

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

Did you not know?

I must be about

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS!

A Series of Lessons by

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for

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LESSON 1: THE FATHER'S LOVE

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, New International Version, 2011, unless noted otherwise.)

All of God's creation flows from the love of the Creator. God loved Adam before he created him. God loved Eve before he created her. And God loved them so both much that he created them to love each other. Jeremiah says of God's love that, ***“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jere. 1:5).*** And David sings, ***“But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever” (Psa. 52:8).*** God loves, and has a plan and a purpose for, each man before he creates him. That love will never cease.

LESSON 1 THEME: FOR THE SIN OF ONE MAN, ADAM, THE ATONEMENT OF ONE MAN, JESUS, IS ENTIRELY SUFFICIENT!

A loving God created not a robot, but a man, sinless Adam, and loved him so much that He gave him a free will. God's desire was that Adam would choose a life in relationship with Him. But Adam sinned by rebelling against God, breaking the relationship. Still, God will always love Adam and wants their holy relationship to be restored.

Now, man has sinned, and man must pay the price. And God is a God of love, but also of justice, holiness and integrity. And sinful man is incapable of an atonement acceptable to a just and holy God. The atonement must be holy. And if all men are to be saved, the atonement must be sufficient to pay for all the sins of all men of all of time.

A loving God provides the perfect sacrifice, a sinless man, Jesus, to be the sacrifice that will atone for all the sins of all humanity. By reason of this sacrifice, each person will again be given an opportunity to choose life. But how can it be that Jesus, the Son of God, is able to pay a man's ransom to a just and holy God? Is this justice? Yes, because Jesus, the Son of God, is really a man as well!

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

Jesus, as the Son of Man, did not use his equality with God to his own advantage! Well, as a man, how could he become obedient to death on a cross? How could he endure suffering for all the sins of the world?

In Nazareth, Jesus was conceived when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. In the River Jordan, ***“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’” (Luke 3:21-22)***. And, shortly afterward, ***“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry” (Luke 4:1-2)***.

Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man, was a man, but he was a man full of and led by the Holy Spirit. In the desert, the devil thought he saw an opportunity to tempt Jesus to obey his flesh rather than his Father. He had successfully tempted Adam in the garden with a snack. Here was Jesus, hungry and in the desert. Perhaps Jesus might be tempted to choose not to do his Father's will. So, ***"The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread'" (Luke 4:3).*** Jesus could simply have agreed, "I am," and ate some bread, but he was not on earth to function in his own authority as the Son of God. Instead of asserting his deity, Jesus asserted his manhood and relied on the written word: ***"Man does not live on bread alone" (Luke 4:4).*** Jesus, the man led by the Holy Spirit, chose to do his Father's will.

Well, since Jesus asserted that he was a man, ***"The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours'" (Luke 4:5-7).*** Well, if you are a man, just bend your knee a little and I will give you anything and everything an ordinary man could want. What would any reasonable man do? To the devil's dismay, Jesus again relied on the written word: ***"Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Luke 4:8).*** A man should worship his God and no one else. His Father had sent him as a man. He was here as a man and Jesus, the man led by the Holy Spirit, chose to do his Father's will.

Hmm. Jesus wasn't going to use his power and authority as the Son of God (deity) and wasn't going to act as an ordinary man (mere

human). Well, how about acting like the Son of God and trusting your Father to exercise His power on your behalf? ***“The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, throw yourself down from here” (Luke 4:9).*** After all, the devil explained, according to the written word that you keep throwing at me, it is written, ***“He will command his angels . . . to guard you carefully” (Luke 4:10).*** Jesus again relied on the written word: ***“Do not put the Lord your God to the test” (Luke 4:12).*** It’s not a man’s place to test his God. His Father had sent him as a man. He was here as a man with the ability to choose. Jesus, the man led by the Holy Spirit, chose to do his Father’s will.

What was the result of Jesus’ desert experience? ***“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside” (Luke 4:14).*** Jesus the man was a man, but not an ordinary man. He was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, who went into the desert led by the Holy Spirit and came out of the desert in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: My loving Father, you loved me before you made me. You loved me so much that you sent your only and sinless Son, Jesus, whom you loved and with whom you were well pleased, to take on my sins and die in my place so that I might be in fellowship with you and your Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Thank you for sending Jesus, the price for my sins, and for sending your Holy Spirit, who is in me so that I might stay in relationship with you.

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LESSON 2: THE GOD OF HOPE

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13). “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).

God is the author of hope. Jesus is our living hope. Faith in Jesus produces genuine joy and peace. And how does hope overflow the believer? By the power of the Holy Spirit.

LESSON 2 THEME: LORD, YOU HAVE NOT LEFT US ORPHANS.

While Jesus was with the disciples, the authority he had given to them enabled their works. The Holy Spirit would not be given to them until after Jesus was crucified, buried, risen and gone back to his Father. Life as they understood it was about to change, and they were clueless in Jerusalem. So Jesus began to prepare them for what was to come. ***“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 13:33).***

Uh, oh! They heard him teach about his Father. They saw him take authority over nature, over spirits, over sickness and even over death. Crowds of people came to hear his teaching and to witness his

power. Signs, wonders, and miracles followed him wherever he went. During their ministry with him, they too had done signs, wonders and miracles. But soon he was going away. With him gone, how could they go on? Faith became fear. Joy and peace were shattered. Hope faded. They were overwhelmed with doubts and questions. Before the rooster crowed, Peter asked, ***“Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you” (John 13:37).***

Left to themselves, ordinary men struggle with change. Let’s stay in the comfort zone where, supposedly, we know all the answers. And if the answers to the questions are not what we want to hear, the answers must be wrong. We want the answers we want, not the answers we need. But God does not have a comfort zone; God is always comfortable. So Jesus leads them closer to the answer they need to hear.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the place where I am going” (John 14:1-4). Jesus was going back to the Father for their benefit. And the kingdom is in the relationship, not the place. But it’s not the answer they want

Thomas persists, ***“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5).*** Jesus reasserts relationship: ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my***

***Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him”
(John 14:6-7).***

Philip pleads: ***“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8).*** Philip wants to see the Father, to be in the same physical place as Jesus and the Father. And Jesus again reasserts relationship, reminding them that the miracles they have seen bear witness to his relationship with his Father: ***“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves” (John 14:9-11).***

Still, the disciples have not heard how it might be possible for them to carry on while Jesus is with the Father and they are on the earth. Jesus does not leave them in this state of mind. ***“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12).***

Wow! The disciples’ ears must have begun to perk up. But how would ***“anyone*** who has faith in [Jesus]” be able to do such things after Jesus was gone? Jesus would leave no room for doubt. ***“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13-14).*** Jesus, if you are not with us, how is this going to work?

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

“But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you” (John 16:13-15).

Jesus prepared the disciples by raising their faith for what would come after he left. They, and all believers, could minister in God’s Kingdom after they had received the promised gift—the Holy Spirit. They probably could not imagine how great a hope they would have in the future—but faith in Jesus produces genuine joy and peace and Jesus had made them a promise they could trust, at least until soon-to-come Pentecost. Then Jesus’ promise (***Acts 1:4-5***) would be fulfilled in their ears and sight (***Acts 2:1-4***), and thereafter they would be filled with joy and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit they had received.

Prayer: Sweet Jesus! Thank you for not leaving me as an orphan. Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit, so that I might be fully prepared to do your Father’s will. Holy Spirit, you are welcome in me. Let me be attentive to you above all else, including abovemyself.

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LESSON 3: THE KINGDOM IS FAITH BASED

Jesus did not say that anyone who believes in him can do the things he did and even greater. He said that anyone who believes in him will do them. ***“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24).*** Jesus told the Pharisees, ***“But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20, NKJV).*** And when they asked when this would happen, Jesus said, ***“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21, NKJV).*** And, to believers, Paul explains, ***“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19, NKJV).***

LESSON 3 THEME: FAITH FOR ACTION IN THE KINGDOM COMES BY HEARING THAT THE SAME SPIRIT OF GOD THAT WAS IN JESUS IS IN YOU, AND THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS IN YOU.

What are some of the things that you know Jesus did? How do you know them? Where would you go to learn about more things Jesus did? To the Bible? Certainly. To a teacher of the Bible? Perhaps. But remember Jesus’ challenge to the Jewish leaders. ***“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40).*** Studying scripture, knowing scripture, is wonderful. But it is in believing scripture, in believing Jesus, that believers can do the things Jesus has done and even greater.

Suppose you don't know and study everything Jesus did! After all, ***“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book” (John 20:30).*** And ***“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25).*** Can you really do all the things Jesus did even if you don't know them? If you don't know them, how can you believe them? What about doing things greater than the things Jesus did? If you only know and believe the things he did, can you really do greater things?

Let's look at this a little differently. Do you think there are any common characteristics in any of the things that you know Jesus did? What do you think some of those characteristics might be? If there is one common characteristic in all the things that Jesus did, what is it?

“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed” (John 5:19-20).

If you believe in Jesus, you believe in his Father. If you see Jesus, you see his Father. If you hear Jesus, you hear his Father.

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:13-14).

Jesus' Father sent him. Jesus was the Father's messenger. Are you a messenger? Whose? Do you see a chain of authority here? What is it? ***"The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me"*** (John 14:10b, 24b, 31b).

What will you do? By whose authority will you do it? Who is really doing the work? Where is the one who is doing it? And what will be the result if you allow the one living in you to do his work?

"For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me" (John 17:18).

Now that Jesus has gone back to his Father, where will you learn what to say and do? ***"I am going to send you what my Father has promised"*** (Luke 24:49). ***"Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me"*** (John 13:20).

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you" (John 16:13-15).

The Kingdom of God is a relationship, not a place, and when the King's children hear anything by the Holy Spirit, faith ensues. Paul said

it this way: ***“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, NKJV).*** It may be the written word of God revealed in believers by the Holy Spirit or it may be a special word from the Father revealed to a believer by the Holy Spirit. But only the word revealed to a believer by the Spirit of God results in faith.

Is there anything a believer cannot do? The “thing” to be done is of no relevance to this question. A believer can do anything, **PROVIDED** it is in the thoughts of the Father that it should be done, and the believer, listening to the Holy Spirit, does what the Holy Spirit reveals. Nothing a believer is called upon by the Holy Spirit to do is in any way more difficult to do than the easiest thing a believer is called upon by the Holy Spirit to do. A believer who thinks something is too mundane or too impossible to be inspired by the Holy Spirit has forgotten who it is that is doing the inspiring.

Perhaps you have heard a child of the King, maybe even yourself, declare, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NKJV).*** This is intellectual nonsense. But it is Kingdom reality. What is included in “all things through Christ?” Christ never did anything that was not pleasing to the Father. The Holy Spirit will never inspire anyone to do anything that is not pleasing to the Father. Faith, Holy Spirit inspiration, is the substance of the Kingdom.

Prayer: ***Oh, my Father! By your Holy Spirit help me, while I am in this world, to be of your Kingdom, to let my light so shine before men, that they may see my good works and glorify my Father in heaven.***
(See ***Matthew 5:16.***)

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LESSON 4: JESUS—ON THE EARTH BUT IN THE KINGDOM

According to *Luke's* gospel, Zechariah (1:67-79), Elizabeth (1:41-44), John (1:15, 41), Mary (1:35) and Simeon (2:25-35) all had personal relationships with the Holy Spirit before Jesus was born, and their attention to the Holy Spirit and their responses to the Holy Spirit's leading changed their lives and ours (1:5-80; 2:25-40).

LESSON 4 THEME: JESUS, MADE IN HUMAN LIKENESS AND FILLED WITH, LED BY, AND IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, DOES BOTH NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL THINGS, BUT DOES THEM SUPERNATURALLY.

Jesus, the son of a carpenter, obeys his parents, reads, keeps the temple traditions, listens to and questions teachers, gets weary and rests, prays and teaches to pray, sits with children, has friendships, visits homes, walks to and walks away, weeps, washes feet and has feet washed, fishes, breaks bread, blesses, cooks, eats and drinks, rebukes and consoles. These and many other things Jesus did are seemingly all natural activities in the present world, rather mundane and certainly within the ordinary capabilities of any person. They are certainly not something a person would need to consult God about, are they?

Jesus also heals all manner of sickness, disease and pain, those who suffer from fever, seizures, paralysis and issues of blood, the blind, the deaf, the mute, the lame, the lepers, the crippled and the dead. He casts out demons, calms the storm and the waves, walks on the water, and changes water into wine. He feeds 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes (Matt. 14:16-21), 4,000 with 7 loaves and a few small fishes (Matt. 15:32-39) and finds a coin in a fish's mouth to pay taxes (Matt. 17:24-27). He tells Nathaniel he saw him under the fig tree (John 1:48)

and tells people in the temple court that one who had not sinned should throw the first stone at an adulteress (**John 8:3-11**). Jesus calls Zacchaeus, a man who had never met him, by name out of a fig tree (**Luke 19:5**). Jesus tells Mary and Martha that Lazarus would be raised from the dead (**John 11:23-44**). Jesus predicts the place where a donkey's colt will be found tied (**Matt. 21:2-3**), Peter's denial (**Matt. 26:34**), Judas's betrayal (**Matt. 26:21-25**), his own death, burial, and resurrection (**Matt. 16:21, etc.**), his ascension (**John 6:62, etc.**), and that the Holy Spirit would come after he returned to his Father (**John 14:16-17; 16:7 etc.**). Wow! These are so unnatural, in fact so supernatural, that ordinary men might well shake their heads and say "no way" or "not me."

Is natural too easy, or supernatural too impossible, for a believer to listen for supernatural direction as to where to be, whom to talk to, what to say, what to do, and when to say or do it?

"And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him" (Luke 5:12-13, NKJV). Jesus listens to the leper, puts out his hand, touches the leper, and says, "I am willing" and commands—"be cleansed."

Jesus sits by Jacob's well. He asks a Samaritan woman for a drink of water and then turns the conversation to spiritual water. She asks for some and he says, "***'Go, call your husband and come back.' 'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said***

is quite true” (John 4:16-18). Amazed, she tells the locals, ***“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” (John 4:29).*** Jesus sits by a well, speaks to a Samaritan woman, turns the conversation from natural to spiritual water and reads her mail. Many Samaritans believe in him because of her testimony, urge him to stay with them and, because of his words, many more believe Jesus really is the Savior of the world **(John 4:39-42).**

A centurion sends some Jewish elders to ask Jesus to come and heal his dying servant. Jesus goes with them and, as they near the house, the centurion’s friends bring a message to Jesus, ***“But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it” (Luke 7:7-8).*** Jesus listens to the elders, goes with them, listens to the centurion’s message and declares the great faith of the centurion. The messengers return to the house and find the servant well.

After choosing the Twelve, Jesus goes down with them and stands on a level place where a large crowd of his disciples are gathered with a great number of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem and the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. ***“Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all” (Luke 6:17-19).*** Jesus goes down, stands, teaches, and is available to be touched.

Jesus boards a boat. His disciples follow. A furious storm comes up. Waves sweep over the boat. Jesus is asleep. The disciples wake him. ***“Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm” (Matt. 8:23-26).*** Jesus boards, sleeps, wakes up, expresses amazement at the “little faith” of the disciples, gets up and rebukes the wind and the waves.

A man possessed by an evil spirit is in a synagogue where Jesus is teaching with authority. The evil spirit screams, ***“Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” ‘Be quiet!’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him” (Luke 4:34-35).*** Jesus teaches, hears the evil spirit, and gives two commands: ***“Be quiet!”*** and ***“Come out of him!”*** The news of Jesus’ teaching and his authority and power over demons spread throughout the surrounding area.

Prayer: ***Lord, help me! I keep fighting for control. I don’t seek your counsel before I speak or act. I leap into my own thoughts and works, not yours. I know and I acknowledge that your words and your actions bring life, not mine. Help me to die to myself, so that you might live more fully in me.***

LESSON 5: THE BOOK OF ACTS KINGDOM

The disciples did not understand what was to come when Jesus said he was leaving. They did not believe the Kingdom would function as it had before he left. Jesus' loving, step-by-step consolation to them was a promise that the Kingdom would function precisely that way. The promise ended with an instruction to wait in Jerusalem—to stay in the Kingdom—until you are baptized with the Holy Spirit. By faith in Jesus, they stayed in the Kingdom. By hearing what he said—and Jesus only says what he hears his Father saying—and doing what they heard, they stayed in the Kingdom. This is life in the Kingdom: to hear, believe and do what you hear. It is a life of love, wisdom, integrity and power, because it is the love, wisdom, integrity and power of the King. After Pentecost, they too would hear, by the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent.

LESSON 5 THEME: THIS IS LIFE IN THE KINGDOM—TO HEAR, TO BELIEVE AND TO DO THE WILL OF THE KING.

So what does the life of a believer in the Kingdom after Pentecost look like?

After Pentecost, when Jews in Jerusalem hear Peter's message that Jesus, whom they crucified, is the Christ of God, they ask Peter and the Apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replies, "***Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call***" (Acts 2:38-39).

Similarly, in Ephesus, Paul found some disciples and asked them, "***Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?***" They answered,

'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?' 'John's baptism,' they replied. Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all" (Acts 19:2-7).

After Pentecost, in Lydda, the Apostle Peter found Aeneas, bedridden eight years and paralyzed. ***"And Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.' Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:34-35).***

In Joppa, a woman named Tabitha became sick and died. Peter knelt down and prayed and turned to the body and said, ***"'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord" (Acts 9:40-42).***

While Peter was still in Joppa, a centurion named Cornelius sent men to bring Peter to Caesarea. As they were on their way, the Spirit said to Peter, ***"Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.' Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, 'Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" (Acts 10:19-21).*** Peter went with them to Cornelius's house. There a large gathering awaited him and Peter spoke

to them about Jesus Christ. ***“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God” (Acts 10:44-46).***

Here we see Peter doing things seemingly difficult (healing paralysis, raising the dead) and seemingly easy (walking down stairs, going with the messengers), but all by the leading of the Holy Spirit. And the result is: **MANY PEOPLE ACCEPTING JESUS AS LORD AND RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

“Sure,” a believer might say, “Peter was one of the Twelve.” Ahh, but there is only one Holy Spirit. ***“So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:1-6).***

Luke provides a record of some of the acts of two of these “table-waiters,” Stephen and Philip.

“Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8).

“When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said” (Acts 8:6).

“Simon (the sorcerer) himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw” (Acts 8:13).

In more recent history, signs, wonders, and miracles have followed John Wesley, John G. Lake, D. L. Moody, Kathryn Kuhlman, John Wimber, Kenneth E. Hagin, Oral Roberts, and Charles and Frances Hunter. On this day, believers are ministering healing throughout the world.

Do you have to be an Apostle or a pre-crucifixion disciple to have Jesus do the things he was doing and greater through you? No! All that is required is that you be a disciple, a person with faith that Jesus will continue to do such things through you for his Father’s glory. If we hear with spiritual ears and see with spiritual eyes, a faith explosion is on the horizon.

“. . . for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).

Any believer can do the things Jesus has done and even greater because the same Holy Spirit who filled, led and empowered Jesus is in all believers from the moment of their second birth.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live consistently in your Kingdom, to wait on the Counselor you sent, to hear, to believe, and to do, to be a fully committed follower of Christ.

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LESSON 6: THE ABIDING HOLY SPIRIT

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17). “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

Only a good and perfect giver can give a good and perfect gift. Hear these words! Take firm hold of these promises! Receive afresh these gifts from the Father—the Savior and the Counselor—and all they represent! Abba, Father! Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul!

LESSON 6 THEME: BELIEVERS LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO THE WORLD.

“Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35). Jesus’ plea, made at the well in Samaria, was for the harvest that his Father purposed to be reaped by men with life in Jesus’ name and led by the Holy Spirit. To this end, as his time drew close, Jesus pleads once again: ***“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21).***

Are believers really equipped to carry the message to the world? ABSOLUTELY! The Kingdom of God is here, Jesus is Lord, and believers enter the Kingdom by faith. And, as they enter, so should they operate, by faith! If man's natural wisdom and knowledge could accomplish the will of the Father, Jesus need not have gone to the cross. But, as Jesus has promised, what believers should say and do comes from God's wisdom and knowledge by the Holy Spirit. ***"Now faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).***

With this in mind, consider the Apostle Paul's teaching about the gifts the Holy Spirit has for believers, begun by this warning: ***"Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. . . I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:1, 3).***

Paul makes clear that believers can speak by the Spirit of God. Might the Holy Spirit's gifts, of which Paul insists believers should be informed, impact a believer's faith to do what the Holy Spirit reveals? After all, the message of Jesus and of believers is the same: Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, by whom the lost can be saved.

Look at Jesus and how he won the lost. Jesus' signs, wonders, and miracles were evidence of the Messiah. As he said to his disciples, believe me because I say it or at least on the evidence of the miracles themselves ***(John 14:11)***. The things Jesus did drew the lost to him. And he promised that any believer could do the works he did and greater.

With this in mind, consider nine gifts of the Spirit identified by Paul in **1 Corinthians 12:4-11** (with the brief descriptions which are here suggested):

1. **message of wisdom** (supernatural instruction as to what to say and/or do in a situation requiring action);

2. **message of knowledge** (supernatural revelation of information not otherwise available to the recipient);

3. **faith** (a supernatural ability to believe God without doubt as to a specific need):

4. **gifts of healings** (supernatural healings, possibly of different illnesses and/or in different ways, with or without human aid);

5. **miraculous powers** (supernatural abilities to overcome forces of nature and evil);

6. **prophecy** (supernatural communication of the thoughts of God, possibly but not always of things to come);

7. **distinguishing between spirits** (supernatural differentiation of good and evil spirits);

8. **speaking in different kinds of tongues** (supernatural speaking in unlearned earthly and/or heavenly languages); and

9. **interpretation of tongues** (supernatural communication of a message spoken in a tongue for the understanding and edification of the hearers).

Are one or more of these gifts exemplified, for example, in Jesus' and post-Pentecost believers' encounters earlier discussed in **Lessons 4** and **5**--encounters with the leper (**Luke 5:12-16**), the Samaritan woman (**John 4:1-26**), the Centurion (**Luke 7:1-10**), great numbers of people

(Luke 6:17-19), winds and waves *(Matthew 8:23-27)*, a possessed man *(Luke 4:31-37)*, Aeneas *(Acts 9:32-35)*, Dorcas *(Acts 9:36-38)*, Peter and Cornelius *(Acts 10)* or elsewhere in the Gospels or Book of Acts?

The gifts are not mentioned in any of these events, but don't they suggest a consistency in the relationships of the Holy Spirit with Jesus and believers, with the head and the body? With or without Paul's letter to Corinth, Jesus always knew his Father's will, always did what he saw his Father doing, and always said what he heard his Father saying—by the Holy Spirit. The identification of the gift is unimportant, as long as the Holy Spirit revelation is received and obeyed. Indeed, believers should not deceive themselves into thinking that they could ever limit God's choices as to how he makes himself known to them. And they certainly should not choose to be ignorant of the gifts.

Confidence that the Holy Spirit may use the gifts as a means to counsel believers at all times should be a powerful encouragement to believers to do just as Jesus did, to diligently seek and expect to hear from the Holy Spirit whatever is necessary to accomplish the Father's purpose in any specific situation. ***“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:12-13).***

Prayer: ***Sweet Holy Spirit, I acknowledge that I need everything you have for me. Forgive me for not welcoming you without reservation. Help me to be open to receive your counsel at all times.***

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LESSON 7: STOP NOT LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

So, how do I start? How does a believer live in the Kingdom? Start by stopping. Say what? What does that mean? *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord” (Isa. 55:8). “For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11).* To live in the Kingdom is to live the thoughts of the Father. To live the thoughts of the Father, a person must first hear the thoughts of the Father. And the only way to hear the Father’s thoughts is to listen to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, who reveals the Father’s thoughts. But before it is possible to hear the Holy Spirit reveal the Father’s thoughts, a person must first stop listening to the thoughts of men, especially his own thoughts.

LESSON 7 THEME: IN ORDER TO LIVE IN THE KINGDOM IT IS, AT THE OUTSET, NECESSARY TO STOP NOT LIVING IN THE KINGDOM!

You’re back from a wonderful mission trip to Costa Rica. You helped build a new school, prayed for many men, women and children, and laid hands on the sick. You have arrived, happy but tired, at the city airport. People from your church have come to welcome you home and want to hear more about what you did. To your surprise, even a church associate pastor has come. But when he shakes your hand, you can feel his body trembling and see in his eyes a great distress. Barely getting above a whisper he says, “Please come home with me. One of our kids is very sick and there is little hope. Can you please hurry?” But the other church folks all want to talk to you about your trip. Your efforts to get

out of the exuberant crowd are futile. In the tangle it feels like someone may even have snagged a finger in your belt loop. The staffer's cell phone rings. The caller ID shows the home number. Over the conference speaker you hear, "Please come home. Don't bother anyone else to come. The child is dead."

You wonder, "No parent wants to outlive a child. What can he be thinking? His hopes and dreams have become nothing! Is he angry with God? Or is he just lost? Is he blaming himself? He didn't get help fast enough? His own sins have caused this? He has unknowingly been holding a grudge, living in un-forgiveness? He hasn't prayed enough, loved enough, done enough? His mind must be racing? Mine is! He must be physically and emotionally unraveling? I am! He came to me for help, and I let myself get caught in the crowd. What can I say now? What should I do now? I have to do something, don't I?"

A few people in the crowd see what is happening and they are overcome by compassion for the staffer and his family. One prays that he will not be angry with God, another that he will not blame himself, and yet another that, if he does blame himself, he will forgive himself. One shares having been in a similar situation and "this worked for me." Another shares having been in an even worse situation and "what worked for me was doing not that but this." Some are praying for the family, that their grieving will be light, that they will have the strength to endure, and that they will come to understand God's purpose for this tragedy. Each of the prayers may have other thoughts to add to the building collection. If the staffer was lost and confused when the phone rang, whatever hope there was has been crushed and, as for faith, any

last flicker is caught in a very stiff wind.

Perhaps it might be best to look again at Jesus. Fortunately, what he would do in a crisis like this is a matter of record (***Luke 8:40-56***). One step at a time, whether Jesus knows it is part of a larger plan or not, Jesus builds up Jairus's faith for what is to come. At first, Jairus pleads with Jesus to come to his house because his daughter is dying. Jairus at least hopes, perhaps even has some faith, that Jesus can help his daughter. All Jesus needs to know then is to go with Jairus, the very thing Jairus has asked him to do. Jairus's hopes and faith probably begin to burn a little brighter. But the crowd crushes in on Jesus and slows their progress. In the crush, someone touches the hem of Jesus' garment. And Jesus, still trying to go with Jairus, knows enough to ask who touched him. A woman confesses that she touched him because she knew that if she did, she would be healed of a thus-far-incurable issue of blood, and that when she did, she was healed immediately. Now Jesus knows enough to declare, ***"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (Luke 8:48)***. It is as Jesus is speaking this that someone from Jairus's house arrives and tells him his ***daughter*** is dead and not to bother Jesus any more. Before hope and faith can fall back into the tank, Jesus knows to tell Jairus, ***"Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed" (8:50)***. You can feel faith growing. Not bothering Jesus any more is just not on Jairus's menu. But at the house, all the people outside are wailing and mourning. Jesus is not deterred and knows to continue to build up Jairus's faith by saying to them, ***"Stop wailing. She is not dead but asleep" (8:52)***. Jesus also knows to allow only Peter, John, James, Jairus and his wife to go in to the girl, where he says with

authority, ***“My child, get up!” (8:54).*** Her spirit returns and she at once stands up. Jesus seals the deal by telling them to give her something to eat.

Some years ago, in a movie entitled “City Slickers,” a man in search of the meaning of his life goes to a dude ranch where he encounters a very strong and confident foreman who appears to have the answer. Whenever the dude asks the foreman what the meaning of life is, the foreman just smiles and holds up one index finger. Eventually the dude asks what the index finger means and the foreman says, “Just one thing.”

The answer to the question, “What should I say or do now?” is always “just one thing.” It was for Jesus and should be for every believer. “I say what I hear my Father saying and I do what I see my Father doing!” One step at a time. Not your thoughts. Not someone else’s thoughts. The Father’s thoughts. Heard in your spirit, not in your head; heard from the Holy Spirit, not from natural sources.

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven. Help me to stop not living in your Kingdom. Help me to remember that it is what you think that is important, not what I or anyone else thinks. Help me to be quiet, to get out of my own thoughts, to give your Holy Spirit an opportunity to show me your thoughts. I want to live my life in your Kingdom.

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LESSON 8: LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

To live in the Kingdom, we don't need to know the whole plan. If we knew the whole plan, our faith might not be built up sufficiently to take the first step. Remember, it is God who is doing the work and we only need to know our next step.

LESSON 8 THEME: KEEP WRITING ON THE GROUND.

Look again at Jesus. Consider the peril of the woman caught in adultery (*John 8*). The teachers of the law and the Pharisees, trying to trap Jesus, tell him that the Law of Moses commands such women to be stoned; they demand to know what Jesus has to say about it. According to John, *“Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’” (John 8:6-11).*

Note that, unlike in the desert, Jesus does not immediately respond with a scripture. In fact, he does not immediately respond at all. At first, he simply bends down and starts to write on the ground. We are not told that he had finished what he was writing or what it was that he wrote. But when he stands up, he knows exactly what to say. It is not a scripture. It is not a response to the question. It is a conviction

to the crowd. He speaks it. He says nothing more. He simply bends down again. The accusers all leave. Jesus is now alone with the woman. He stands up again, and knows exactly what questions to ask her. She answers, and then he knows exactly what revelation to give her. It is not a revelation that should have been spoken to the crowd. He knows the accusation is correct, but her sins are forgiven. And he knows what commands to give her.

Believers should always take time to “write on the ground,” to listen to the Holy Spirit, to know what the Father wants said and done. Don’t say or do anything until you are finished writing on the ground, until you know the one thing. You may have a paragraph, a sentence, or a single word, an act, a scene, or a single move. Say and do only what you have. The next paragraph, sentence or word, the next act, scene or move, will come as you need it. If it doesn’t come right away, keep writing on the ground until it does. Your own words or actions will not bring life. If the Father wants you to know more than one word or move at a time, the Holy Spirit will reveal more than one word or move at a time. Do what you get and nothing more.

Sometimes it can be very difficult to get out of your own thoughts and into your Father’s. This is more likely the case when you are evaluating choices or facing troubles. And the more choices you have or the more overwhelming the troubles, the more difficult it is to not get short-circuited in your thought processor. This is a great opportunity to tell your Father the problem and ask him for his wisdom and his help. Then, “Let go, let God.” Trust him with the problem. Faith in God does overcome doubt and fear. Hearing the Holy Spirit sets you free.

Also remember that Jesus, who is fully aware of our human limitations, has not left us orphans but has given us the Holy Spirit. And by the Holy Spirit we are, among other gifts, able to speak in languages we do not understand for our personal edification and benefit and for the edification and benefit of the church (*see 1 Cor. 14:2-5*). To pray in tongues is to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through you. The Holy Spirit will neither require nor force you to do so. But it is one of the personal benefits that, in doing so, what you hear is not understandable to your mind. You are not hearing your own thoughts. You are hearing the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit may also reveal what you pray in a tongue when you pray with your understanding.

Consider that, of tongues for personal benefit, Paul says, ***“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding” (1 Cor. 14:14-15)***. And, in comparing tongues for personal benefit with tongues for the benefit of the church, Paul says, ***“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:18-19)***. If Paul used tongues for personal benefit more than all of the Corinthian Christians, what shall we do?

Always keep in mind that Jesus did not take it upon himself to minister as he pleased. Just because you feel human compassion does not mean that the Holy Spirit has given you a revelation. Like Jesus, always minister to people who ask and to people who are brought to

you by others with their approval. Like Jesus, always minister when asked by the Father, or when asked by someone who is submitted to the Father, like your pastor. Only the Father, or someone with discernment from the Father, can know the heart of a man or woman. And also remember, after you have done what is revealed to you, it is always appropriate and scriptural to share the love of the Father and to pray.

At the Mount of Olives, Jesus the man prays, ***“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”(Luke 22:24)***. He always knows his Father’s will. He always does what he sees his Father doing. He always says what he hears his Father saying, because he ALWAYS knows, sees, hears and does by the Holy Spirit. Believers should do the same. ***“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 8:1-2)***.

Why should believers say and do the things they hear and see the Father doing? ***“But these (things) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31)***. ***“Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35)***.

Prayer: ***Oh God, my God! Here I am, Lord. My Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Help me to be about My Father’s Business.***

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