerebral concept. *If I cannot understand God, I do not believe he exists. Or, If I do not agree with what the Bible says, I will rewrite or reinterpret it to make sense to me.* This is primarily where essential doctrines of faith like Jesus' virgin birth and resurrection of Christ are unaccepted by unbelievers or theologians. Religious life (church) becomes an empty ritual, powerless and unable to offer authentic life-change to hurting people. No religious group is immune to such degeneration of faith. Even the church of Ephesus left their first love of God.

Hyper-spirituality puts man's **emotions** above God and His Word. This reduces God and faith to an emotion or an experience. *If I did not feel something today, God was not present. Or, If I don't feel it's wrong for me to do, God is saying I can do it.* Like rationalism, if I do not feel a truth in the Bible fits my preference, I will twist truth until it feels good to me.

Christ followers must distinguish the difference between what emanates from the soul (mind and emotions) versus the spirit (intuition and conscience). The Holy Spirit doesn't disregard the mind or emotions but brings them under submission to God so we can think and apply the Bible even better.

Surrender your thoughts and feelings to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Remind your mind and feelings that nothing in God's Word will contradict itself.

Read Scripture by listening to the text, reflecting, and asking not merely the meaning, but what the Spirit is highlighting me to hear.

When in doubt regarding something in the Bible:

1. Silence your mind and emotions.
2. Seek God’s presence within your spirit.
3. Confirm the validity of your conclusion by asking a God-fearing, Bible-loving person who has proven to hear God’s whispers through reflection on God’s Word.

Obedience is essential to a correct interpretation of the Bible. Jesus said, “Everyone who hears what I say but doesn’t obey it will be like a foolish person who built a house on sand. Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and struck that house. It collapsed, and the result was a total disaster.” (Matthew 7:26-27, GW)

Remember, sound Bible interpretation produces unity and righteous living. The lack of sound interpretation produces confusion, disunity and unrighteousness in laws and behavior.

Using John 5:44, find Significant Meaning Indicators:

John 5:44	Meaning of Keywords	Synopsis
<p>How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?</p>	<p>Believe—be convinced of, have confidence in, entrust, Accept—to get something, grasp, collect, take hold of From—source One another/God—relationship Praise—honor, good opinion No effort—seek, try to get, look for, inquire into</p>	<p>You cannot go north and south at the same time. If you grasp/collect honor from one another, you cannot be convinced of, or have confidence in, or trust God.</p>

Believe -meaningful – subject

If -conjunctive - conditional

Accept/no effort to obtain - Contrast

From (2) – Repetitious – the source if what is desired

Praise (2) - Repetitious – what is desired

One another/God -Relational (contrasting)

ASSIGNMENT:

Review *Digging Deeper Guidelines for Self-Discovery*.

SESSION 5: POSITIONING YOURSELF TO HEAR FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

DIGGING DEEPER FOR SELF-DISCOVERY

The Bible is God's love letter to us, full of wisdom and insights. Like a prism, His light will illuminate certain words or passages in different seasons throughout our lives. We need to approach Bible passages with an open mind, not preconceived ideas. The purpose is to discover what the Bible really says, not what one has heard or thought a passage said.

Review Digging Deeper Guidelines for Self-Reflection, following steps help us hear the Holy Spirit whispers"

1. Clarify the broader **context**.
2. Identify the primary and supportive **concepts**.
3. Personalize it. Step into the scene as a **participant** rather than a spectator.
4. With a bird's-eye view, speculate on God's **overall purpose/message** in the passage.
5. Discern how the Holy Spirit may intend that message to **apply** to daily life.

Tools to assist you: Various Bible translations, a Study Bible, a Bible Dictionary, a Bible Encyclopedia, and various commentaries

Step 1: Do your best to determine the general **context** of the book/passage.

- Who is the author? What do we know about him?
- When might it have been written?
- Who is the audience?

- Where was the author writing the passage?
- Why was the passage written? What circumstances surrounded the recipient(s)?

Step 2: Identify notable **concepts**.

- Read the passage, including the surrounding chapters, or the whole book if time allows. Note the flow of thought and shifts in concepts. Identify how the selected passage fits into the whole letter.
- Re-read the passage from different Bible translations (not paraphrases). Identify the differences in words and phrases. Combine the differences to gain a broader understanding. Suggested translations: NKJV, NASB, ESV, GW, GNB, NLT

Step 3: Write out the passage in short statements. Aim for no more than 10 words.

Step 4: Personalize the selection. Picture yourself in the scene. What do you see/hear? What are you feeling/thinking?

Step 5: Mark words that catch your attention, using highlighters and other marks (circles, squares, single or double underline). Add a key word/phrase from the verse in the first column. Add the meaning in the second column. Summarize the concept in the third column.

Note: Four types of meaning indicators:

1. **Similar or contrasting meanings.** For example: *alienated* and *enemies* and *alienated* and *reconciled* in Colossians 1:21-22.
2. **Stylistic features, like repetition.** For example: Jews demanded *miraculous signs* and Greeks look for *wisdom* OR *a stumbling block* to Jews and *foolishness* to Gentiles in 1 Corinthians 1:22-23.

3. **Relationships between different sentences and phrases connected by conjunctions or hinge words.** For example: *and, because, but, if* in Colossians 1:21-23 and *once, but now* in Romans 11:30.
4. **Meaningful words and phrases.** Take a bird's-eye view of the whole passage to identify significant truths.

Step 6: Summarize the passage.

- Is this passage a command, a promise or information?
 - What does the selection reveal about God's awe-inspiring character or values?
 - What does the passage expose about you/humanity?
 - How do you intuitively sense you should respond?
 - Is your interpretation consistent with the rest of Scripture?
 - Read at least two good commentaries to confirm your initial observations. Suggested commentaries: *The Complete Biblical Library* (Thoralf Gilbrant and Ralph Harris), *Life Application Bible Commentary* (New Testament), *Barclay New Testament Commentary* (New Testament), Adam Clarke, *New International Commentary, Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Matthew Henry.
- Use the following sites to help your search:
 Amazon, www.logos.com (most comprehensive),
www.accordancebible.com, www.e-sword.net,
www.crosswire.org/applications (The Sword Project),
www.biblegateway.com, www.bible-hour.com (Blue Letter Bible)
- Share your discoveries with another person passionate about God's Word who is in a close relationship with Him.

Step 7: Apply the passage. Obedience is essential. (Matthew 7:26-27)

- Journal your thoughts.
- What does this passage reveal:
 - ✓ About God? (His value system, ways, character)
 - ✓ About me? About humanity?
 - ✓ About our culture?
 - ✓ How should I respond?
- Write one or two open-ended questions in such a way that forces an examination before a response.
- Is this something to share?

Complete *Colossians 1:15-23 Guide* as you work through the discussion questions below.

Reflections:

1. Did you notice a shift in focus within the passage from God to man between verses 20-21? Did you notice any change deeper within you? If so, pay attention to this.
2. Since this is our first time, we will limit our digging to the last meaningful word indicator: **meaningful words and phrases**.

While the two passages are integrally related, let's examine them separately and then together. Reflect on the awe-inspiring factors of God in Christ in verses 15-20. Share a time you felt awe in something/someone.

Now think about our incredible God/King and His tender care for each of us. Discuss the difference between **theoretical** and **experiential**? When have you experienced such **AWE**, you were rendered speechless? Point: Reflecting

on scripture is more than intellectually knowing a concept; it's experiencing God's awesomeness.

3. Possible watch Louie Giglio's *How Great is our God*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1rPalyUshw>
4. What might *for him* at the end of verse 16 imply about God, man and all creation? (Notice verse 20.)
5. Reflect on how this section has affected your spirit.
6. Read verse 21. How does alienation feel? The Greek words suggest this can be translated different ways. We're examining the NIV translation, but the ESV translation says we were not alienated *because of* our evil deeds. Rather, *our evil deeds only revealed our already hostile minds*. How might that reshape how we think of sin?
7. What does faith mean to you? How does the Bible define it? (Read Hebrews 11:1-3 and Ephesians 2:8.) How do you explain the qualifying statement *if you continue in your faith*?
8. How might this be helpful to someone I know?

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Read Acts 19.
2. Using the Digging Deeper Guidelines, go through Ephesians 2:1-10.
3. Reflect on *Guidelines on How to Create a Bible Study*.

SESSION 6: SPIRITUAL FORMATION

SPIRITUALLY DEAD OR ALIVE

Living in two worlds is hard to comprehend. But God wants us to see the connection between the seen and unseen worlds.

Read the following verses commanding water baptism to link the **natural/seen** with the **spiritual/unseen**: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, and Romans 6:1-14. Note the connection between the watery burial and the coming out of the water with the unseen death, burial and resurrection Jesus experienced on our behalf.

Discuss the importance of baptism and how it relates to salvation. While there is a value for water baptism to serve as a public testimony of one's faith in God, the eunuch was baptized without observers (Acts 8:36-39), showing the far greater value to the one being baptized. Like circumcision (Colossians 2:10-12), God ordained baptism to be a physical act helping a person better identify with Jesus' death and resurrection.

Dead people have no feelings and are immune to temptation. Thus, considering oneself dead to sin can be a very liberating and a defensive weapon against Satan's temptations and accusations. Knowing our old self was crucified and we are alive to God in Christ, we can live as Jesus did in both the seen and unseen worlds at the same time. (Romans 6:3-11)

Taking the next step, we can imagine ourselves being risen with Jesus into heaven. (Ephesians 2:4-6) This gives us an eternal perspective to overcome daily hardships in life. Sitting with Christ in Heaven reminds us how He is with us to empower, equip and guide our lives on earth.

Things to Ponder:

1. Describe on paper a spiritually dead person. What part of us is dead? (Read Matthew 6:22-23.)
2. Describe the incredible change Christ's death and resurrection means to a spiritual zombie?
3. How would you identify a spiritually hungry person?
4. Have you considered asking the Holy Spirit to bring a spiritually hungry person across your path? Imagine the joy of walking with them through what you're learning as they take baby steps into a spiritual life/maturity?

DIGGING DEEPER FOR SELF-DISCOVERY:

Using the Digging Deeper method, read Ephesians 2:1-10 to discover God's overview of the Christian's life. Complete *Ephesians 2:1-10 Guide*.

Summary: The fundamental truth is that **all are dead** (spiritual zombies) until we die to our former life through humble submission to the King. His Spirit transforms us and makes us **alive in Christ for good works**.

Read Acts 19 and note:

- Paul stayed in Ephesus about 2-3 years and led an incredibly life-giving revival.
- Verses 17-20 refer to supernatural signs and wonders, the fear of God, and deep conviction that led to citizens burning their sorcery scrolls valued at 50K pieces of silver. Many think Epaphras was saved at this time and later planted churches in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.
- This revival created conflict on two levels: 1. Physically and socially between the Jews and new Gentile believers, and 2.

Between demonic power and the power of God in the unseen world which manifested in financial matters.

- Paul was imprisoned on his way back to Jerusalem and taken to Rome. Acts 20:13-18 records his last deeply moving meeting in Miletus with the elders of the Ephesian church. While imprisoned in Rome, Paul writes back to the church of Ephesus, Colossians and Philemon.

Ponder (journal notes if possible):

- What seemed most enlightening to you and why?
- How can we help ourselves and others overcome the world's influence?
- What do the *desires of the body and mind* look like?
- Divide the group into teams of two/three. Have each team create a question (like Jeopardy) that requires another team to read the passage to answer the question.
- How can we apply this type of spiritual formation to our daily life?
- How might this be helpful to someone you know?

ASSIGNMENT:

Read *Identification with Christ's Ministry* contains narrative (stories) scripture passages from John 20:19-22, Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-13, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. This brief comparative study is very revealing and helpful in understanding the different works of the Holy Spirit.

- The passages from John and Acts are **historical narratives (stories)** rather than **exposition (explanation of doctrine)** or **exhortation (specific instructions.)** Narratives are easiest to understand when broken down into different sections of thought. The 1 Corinthians passage is exposition. Mark only the parts you would like to discuss.

- When marking the words in the narrative passages, mark only key words or major conjunctive words like since/therefore which affect the concept being communicated. Note each change of thought and the sequence of events. Last, reflect on the why factors or message of each passage.
- Write out an imaginary Bible study based on this material.

SESSION 7: IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST'S MINISTRY

BEING “FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT”

The cross and resurrection triggered a dramatic shift in how God worked with man. Everything changed from the law to grace and from the ministry of Jesus to ministry of the Apostles and the church. God's new strategy was to **share His power** with believers **so they could do His work with Him**. This puts exceptional meaning on everything Jesus said and did before Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit inspired four different men to write the first four books in the New Testament. When harmonized, these books offer greater insight into what Jesus said and did. The same is true when we synchronize what the Spirit inspired throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament.

Ephesians together with Colossians, provides great insight into our identity with Christ as well as the unique unseen powers involved in the Kingdom of God. Although we participate with Him, what our King has done is not just about us. Ephesians 2:6-7 points out our salvation is about glorifying Christ and not just providing fire insurance for us. Ephesians 2:10 points out Christ saved us for the good works already prepared for us to do, not just to give us an identity or skill.

Ponder or journal:

1. Why did Jesus have to die and rise again? Was it just transactional (paying the debit of sin to His Father or was there more? Could it also have been transformational (empowering each one born again to be able to grow into

looking and acting like Jesus. Which is most of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) focused on?

2. How were people saved before He died?
3. How are people saved after He died and rose again?
4. How and when were the disciples spiritually regenerated/transformed as we are today?

Jesus died and rose again to reconcile us with the Father. Before He died, people were saved through faith looking forward to the perfect sacrifice. After Jesus died, people are saved by faith looking backward to the perfect sacrifice.

The Holy Spirit comes into us in two ways:

1. To regenerate or save us through the **indwelling of His presence**. Regeneration or spiritual rebirth (being born again) happens once. Regeneration brings fresh passion to obey as the Spirit teaches and leads us.
- 2.. To empower us to progressively be transformed into loving God as Jesus loved His Father, loving and serving others as Jesus did.

To empower us through **continuous infilling**. Being filled with the Holy Spirit occurs multiple times. We need continuous filling to accomplish the King's work on earth--working miracles as Jesus and His disciples did.

NOTE: The difference between the two is **cold, soul-generated obedience** versus **spirit-driven empowerment**.

Before Jesus died, the Holy Spirit was not resident in the disciples as He is today when we are regenerated. "Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.' (When he said, 'living water,' he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)" (John 7:38-39)

Read John 20:19-22. John is the author writing to all believers possibly while pastoring the church in Ephesus. Review **the sequence** in these verses. Jesus now had died and risen, leaving the disciples grieving and in shock. Jesus appeared to Mary who told the disciples what Jesus had said. The disciples are still confused and fearfully locked in a room when Jesus appears for the first time since His death and resurrection.

Try to imagine yourself as one of the disciples. This was Easter evening. What do you suppose the disciples were thinking and feeling when Jesus appeared to them in a room with locked doors? Imagine their emotional state as Jesus showed them His hands and side.

Jesus gave the disciples a spiritual reset and the passing on of the mission when he said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”

Jesus prepared them for their future communication with the triune Godhead by breathing on them and saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The same verb for *breathed* (emphusáō) occurs in Genesis 2:7 when the Spirit breathed and Adam became a living soul. Jesus breathes on the disciples giving new life or spiritual rebirth to them like new believers today. Jesus had to teach the disciples to utilize their restored spirit just as we must learn to hear and obey our spirit. (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

DIGGING DEEPER FOR SELF-DISCOVERY:

Read the following passages, looking for the differences between the four gospels and Acts? Hint: Jesus’ acts versus the disciple’s Spirit-empowered actions. Matthew 1:1, Mark 1:1, Luke 1:1-2, John 1:1 and Acts 1:1,4-8.

The gospels were the acts and teachings of Jesus. The book of Acts comprises the acts of Christ through the early church believers. The same Holy Spirit that empowered early believers will empower believers today.

What key words, major conjunctive words and **the sequence of events** did you mark in your response to: *Identification with Christ's Ministry*.

Examining the **different purposes** for each of Jesus' actions and words in John 20:22 and Acts 1:8, 2:4. In what ways are they uniquely different?

Compare Peter's response in Mark 14:66-71 to his response in Acts 2:14. What would produce such a dramatic change in you? How does Peter's experience serve as a model for Paul's explanation of the variety of gifts of the same Holy Spirit in believers today?

Peter went from denying Jesus to preaching the gospel to a large crowd because of the transformation resulting from the infilling or baptism of the Spirit. What happened to Peter is for every spirit-filled believer today. Spiritual gifts are distributed among us today, so we can do good works God prepared in advance for us.

Ponder or journal:

1. Jesus handed off the baton to His disciples before ascending into heaven. Do you think the disciples were aware of such a dispensational landmark moment? What mental distractions might they have encountered? What thoughts might have gone through your mind if you heard this commissioning statement?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem?

3. Describe the infilling or baptism of the Holy Spirit. What does this mean in your life?

SESSION 8: GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRIST FOLLOWERS TO LIVE HOLY LIVES

DIGGING DEEPER FOR SELF-DISCOVERY:

Break into three groups. Each group will complete and lead one of the following sections: verses 1-4, 5-11 and 12-17.

Using *Colossians 3:1-17 Guide*, discuss what this passage tells you about God, yourself, and what your next step.

Note the indirect reference to the kingdom authority factor in verses 1-2 in contrast to earthly things. Highlight the phrase: **we must choose to set**. We don't have the power to change our hearts. But we do have the power to reorient our minds. For example, if I stop justifying that activity or that habit and reorient my mind, God will use His power to change my heart. But He won't change my heart until I take the initiative to reorient my mind.

Consider the chorus in the song, *Turn your Eyes Upon Jesus*. When we fix our eyes on God's kingdom life, He changes our heart's desires and perspective much like the shift from looking for a mate to being married.

When a person is spiritually regenerated, the Holy Spirit stamps a love for Christ in our hearts (attachment love). Like a newborn child with its mother or duckling with its mother, we **want** to follow/please Christ.

Encountering Jesus has dramatically changed the perspective of scores of people throughout history. When we die to ourselves and come alive in Christ, Paul teaches that we intentionally look at our earthly lives through the lens of our attached (mutual) mind with

Christ in heaven. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. To what extent should we go to change the focus of our minds?

Journal your answers to these questions.

- What insights did you discover in processing this assignment?
- What do you believe to be the most critical thoughts in this passage?
- What does it mean if we are *hidden*? Consider a pregnant lady with a child hidden within her or a person with a dream hidden inside his heart. Think about a future president hidden inside a child long before election. Now focus on Colossians 3:3 in terms of the following: our well-being is dependent on His well-being, we are seated with Christ, we are *hidden in Christ in God* and we are preserved in Christ.
- How might verse 4 offer definition to what *hidden* might mean? The world cannot understand who a believer is but will so when the believer comes with Christ.
- How significant is the word dead in the context of the promise of being hidden with Christ in God?
- Together, write out 6-8 open-ended thought-provoking questions, related to your discoveries, which will require others to reflect deeply on the answer. Making every effort to lead others to self-discovery is what writing an effective a Bible study is all about.
- What could be helpful to someone you know?

Assignment:

1. For the last session, choose a passage you find meaningful or use Galatians 5:16-26 (the Fruit of the Spirit).
2. Complete the Digging Deeper guide.

3. Regardless of your selection, anticipate the Spirit's guidance while considering and discussing the text.
4. Create your own unique study method for the passage, then explain your design, reasoning, and insights. Make sure you write down your discussion question answers. This exercise will help you set up future devotional times. Studying the Bible regularly will help you grow spiritually.

SESSION 9: PROFILE OF A CHRIST FOLLOWER

DIGGING DEEPER:

Read Galatians 5:16-26 slowly and reflectively exploring the fruit of God's work in a believer's life. Prayerfully and attentive to the Spirit, walk through the passage using the Digging Deeper steps.

DISCUSSION:

1. Works and gifts come naturally as we grow in our relationship with Christ, so in this context, what might the word *fruit* imply about spiritual life?
2. Our constant battle with sin makes bearing the fruit of the Spirit difficult. Compare verses 19-21 with 22-23. What does this reveal about the root motivation in our lives? Note the difference between self-gratification and honoring our awesome God.
3. How do we have victory over the sinful nature because of what Christ achieved on the cross? What does this passage teach us about how we can implement this victory in our lives?
4. If the author wrote the passage to unbelievers versus believers, how might it influence interpretation? (See 1 Corinthians 2:14)

Use the last 5-7 minutes, push them a bit to answer at least the essence of the following evaluation questions. Their answers can provide ideas on how to adapt this material when used with others.

Self-Evaluation:

- Using a scale of 1-10 (10 is high), try to identify your hunger to know God through His Word before and after these sessions.
- What was most effective to develop a greater passion for hearing God's whispers? What was most confusing?
- Discuss how this model of Bible study can engage others in a deeper life-giving study of God's word.

Pray, asking the Spirit to empower and direct each member of the group as they seek His guidance for leading others in developing this skill set for reading the Bible.

Handouts

Session 1.1

Welcome

Welcome. You have chosen to take part in what a Fortune 500 survey has identified as the sole consistent driver of sustainable spiritual growth: consistent reflection on scripture. However, this does not mean just reading the Bible to mark off a checklist. Reflecting on scripture means personalizing engagement with a curious mind and heart.

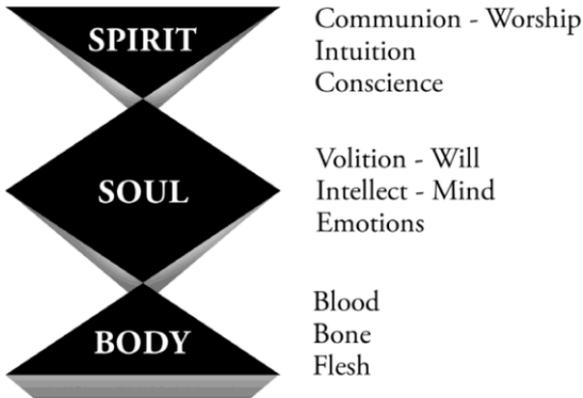
This study material will provide you with self-discovery tools to understand the Bible better and learn how to hear God's whispers as you reflect on what you read.

The first half focuses on fundamental principles to help you accurately interpret what you read. The second half offers tools to unpack scripture. This begins with handouts that provide you with prepared worksheets. As we progress, the worksheets will provide fewer helps, which will prepare you for your personal quiet time with God. No worksheets will be provided in the last session, so you can fly on your own with a coach nearby to support you. You will also be provided with a sample daily study guide that will hopefully stimulate your creativity for your personal Bible study time with God. The goal is that by the end of the sessions you will have: 1) a greater hunger for the Word, 2) tools to put into daily practice, and 3) a practical plan to implement.

If at any point in the class, especially in the last five weeks, you do not feel you are moving toward these three goals, please let me know so we can help understand and eliminate the barricades blocking your success.

Session 1.2

Spirit, Soul, Body Diagram



God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.
John 4: 24 (NIV)

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” Genesis 1:26 (NLT2)

Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person. Genesis 2:7 (NLT2)

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables.” Mark 4:10-11 (NIV)

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things?” Mark 2:8 (NIV)

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV) The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Session 1.3

The Mind's Role as Gatekeeper

(Prerequisite to this document is the Spirit, Soul, Body document.)

Our minds are a wonderful gift from God, but like other gifts, including sex, the mind can become devastating when misused. Satan used the mind to defeat Eve, then Adam. Satan planted the seed of doubt and mistrust in Eve's mind, which ultimately led to the demise of mankind. Interestingly, the mind influences both the will and emotions, which creates a daunting power of influence. Therefore, Satan primarily attacks the mind, which then becomes a heated battlefield when God grants revelation or speaks to a human's spirit. This power can only be overcome through an encounter with God, which often comes in the form of a divine revelation. That is what dramatically changed the trajectory of Saul's future, who became Paul, on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-20)

The more common, less intense ah-ha moments, whispers from His Spirit, connect us to God's unseen world—the kingdom of God. These experiences bring either conviction or certainty and deep peace, joy, and remarkable inspiration. As Paul pointed out, the most common sign of hearing God's whisper is His **peace** (not natural, but divine) that comes from Christ **rule** (serving as an umpire) in a person's **heart**. (Colossians 3:15)

The role of Eve's spirit in doubting God by choosing not to believe God's word is implicit in the context. Once this wall was breached, the action of the body soon followed. The fall of humanity was a consequence of their disobedience. For salvation to occur, all three of our components must take part in reversing Adam and Eve's rebellion (disobedience) before spiritual regeneration can occur. Paul explained, "**If you confess** (the will/mind/emotion—soul is implicit) **with your mouth** (body) that Jesus is Lord and **believe in**

your heart (spirit) that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9 ESV) The context of Paul’s words implicitly includes the decision that resulted in confession.

The mind then IS a gatekeeper to spiritual formation in that it manages information that feeds a human’s will where decisions are made. A word picture may help.

A chief executive officer in a large company has a personal secretary who provides him/her with information to make a company decision. Imagine the secretary has a selfish agenda and provides the CEO with deceptive information which causes the company to do harmful things. Our minds are like this secretary. If Satan corrupts a mind, as he did to Eve, the individual will often make wrong choices separating him/her from God—as happened to Adam and Eve.

We must not be passive in our relationship with God. Initiative steps towards God are imperative. Therefore, God tells us in the Bible, “Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2 NLT2). He also wrote, “. . . whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8 NIV) Bottom line: We must proactively fill our minds with truth of who God is and His kingdom to ward off the deception Satan tries to plant in our minds.

Why do this? The poet Emily Dickinson captured the power of good or bad ideas we allow to park in our minds. “The soul selects her own society, then shuts the door; On her divine majority, Obtrude no more.” Knowing how the mind works helps before accepting a distorted idea. Therefore, follow Solomon’s words, “Guard your

heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” (Proverbs 4:23 NLT2)

Yes, expect battles to rage within you. James wrote, “So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7 AMP) The strongest defense is a stronger offense. Alcoholics Anonymous hinges on the third step to recovery, a game changer in combating addiction. “Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.”

We cannot trust our minds or even self-discipline which offer only temporary help. Instead, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5 ESV) If we surrender our kingdom to God, He will empower us to overcome temptations. Paul wrote, “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13 ESV)

In summary:

- Be proactive by exercising the mind to be a strength rather than a weakness. Do this by filling your mind with truth from God’s written word.
- No matter how much information the mind knows about God or practices right living, this alone cannot redeem man. We desperately need regular *ah-ha* moments from scripture reflection to maintain the divine strength necessary to be spiritually victorious in this life.

Session 1.4

Why the Bible?

The Bible presents God as the Creator and King of all creation, describing Him as an incredibly powerful, self-sustaining energy source who speaks with such authority that material objects appear out of nothing. God created all things and continues to hold all that is physical together.

When God created humans in His own image, they were superior to His other creations. Their virtues included a creative mind, the capacity to rule, and free will. God's ultimate purpose was to delegate a slice of His absolute authority to His children to rule with Him over all His creation.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil's seduction, disregarding God's authority and asserting their independence. This compelled a totally just God to banish His now fallen creation from His perfect kingdom. This brief backstory leads us to *why the Bible*. God empowered His Word to be written to communicate His authority, truth, mercy, and grace to His prized yet imperfect creation. He desires for us to turn from our independence, receive His mercy and grace, and live again under His authority in His kingdom.

While we chose independence from His authority, our choice did not keep His purpose from being fulfilled. Just delayed. His curse included a promise that one of Eve's offspring would crush the devil's head. (Genesis 3:15) Jesus, God the Son, fulfilled this promise: those who choose to surrender to Him, He would use to fulfill His original purpose.

Inspired by the Spirit of God, the Bible uses facts, metaphors and multiple literary genres to communicate the unseen world and His

authority to fallen humanity. Instead of being angry and vindictive, God displays His unexplainable mercy and grace. He also reveals the life-giving principles of His authority as King and His relentless love. For those who choose to reverse Adam and Eve's choice to be independent, He graciously restores and empowers to live an abundant life on earth and eternity, ruling and reigning with Him forever.

God's kingdom is not a place but a condition where His authority, presence and power flow in and through His people. Wherever the supernatural occurs and God's sovereign will is fulfilled, His future kingdom has come into the present, here and now. When a miracle happens, a prophecy is made, teaching is anointed, His kingdom is being made real.

Bringing His kingdom, His reign in heaven to earth, is the dominate theme throughout the Bible, especially in Jesus' teachings. This kingdom represents a governing authority which has existed from before creation and will never end. (Psalm 145:13, Daniel 7:14) Like the man who sold everything to buy a field with a hidden treasure or the merchant in search of fine pearls who sold everything he owned when he discovered a pearl of immense value, we will never regret selling everything to be best friends with our Creator. (Matthew 13:44-46)

Session 2
Who is Well-off
Matthew 5:1-12

- (1) Reflectively read chapters 5-7 at least twice, in two or three different translations.
- (2) Circle words in chapter 5:1-12 that seem to capture your attention.

Matthew 5:1-12 (ESV)

- 1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. [This is the first time the Greek term translated disciple is used in the New Testament. John 6:66 refers to disciples that were not believers or the twelve. Can we be certain only the 12 disciples came to closer to Jesus?]
- 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
- 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- 7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- 8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- 10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,
for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

NOTE: The English translation of *blessed* refers to the highest sense of well-being possible for humans. The word is frequently contrasted with *qālal*, which means *to curse or esteem lightly*. (Deuteronomy 30:1, 19) *Righteousness* (v 10) means to routinely acting in the character and power of Jesus because of His empowerment. (Isaiah 66.2)

Session 3.1

Structure of the Bible

The whole Bible has one consistent, central message — the Kingdom of God. Its theme is of the majestic God creating man who chose to ignore His authority. God then patiently provided incredible miracles, inspired leaders, and gave profound commandments and loving discipline to fallen humanity. He did so to persuade individuals to humbly repent, then trust and obey His rule, and again enjoy the blessings of His kingdom. God ultimately sent His Son, Jesus, to show the way to reenter His kingdom. The Kingdom of God culminates with Christ again ruling Paradise for those who choose to surrender to God’s reign.

Old Testament Books

Pentateuch	History	Wisdom	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel	Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi
Literary Genre: Historical Exhortation Expository Poetry	Literary Genre: Historical Narrative	Literary Genre: Poetry Prophecy	Literary Genre: Poetry Prophetic Exhortation	Literary Genre: Poetry Prophetic Exhortation
Message: Progressive Revelation Promise of Salvation	Message: Everyone did what was right in their own eyes	Message: Prophecy concerning Christ, Encouragement	Message: Social & moral sin Pending Judgement on their sin	Message: God’s judgement while He calls for repentance
Uniqueness: 3 Genres of Laws Moral Ritual Civil	Uniqueness: So many of the OT incidents provide illustrations of NT principles	Uniqueness: Encouragement and eternal wisdom practical for real life	Uniqueness: God cares about man’s condition and will speak to man’s condition	Uniqueness: God’s authority in the face of man’s stubborn rebellion

Deuteronomy 4:2 (NLT2) *Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you. Just obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you.*

Proverbs 30:5-6 (NLT2) *Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection. Do not add to his words, or he may rebuke you and expose you as a liar.*

New Testament Books

Gospels	History	Paul's Letters	General Letters	Prophecy
Matthew Mark	Acts	Romans 1 Corinthians	Hebrews James	Revelation
Luke John		2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians Pastoral Letters 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon	1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude	
Literary Genre: Historical Exposition	Literary Genre: Historical Narrative Expository	Literary Genre: Expository Exhortation	Literary Genre: Exhortation	Literary Genre: Poetry Exhortation
Message: The life of God's Son who personified the kingdom of God	Message: Christ's continued work through His body, the church	Message: Christ's superiority Insights and principles for a Christ follower	Message: Guidelines for living a Christian life in an adversarial environment	Message: A revelation of the incomparable superiority of the majestic King of Kings
Uniqueness: The continued theme Jesus taught was of the Kingdom of God	Uniqueness: The power Holy Spirit is waiting to work through believers	Uniqueness: Warning of deceitful teachers who would come	Uniqueness: Practical teachings from many who walked with Jesus	Uniqueness: Blessed hope cloaked in frightening poetry

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT2) *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

Revelation 22:18-19 (NLT2) *And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.*

Keep in mind that poetics are not just lyrical but can also be free verse, imagery, symbolism or figures of speech. This

means that while the message is absolutely true, the words used are not all to be taken literally.

Session 3.2

Typical Internal Stages for Entering the Kingdom

TYPICAL INTERNAL STAGES FOR ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This chart explains the normal stages a person experiences when entering God's kingdom. Note the progressive change of heart in the chart. These transitions often happen subtly and in rapid spurts, so transitions may be difficult to distinguish. A subconscious drawing of the Holy Spirit progresses with increasing intensity as a person responds to the inner compelling within them.

PHASE	CURIOUS	EXPLORER	SEEKER	PURSUER
Response Bible Examples	Indifference - Antagonism Nicodemus—John 3 Woman at the well—John 4	Confusion - Naivety Ethiopian eunuch—Acts 8 Woman at the well—John 4	Indecision - Love of darkness Philippian jailer—Acts 16 Woman at the well—John 4	Independence - Inward focus Early church—Acts 2:40-42 Samaritan awakening—Acts 8
Mini-Decisions Some of the specific mini decisions that could be made in each phase. Some may blur together or vacillate, repeat- ing themselves before moving forward.	-12 -11 -10 -9 -8	-7 -6 -5 -4	-3 -2 -1 *	+1 +2 +3 +4
	Little or no belief in any spiritual reality	Curious of spiritual reality—not necessarily God	Questions current religious concept of God	Has a positive attitude toward Bible
	Accepts Jesus is also God	Understands you cannot earn your way into Heaven	Asks God for guidance	Understands meaning and implications of the gospel
	Has a positive attitude toward gospel	Conviction of personal sin and for forgiveness and empowerment to change	An inner compelling to give it all to God to forgive and reorient	Acts on inner compelling & humbly surrenders his/her life to God
	Receives a deep desire to know God in a more intimate way	A deep inner compelling to know & serve God more out of love for Him	Assimilation into a caring community and learning to carry spiritual responsibilities	Growing and maturing into Christlikeness; draws personal worth from God
	Intuitively compelled to give everything to be a responsible spiritual parent and grandparent			

Session 4.1

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23 GUIDE

Contextual information within the book of Colossians:

- **Who wrote the book?** Paul (1:1)
- **Who was with the author at the time?** Timothy, Epaphras, Luke, Demas (1:1, 4:12, 14)
- **To whom was the letter written?** Church in Colossae (1:2)
- **Where was Paul when the letter was written?** Prison in Rome (4:18)
- **Who preached the gospel to the believers who received the letter?** Epaphras (1:7)
- **Had Paul ministered to the Colossians before?** Indirectly; he'd never met them (2:1, 5)
- **What did the Colossians have to watch out for?** False teachers (2:8)
- **What was the false teaching they needed to resist?** Gnosticism, legalism (2:16)
- **Where was Epaphras when the letter was written?** With Paul, Timothy and others in Rome (4:12-13)

Colossians 1:15-23 (NIV)

15 He is the **image** of the **invisible** God,

the **firstborn** over all creation.

16 For **by him** all things were created:

things in **heaven** and on **earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created **by him and for him**.

17 He is **before all things**, and in **him all things hold together**.

18 And he is the **head of the body**, the church;

Continue with the rest of the passage.

Meaning of Keywords

Image (likeness, representative) vs. invisible (formless)

(trichotomy Genesis 1:26-27)

Firstborn [preeminence over]

By Him/for Him

Heaven/invisible vs. earth/visible spirits

(Is. 45:7 cf. Ez. 28:15)

Incomprehensible – Awe

(Colossians 2:6-8)

Before/held together

Head of body=church

Synopsis

Response to heresy that depreciated the person and work of Christ.

This section portrays the awesomeness of Christ.

Session 4.2

Correctly Interpreting the Bible

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV) *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

For the most part, its context and the Spirit reveals how it should be classified.

To increase the possibility of avoiding theological deceptions, we should take extra care in correctly determining if a scripture is an Absolute or Relative [changeable].

- An **Absolute** statement is timeless and intended for everyone. i.e., Exodus 20:3 (NLT2) *You must not have any other god but me.*
- A **Relative** statement is relevant to the original receiver(s) setting. i.e., Deuteronomy 23:7 (NLT2) *Do not detest the Edomites or the Egyptians, because the Edomites are your relatives and you lived as foreigners among the Egyptians.*

An **Absolute** interpreted as a **Relative** produces Theological Liberalism.

EX: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NLT2) *Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. If interpreted as written only to the Corinthians or just to that time period, that would be Theological Liberalism.*

A **Relative** interpreted as an **Absolute** produces Theological legalism.

EX: Romans 16:16 (NIV) *Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.* If that is interpreted as an **Absolute**, it would be Theological Legalism—which is condemned in scripture.

A third and more complex rule is a **Relative Absolute** – [contextual]. On occasion, you will find the Bible says things that sound contradictory to us. EX: 1 John 4:18 (ESV) *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* Contrasted with 1 Peter 2:17 (ESV) *Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.* It is hard for our minds to reconcile such things. However, God is the King and must determine what is to be truth. When in Heaven, we will understand they are simply two sides of the same coin. While on earth, we would be acting presumptuously if we attempted to change something the King has given us as truth.

Another common deception in interpreting scripture is falling into the ditch of **Rationalism** or **hyper-spirituality**.

- **Rationalism** puts the mind above the Word of God, while **hyper-spirituality** puts emotion above the Word of God. Both originate in the soul of a person and not their spirit (intuition or conscience) and are therefore suspect at best.
- **Obedience** is essential for a correct interpretation of the Bible. Jesus said, *“Everyone who hears what I say but doesn’t obey it will be like a foolish person who built a house on sand. Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and struck that*

house. It collapsed, and the result was a total disaster”
(Matthew 7:26-27, GW).

A sound interpretation will bring unity and peace. The lack of it produces confusion, disunity and unrighteousness in laws and behavior.

It is important that the Holy Spirit’s whispers to one’s spirit to guide the interpretation of the Bible. John 16:13 (ESV) *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*

Session 4.3

Digging Deeper for Self-Discovery

The Bible is God's love letter to us, full of wisdom and insights. Like a prism, His light will illuminate certain words or passages in different seasons throughout our lives. We need to approach a passage with an open mind, not preconceived ideas. The purpose is to discover what the Bible really says, not what one has heard or thought a passage said.

The following steps help us hear the Holy Spirit whispers:

6. Clarify the broader **context**.
7. Identify the primary and supportive **concepts**.
8. Personalize it. Step into the scene as a **participant** rather than a spectator.
9. With a bird's-eye view, speculate on God's **overall purpose/message** in the passage.
10. Discern how the Holy Spirit may intend that message to **apply** to daily life.

Tools to assist you: Various Bible translations, a Study Bible, a Bible Dictionary, a Bible Encyclopedia, and various commentaries

Step 1: Do your best to determine the general **context** of the book/passage.

- Who is the author? What do we know about him?
- When might it have been written?
- Who is the audience?
- Where was the author writing the passage?
- Why was the passage written? What circumstances surrounded the recipient(s)?

Step 2: Identify notable **concepts**.

- Read the passage, including the surrounding chapters, or the whole book if time allows. Note the flow of thought and shifts in concepts. Identify how the selected passage fits into the whole letter.
- Re-read the passage from different Bible translations (not paraphrases). Identify the differences in words and phrases. Combine the differences to gain a broader understanding. Suggested translations: NKJV, NASB, ESV, GW, GNB, NLT

Step 3: Write out the passage in short statements. Aim for no more than 10 words.

Step 4: Personalize the selection. Picture yourself in the scene. What do you see/hear? What are you feeling/thinking?

Step 5: Mark words that catch your attention, using highlighters and other marks (circles, squares, single or double underline). Add a key word/phrase from the verse in the first column. Add the meaning in the second column. Summarize the concept in the third column.

Note: Four types of meaning indicators:

5. **Similar or contrasting meanings.** For example: *alienated* and *enemies* and *alienated* and *reconciled* in Colossians 1:21-22.
6. **Stylistic features, like repetition.** For example: Jews demanded *miraculous signs* and Greeks look for *wisdom* OR *a stumbling block* to Jews and *foolishness* to Gentiles in 1 Corinthians 1:22-23.
7. **Relationships between different sentences and phrases connected by conjunctions or hinge words.** For example: *and, because, but, if* in Colossians 1:21-23 and *once, but now* in Romans 11:30.

8. **Meaningful words and phrases.** Take a bird's-eye view of the whole passage to identify significant truths.

Step 6: Summarize the passage.

- Is this passage a command, a promise or information?
- What does the selection reveal about God's awe-inspiring character or values?
- What does the passage expose about you/humanity?
- How do you intuitively sense you should respond?
- Is your interpretation consistent with the rest of Scripture?
- Read at least two good commentaries to confirm your initial observations. Suggested commentaries: *The Complete Biblical Library* (Thoralf Gilbrant and Ralph Harris), *Life Application Bible Commentary* (New Testament), *Barclay New Testament Commentary* (New Testament), Adam Clarke, *New International Commentary, Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Matthew Henry. These are available on Amazon, Logos.com (most comprehensive), Accordance, E-Sword, The Sword Project, BibleGateway.com, Blue Letter Bible, etc.
- Share your discoveries with another person passionate about God's Word who is in a close relationship with Him.

Step 7: Apply the passage. Obedience is essential. (Matthew 7:26-27)

- Journal your thoughts.
- What does this passage reveal:
 - ✓ About God? (His value system, ways, character)
 - ✓ About me? About humanity?
 - ✓ About our culture?
 - ✓ How should I respond?

- Write one or two open-ended questions in such a way that forces an examination before a response.
- Is this something to share?

Session 4.4

Sample Exegesis of John 5:44

1. Notice the internal juxtaposition (contrasting concepts)
2. Note key words (those you are drawn to) in each line
3. Define the key words
4. Summarize what Jesus is saying

John 5:44	Meaning of Keywords	Synopsis
<p>How can you believe</p> <p>if you accept praise</p> <p>from one another,</p> <p>yet make no effort</p> <p>to obtain the praise</p> <p>that comes from the only God?</p>	<p>Believe—be convinced of, have confidence in, entrust,</p> <p>Accept—to get something, grasp, collect, take hold of</p> <p>From—source</p> <p>One another/God—relationship</p> <p>Praise—honor, good opinion</p> <p>No effort—seek, try to get, look for, inquire into</p>	<p>You cannot go north and south at the same time. If you grasp/collect honor from one another, you cannot be convinced of, or have confidence in, or trust God.</p>

How might Jesus' words here be warning us of the respectability trap?

What might this tell us happens to our spiritual progress the moment we find ourselves seeking respectability from others?

Session 5.1

How to Create a Bible Study

We learn and remember more when coached through a self-discovery process versus lecture. Jesus taught His disciples using this process. Our efforts to encourage spiritual formation will be more rewarding if we foster group discussion and coach them by modeling a systematic self-discovery method. Coaching consists of asking leading questions so participants can draw their own conclusions and solutions.

Tips on How to Create a Personalized Bible Study.

1. Using the Typical Internal Stage document, discern where you sense each participant is in their spiritual journey “of measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13b, NLT2) Then decide which spiritual truths or practices would most effectively move participants ahead.
2. Give prayer and critical thought to the selected Bible passage to discover what you sense in your spirit might best position participants to gain fresh insight. After working through the Digging Deeper Steps on your own, anticipate their questions to facilitate the discussion.
3. Seek the Holy Spirit’s wisdom to write out **clear, open-ended, thought-provoking questions to stimulate deeper thought** when discussing each concept. (This questioning technique was popularized by the television show Jeopardy. The aim is to position participants to hear Holy Spirit whispers related to the

passage. God's transformational power to bring understanding and application. Avoid discussion that distracts from the primary message.

4. Explore what the passage tells them about God, His values, character, and ways. What does the passage say about themselves/humanity? What should they do with this knowledge? How should participants align themselves with the Spirit's whispers?
5. Read Matthew 7:26-27. "Everyone who hears what I say but doesn't obey it will be like a foolish person who built a house on sand. Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and struck that house. It collapsed, and the result was a total disaster." (GW). In this light, ask how you can support participants in taking their next step to obeying the Spirit's whispers.
6. Follow up a few days later to provide both encouragement and gentle accountability.

Session 5.2

Next Week's Assignment

1. Think through the Digging Deeper guidelines.
2. Read through the book of Colossians and answer the top set of questions on the worksheet.
3. Use Step 2; 4th x to uniquely mark the words that may have significant meaning to the passage.
4. Under the Meaning of keywords column, identify the meaning of the words that you identified as having significant meaning to you. Col. 1:15-23.

Session 6.1

EPHESIANS 2:1-20 GUIDE

Contextual information within the book of Ephesians:

- Who wrote the book?
- Who was with the author at the time?
- To whom was the letter written?
- Where was Paul when the letter was written?
- Who preached the gospel to the believers who received the letter?
- Had Paul ministered to the Ephesians before?
- What did the Ephesians have to watch out for?

Ephesians 2:1-20 (ESV)

1 And you were dead
in the trespasses and sins
2 in which you once walked,
following the course of this
world, following the prince of
the power of the air, the spirit
that is now at work in the sons
of disobedience
3 among whom we all once
lived in the passions of our
flesh, carrying out the desires
of the body and the mind,
and were by nature children of
wrath, like the rest of mankind.
4 But God, being rich in
mercy, because of the great love
with which he loved us,

**Continue with the rest
of the passage.**

Meaning of Keywords

Synopsis

Session 6.2

Next Week's Assignment

The *Identification with Christ's Ministry* document includes passages from John 20:19-22, Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-13, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. This comparative study is very revealing and helpful in understanding the works of the Holy Spirit.

- The John and Acts passages are in the History (story) genre and therefore should be broken down into different sections to determine the sequence of the events. Each passage offers a significant piece of a puzzle picturing the greater truth. The 1 Corinthians passage is of the Exposition genre. However, in this case, we are only looking at the bigger picture, so we will not be breaking that passage down. Therefore, mark only the parts in it that attract your attention.
- When marking the words in the Historical passages, please mark only the most significant conjunctive words like since/therefore, etc., not the minor ones like and, in, etc. I.e., Mark the meaningful words that shape the concept being communicated. Note each change of thought and the

sequence of events. Last, reflect on the why factors or message of each passage.

- Spend several minutes examining the sequences and the different purposes for Jesus' actions and words in John 20:22 and Acts 1:8 and 2:4. In what way is each unique in shaping a greater understanding of what Jesus was communicating to the disciples and us today?
- Also read in your Bible, Acts 2:14, 41; (vv 15-40 is Peter's impromptu sermon). Compare Peter's response in Mark 14:66-71 with his response in Acts 2:14. (Find added details about it in Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 22:56-62, John 18:25-27.) What might it take to produce such a dramatic change in you?
- What might be the purpose of Paul's explanation in 1 Corinthians 12. How might what happened to Peter then serve as a model for Paul's explanation of the variety of gifts since he is the same Holy Spirit who works in believers today?

Session 7.1

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 GUIDE

Contextual information within the book of Colossians:

- **Who wrote the book?** Paul (1:1)
- **Who was with the author at the time?** Timothy, Epaphras, Luke, Demas (1:1,4:12, 14)
- **To whom was the letter written?** Church in Colossae (1:2)
- **Where was Paul when the letter was written?** Prison in Rome (4:18)
- **Who preached the gospel to the believers who received the letter?** Epaphras (1:7)
- **Had Paul ministered to the Colossians before?** Indirectly; he'd never met them (2:1, 5)
- **What did the Colossians have to watch out for?** False teachers (2:8)
- **What was the false teaching they needed to resist?** Gnosticism, legalism (2:16)
- **Where was Epaphras when the letter was written?** With Paul, Timothy and others in Rome (4:12-13)

Ephesians 3:1-17 (NIV)

1 Since, then, you have been raised (see 2:12) with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3 For you died, and your life is now hidden [unseen] with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires

Continue with the rest of the passage.

Meaning of Keywords

Synopsis

Session 7.2

Identification with Christ's Ministry

John 20:19-22 (NLT2)

- 19 That Sunday evening
the disciples were meeting
behind locked doors
because they were afraid
of the Jewish leaders.
Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them!
“Peace be with you,” he said.
- 20 As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side.
They were filled with joy
when they saw the Lord!
- 21 Again he said, “Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”
- 22 Then he breathed on them
and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4-8 (NLT2)

- 4 Once when he was eating with them,
he commanded them,
“Do not leave Jerusalem
until the Father sends you the gift he promised,
as I told you before.
- 5 John baptized with water,
but in just a few days
you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”
- 6 So when the apostles were with Jesus,
they kept asking him,
“Lord, has the time come
for you to free Israel

and restore our kingdom?”
7 He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates
and times,
and they are not for you to know.
8 But you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.
And you will be my witnesses,
telling people about me everywhere—
in Jerusalem,
throughout Judea,
in Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 2:1-21 (NLT2)

1 On the day of Pentecost
all the believers were meeting
together in one place.
2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven
like the roaring of a mighty windstorm,
and it filled the house where they were sitting.
3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire
appeared
and settled
on each of them.
4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit
and began speaking in other languages,
as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.
5 At that time there were devout Jews
from every nation living in Jerusalem.
6 When they heard the loud noise,
everyone came running,
and they were bewildered
to hear their own languages
being spoken by the believers.

7 They were completely amazed.

“How can this be?” they exclaimed.

“These people are all from Galilee,

8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!

9 Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia,

10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene,

visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism),

11 Cretans, and Arabs.

And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!”

12 They stood there amazed and perplexed.

“What can this mean?” they asked each other.

13 But others in the crowd ridiculed them,

saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

14 Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem!

Make no mistake about this.

15 These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that.

16 No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

17 ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

18 In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike— and they will prophesy.

19 And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below— blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

20 The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives.

21 But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.’

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (NLT2)

- 1 Now, dear brothers and sisters,
regarding your question about the special abilities
the Spirit gives us.
I don't want you to misunderstand this.
- 2 You know that
when you were still pagans,
you were led astray
and swept along in worshiping speechless idols.
- 3 So I want you to know
that no one speaking by the Spirit of God
will curse Jesus,
and no one can say
Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.
- 4 There are different kinds of spiritual gifts,
but the same Spirit is the source of them all.
- 5 There are different kinds of service,
but we serve the same Lord.
- 6 God works in different ways,
but it is the same God who does the work
in all of us.
- 7 A spiritual gift is given to each of us
so we can help each other.
- 8 To one person
the Spirit gives
the ability to give wise advice;
to another the same Spirit
gives a message of special knowledge.
- 9 The same Spirit gives
great faith to another,
and to someone else
the one Spirit gives the gift of healing.
- 10 He gives one person

the power to perform miracles,
and another the ability to prophesy.
He gives someone
else the ability to discern whether a message
is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit.
Still another person
is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,
while another
is given the ability to interpret what is being said.

11 It is the one and only Spirit
who distributes all these gifts.
He alone decides
which gift each person should have.

Session 7.3

Next Week's Assignment

The **Identification with Christ's Ministry** document contains narrative scripture passages from John 20:19-22, Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-13, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. This brief comparative study is very revealing and helpful in understanding the different works of the Holy Spirit.

- The passages from John and Acts are narratives (stories) rather than Exposition (explains doctrine) or Exhortation (specific instructions) genre. The history genre is easiest to understand when broken down into different sections of thought. The 1 Corinthians passage is of the **Exposition** genre. However, we will not be breaking it down this next week. Therefore, mark only the parts that you would like to discuss.
- When marking the words in the Narrative passages, please mark only the key or major conjunctive words like since/therefore, etc., not the minor ones like and, in, etc. I.e., the meaningful words that affect the concept being communicated. Note each change of thought and **the sequence or guesstimated timeline of events**. Last, reflect on the why factors or message of each passage.
- Spend some time examining the different purposes for each of Jesus' actions and words John 20:22 and Acts 1:8 and 2:4. In what ways are they uniquely different?
- Also read in your Bible Acts 2:14, 41; (you don't need to read vs. 15-40 since it is Peter's impromptu Spirit inspired sermon). Compare Peter's response in Mark 14:66-71 with his response in Acts 2:14. (You can find additional details about it in Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 22:56-62, John 18:25-27.) Discuss: What might it take to produce such a dramatic change in you?

What seems to be the purpose for Paul's explanation 1 Corinthians 12? How might what happened to Peter serve as a model for Paul's explanation of the variety of gifts of the same Holy Spirit in believers today?

Session 8

Forming a Daily Bible Study Habit

My goal is to equip you with resources for personal Bible study. Naturally, these are merely ingredients to make a meal, not the meal itself. Only you and God can create this shared experience.

The key is how to incorporate engaging tools into your private devotion? Let me emphasize the critical need to approach your studies with a sense of awe for God. Get creative in setting the scene for your study time. Slowing down allows you to move past the natural mind's comprehension into sensing God's magnificence. This is the best way for you to hear God's whispers as you reflect on His Word. Imagine Psalms 19:1, 89:5-7 (the wonder of the heavens) or Colossians 1:15-19 (Christ's qualities). Seek God's guidance to fix your thoughts on what's above.

Decide how much time you can chisel out of your day to study. Pick the time and place you will do your study work.

An Example of Daily Bible Study Time:

Day 1: Select a book of the Bible.

- a) Research the context of the book.
- b) Read as if you were present hearing or seeing the action.
- c) Read as much of the book as time allows to get a bigger picture of the book.

Day 2: Divide the book into sections focusing on one or two complementary concepts.

- a) Select a passage you are drawn to work on first.
- b) Write the verses into a journal, breaking them into bite-size phrases so you reflect on every word.

Day 3: Note which words make you curious.

- a) Read other translations and note the different words.

- b) Include them in your journal.
- c) Reflect on them while driving and during downtime.

Day 4: Condense related words and verses into a summary.

- a) Compose questions answerable only by someone who has read the provided text.
- b) Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight concepts and understanding. Prayerfully visualize doing whatever you sense the Spirit asking.
- c) Ask the Holy Spirit to open an opportunity to share what you've learned.

Day 5: Ask the Holy Spirit to synthesize the entire passage.

- a) Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on related areas where His revelations can be applied.
- b) Ask how you should apply these insights to your daily life.

Do this repeatedly until the book is complete. Share your experiences with a fellow lover of God's word.

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Bob