Welcome to AP Deeper Walk 101 - A Firm Foundation! This is a short series of seven lessons on the basics of living for God and is written for new converts although even seasoned saints could benefit from the reminders and principles written in it. The outline of the lessons is below.

**Lesson 1:** Talking with God

**Lesson 2:** Hearing From God

**Lesson 3:** The Man of God

**Lesson 4:** The Body of Christ

**Lesson 5:** Unbelievers

**Lesson 6:** A New Creature

**Lesson 7:** How to Live and Have Life More Abundantly.

The goal of these lessons is to bless and enhance your walk with God. Lesson 1 begins with prayer, which is the most important thing in your relationship with God. You must communicate with Him on a daily basis. Lesson 2 is about hearing from God, with emphasis on using the Bible to do so. Lesson 3 is about the Man of God and the necessity and blessing of having a pastor (shepherd or bishop).

Lesson 4 is about the Body of Christ and how you must stay connected to the body to survive and be blessed. Lesson 5 is about unbelievers and how to make sure you listen to the right voices. Lesson 6 is about how you are a new creature after you follow and obey the three part plan of salvation. Lesson 7 is about how God wants us to be happy and enjoy living for Him.

May these Bible studies be a blessing to you and further your walk and relationship with God.

God bless,

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INTRODUCTION
Welcome to Apostolic Praise Deeper Walk 101 Lesson 1: Talking with God! In this lesson, we are going to learn how to Talk with God. By the end of this lesson, you will know the secret to easily being able to pray for one hour and how to enjoy it – without running out of things to say!

SO…WHAT DO I SAY?!!
Many people do not pray simply because they do not know what to say. Others pray but do not like to do it. Others pray everyday but only do it for about 5-10 minutes and then run out of things to say. We have all been in one of those categories at some time, especially those of us who may not be “talkers” in the first place. However, talking to God is something that is easy, exciting, and fun to do.

First of all, we are going to lay out some guidelines on how to talk to God. Once you have learned this, you will be amazed that you can actually pray for 30-60+ minutes. We should strive to give God ten percent (a tithe) of our daily time. There are 1440 minutes in a day. Therefore ten percent of our day comes to about 2 ½ hours per day. This includes time that is spent praying, reading the Bible, studying, witnessing, listening to Christian music, etc. However, at least one hour of it should be spent in talking with God.

You may say, “Wow, I don’t even have an extra hour, much less 2 ½ extra hours in my day.” Don’t worry. Neither did I…or so I thought! Then I realized that I spent 50 minutes a day in my car alone! I could spend that time in my car praying, listening to the Bible on CD or listening to Christian music. Furthermore, I shower for about 10 minutes everyday. That could be one hour of “God time” already! While it is best to take some personal 100% attention-devoted time out for God, sometimes we have to do what we have to do. Then when God sees our desire to spend more time with him, he in return will bless us with more free time to devote to him.
THE SECRET TO PRAYING – 12 Areas of Prayer

Okay, let’s go over our “secret” to talking with God.

There are twelve general areas of prayer that you want to cover when you pray, and this is the appropriate order for them as well.

1) Praise and Worship
2) Repentance
3) Forgiveness of Others
4) Praying for Yourself
5) Intercession (Praying for Others)
6) Reading the Bible
7) Meditating on What You Read
8) Thanksgiving
9) Singing
10) Praying the Word
11) Listening to God
12) Praise and Worship

Most of these categories are pretty self-explanatory, but let’s go over them in a little more detail.

THE 12 AREAS of PRAYER - EXPLAINED

1) Praise and Worship – Psalm 100:4 says “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.” Jesus began the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9 by saying “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” This time can be spent praising God. We typically say things like “I worship you Lord” or “I praise you” or “I love you” or “Thank you for how good you have been to me” or “There is no one like you” or “You are holy.” There are so many things you can tell God because he truly is great and worthy of praise! If you need inspiration, you can go read some psalms to give you some extra ideas on how to praise and worship him!

2) Repentance – When you come before God, you want to make sure that you are right before Him and that there is no unrepented of sin in your life. You will find that if you have unrepented of sin in your life, you will have a hard time entering into God’s presence. It will be awkward trying to talk to him until you get it right. It is like doing something bad that hurts your best friend and then trying to act buddy-buddy with them. It is awkward until you say “I’m sorry for doing this, will you forgive me?” Sin has no place in God’s presence. Ask him for forgiveness for whatever it is and get it under the blood. By the way, there is no condemnation in Christ. You do not have to ask for forgiveness for the same sin you committed in the past and have already repented of. Once you repent, God forgets.
3) Forgiveness of Others – Make sure you do not have any bitterness in your heart against anyone. Part of the Lord’s prayer in Luke 11 is “forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone that is indebted to us.” In other words, if we do not forgive others, how can we expect God to forgive us?

4) Praying for Yourself – Pray that God will make you a better person in every area of your life and make you more like Him. Pray for specific areas of your life. Ask for physical, spiritual, emotional, even financial blessings.

5) Intercession (Praying for Others) – Pray for your family, your loved ones, your friends, your pastor and pastor’s wife, church family, sinners, missionaries, even enemies. Ask God to bless them and help them and that His will would be done in their lives. Call out their names before God. Remember that God blessed Job when he prayed for his friends!

6) Reading the Bible – Take a few minutes and read a chapter or short passage in the Bible.

7) Meditating on What You Read – Think about what you just read and think about how it applies to you in your life. Reread the same passage out loud or perhaps read it through more slowly.

8) Thanksgiving – Give God thanks for anything and everything he has does for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says “In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” God loves a thankful heart. If nothing else, thank God for breath and health in your body (even if you don’t have it – God loves faith), and thank him for coming to earth and dying on the cross. Thank him for his word, and for a good pastor, a good church, a good family, for this Bible Study (just kidding) and anything else you can think of. There are so many things we can be thankful for!

9) Singing – Even if you cannot carry a tune in a bucket, God loves to hear you sing. Paul said in Ephesians 5:19 “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.” In the book of Psalms it says to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Did you know that Jesus and the disciples also sang a hymn together after they took of the passover, shortly before Jesus was crucified? Singing is Biblical, and it is a part of prayer.

10) Pray the Word – Find a chapter in the Bible, maybe even the one you just read, and read it as a prayer to God. The book of Psalms is particularly good for this, but you can do it with almost any passage of Scripture. Or if you have enough Scriptures memorized, just pray whatever comes to mind!

11) Listening to God – Prayer is not just a monologue (one person talking); it is a dialogue (two people talking). It is a conversation between you and your Creator. You have had your time to speak; now it is time to listen. This will teach you to hear and recognize the voice of God, and it will teach you to wait upon him. You probably will not hear an audible voice but instead may feel a soft impression upon your heart or mind.

12) Praise and Worship – Always begin and end prayer with praise.
Okay, now let’s think about this. If you spend just five minutes on each category, you have prayed for your hour! Isn’t that awesome?! Even if you just spend two minutes on each category, you have prayed for almost half an hour, which is still not bad if you are just beginning!

PRAYING OUTLoud AND MORE

These twelve general areas of prayer are a good guideline to start off with. Remember, try to talk out loud when you pray. Sometimes walking around is a good idea also. If you pray silently with your eyes shut, you may fall asleep (I know I have). It is just a natural response your body has when you close your eyes, especially if you are kneeling or laying down.

It is okay to pray walking around with your eyes open, although at times you may want to close your eyes to block out distractions. When you do this, praying out loud really helps. David said in Psalm 55:17 “Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.” Now we know that David knew how to talk to God and pray. He was a man after God’s own heart. In my personal opinion, it is best to pray out loud. God knows your thoughts, but it is good to let your family, your flesh, and the devil know that you are praying.

DIFFERENT CHANNELS OF PRAYER – Being sensitive to God’s Spirit in Prayer

On one final note, please remember that these twelve areas of prayer are just a general guideline. Some days you may not get past Intercession for Others as God may lead you to pray for someone in particular, and you may get under a burden for them. Other times, you may get lost in Praise and Worship and be in the presence of God and never even get to the rest! There are different channels of prayer. If you feel like God is moving in one channel, and you do not feel like it is time to go to the next area, do what you feel is right. Learn how to be sensitive to the Spirit of God when you are praying. Follow after what you feel like he wants you to do.

TALKING TO GOD ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL

The whole point of prayer is to get a deeper walk and relationship with God. Sometimes, I just feel like talking with God or asking him questions. I may never even enter one area of the twelve we just talked about! Sometimes I may just ask Him, “God, what do you think about this?” or “God, so-and-so said this, and it kind of hurt me, can I just tell you how I feel?” There is nothing God loves more than having an honest heart-to-heart conversation with his children. He cares so much about how we feel and what we are going through.

And even though we may hesitate to unburden ourselves on others with how we feel and what we are going through for fear of discouraging them or for fear of “talking bad about someone” or “running them down” we never have to feel that way about God. There is no burden too heavy for him to carry. This is what prayer is truly all about.

I hope you enjoyed this Lesson 1 of AP Deeper Walk 101. I am truly excited that you are taking this course and learning. Just writing this Lesson made me want to go pray, and I just finished praying! Hopefully you feel the same. God bless!
Everyone has the ability to hear from God. It does not matter if you are young or old, male or female, black or white. God can and desires to talk to you. Since the beginning of time, God has desired fellowship with mankind because of His love for us. The Bible tells us that God walked in the garden everyday in the cool of the day to talk with Adam and Eve. This lesson will go over learning how to hear from God through His Word, as well as the benefits and dangers of learning to hear from God.

THE WORD OF GOD

God gave us the greatest love letter ever written when He gave us His word. In fact, the Bible says in John 1:1 that “the Word was God” and in John 1:14 it says that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” When we read and study the Word of God, we are doing more than just reading a good book of history or poetry or writings of great men. We are literally reading the Word of God; we are spending time with God Himself because the Word is God, and God is His Word!

READING OR LEARNING?

Now many people, even Christians, read the Word simply because they are supposed to, and they commit much of the knowledge of the Word to their memory. While this is good and commendable, there is so much more to the Word than simply gaining knowledge from reading. God desires to speak to us through His Word everyday. Every chapter, every verse God desires to impart something to us and to help us grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Him.

OUR DAILY BREAD

There should never be a day that goes by when we do not get our daily bread from reading the Word. One thing that I like to do is to stop after I read a chapter and meditate or think about what I just read, as well as what stood out to me, and how I can apply it to my life to help me grow in the Lord. If I did not get anything from it, I will go back through the chapter and see if there is anything I can glean from it that perhaps I missed the first time. Of course, while reading it through the first time, I keep my eyes open and my mind on God so that I can hear what the Spirit is saying to my heart. Who knows but that I may see something that can not only help and benefit myself but someone else as well. That is what studying and reading the Word is all about!

SO HOW DO I START?!

Now when you first begin this process of learning to hear from God through His Word, you may have a hard time getting anything. I would recommend starting from easy passages, such as those in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) which have the teachings of Jesus. The book of Psalms is another a good one. Another thing that is helpful is to literally pray the Word aloud (this is particularly good with Psalms) or even just read it aloud. You can even do this while kneeling down as well to help to keep your
mind from wandering, which can be easy to do if you are just beginning or if you have a lot on your mind (and who doesn’t?).

**BENEFITS**

Of course, the awesome benefits of learning to hear from God through His Word are too numerous to count! First of all, it helps you to grow in wisdom and knowledge, bringing you closer to God and making you more like Him as you spend time in His Word and allow it to transform your life. Second of all, it gives you the daily bread that you can then use to help or feed somebody else that may be going through a hard time and may need to hear exactly what God laid on your heart when you studied earlier!

**DANGERS**

Of course, one must be careful when studying the Scriptures because Satan also knows how to twist the Scripture. Just because you think you have seen something great or gotten a great revelation from God about a passage of Scripture does not mean that you are correctly or rightly dividing the word of truth. One must be careful to compare Scripture with Scripture to make sure that it is correctly put in context.

For example, one may read the Scripture where Peter said in Acts 2:21 “for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” and think that all one must do is call upon the name of Jesus for salvation. Yet careful study of Scripture reveals that there is more to calling upon the name then just yelling “Jesus!” For as we compare Scripture with Scripture (“line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little”) we find sixteen verses later that when a crowd of sinners asked Peter what they had to do, he told them to “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto...all.”

Peter understood that calling upon the name meant more than just lifting up one’s voice, and we too, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, understand that as well. (And by comparing more Scripture we find that Peter was obeying the words of Jesus as found in Luke 24:47-49 where Jesus commanded to “preach repentance and remission of sins in His name,” which would be followed by “the promise of the Father” and “power”!)

Yet one could stop and build a salvation doctrine off of one verse and never go on to get the promise! This is why we must “search the scriptures daily” as they did in Acts 17:11 to make sure that what we have been taught and what we know is truly of God or just a teaching of a man that thought he heard from God but never “rightly divided the word of truth” or compared Scripture with Scripture in context.
OTHER WAYS GOD SPEAKS

Of course, there are other ways that God talks to people besides through His Word, but this is the main way that God will speak to you on a day-to-day basis. As we will see in our next lesson, God also speaks to us through the ministry he has put in our lives, particularly our church pastor. For the Bible says in Romans 10:14 “How can one hear without a preacher?” and it also says that God “has chosen...preaching to save those that believe.” It will take preaching to save you, and you will not want to miss this next exciting lesson.

God also can speak to us through dreams, circumstance, other people, our finances, his voice, even our enemies. Now actually audibly hearing the voice of God is rare – instead God usually speaks to us as a soft impression on our heart through His Spirit. However, the more we learn to listen to Him through His Word and the man of God, the more sensitive we will become to His Spirit impressing us to do something.

DREAMS

Not every dream is from God; in fact most dreams are not from Him. However, sometimes God will speak through a dream to us as the Bible plainly tells in Job 33:14-15 “For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.” In fact, the Bible prophesies in Acts 2:17 that in the last days “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.” God still speaks to people through dreams…but that being said with a grain of salt, most dreams are not of God.

CIRCUMSTANCES

Sometimes God will use circumstance to speak to us and move us to action. If it were not for persecution, the church of Jerusalem never would have fully spread abroad everywhere teaching and preaching the Word like they did.

OTHER PEOPLE

Sometimes God will use other people to talk to us. The other person may not even realize God is using them at times! One evangelist that visited our church told of the day that a man walked past him, came back and told him that “God loved him.” He was in the US Army at that time and wanted nothing to do with God (also being an atheist), but something touched him that day, and he began to seek for God and is at this time an evangelist preaching the Word!
OUR FINANCES
Some people will not listen to God, but they will listen and get desperate for God when they come to the end of their rope financially. Sometimes it takes God allowing them to get in a tough financial situation for them to realize how much they need him! Or sometimes as Christians, we get our minds off of God in our search for riches, and it takes God refocusing us by putting us in a predicament that only He can get us out of to help us realize that it is not all about the money, but it is all about His Kingdom and His righteousness.

GOD’S VOICE
Sometimes God will speak audibly to us. When we hear that still small voice, there is no doubt that it is God. It is has been said that God’s voice is usually the one that is the quietest one…not the loudest one. It is the one we have to stop and listen to in order to be able to hear it.

OUR ENEMIES
As previously mentioned, sometimes it takes persecution by the enemies of God for the church to spread the gospel and have revival.

THE SOFT IMPRESSION OF THE SPIRIT
Usually this is how God speaks. It is not an audible voice but just a soft impression on our heart (if we have been prayerful). Usually it is easy to tell if it is God or not. God will not tell you to do anything that goes against His Word, and it is usually something that will benefit or bless you or someone else by your doing it. For example, neither the devil or your flesh are ever going to tell you to go witness to somebody or to give extra in the offering or to call and checkup on a brother or sister in the church…you can be assured that it is the voice of God speaking when it is something like this that you feel you need to do.

THE END
I hope that you enjoyed this lesson and that it was a blessing to you. Now go read your Bible and listen for the voice of God to tell you something new! He will do it if you will pay close and prayerful attention!
INTRODUCTION
Welcome to Apostolic Praise Deeper Walk 101 Lesson 3: The Man of God! In this lesson, we are going to study and learn about the man of God. We will be looking at our relationship with the man of God and the role that he plays in our spiritual walk and relationship with God.

THE PASTOR
The word “Pastor” literally means “shepherd.” The pastor is the shepherd of the flock of God, also known as the church. Sheep, if left to themselves without a shepherd, are going to wander aimlessly and will eventually fall prey to wild animals. While we also have the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, it is also necessary and beneficial to have a local shepherd. This study will also cover the necessity of having a pastor or shepherd.

THE NECESSITY OF HAVING A PASTOR
As sheep are not the smartest animals in the world, are not great fighters, and tend to get lost easily, they are very vulnerable to attack and have a very low chance of survival without a shepherd. According to Scripture, it is going to take a pastor for you to survive as a Christian and to make it to heaven. While some may disagree with this, let us look at some Scripture to prove this point.

Biblical Principle 1: You cannot be saved without preaching, and it takes a preacher to preach. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Notice it did not say to save sinners, but it pleased God to save by preaching those that are already believers!

Biblical Principle 2: The Bible commands us to obey those that rule over us and to be submitted to them. Hebrews 13:17 says “Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” The pastor is the one who watches for your soul and who is one day going to have to give an account of you before God. So what would your pastor have to say about you? Also, how can one obey and submit to the one who is ruling over them and watching for their soul if they do not have a pastor? Clearly one must have a pastor to obey and be submitted to.

Biblical Principle 3: It takes a pastor to keep you fed spiritually. Jeremiah 3:15 says “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” One duty of the pastor is to feed the flock. Without a pastor, how can you be fed spiritually? God will feed you Himself if in some odd circumstance (war breaks out or catastrophic event of nature) you cannot get to church to hear your pastor; however, God will not excuse those that could be fed but choose not to go to church.
Biblical Principle 4: The ministry is God’s gift to the church and is how God chooses to work. Ephesians 4 tells us in verses 8-12 that the ministry were given to the church as gifts for the following reasons: “the perfect of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ.” God works through the hands of the ministry and if we reject the ministry, we are rejecting the gifts of God as well as the medium through which God has chosen to work.

DUTIES OF THE PASTOR

PROTECTION

The first duty of the pastor is the protection of the flock - your protection. The sheepfold was usually a pen surrounded by high walls with only one door or doorway. It was the place where the shepherd would bring the sheep in for safety - usually at night. Many shepherds would then literally sleep in front of the door or in the doorway of the sheepfold so that anything, whether it be thief or beast, that wanted in would have to go through him first.

So it is the pastor’s duty to protect the sheep from those that would do them harm and try to steal them out of the sheepfold of God or destroy them. Our sheepfold is the church. The pastor also keeps the walls of truth and holiness in good condition so that nothing can break through and harm the flock.

CARE AND FEEDING

The second duty of the pastor is the care and feeding of the flock. The shepherd had to watch and check his sheep to see if they were sick or had broken bones. The shepherd would routinely check on the sheep, usually feeling with his hands on their legs and back and checking their mouth and eyes to make sure they were not sick or hurt. Obviously the pastor does not physically check our legs, back, mouth or eyes, but spiritually and emotionally, he must be alert to make sure that no one is sick and that there is nothing that is broken and needs to be fixed.

The shepherd also had to make sure that the sheep were well fed by leading them to green, healthy pastures to eat while at the same time keeping them away from harmful pastures where there were plants that were dangerous or poisonous to the sheep. The pastor’s job is to feed us with the word of God and good preaching, giving us a solid Biblical foundation and keeping us away from those that teach poisonous doctrines that are contrary to the word of God. The Bible calls these “doctrines of devils.”

DISCIPLINE & CORRECTION

The third duty of the pastor is the discipline and correction of the flock. The two main tools of the shepherd were the rod and the staff. The rod was used to drive away wild animals such as wolves but was also used to discipline the sheep. The staff (or shepherd’s crook) was used to comfort and pet the sheep but could also be used to bring back a straying or runaway lamb.
The rod could also be used if a lamb began to stray repeatedly and would not respond or come back at the shepherd’s call. In this case the shepherd would break one of the lamb’s legs using the rod and then physically carry the lamb on his shoulders until the leg was healed. This would cure the lamb’s straying and would create a bond between the shepherd and the lamb.

Sometimes the pastor has to correct and rebuke us when we have a rebellious or bad attitude or habit. Even though this may hurt for awhile, when it is done in a loving manner and we keep the right spirit, we will one day realize that it was for our good and our protection. The shepherd knows that if the lamb continues to stray too far away, it may be killed, eaten, or lost, and likewise, bad decisions, habits and attitudes can hurt us.

DUTY OF THE SHEEP

As sheep, we must obey the voice of the pastor. Whether or not you are obedient and submitted to the man of God will determine your destiny and eternal home. Speaking from personal experience as one who has been in ministry at several different churches, I have seen those that had great potential and talent who went against the voice of the shepherd and eventually left the church and are living in sin today. I have also seen those that did not seem like they had a lot going for them, but because they listened to and obeyed the voice of the man of God they are still living for God today and are blessed because of it.

God gave us a pastor for wisdom, counsel, and advice. Most pastors that I have seen do not tell people what to do unless they feel very strongly that what they are doing is a mistake. I have seen people move to cities where there was no truth-preaching church and backslide. I have seen young people who were warned not to continue to date or spend time with a young lady or young man but continued to do so and ended up unhappily pregnant and single. Yet I have also seen those that obeyed and ended up happily married with that same person because they put God and the man of God first.

WHEN YOU NEED TO MOVE

Making big decisions, such as moving or getting married should never be done without the counsel of the man of God. No pastor wants to micro-manage your life. However, it is the proper thing to counsel with your pastor over major decisions. You should never move without the consent and counsel of the man of God (unless he is preaching false doctrine or has become a Saul - see below for more details). This is the biggest mistake that people make - especially new converts. I have seen it happen time and again where someone comes in and gets the Holy Ghost and then suddenly an opportunity opens, and they leave and move away to a place where there is no truth-preaching church. This is the plan of the devil.

After you receive the Holy Ghost, you need to stay at the church where you got it for at least a year, preferably two, to become solidified. Not all churches are created equally. Not matter how long you have had the Holy Ghost, you should never move to a city if there is not another Holy Ghost-filled, truth-preaching, Apostolic church that your pastor recommends where
you are moving. The devil is good at getting people to move away after they get the Holy Ghost because he knows if he can separate them from the Man of God and the Church, they will be lost. Always counsel with the man of God because “in the multitude of counsel, there is safety.”

EXCEPTIONS

There are only two times where it is proper to leave a church without the pastor’s consent or counsel. If the man of God you are under is not preaching truth (whether he has stopped preaching truth or just never preached it), it is okay for you to leave that church without his consent or counsel and to find a pastor that is preaching the truth.

Second, if the pastor you are under is a King Saul and a spear-thrower who is constantly hurting people by his words and actions in a non-Biblical manner, it is okay to leave his church without his consent or counsel. I would highly recommend that you purchase a copy of “A Tale of Three Kings” and read it, preferably before you leave.

In either one of these cases, it is never okay for you to speak poorly of the man of God, even if it is true. He may be a King Saul in your opinion, but what if he is not? What if your opinion of him is incorrect? Even if you are right, you will be wrong if you begin to speak poorly of him, and God will hold you accountable for that. Honor the office even if you feel that you cannot honor the man.

Furthermore, it is not okay for you to try to get other people on your side so that they will leave with you too. This is called mutiny, and in the old days was a hanging offense. It is also known as rebellion and will ruin your reputation. When David left the kingdom because Saul was throwing spears and trying to destroy him, he left alone. Yes, he eventually had a band of men that were with him, but he left alone. Others may come later. If they do, keep in your heart that you will not say anything bad about your former pastor. David always kept respect for the anointed of God even though King Saul was backslidden. Always respect the office of the pastor and God will bless you. Remember, he is still a pastor – whether he is a good or bad one.

Speaking badly of a pastor is different from speaking badly of a political office such as governor or president. The position of a pastor is a spiritual office and must be respected as so.

In conclusion, God has given you a pastor to save, protect, care for, feed, discipline, and correct you. He is God’s gift to you, as is the rest of the ministry and should be respected as such.

Recommended Scriptural Readings:

Jesus Sermon on the Shepherd and the Sheep: John 10:1-16,
Paul’s Admonition to the Pastors Before His Departure: Acts 20:28-29
Peter’s Counsel to the Elders and the Young People: 1 Peter 5:1-6
The Watchman on the Wall – A Type of the Pastor: Ezekiel 33:1-19
INTRODUCTION
Welcome to Apostolic Praise Deeper Walk 101 Lesson 4 “The Body of Christ!” In this lesson, we are going to study and learn about the body of Christ. We will be looking at our relationship with the body of Christ (the church) and how it is necessary to stay connected to it.

WHAT IS THE BODY OF CHRIST?
According to the Bible, everyone that has been born again and become part of the church is a member of the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul speaking to the church in 1 Corinthians 12:27 said “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” The term “body of Christ” basically refers to the worldwide church body as a whole. It is made up of anyone that has been “by one Spirit baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

On a side note, although the body of Christ is made up of everybody that has been born again all over the world, there are also local church bodies that are made up of local members.

MEMBERS OF ONE BODY
Every member in the body of Christ has a different but needful function. 1 Corinthians 12:18 says “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” Just as one’s physical body has different members with different functions (you have feet to walk, hands to touch, and eyes to see), the body of Christ (the church) does also. Without feet, one could not walk and without eyes one could not see. In the church, without ushers, no one will greet people at the door or take up the offering, and without musicians and singers, no one would lead God’s people into praise and worship.

DIFFERENT MEMBERS
Some people feel that because they do not sing, play, preach, or have a “high-profile” ministry in the body of Christ, they are not useful to the kingdom of God. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This is a lie that the devil uses to spread feeling of low self-esteem and depression – causing God’s people to backslide or fall into spiritual lethargy. 1 Corinthians 12:17-18 says “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

I’M ALL EYES!
Imagine if your whole body was made up only of eyes! You would be great at seeing but how would you smell, hear or feel? It is the same in the body of Christ! Imagine if everyone were a musician, but no one was a preacher! Who would preach the Word? Imagine if everyone were a preacher, but no one was a saint! It would be like a shepherd without sheep! A pastor cannot lead without anyone to lead.

WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT
The point is that we are all different...because that is how God made us. One should not think less of oneself because one is different from another. We all have different functions as different members of the body. Maybe you are the church janitor. Your job may not be “high-profile,” but it is just as needful as being a worship leader or an usher. 1 Corinthians 12:22 says “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” Everyone is needed!
STAYING CONNECTED

As a member of the body of Christ, it is vital that you stay connected to the body. A member that is cut off from the body cannot survive on its own, no matter how strong it is. Your brain is an incredibly smart member of the body, but if your head gets cut off, your brain will die. It cannot survive without the body. A hand is a powerful and talented member that is able to do many things, but if it gets cut off, it will be dead and useless in a short period of time. Likewise, many people do not realize that by not regularly attending church and staying connected, they are cutting themselves off from the body of Christ!

COMING TO CHURCH

It is so vitally important to come to church, fellowship with other church “members” and stay involved and “connected” with your local “church body.” The Word says in Hebrews 11:25 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

I DON’T HAVE TO GO TO CHURCH!

Some people really do not think they need to go to church. Yet this directly contradicts God’s Word (as we just read). The Bible says that we need to assemble together even more and exhort one another even more as we “see the day approaching.” We don’t need to forsake church - we need more of it! So what day is this passage referring to? It is referring to the day of the Lord in which God’s wrath and judgement will be poured out upon the wicked, and the day when antichrist shall appear. We know this day is coming sooner, for we see the signs of the times that Jesus spoke of coming to pass. We are definitely in the last days.

YOUR PLACE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

It is important that you find your place in the body of Christ. Everyone has a place and a function as a member of it. Your function first of all is to be in the Spirit at all times so that you can be used in the gifts of the Spirit. Many people want to be used in the church, but they are never in the Spirit and are about as “carnal as a candy bar.” If you want to be used and to function as a member, you need to be prayerful, spiritual, and loving – demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23.

DON’T BE SURPRISED IF YOU ARE NOT USED IMMEDIATELY

Whether you have just received the Holy Ghost or just moved to a new church, do not be surprised if you are not used immediately in the place or function in which you think you should be used. Most pastors want to see faithfulness and character before they use you or give you any responsibility. This means faithfulness in both church attendance and tithes and offering (which we cover in another lesson). Paul gave the young pastor Timothy an important principle regarding people who wish to be used in 1 Timothy 3:6 “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

FOUR REASONS WHY PEOPLE ARE NOT USED

If you have a God-given gift or talent (or if you think you have a God-given gift or talent), it is important not to become discouraged or angry if you are not being used. I will explain why shortly. I have seen and heard many people say “I am a good singer or musician.” In some cases, they were truly talented, and in some cases they were not. There were a few general things that I have noticed that kept them from being used. 1) Faithfulness – they were inconsistent in church attendance or late often – showing that they could not be
trusted with function, ministry or leadership. Remember, the Bible says if you are faithful in the little things, God will use you in the bigger things.

2) Carnality – they were talented but did not have a walk with God. They never prayed at the altars, never truly worshipped or participated in worship service, and hung out with a bad crowd. One must be a saint before becoming anything else. 3) Rebellion – they were not in complete submission to what the pastor was preaching. There were things they either did not agree with or simply did not do.

4) Not Truly Talented – some people think they are talented but are not. Some people do not even have potential. (Potential is simply undeveloped talent.) If this is true, rest assured that there is a better place for you in God’s kingdom. I remember one man in particular that taught me this principle. He was an excited new convert and wanted to do something for God - so he decided to join the church choir. He even went out and purchased a $120 choir robe (which was a prerequisite for joining at his church).

The problem was that he was not just a mediocre singer; he was an awful singer…and he sang very loudly. After patiently working with him, the choir director finally had to meet with him and kindly explain to him that everyone has a place in God’s kingdom…and perhaps his would best be in another area of the church. So he became an usher, and he was a fantastic usher! Everyone has a place as a member in God’s body, but sometimes it can be tough finding your place.

DON’T WORRY - YOUR GIFT WILL MAKE ROOM FOR ITSELF
The Bible says in Proverbs 18:16 “A man’s gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.” If you have a gift that God has given you, it will make room for itself. I have heard people say “I want to learn to play the drums. Do you think pastor will let me play if I learned?” Of course he will! If you learn, and learn well, God will give you an opportunity to play, and the rest will be history!

I have personally played the piano in different churches for many years, but I remember when I was first beginning to play in church. I had practiced extensively and perhaps even played better than many of the other keyboardists in that church, but my gift had not made room for itself there yet. However, there was a struggling home missions church down the road that needed a faithful piano player. The opportunity came, and I helped that church out for two years because there was room for my gift there. Let me say that there is no better place to learn to play than a home missions church where you are the main musician! There was no other musician to depend on if I messed up. There was no one else to play a little louder and cover up my mistake or if I forgot the song. Believe me, if I made a mistake or hit a wrong note, everyone knew it (unless they were just “caught away in the Spirit”!)

However, somewhere in that two years of playing there, God opened the room for me to play back at my home church. They knew that I was playing at the home missions church, and there were a couple of nights when they needed a piano player. They also gave me a couple of choir songs to learn. I did well and eventually became the main keyboardist there. However, without practice, faithfulness, and being (somewhat) spiritual that opportunity never would have come. Your gift will make room for itself…if you develop your gift...your potential. Remember potential is unused, undeveloped talent. It is up to you to develop that talent. Then it is up to God to use you, and he will!
ORDER IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Bible gives us an order to the body of Christ. Referring to Jesus, Colossians 1:18 says “And he is the head of the body, the church.” Jesus Christ is the head of the body of Christ – including the global church body as a whole, as well as local church bodies. Some organizations have a General Superintendent, followed by various Department Heads, Boards, Governments, Etc…However, in the local church body, the next in order is the pastor of the church (see Lesson 3: The Man of God for more on this topic). (On a side note, every pastor needs to have a pastor as well!)

ORDER OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

Jesus said in Matthew 20:25-26 “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.” Hebrews 13:17 also commands “Obey them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.” After the Great Shepherd, comes the local shepherd in the order of the body of Christ. After the pastor come the local church ministry and leadership (only those whom the pastor has appointed – not those who are self-appointed). After that are the elders in the church, and after that are the saints. You will know true church elders because they will take new converts and saints under their wing and mentor them – as Paul said they should.

NO ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANOTHER IN GOD’S EYES

Now this is not to say that one group or person is more important than another, but without leadership the church will fall into disarray and confusion. Someone has to make the decisions. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14:33 “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Confusion is not of God. Someone has to be under Jesus Christ as the leader of the church. This responsibility falls to the pastor. Please note that this does not take away from any other member. Each and every soul is equally important in the eyes of God – no matter their position in a church or organization.

NEITHER COLOR OR RACE MATTERS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Colossians 3:11, as well as other passages of Scripture, are very clear. There is no room for racism or prejudice in God’s body. If one has truly been born again and become a new creature, Paul says “…there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” In God’s kingdom, it does not matter your color, your race, your background, your financial state, or whose family you are from. We are all equal in Christ Jesus. When God looks at us, he is more concerned with what is inside us…”the content of our character” as Martin Luther King called it.

True Christians will never look down on another because of their color, race, background, or financial state but will instead “esteem others better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). Like the song says, it “could have been you sitting under that bridge” homeless and broke. It is truly because of God’s grace and goodness that we are anything today and that we have the privilege to be a member of the Body of Christ – the church (the word “church” means “the called out ones” or “chosen ones of God”) of the Living God.
INTRODUCTION
Welcome to Apostolic Praise Deeper Walk 101 Lesson 5 “Unbelievers.” In this lesson, we are going to study and learn about the different types of Unbelievers (anyone outside of the church), our relationship with Unbelievers, and how they can affect your walk with God.

WHO ARE UNBELIEVERS?
Simply put, an unbeliever is someone who does not believe the truth of our Acts 2:38-based Apostolic doctrine. There are many different types of unbelievers. The first and most obvious type of unbeliever is the atheist. An atheist is one who claims not to believe in God at all. Another type of unbeliever is one who believes in a different god than the one true living God - a muslim for example, who believes in allah (the moon god).

Although more closely related to us, still another type of unbeliever is one who believes in Jehovah God of the Bible but does not believe that Jesus is God - a Jew for example. Also more closely related to us are those of different denominations (Catholic, Baptist, Methodist) that believe in Jesus but do not teach Acts 2:38-based Apostolic doctrine. The final type of unbeliever is one who has at one point believed the Apostolic message but either no longer believes it or is no longer living their life according to it.

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT
After you receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, things are different. While you have changed for the better, others have not. When you go back to your old friends, family or loved ones and tell them about what God has done for you, they are either going to join you, be undecided and neutral, or be against you. However, the majority of the time they will be against you. Being against you will come in one of several different ways. They will either 1) tell you that you are crazy (which is true, you are crazy about Jesus now! - see 2 Corinthians 5:13) and try to persuade you that what you have experienced is not real (it is a little late for that now!) or 2) they will just simply stop hanging out with you. Sometimes they will do both.

A NEW CREATURE!
The problem is that they are not any different now, but you are because God has made you into a new creature and person! Your old desires and person have changed, and all things have become new. In fact, they may even say things such as “you are not the same person you used to be.” Well, they are absolutely right! The proper response to this is simply “Thank you for saying that, and thank God for doing it!”

THE PLEASURES OF SIN
Now, the problem is your old unbelieving friends are probably accustomed to the old You who liked to hang out at the bar or club (or wherever you used to hang out before you came to Christ) and who perhaps liked to party, drink, do some drugs, curse, and fight (or whatever you used to do before God gave you the greatest gift of all - the gift of the Holy Ghost). Perhaps they do not even like the new You because you now refuse to enjoy and partake of the pleasures of sin. Oh yes, the Bible even says there is pleasure in sin, but it also continues and says that “it is but for a season”! In other words, it may be fun for a little while, but soon the fun wears out. As they say, sooner or later the party and the music stops, and the cops show up. In other words, judgement and punishment come.
NEW FRIENDS

So let me tell you what you now need to do. If your current family, friends, or loved ones refuse to hear the truth after you tell them what God has done for you, just thank God for your new friends and family in the Body of Christ. This does not mean you completely reject your family or friends, but it does mean that you may need to put a little more distance between you. And if they are openly hostile of your new faith, you may need to completely separate yourself from them - we will cover this more below.

WHAT FELLOWSHIP HATH BELIEVERS WITH UNBELIEVERS?

Now it is never easy to separate yourself from people (particularly if you have been close); however the Bible clearly states in 1 Corinthians 6 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

WHAT IS AN INFIDEL?

The word “infidel” has been twisted and perverted by the islamic religion as a word that describes someone who has denied the islamic religion and must die. However, in the Bible, the word “infidel” simply means someone who is an “unbeliever” - someone who does not believe. Also, the word “Belial” here refers to “satan.”

BEING YOKED TOGETHER

Being yoked together is usually understood as a reference to being married. Clearly, one should not become married to an unbeliever (unless you are living in fornication - please counsel with your Pastor if this is the case); however, if you are already married, you become a believer, and your husband or wife is an unbeliever, you are to stay married to them according to the teachings of the Bible (the Apostle Paul clearly explains this in his epistles). However, being yoked together can also be taken to mean two people that are good or close friends.

WHAT DOES “YOKED” MEAN

Now here is the problem with being “unequally yoked together” with an unbeliever - whether in friendship or marriage. This phrase “unequally yoked together” is interesting because it actually refers to oxen. A “yoke of oxen” was simply two cows tied together (usually with a piece of wood referred to as the “yoke”) in order to pull a heavy burden (usually a plow). Now common sense dictates that if you have two oxen pulling in different directions, they are not going to go anywhere. Furthermore, if you have one ox that is very strong and one is that weak, you are going to only go around in a circle!

This is why God, speaking through the Apostle Paul in this passage commands “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Being married to an unbeliever will hinder your walk and relationship with God. On another note, this is why a minister or someone called to ministry should not get married to a new convert. You will have a yoke made up of one strong ox and one weak ox. Their ministry will go in a circle, and they will get nowhere in the work of God! Now being a new convert has more to do with one’s level of spiritual maturity than it does actual time in the church. I have seen some people who have been in church for 6-7 years that I would still classify as a new convert. I have seen others who have been in church for 10-12 months that I would classify as spiritually mature!
THE PROBLEM WITH OLD BUDDIES

Another reason God put this passage of Scripture about separating yourselves from unbelievers is because he knows the danger of one hanging around with his or her old buddies again. In fact, hanging out with old friends is probably the number one reason that people turn their back on God and backslide. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”

WELL, I AM GOING TO CHANGE THEM

Many people say “Well I am going to change them.” However, in the Bible, when the unclean (or the dirty) touched that which was holy, what happened? That which was holy also became unclean (and therefore not usable by God)! We must be careful not to hang out with old friends and in old places like we did before we came to Truth. By doing so, we put ourselves in danger of falling into our old ways and leaving God and our loving church family. We will discuss this more below.

YOUR PROMISE

So let us say that now you have separated yourself from the friends, family and loved ones who have rejected your experience and the Truth. You have fulfilled 1 Corinthians 6:17 which says “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” So now what do you do? Who do you hang out with? God gives you a promise in the very next verse. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says “And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

A NEW FATHER

Here is what is so awesome about when you separate yourself because of your love for God and your desire to make it to heaven. When you do this, God promises to be your everything. I have been through times where it felt like I had no friends and no one to turn to, but in those times of loneliness, I was able to turn to God. He gave me a love and fellowship divine that no earthly relationship could ever give. Use your times of loneliness to turn to your heavenly Father and draw closer to Him.

A NEW FAMILY

In addition to this, God also gives you a whole new family of brothers and sisters that will love you and will encourage you (like your old friends and family may not do) in your walk with God! Furthermore, you now not only have the new brothers and sisters in your local church, but there are thousands of people worldwide that you are now related to through the Body of Christ and Family of God! Just go to some conferences and local revivals to meet some of these wonderful people (be sure to ask your Pastor before you go because he will be able to recommend some meetings and warn you of others to avoid!). Be assured that God will never ask you to give or sacrifice anything up without promising to give you something so much better in return to replace what you gave up.

A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF SEPARATION

It is important when separating yourself that you do it in the right spirit and attitude. You are not doing it because you are better than anyone else, and you are definitely not doing it because you have stopped loving anyone. You need to be loving, courteous, and kind, especially now because you have the Holy Ghost and are an example of God’s love to others! There are different types of separation. Complete separation means you completely cut off all communication and fellowship with someone. It should be done only with those that are a 100% negative influence on
your walk and relationship with God. In other words, they have rejected truth and are trying to weigh you down - attempting to get you to do things that will hurt your relationship with God and cause you to leave the Body of Christ.

Partial Separation means you do not spend as much time as you used to with someone. This may be necessary depending on the kind of influence they are on your walk with God. Here is a good guideline to follow: Separation should only be done with family or close friends if they are a negative influence on your walk and relationship with God. However, please note that Jesus did say the following in Matthew 10:34-38:

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.
36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.
37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

While separation should preferably never be done, sometimes it is necessary.

BUT JESUS FELLOWSHIPPED WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

This is an old argument to the separation principle. The big difference is that Jesus was not a new convert. The separation principle is so important for new converts because they are not yet strong, mature believers, and they do not need anyone to be dragging or weighing them down or influencing them to go back to their old, sinful habits. Instead, they need to be fellowshipping with and being mentored by those that are strong in the faith - developing strong relationships with elders and mature brothers and sisters in the church.

HOW CAN WE REACH THE WORLD

Another question is “How can we reach the world if we do not fellowship with them?” Jesus answered this quite plainly in Matthew 5:16 when he said “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” By simply living a holy life and “letting your light shine” you are going to bring glory to God, and people will be drawn to you and want what you have.

The Apostle Peter also wrote in 1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” If you will keep yourself holy, and are ready to give anybody that asks an answer, you will reach those around you.

FINAL NOTE ON UNBELIEVERS

If you are a strong believer, it is okay to spend some company with those living in sin as you try to reach for them and draw them to Jesus. However, you should not fellowship or even eat with those who are former believers and are living in sin. Instead you should try to get them back into the truth (see James 5:19-20)! Paul clearly covers these principles in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11: “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”
INTRODUCTION
The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.” This Bible Study is going to explain about the spiritual transformation that takes place in your life when you obey the gospel plan of salvation and are filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE
It is common knowledge that Jesus was crucified, buried in a tomb, and resurrected from the dead three days later. This is the gospel message. However, this is not the complete gospel message. Knowledge of the Word of God and Biblical history is powerful, but if you are like me, you want to know how it applies to you as well. What is so incredibly powerful about the three-part gospel message of Jesus Christ is that we too can experience it for ourselves! When we repent of our sins, we crucify our old man with Christ. When we are baptized in Jesus name, that old man is buried in a watery grave in baptism. When we receive the Holy Ghost, we are “resurrected” or “born again” as a new man or a new creature in Christ Jesus!

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST THROUGH REPENTANCE
Is this in the Bible? Very much so! The Apostolic Paul says in Romans 6:6 “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him,” (“him” referring to Jesus). True repentance is a death, a dying out, and a turning away from the old person we used to be. The word “repentance” literally means “to turn away from.” In other words, if you say that you have repented of stealing and then turn around and steal something else, you have not truly repented but instead have only said you were “sorry.” True repentance demands a change of direction and a turning away from the old habits of sin.

WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?
Whenever God gives a commandment, he almost always give us an explanation directly following it in His Word. Romans 6:6 says in its entirety “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (The underlined part is the explanation for the “why.”)

TO DESTROY THE BODY OF SIN AND THE HOLD OF SIN ON OUR LIFE
We repent and crucify our old man (or woman) with Christ so that we can destroy the body of sin that exists inside of us and so that we no longer have to serve sin! How is that possible? Doesn’t everybody sin everyday? No. People whose “old man” is still living do sin, but those who are “new creatures in Christ Jesus” do not have to sin because they are no longer bound by the taskmaster of sin! Paul continues in verse 7 “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” When we kill that old man, that is the first step to destroying the body of sin and the bondage that sin has us in.
BURIED WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death…When we are baptized in Jesus name, we are buried with Christ Jesus. That old man (or woman) that we used to be is dead, gone, and buried…never to be seen or to live again!

WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?

Once again God, gives us a clear explanation of why! Romans 6:4 says in its entirety “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life.” (The word “that” is an explanatory word. It means that God is about to explain what he just said! The “why” is that we are buried with him in baptism, so that we too can be raised from the dead and walk in newness of life…as a NEW CREATURE! (That is the next step to follow.)

RESURRECTED WITH JESUS THROUGH BEING BORN AGAIN OF THE SPIRIT

Paul continues in verse 5 “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Here is what is so powerful...God is not going to leave us dead! He is not going to leave us in the grave anymore than Jesus was left in the grave. He wants to raise us up or “resurrect us” to be born again as a “new man” or “new creature in Christ Jesus!” Now, this happens when we are filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost or “born again” of the Spirit, as Jesus said we must do to enter the kingdom of God in John 3:5.

WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?

Once again, to “reiterate” or say it again, we are born again of the Spirit, so that we too can enter the kingdom of God. In other words, anyone who is not born of the Spirit will not enter or even see the kingdom of God (see Jesus’ words in John 3:3 and John 3:5). In other words, they will not go to heaven but will instead be lost to burn forever in the lake of fire.

JESUS TALKING ABOUT HIS GOSPEL PLAN

Jesus uses the phrase “born again” in John 3:3, and he uses the phrase “born of water and of the Spirit” to go into further detail explaining what it takes to enter and see the kingdom of God. Among Jesus’ last words to the disciples were those in Luke 24:47 when he said “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Jesus continues in Luke 24:49 “And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Of course, we know from Acts 1:4-5 that the promise of the Father is the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, we know from Peter’s words in Acts 2:38 that remission (the washing or wiping away) of sins is done through baptism in Jesus name.
THE APOSTLES KNEW IT!

The Apostles knew that when one is born again of the Spirit, he will speak in tongues. This is how Peter and the converted Jews with him knew that Cornelius and his household had received the Holy Ghost in Acts 10:44-48. Acts 10:44-45 says “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision (in other words the Jews which came with Peter) which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

HOW DO WE KNOW?!

Let’s pay close attention to this next part. How did Peter and the Jews with him know that Cornelius and his household had received the gift of the Holy Ghost (or “been born again of the Spirit”)? It was not because they saw them experience a warm, fuzzy feeling. Neither was it because they heard them recite the Sinner’s Prayer or say “I accept you in my heart, Lord.” No, no, no!!! Let’s look in verse 46 and see how the BIBLE says they knew the gift of the Holy Ghost had been poured out on them.

Acts 10:46 says “For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter.” In the middle of Peter’s message, the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and his household, and they began speaking in tongues and worshipping God! This is how they knew they had received the Holy Ghost...“For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

PETER ACKNOWLEDGES THEY GOT IT JUST LIKE HE DID TOO!

Peter then exclaims in verse 47, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” Notice that Peter references how he and rest of those with him had received the Holy Ghost...the same way...through speaking with other tongues (see Acts 2:1-4 for more info on when Peter and the rest of the apostles received the Holy Ghost - they too spoke with tongues). Finally, verse 48 says “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” He did not ask, he just told them - this is necessary, you need to do it. How exciting!

THE APOSTLE PAUL’S EXPLANATION OF TONGUES

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 “In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.”

The sign of tongues is not for those that believe but for those that believe not. In other words, they are a sign to someone who is an unbeliever (one who has not yet obeyed the plan of salvation and been filled with the Holy Ghost), that he has just been filled with the Holy Ghost.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH SPEAKING ABOUT TONGUES

The Old Testament verse Paul is quoting here is Isaiah 28:11-12 where the prophet Isaiah said “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he
said, *This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest: and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.*” Wait a minute, what is the rest and what is the refreshing? Simply...“this.” So what is the word “this” referring to here? Well, it is referring to what he just said…it is referring to stammering lips and another tongue.

SO REFRESHING!

How can this be a rest or a refreshing? You will find in living for God, that the best way to “keep” the Holy Ghost and to stay “happy, rested, and refreshed” is to keep being filled with the Holy Ghost over and over again on a daily basis. You are refilled with the Holy Ghost the same way that you originally were filled with the Holy Ghost the first time – through stammering lips and another tongue! That is still how he talks to us, and it is still how we stay rested and refreshed in Him and His Spirit. The sad part is the last phrase “yet they would not hear.” Many today still reject the tongues message and the refreshing it brings.

JUST LIKE WHEN A BABY IS BORN – THERE IS A SOUND

Another interesting fact is that when a new baby is born into the world, we know that they are born and alive by the fact that they are breathing and making sound (usually not a very “pleasant” sound – although it is beautiful indeed to the parents’ ears)!

Likewise Jesus said in John 3:8, whenever someone is born of the Spirit, there is a sound that goes forth! John 3:8 says “The wind bloweth where it listeth, (where there is room for it or space made for it) and thou hearest the sound there, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” Wherever someone is being born of the Spirit, there is going to be a sound. The Greek word for wind here is “pneuma” and also means “current of air, breath, breeze or spirit.”

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT TONGUES

Jesus also said in Mark 16:17-18 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues: They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Note here that Jesus gave five different signs that shall follow those that believe. However, notice that there is only one of these signs that happened immediately after anybody in Scripture received the Holy Ghost! (See also Acts 19:1-6)

WE MUST FULFILL AND OBEY THE WHOLE GOSPEL – ALL THREE PARTS!

In conclusion, one should not stop at repentance. Repentance is a great and necessary thing, but it is only part of the gospel plan of salvation. (You are just crucified at this point.) If you stop here, you still have not been buried with Jesus. Furthermore, we should not stop at baptism. If we do, we are spiritually still in the grave. (Imagine if Jesus had stayed in the grave!) Instead, we need to continue until we receive (or are born again of) the Holy Ghost (or the Spirit – as Jesus said in John 3:5)! This is when we are “born again” as a new creature in Christ Jesus and “raised up” to walk in newness of life with Him.
It is God’s desire that His people are happy, joyful, peaceful, contented people who enjoy living for Him. In fact, the main reason that Jesus said he came is so “…that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). In this Bible study we are going to explore how to live and have life more abundantly.

No matter your circumstance, environment, or situation it is possible for you to be joyful. Being joyful is a matter of attitude and spiritual well-being. There is a big difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is based on material things or events, such as when a person is given a gift, graduates from college or celebrates a birthday. For example, the Apostle Paul said in Acts 26:2 “I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because…” Happiness always has a “because” attached to it.

Joy, on the other hand, is from God and runs deeper — it can be present even during unhappy times. Galatians 5:22 says that “joy” is a “fruit of the Spirit.” Furthermore, in this passage which lists nine fruit of the Spirit, it is second on the list, making it one of the most vital and important fruits for a Christian to have - second only to “love”!

WHY JOY IS SO IMPORTANT

As stated, joy is a fruit of the Spirit. When you have joy, it is a fruit or “outward adorning” to others that you are full of the Spirit. People can feel the difference when they are around a truly joyful person. There is a feeling of peace and positive energy, instead of a feeling of stress and anxiety. When a person is not full of joy, it may cast a shadow of doubt over their testimony and even cause others to doubt if they are truly a Christian or a fake.

JOY IS TIED TO HOPE!

Another reason that joy is so important is that it is explicitly tied to hope. Paul said in Romans 15:13 “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Live without joy for a little while, and you will notice that your hope begins to disappear also! The verse also says that ye may abound in hope “through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Hope is tied to the power of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes our walk with God and our testimony is dry and powerless because we are missing the key ingredients of hope, joy, and peace.

BEING CONTENT

One of the keys to living life more abundantly is to be content…anywhere and everywhere you are. Paul said in Philippians 4:11 “…for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” No matter what we are going through, like Paul we can learn to be content. We are part of the bride of Christ (the church), and we ought to remember the vows that we hear so many times at earthly weddings. Whether we are richer or poorer, for better or worse, in sickness or in health, we can and should learn how to be content.
STAYING FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST

One of the main keys to living life more abundantly is staying full of the Holy Ghost. Everyday, we should make it our goal to touch God, talk to God, and hear from God. We should pray until we pray through and speak with other tongues. As the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 28:11-12 “This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.” When you feel weary and need rest and refreshing, the presence of God is the best place to get refreshed!

BEING FRIENDLY

Having friends is another way to live life more abundantly. It is important to our well-being that we have friends. Good friends can keep us from making horrible decisions through their wise advice and counsel. They can lift us up when we are down and encourage us spiritually. A true friend is one who helps you to draw closer to God and become more like him. They will also pray with you in your darkest hours and stand with you through hard times.

However, how do we get friends? It is important to always be friendly to everyone we meet. The Bible says in Proverbs 18:24 “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh than a brother.” We should always strive to meet new people and acquire new friends. It has been proven scientifically than “social butterflies” have stronger immune systems and are less likely to get sick than recluses. Being around people makes them stronger. While it is also important to get away from the crowds and be by yourself sometimes, it is equally important to spend time with others and “get away from it all” by relaxing and spending time with your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

FELLOWSHIP

It is so important that we fellowship and stay connected with the people of God and the body of Christ. Proverbs 27:17 says “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Being around people of like precious faith who love God and love to talk about the things of God sharpens us as iron sharpens iron. We should look for those friends who “sharpen us” and make us stronger and better people and not for those who drag us down or are bad influences on us.

LIVING LIFE WITHOUT STRESS

As the children of God, we have no need to worry about finances, food, clothing or the other things of this world. This is not to say we do not have to work, for the Bible also says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 “...if any should not work, neither should he eat” and again in 1 Timothy 5:8 “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

However, if we are doing our best to work and provide a living for ourselves and our family, we have the assurance that God is going to supply our needs and take care of us! Philippians 4:19 says “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by
Christ Jesus.” Furthermore, David said in Psalm 37:25 “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” God takes care of his own!

Jesus gave us a beautiful passage of Scripture in Matthew 6:25-34 promising us that God will take care of us.

25Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

THE BIGGEST REASON

Of course, the biggest reason that we can go through life and be joyful and content is that we know that we have heaven to look forward to when we die. We may go through hell on this earth but that will be the only hell we will ever know. Life and its troubles and trials would not be nearly as easy to go through if we did not have streets of gold, gates of pearl, and eternity spent in the presence of Jesus to look forward to.
As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:19 “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead...” Because Jesus has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, we also have hope (and joy) that one day we too shall be there with him!

ETERNAL LIFE

Jesus came that we might have eternal life. In John 3:15-17 Jesus says “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Paul also said in Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus came that we might have eternal life. Notice in John 3:15-17, three times Jesus uses a “possibility” word. Many people misquote this Scripture to fit their manmade religion by saying “whosoever believeth in him SHALL not perish, but have eternal life.” But Jesus said “should not perish” and he said “that the world through him might be saved.” In other words, there is no reason why somebody that believes should be lost, but it is possible! That is why we must obey the complete plan of salvation as we discussed in a previous lesson.

When the children of Israel were carried away to Babylon, many of them were in a state of great worry and anxiety. Many of them refused to live life or be happy in this new land. However, the prophet Jeremiah gave them a word from the Lord in Jeremiah 29:5-7:

“5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; 6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”

He continues in the next few verses in Jeremiah 29:11-13:

“11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

It is God’s desire that we live life and have life more abundantly - a life full of love, joy, peace, hope, friends, family, happy homes, and contentment. And at the end of a joyful life, that we move on to the eternal life in heaven that he gave us through the gift of God - the Holy Ghost.